THE IMAGE OF GOD: A REFLECTION OF ORDER AND SUITABILITY IN DESIGN

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Abstract

In the history of biblical interpretation and dogmatic speculation, the "image of God" in humanity has proved remarkably prolific as a source of exegetical and theological discussion. In Genesis 1:26–27, the Bible expounds that God created man in His own image, and in His image, he created male and female. The literature on this topic continues to be overwhelming despite several exhaustive treatments spanning decades among biblical scholars. The act of posing several questions resulted in different answers from various sources. For example, what exactly is the image of God? Is the image of God spiritual or physical? Is the likeness of God the same as the image of God, or is it different? Does sin destroy the image of God? A tremendous amount of ink has been spilled to answer these questions, but the debate continues.

Scholars and commentators have proactively tried to identify various dimensions of human capacity as the definitive elements of the image of God, such as the substantive interpretation, which most often associates the image of God with the abstract ideas of reason, conscience, and free will. Others have argued in favor of the royal or functional interpretation, wherein the image of God is perceived as being symbolic of our dominion over the earth. At the same time, others argued for the relational interpretation, which states that God's image in humanity is found within the relationships we establish and maintain. All of these different interpretations of the image of God have tremendous validity; they include various aspects of human nature and more. However, this study explores another concept that has not been adequately understood and appreciated—the image of God as a reflection of divine order and intended suitability within the design of creation. The idea of male and female being a reflection of God is incredibly meaningful. In what follows, I will contend that male and female created in

the image of God are a reflection of order and suitability in design. This is not only seen in the context of human beings, but also, when we look across the spectrum of species on earth, we perceive a reflection of God's divine order and suitability embedded within the design of creation.

The body of the research is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter discusses the creation account in Genesis 1–2, which provides the foundational biblical image of humanity. Genesis 1–2 tells the story of a God of order, not disorder. God's order facilitates the appropriate paradigm for human order and suitability in design. A second area for examination is the degree of influence of other Ancient Near East creation accounts on the shaping of Genesis 1–2. The second chapter analyzes several interpretations of the image of God offered by prominent scholars, such as J. Richard Middleton and John Kilner. Middleton provides a worthy contribution to the discussion and exegesis of the image of God. He views the human creature as the one delegated by God to take over the task of mediating and representing the divine presence on earth. Kilner believes that being created in God's image is not a matter of human attributes but specifically how people reflect God. In other words, humans made according to the image of God need to reflect godly attributes. Each of these interpretations has significant strengths; however, we see an emphasis on male and female that is explained by the recognition of suitability in design as a reflection of the image of God. This is ultimately an aspect of what it means to be created in the image of God.

The third chapter provides an exegetical and biblical examination of Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1–3, and 9:6 to understand the meaning of "image" (*tselem)* and "likeness" (*damut)*. In God's divine prerogative, he chose to create humanity in His image and likeness to reflect His divine

order and suitability in design. Chapter four presents a full range of relevant New Testament texts in explicating the links between the image of God in creation and the image of God in Christ. Chapter five comprises the heart of the dissertation—it considers the significance of "male and female created in the image of God" as a reflection of divine "order and suitability" in design, reflecting the identity of God as the Creator. God's order and suitability can be seen in various passages in the Wisdom literature. Wisdom literature teaches us that there is a cosmic order. In the book of Proverbs, this cosmic order is personified as female; she is *hokma*, "Wisdom." In the book of Ecclesiastes, the author states that "God makes everything suitable in its time" (Eccl 3:11). After a thorough analysis of the materials, it will become evident that "male and female created in the image of God" is a reflection of divine order and suitability in our responsibility of stewardship on the earth. This is a true reflection of God, as affirmed in the creation narrative. Chapter six focuses on the compatibility and suitability of God's design of male and female. This will be accomplished by a close reading of the Song of Songs and its affiliation to Genesis 1–2 to present a framework for understanding male and female as being created in the image of God. Chapter seven explores the theological implications of a Christian worldview and the Christian response to societal confusion. Chapter eight briefly summarizes the most important findings and provides a conclusion.

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Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BTC	Brazos Theological Commentary
CBC	Cornerstone Biblical Commentary
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary
EDT	Evangelical Dictionary of Theology
GELNT	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament
GTS	Gettysburg Theological Studies
HELOT	Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament
HALOT	Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
JHS	The Journal of Historical Studies
JPSTC	The JPS Torah Commentary
JSB	The Jewish Study Bible
LBD	The Lexham Bible Dictionary
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	New American Commentary
NBC	New Bible Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary

NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NTCATMRS	A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
SGBC	The Story of God Bible Commentary
TA	A Theological Anthropology
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TLOT	Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Of all the miraculous events recorded in the opening pages of Genesis, the most striking statement is that God created human beings in his "image and likeness."[1] The uniqueness of humanity amongst all the creatures is further reinforced in how God made us to represent Him on earth. God made the plants, sea creatures, flying creatures, and land creatures, each "after his kind" or "after their kind." However, when we come to man, the formula is suddenly and brilliantly altered to read not "after his kind" or "after their kind," but "in our image" (Gen 1:26). Amongst the earthly creatures, only "male and female" are made in the image of God. To emphasize the incredible distinction between man and all other creatures, God approves the killing of animals to provide clothing to cover humankind's nakedness (Gen 3:21). God was pleased with the sacrifice of animals offered to him in worship (Gen 4:4). After the flood, God permitted man the right to eat the animals, but he said that "whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image" (Gen 9:6).

For over two thousand years, an enormous amount of exegetical and theological energy has been spent interpreting Genesis 1–2. Of particular interest has been the creation of humanity in the image and likeness of God, which is a central teaching in Genesis 1:26–27, and therefore, it is fundamental to the rest of the Scripture. In both versions of the Genesis account, the creation of humanity is the apex of God's creation, which raises the fundamental question of the relationship between human beings and God.

The image of God concept varies and reflects different components. But what exactly is the image of God in humanity? The answers and applications to this question are incredibly

[1] Claus Westermann, *Genesis: An Introduction*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 111.

essential to humanity, as they ultimately dictate human happiness, ethical or unethical behavior—and often life and death. As Stanley Grenz so wisely stated, the divine image reveals the essence of who we are and what we are destined to become to humanity.[2] There are different interpretations of what the phrase "image of God" entails. Some scholars, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, believe that the image of God refers to the abstract capacities of the human soul, such as reason, conscience, and free will. This view dominated Christianity up until the last century. Others, such as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, argue that the concept relates to man's unique relationship with God. This interpretation has been influential throughout the twentieth century. Still, others emphasized dominion—a person's accomplishments. In fact, dominion reflects a person's accomplishments at the universal level rather than at the individual level. However, scholars such as John Kilner and Ronald Allen reject the notion that the meaning of the image is expressed by any of the various categories that theologians have employed.[3] Allen prefers not to regard the image of God as being solely represented by any of the traditional views because humanity is a complex being and cannot be looked at through only one set of philosophical lenses. Instead, he believes that the image of God describes man in his whole being (including his body), in his relationship as male and female with God, and as having dominion over God's creation.[4] Anthony Hoekema echoes a similar sentiment that the image of God in man "describes him in the totality of his existence."[5]

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[2] Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001), 11.

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

[4] Ronald B. Allen, *The Majesty of Man: The Dignity of Being Human* (Portland: Multnomah, 1984), 84.

[5] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

Why did the author of Genesis specifically state that male and female together were created in the image of God? Is it because the author thought it was appropriate to mention male and female under the same umbrella or because men and women are complementarily designed to reflect the control and order of God on the earth? The Scripture affirms that God's complementarian design for men and women is biblical. This leads to several pertinent questions—Why is the original creation of male and female different? Does it stand to reason that the method by which God made man first and then the woman meant to communicate something important about their respective identities? Given the significance of the ordering of the creation of man as male and female, we must also consider it significant. While God formed Adam from dust, he intentionally formed the woman from Adam's rib. If God wanted to convey an absolute and unequivocal identity in how man and woman are constituted as human beings in the image of God, he could have created each in the same manner. That is, after fashioning the man from the dust of the ground as His image-bearer (Gen 2:7), God then could have taken more of the same dust to form the woman, who would have also been recognized as His image-bearer in the identically same fashion as the man had come into existence. However, this is not what occurred. Instead, God intentionally took not more dust but Adam's rib as the material from which He fashioned the woman. The theology of this is explicit. As the man himself states in Genesis 2:23, her identity is as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh; she is called woman (*ishshah*) because she was taken out of man (*ish*).[6]

The present inquiry of this dissertation is justified, as it suggests another angle to what the image of God entails. In fact, it attempts to fill a gap. Although there has been a tremendous supply of interpretations, which have all attempted to answer the image of God question, they

[6] Bruce A. Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God." Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, (2002): 83.

have not adequately considered the perspective that traces the wisdom by which God created male and female, as it unfolds in the Wisdom literature. In Proverbs 8:22–31, the author tells us that God used wisdom and intelligence in the design of the universe. In "the beginning, before there was even an earth," God used wisdom when creating something out of nothing. God's Wisdom marks the created world, especially God's creation of man, "rejoicing in his inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men" (Gen 1:31). We hear God's Wisdom "rejoicing" during the creation of the world. The word "rejoicing" translates as (*sakhaq*), which means "laughing" or "playing;" we have a vivid picture that reflects God's joy in his design of humanity.

However, there is something more that needs to be considered in this context. Thus, this dissertation explores the concept of the image of God in humanity as a reflection of "divine order and suitability in design." Suitability in design reflects the image of God; that is who God is—for He is a God of order who designed things in creation to function orderly and properly. Thus, what we see in God's design of creation is compatibility and suitability, which is ultimately a reflection of the image of God. Humanity was meant to glorify God. His creative acts were intentional, orderly, coherent, purposeful, and "very good."

THESIS

The Bible teaches that God created male and female in his own image, which summarizes the excellence of human beings. Scholars and commentators have attempted to identify and articulate the "image of God" concept with various dimensions of human capacity such as spiritual qualities, functional, and corporeal. Therefore, as God's image-bearers, it is incredibly essential to understand what the divine image of God in humanity entails. This dissertation seeks to present another concept, that male and female created in the image of God is a reflection of

divine “order and suitability” within the design of creation as it unfolds in the Wisdom literature. I will now unpack the methodology used in subsequent chapters to demonstrate this thesis.

METHODOLOGY

A key component of this study is to understand what it means to be created in the image of God and how male and female attributes reflect this image on the earth. The first chapter introduces the problem, a proposed thesis to solve the emergent issue, and then defines the methodology. The research will begin with a study of the creation account in Genesis 1–2, which provides the foundational biblical image of humanity. Subsequently, this study will review the creation of humankind (Gen 1:26–31 and Gen 2:18–25), distinguishing humanity from the animal and plant kingdoms. The study will briefly review the previous scholarship on Genesis 1–2 and the Mesopotamian and Egyptian creation accounts. In addition to the tremendous scholarly emphasis during the twentieth century on the possible Mesopotamian background of the creation account, several Egyptologists have also noted potential Egyptian influence on the biblical creation stories.

Chapter two will examine the meaning of the image of God through the lenses of historical and polemical theology. The study will embrace the well-researched analysis of some exceptional treatments offered by Origen and Irenaeus, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Kilner, David Clines, Millard Erickson, Gerald Bray, J. Richard Middleton, Ian McFarland, Karl Barth, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other scholars. Moreover, the survey will show that theologically and exegetically, interpreters and commentators faced difficulty while explicating the image of God in man.

The chapter begins with the Rabbinic interpretation of the image of God. The Rabbinic interpretation of the image of God relied on a historical-grammatical approach to the text and, in

the majority of instances, extra-biblical sources or philosophy were avoided. The rabbis understood the deliberate creation of man as the beginning of God's spiritual work in a material universe. This prompts Rabbi Zlotowitz to observe man's role as a spiritual endeavor.[7] Rabbi Abarbanel also claims that the divine deliberation in man's creation shows that God did not associate humanity with the earth but instead served as "the deepest involvement of Divine Providence and wisdom."[8] The study will explore the views of the early Church Fathers. The image of God has been debated and discussed since the early Church Fathers well into the Middle Ages, throughout the Reformation and carried forth to the present day. As Louis Berkhof states, the early Church Fathers agreed that the image of God in man primarily consisted of man's rational and moral characteristics and focused on his capacity for holiness."[9]

Lastly, in this chapter, the study will also survey the four main modern views of the image of God—relational, substantive, functional, and holistic. Most modern scholars have claimed that the greatest Christian theologians failed to understand the image of God because the image of God in man cannot be solely defined by any one of these views as humanity is a complex being and cannot be examined through only one set of philosophical lenses. As we are created after God, we should not be expected to simply fit into any particular grid to explain humanity or apply such a grid to describe God. The study will embrace the work of Ronald Allen, who shares the sentiment that the image of God in man cannot be solely defined by any single view. However, he believes that the image of God describes man in his whole being (including his body), in his relationship as male and female with God, and as having dominion

[7] Meir Zlotowitz and Nosson Scherman, *Bereishis: Genesis: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources* (New York: Mesorah, 1977), 8.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996).

over God's creation. Allen writes, "the image of God in man is inclusive and descriptive of his entire being. It is the essence of what man is."[10]

Chapter three provides an exegetical and biblical examination of Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1–3, and 9:6 to understand the meanings of the words "image" (*tselem)* and "likeness" (*damut)* in the Hebrew Bible. While many scholars and interpreters have proposed that the words "image" (*tselem)* and "likeness" (*damut)* are the same concepts, this study will further explore how these terms are used throughout the Scripture to determine whether they are different or whether they can be used interchangeably. These inspired interpretations of Old Testament Scripture contribute to the image of God concept. The study will discuss the propositions *be* (in) and *ke* (in), for they shed light on the subject relating to the understanding of the image to the Adamic commission and covenant of Genesis 1:28.

Chapter four analyzes how the New Testament Scriptures present the idea of the image of God, which cannot ignore the example of Jesus Christ, who was reincarnated and became the perfect image of God in human form—truly God and truly human. Jesus shares in our humanity and invites humanity to share in His eternal life. Paul teaches that believers are destined to conform to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Paul also refers to Jesus as the image of God (2 Cor 4:4). The writer of Hebrews uses the exact verbiage, referring to Jesus as "the express image of God" (Heb 1:3). As humans gave visible form to God, so Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15).[11] These inspired interpretations of the Scripture passages will be noted for their contributions to the image of God concept.

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[10] Allen, *The Majesty of Man*, 84.

[11] Michael S. Heiser and ed. John D. Barry et al., *Image of God*, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary (*Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

Chapter five directs our attention to the heart of the dissertation, suggesting another angle to what the image of God entails, a reflection of "divine order and suitability in design." While various interpretations have attempted to answer the image of God question, they have not adequately considered the Wisdom by which God created male and female as it unfolds in Wisdom literature. In Proverbs 8, the author tells us that God's Wisdom marks the created world, especially God's creation of man, "rejoicing in his inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men" (v 31). Thus, it is abundantly clear that God's Wisdom is "rejoicing" at the creation of the world and his design of humanity.

The most penetrating contribution to the theology of creation is found in the epitome of wisdom and its connection with creation. The theology of Wisdom literature enriched the content of the creation narrative found in Genesis. As Gregory Mobley so elegantly writes, creation theology is the foundation of biblical wisdom. God created a world that works, and no one can alter the fundamental nature of the world.[12] When we look at the world today, it does not appear to be created by wisdom; instead, chaos impinges on God's order. Hurricanes, typhoons, tornadoes, earthquakes, poverty, racism, and death are prevalent at the most profound level. Yet, Proverbs 8:22–31, in its reflection of Genesis 1, informs us that the world was not created chaotically. God, through His Wisdom, created an order that he rejoiced in and repeatedly said that it was "good" and "very good." I will embrace the work of David Firth, who so eloquently writes that there is an order and pattern to creation that is known to Wisdom, and, by coming to know Wisdom and heeding her instruction, humans can live in harmony with this order.[13]

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[12] Gregory Mobley, *The Return of the Chaos Monsters: and Other Backstories of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 115.

[13] David G. Firth, *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes* (London SWiP: Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 58.

Understanding that male and female attributes by design reflect God's "order and suitability" encourages one to nurture a tremendous appreciation of human existence. We live in a world where things do not work as God designed them to work. God created male and female in His own image to function in a specific way. Society has devalued the distinctions between male and female to the point where kids are told today that they can choose their gender. Constructionists claim there are no fixed features that define or restrict who we are as sexual beings. They believe that human sexuality is "plastic," which essentially means that individuals are free to "shape" their sexual identities any way they choose. This is absurd, as it goes against the very design of things reflective of God's order. There is a correctness to how God has designed the sexes to be compatible. This research will show that though things got out of order due to the fall of man, male and female were created in the image of God because that image reflects appropriateness and suitability of design in the Creator. The more things are done in the world according to God's indigenous intent, the better we will be as a people.

Chapter six explores the suitability and compatibility of God's design of male and female. This will be accomplished by a close reading of the Song of Songs and the examination of its affiliation to Genesis 1–2 to present a comprehensive framework for understanding male and female as created in the image of God. Song of Songs is another book of Wisdom that informs us that male and female created in the image of God is much more than two genders or two sexes of humanity. Instead, it intentionally suggests that there is something profoundly significant to the suitability and compatibility of male and female, as it reflects something akin to the image of God.

The chapter will also focus on the "suitable union" between man and woman as recorded in Genesis 2:18 and 2:24. The goal of this chapter is to explore the "one-flesh" relationship

between men and women in Genesis 2:24, which comprises God's suitable model for the family. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth asserts that the things that God has created are permanent, complete, and perfect. We cannot add or take away from it (Eccl 3:14). There is always something that could have theoretically been done with human work to improve on it, but not with God's creation. After God created male and female, he declared that it was "very good" (Gen 1:31), thereby affirming the completeness of male and female.

Chapter seven will present the implications for the church today in terms of a Christian theological worldview and societal perspective. What does this mean for the church today in the context of role relationships between men and women in marriage, same-sex marriage, gender identity, homosexuality, and more? The study will reveal that when humans find their proper place in God's design of things, they reflect who God is as the Creator. However, when we are out of alignment, we end up tampering with what God has created as "very good" in his "image and likeness."

Chapter eight will bring all the research together to summarize the findings and implications to facilitate a holistic understanding of Genesis 1:26–27, Genesis 1–3, 5:1–3, and 9:6. The conclusions of this dissertation will help guide the church and the world to a virtuous, "Christlike" character and good works that glorify God and benefit His creation. The findings will be used to re-evaluate the manner in which Genesis portrays an understanding of the meaning of the "image of God." The dissertation will conclude with suggestions for future avenues of research.

The subsequent sections explain the uniqueness of the work of creation, as outlined in Genesis 1–2, through the textual interpretation of relevant scriptures. Human beings can

speculate about the origin of the creation, not having been there to witness it (Job 38:4), but the eternal God spoke from direct knowledge of these events.

The Account of God's Creation

The Bible opens with the book of Genesis, which introduces us to the Creator who created the universe by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. Creation is a phenomenon through which something new and valuable is created. The Genesis creation account is theocentric—it involves God, humans, and nature. The main purpose of Genesis is to glorify God by highlighting the majesty of the created order. Two creation stories are found in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis. The first story is outlined in Genesis 1:1–2:4a, wherein God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. The second story in Genesis 2:4b–25 states that God created Adam, the first man, from dust and placed him in the Garden of Eden, where he was given dominion over all animals. Thereafter, God created Eve as a suitable companion from Adam's rib. Here, we perceive God as the Ruler of all creation—he alone commands and controls the universe.

The authorship of Genesis has been one of the most discussed issues in biblical studies.[14] The author of the creation account of Genesis has long been believed to be Moses, according to the internal evidence of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The prophets believed that the Pentateuch was authored by Moses, who spoke face-to-face with God. According to Allen Ross, most critical scholarship does not accept the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and some scholars do not accept the historicity of Moses or the Exodus. However, doubts about Mosaic authorship are not necessarily recent. Early in the Christian era, theologians wondered whether

[14] Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *Cornerstone biblical commentary: Genesis, Exodus* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008).

the work had been authored by Moses or Ezra. [15] The significant viewpoints and stances taken in the commentary are as follows: it was accepted that certain remarks (for example, Gen 12:6; 36:31) showed that some parts of the book had been added later. The text of Genesis does not claim Moses as its author. From the nineteenth century onwards, critical scholarship minimized the role of Moses in the composition of the Pentateuch. Indeed, the most widely accepted view was that Genesis was composed of three significant sources J (tenth century BC), E (ninth century BC), and P (sixth century BC).[16] Some source critics even argue that it was composed by an unknown Israelite Priest during the Babylonian exile period.

Structure of Genesis Creation Account

Genesis 1:1–2:3 is the royal opening chapter of the Bible for it introduces the two main subjects—God the Creator and man his creature. Furthermore, Genesis 1:1–2:3 presents the primeval and patriarchal histories that constitute the book of Genesis. The creation story comprises two narratives, which are equivalent to the two first chapters of the book of Genesis. Genesis 1:1 through 2:4a employs a repetitive structure of divine fulfillment, with the statement "and there was evening, and there was morning" being reiterated for each of the six days of creation. There is an act of division in each of the first three days—day one divides the darkness from light, on day two, the waters above are divided from the waters below, and on day three, the sea is divided from the land. During each of the next three days, these divisions are populated. On day four, darkness and light are populated with the sun, moon, and stars. On day five, the

[15] Ross and Oswalt, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary,*38.

[16] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*: *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 55.

seas and the skies are inhabited by fish and fowl, and finally, land-based creatures and mankind populate the land.[17]

The Unique Work of Creation

The work of creation marked the "beginning" of the universe (Gen 1:1). In the beginning, "God created the heaven and earth" (1:1). This statement indicates that God made everything in the universe. Here, we have the first use of the verb "created" (*bara)*, which means "to bring into existence, to cause something to be"—this verb is only used with God as the subject, thereby suggesting that act of creation is the activity of God alone. The verb "created" is replaced by the verb "make" in verses 7, 16, 25, and 26. The heavens and the earth comprise the Hebrew way of indicating all that existed. It is an idiom comprising two opposites, akin to the expression "good and evil." In this context, the idiom indicates the universe or everything in the universe, and not just the earth and the sky.[18] The word "Heaven" includes the special dwelling place of God and the angels (Ps 148:1–6; Col 1:16).

The first step in remedying the dark earth was God's command to bring forth light, "Let there be light," and there was light (Gen 1:3). The divine word shatters the primal cosmic silence and signals the birth of a new cosmic order. G. von Rad suggests that this serves as a reminder of what the earth once had been like before the life-giving word of God.[19] With God's first command of the second day, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters," God formed an "expanse" to create a boundary, thereby giving structure to the upper and lower waters (Gen

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[17] Barry L. Bandstra, *Reading the Old Testament: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2008).

[18] William D. Reyburn and Euan McG Fry, *A handbook on Genesis* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 29.

[19] Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 145.

1:6–7). The "expanse" indicates the atmosphere that distinguishes the surface waters of the earth below from the atmospheric waters or clouds above.[20]

On the third day (Gen 1:9–13), God formed dry land along with its vegetation—seed-bearing plants and fruit trees, all of which reproduced "according to its kind." The waters were gathered into reservoirs, called "seas," and the dry land emerged and produced all kinds of vegetation.[21] This creation report is uncomplicated and pure compared with the pagan accounts, wherein the sea was not represented as a god that had to be controlled, and vegetation was not the result of some cyclical, seasonal myth in which the gods ensured annual fertility.[22] God controlled the boundaries of the seas (Job 38:8–11), and God caused everything to grow by his creative decree. We see the phrase "according to its kind" repeated three times in these two verses to describe the connection between the plants and fruit trees God created.

On the fifth day (Gen 1:21–23), God created the great sea creatures and birds "according to their kind." Here, we observe the second use of the verb "created" (*bara)* in the chapter. Rose suggests that the use of this verb stresses that they were the creation of God alone—part of the animal world and not evil spirits or monsters at all.[23] God saw that it was good, and He "blessed them" and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply in their respective domains, each according to their own kind. Moreover, their ability to be fruitful and multiply was given to them only by God Almighty (Gen 1:22). Subsequently, God ensured that all the living creatures could inhabit the earth, each "according to its kind," and He saw that this was good. The phrase

[20] Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 146.

[21] Ross and Oswalt*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, 38.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid, 39.

"according to its/their kind" is repeated ten times in these seven verses. The author clearly emphasized the creation and reproduction of each species "*according to its own kind*."[24]

The creation account in Genesis 1–2 provides the foundational biblical image of humanity. The sixth day climaxes with the creation of animal and human life (Gen 1:24–31). Everything created before this prepared for the final creation of human beings. Although man is the last creature mentioned in the days of creation, he did not evolve from earlier forms, "according to his kind," but was separately formed "in the image and" according to the likeness of *elohim*. God said, "Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." This is the first command that uses the plural pronouns "us" and "our" and the first time God speaks of Himself. Elsewhere, God speaks of Himself using plural pronouns only in Genesis 3:22, 11:7, and Isaiah 6:8. Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the ground, and he was given the breath of life from God. He did not gradually develop his breathing and thinking faculties on his own (see Gen 2:7). In chapter one, the characteristic word for God's activity is *bara*, which means created. In Genesis 2:7, the word used when God created Adam is *yatsar*, which means "to fashion," "to make," "to create," or "to form." This word is generally used in the context of a potter fashioning a pot from clay. God "breathes" (*nāp̄aḥ)*, His own breath, into the clay, and it becomes a living being.[25]

Furthermore, only human life is created in God's image. The term "image" applies equally to male and female, which comprise the human race. The term is used figuratively and does not refer to physical shape or outer appearance. Ross and Oswalt assert that being in the image of God means that humans share, although imperfectly, in the nature of God—that is, they

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[24] Ross and Oswalt*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary,*39.

[25] J. Van Seters, "*The Pentateuch." In McKenzie, Steven L.; Graham, M. Patrick. The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1998), 99.

were given the communicable attributes of intelligence, knowledge, spiritual understanding, creativity, wisdom, love, compassion, holiness, and justice. Thus, humans have the capacity to commune with the living God and one another.[26] We can, therefore, conclude that the juxtaposition of the repeated "according to their kind" with "in the image and likeness of God" suggests that the author draws a sharp distinction between man and other created beings. Also, we can imply that plants and animals were created according to their own kind or type, whereas man was made according to *elohim's image and likeness*. In other words, the author expressed man's similarity to the divine with *tselem* and *damut.* Man is his own category, type, or species, who is defined by being created in the image and likeness of *elohim*. God then "blessed male and female" and empowered them to be fruitful and multiply.[27] This blessing could only come from God, for He alone can give life and make it productive. After completing the creative work, God saw that everything He had made was "very good" (Gen 1:31). The narrative flow of Genesis 1 describes a gradual transformation process of creation from one state to another—from disorder to order —uninhabitable to inhabitable. The creation process illustrates a series of activities that are deemed functional, productive, good, and very good. God created the universe to function appropriately and in a way that does not need to be corrected. He created order out of disorder.

Review of Previous Scholarship on Gen 1–2 Egyptian and Mesopotamian Creation Accounts

During much of the twentieth century, scholarly emphasis has been on the Mesopotamian background of Genesis 1–3, but several Egyptologists have also noted the potential Egyptian influence on the biblical creation stories. A. H. Sayce was amongst the first to suggest a

[26] Ross and Oswalt*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, 39.

[27] Ibid.

connection between the cosmogonies of Hermopolis and Genesis 1, both of which mention the formless deep, the divine breath moving over the waters, the creation of light, and the emergence of the hill or firmament in the midst of the waters.[28] As for the creation of mankind, there are various accounts in Egyptian literature, but a recurring conception is the making of man from clay. This account bears similarities to Genesis 2:7, where man is made with the "dust" of the earth. The Hymn to Khnum depicts the deity at the potter's wheel forming man, and Hekat, the goddess, gives the clay figure the breath of life through its nostrils. The Instruction of Amenemope reads, "Man is clay and straw, and God is his potter." In the Instruction for Merikare, the deity Re made man: "He placed the breath of life in their nostrils. They who have issued from his body are his images." In Egyptian sources, unlike in the Bible, there is little interest in the creation of the woman.[29]

Lastly, J. Hoffmeier has also pointed out several similarities between Genesis 1–2 and Egyptian creation accounts. His observations include the conceptual parallel between Genesis 1:1, the root of which is the "head," and the Egyptian term denoting the time of creation, whose root also means "head," to mark the beginning of the divine creative activity, creation by divine fiat, and the notion in Genesis 1 and Egyptian mythology that the celestial vault was constructed using a metal barrier.[30]

Since the recoveries of the Babylonian creation myth *Enuma Elish* and the flood story *Epic of Gilgamesh* in the nineteenth century, Mesopotamian studies have inordinately influenced scholarship's understanding of Genesis 1–3. The story comprises several elements: *theogony*,

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[28] A. H. Sayce, "The Egyptian Background of Genesis 1," Pages 419–423 in *Studies Presented to F. LL. Griffith* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932).

[29] Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 145.

[30] J. Hoffmeier, "Some Thoughts on Genesis 1&2 and Egyptian Cosmology." *JANES* 15 (1983): 39–49.

explaining the origins of the gods born to the stagnant waters of Apsu and Tiamat; *theomachy*, in which the lesser gods threatened by Apsu kill him, raising the revenge of Tiamat; and *monarchy*, describing the rise of Marduk as the permanent ruler of the gods. Tiamat's murderous intentions against the children born to her are countered in the assembly of the gods by appealing to young Marduk, who volunteered to combat the watery goddess. The idea that the creation's inception involved the primeval waters of Tiamat are shared by Genesis (that is, "deep," *tĕhôm*), and the horizontal differentiation in the cosmic sky and earth is akin to the division of the waters below and above (Gen 1:6–8). The focus of ancient cosmogony is on the generation of the gods and how the present order and cultural institutions came into existence. The Mesopotamian telling was more theogonic (the origins of the gods) than cosmogonic.

Moreover, "creation" is depicted not as the creation of matter but rather as the organization of pre-existent matter into the ordered universe. According to B. W. Andersen, it has been typical of scholarship since H. Gunkel's *Schöfung und Chaos* (1895) to interpret Genesis 1's subjugation of the "deep" and the division of the "waters" as remnants of the battle motif between Marduk and watery Tiamat, which was taken up by the Hebrew author and demythologized.[31] W. G. Lambert states that scholars have come to recognize that the association of Hebrew *tĕhôm* ("deep," 1:2) with Tiamat is superficial, and there is nothing Babylonian about the Genesis account of creation.[32]

The creation of mankind in Mesopotamian myths involves the blood of slain deities and sometimes a mixture of clay material. Enuma Elish elucidates how the deity Kingu, the leader of the Tiamat armies, was slain and, from his blood, mankind was made with the purpose of

[31] B. W. Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (1967; reprint, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

[32] W. G. Lambert, *Genesis 1–11:26* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996).

relieving the lesser gods of their toil. In the Atrahasis Epic, the lesser gods revolted against their duties of canal digging, and the higher gods called upon the mother-goddess, Nintu, to create humanity. Upon Enki's direction, the deity Geshtu-e (or Wê-ila) was slaughtered, and a clay figure was formed from his blood and flesh when mixed with clay. The lesser gods spat upon the clay.[33] In Genesis 2:7, the first man is made of "dust" and endued with life by the divine inbreathing. But there the analogy ends, for humanity is not created to meet the needs of the deities, but God's actions serve the needs of the man and woman, as it provided the idyllic Eden to them.[34]

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the creation account in Genesis 1–2, which provides the foundation for the Pentateuch and the rest of Scripture. The study examined the creation story of humanity, distinguishing humankind from animal and plant kingdoms. In all of God's amazing acts of creation, He speaks life into existence, but the creation of humans was significantly different. It was profound, intuitive, relational, and intimate. God, the divine artist, reaches His infinite hands into the raw material of creation and lovingly shapes His masterpiece—the pinnacle of creation. Humanity is priceless; man created in God's image and animated by his own breath reflects "order and suitability" in design.

To review, we see compatibility and suitability in the creation account of all living creatures. God's Wisdom and design are perceived in human beings and across the spectrum of species—from the glowing birds in the air to the fish in the sea. God's Wisdom filled the entire universe with thousands of creatures of different kinds, each designed to live in its particular

[33] W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atraḫasîs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 59; also W. Moran, "The Creation of Man in Atrahasis I 192–248," *BASOR* 200 (1970): 48–56.

[34] Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 94.

habitat. Amongst the winged creatures, there is great diversity—an ostrich is different from a hummingbird, and a peacock is larger and more beautiful than a sparrow. A spider builds a web without any human help. The spider web is characterized by a highly organized geometry that optimizes its function. This is another example of the Creator's Wisdom. We also see God's design in the plants. When we look at the great variety of foods that grow on plants, we see that God did not limit us but created many different things for us to enjoy. For example, the sweetness of mango and pineapple, the juiciness of grapes and orange, and many more. Also, different kinds of wood derived from trees are used to build homes and corporate buildings. The beautiful flowers that bring joy to our hearts and fill our homes with fragrances of all kinds are also a part of God's beatific creation. This unique work of creation affirms a God of order, not of disorder. Essentially, God's order provides the appropriate paradigm for human "order and suitability." We are creatures of an orderly God, and we reflect an orderly God who created us. When humans function according to God's intended "order and suitability," God's glory is spread throughout creation. This involves adherence to his commandments and resistance from sin, procreation, political justice, respect, and protection, and not the privilege of abusing or destroying God's creation.

In the context of the Genesis creation story discourse, the study reviewed previous scholarship on Genesis 1–2 and the Mesopotamian and Egyptian creation accounts, which strongly correlate with the Hebrew creation stories. Without analyzing Egyptian and Mesopotamian creation accounts, scholars have noted that it would be difficult to discuss the Genesis creation stories in the diaspora, as they provide a foundational understanding of the Genesis creation.

Now that we have examined the unique work of creation, we turn to chapter two. The purpose of the next chapter is to acquaint the reader with a summary of the historical interpretations of the image of God. It provides a crucial foundation for the development of this dissertation. There has been a well-known history of reflection on the image of God. Over the span of the recent years, the intensity of such reflections has increased tremendously with a steady flow of published books, monographs, journals, and articles. In Chapter 2, the following viewpoints will be considered: Rabbinic, the Early Church Fathers, Medieval, and Reformation Scholars, and the four main modern interpretations, namely substantive, relational, functional, and holistic.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL AND POLEMICAL THEOLOGY OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

The previous chapter examined the uniqueness of the work of creation in Genesis 1–2. When God created heaven and earth, He brought perfect order out of what was "without form and void." God worked in a wise and orderly fashion to prepare a proper environment that He structured and populated with living creatures. The wisdom of God appears in the diversity of the creation of animals, each made according to its kind, and the creation of the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind. Here, we see compatibility and suitability in God's design of things, which reflects a God of order, not of disorder. Unfortunately, because of human disobedience against God, disorder (evil, pain, and sin) was introduced into creation, which still persists throughout the world today. The serpent's motive in Genesis 3 was to bring disorder to God's creation by inciting Adam and Eve to disobey God. Understanding that male and female by design reflect God's "order and suitability" encourages one to nurture a tremendous appreciation for human existence.

This chapter provides a historical overview of the interpretation of the image of God in Genesis 1:26–27. For the past two millennia, theologians and scholars have struggled to find a consensus and satisfactory understanding of what it means for male and female to be created in the image and likeness of God. The lack of agreement can be significantly attributed to the fact that the Scripture declares it but does not explicitly explain what it means to be created in the image of God. Man is not God but rather an image of God. Hence, we expect the image of God to be comparable in a finite way to the infinite power, authority, and wisdom that God manifested while creating the Universe. Genesis does not tell us that God gave or imparted his image to man, but the author explicitly states that "God made man in his image." Therefore, we

can plausibly infer that in man's original state, aspects of his nature and condition reflect God's divine nature and actions.

According to Gregory of Nyssa, a mystery is wrapped around the words "image of God." How is the incorporeal likened to the body? How is the temporal akin to the eternal? Gregory concludes that only God Himself knows the true answer to these questions. Therefore, we must all approach this subject with great humility.[35] As Walter Vogels states, the voluminous attention given to the concept and meaning of the image of God seems disproportionate, considering that it is not a central theme of the Scripture.[36] Nevertheless, many scholars have attempted to document the varying historical perspectives on the subject. For example, several Old Testament scholars have produced an equivalent number of pages discussing the origin of the image of God concept.[37] Several prominent views, such as that of Hermann Gunkel, Paul Humbert, and Ludwig Köhler, have offered variations of a physical interpretation of the image of God. Moreover, Ancient Near East texts have been drawn upon for insights into the concept; however, scholarship remains divided on the successes of this approach.[38]

Throughout the church's history, tremendous efforts have been made to identify and articulate the content pertaining to the image of God. Although theological speculation on this topic did not begin with Irenaeus of Lyons, his treatment of Genesis 1:26–27 has become the standard starting point for historical accounts of the interpretation of the image and likeness of

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[35] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* (New York: Aeterna Press, 2016), 16.

[36] Walter Vogels, "The Human Person in the Image of God (Gn 1,26)," *Science et Esprit* 46, no. 2 (1994), 189.

[37] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

[38] Theodorus C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958).

God in Christian theology.[39] Following Irenaeus, several church fathers made essential contributions, such as Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine of Hippo.[40] The medieval consensus was that the *imago Dei* corresponds to human rationality or freedom; however, this viewpoint is almost universally rejected today.[41] Martin Luther and John Calvin moved to distinctly relational models, stating that it is humanity's particular relationship to God that established its original righteousness (Luther) or its ways of reflecting God's glory (Calvin). Protestant scholastics, on the other hand, hold the view that the image of God is intrinsically located in an aspect of humanity's spiritual capacities.[42] Karl Barth and Emil Brunner reintroduced relational models of the image of God but in a different way than the Reformers. To date, Brunner's has been the most clearly articulated relational model, and it continues to be influential.[43] Now that an overview of the landscape has been described, we will now discuss the perspectives of the rabbinic teaching on the image of God.

The Rabbinic Teaching on the Image of God

The rabbinic interpretation of the image of God and the entirety of the Scripture is methodical and meticulous; therefore, it is natural for the subjects to be treated with much care. The rabbis understood the deliberate creation of man as the beginning of God's spiritual work in

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[39] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies. Vol. 1* of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ed. Philip Schaff. 10 vols; United States: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888. Reprint, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994).

[40] Athanasius, *contra Gentes—de Incarnatione* (ed. and trans. Robert Thomson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1971); Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* (NPNF2 5:387–427); Augustine, *The Trinity (De Trinitate)* (trans. Edmund Hill; WSA; Hyde Park, N.Y. New City, 1991).

[41] Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (trans. David G. Preston; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984), 79–94.

[42] David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, vol. 2 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 895.

[43] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics (*ed. Thomas Forsyth Torrance; trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley; Vol. III/1; London: New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2004).

a material universe. Rabbi Zlotowitz, elaborating on the rabbinic thought on this matter, observed man's role as a spiritual endeavor:

> Thus, God satisfied the motive of creation: He would be able to confer good upon man . . . . Man could attain it only by elevating the spiritual in himself and by uniting it with the spiritual in creation . . . . By uniting his intellect with that of God through the study of Torah and by perfecting his deeds through the performance of the commandments, man earns the degree of perfection that it is possible for him to attain, and the degree of reward that God seeks to give.[44]

Rabbi Abarbanel claimed that the divine deliberation on man's creation was evidence that God did not associate humanity with the earth but instead served as "the deepest involvement of Divine Providence and wisdom."[45] The Rabbis noted that, in reference to the beasts, God commanded, "Let the earth bring forth;" however, in the case of man, God said, "Let us make man," thereby clearly distinguishing man's spirituality. Ramban called נַעֲשֶׂה a special utterance in which the earth produced "the body [of man] from its elements as it did with cattle and beasts . . . and He, blessed be He, to give the spirit from His mouth."[46] Rabbi Kimhi (Radak) related Adam's name to אֲדָמָה to highlight his constitution, now endowed with a spiritual element. He wrote that when God created man from the upper and lower elements, He called him Adam as if to say, even though his spirit was from the heavens, he was nevertheless *adam*, for his body was formed from the *adamah*.[47] R. Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv) suggested that Adam's name was derived from דמה as in Isaiah 14:14, "I will make myself like the Most High." He noted, "Because man is in the likeness of God."[48] The rabbinic emphasis on man's creation is directly

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[44] Meir Zlotowitz and Nosson Scherman, *Bereishis = Genesis: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources* (New York: Mesorah, 1977), 8.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Charles B. Chavel, trans., *Ramban (Nachmanides): Commentary on The Torah: (Bereshis) Genesis* (New York: Shilo, 1971), 52.

[47] Zlotowitz and Scherman, *Bereishis = Genesis*, 69.

[48] Ibid.

linked to the fact that man was created in God's image. Rabbi Abarbanel associated צֶלֶם with the word צֵל to illustrate how man is related to his Creator. He wrote that man must follow God's every way, "as a shadow which faithfully follows the movements of its illuminated form,"[49] Zlotowitz understood Genesis 1:27 as strictly spiritual action. The use of the word 'created' regarding man refers not to his physical formation but instead to man's creation—from nothingness —as a being endowed, in God's 'image, with reason and intellect. He was the first such creature in the Universe. And similarly, wherever else the verb appears, it is to be so interpreted.[50]

Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman (the Vilna Gaon) significantly contributed to this discussion. He explained that the word "image" refers to spiritual image and content, and therefore, "Man was also granted a degree of divine holiness so that he might properly serve God." He also explained that the phrase "in his image" refers to "an image commensurate with his lofty soul."[51] In his commentary on the adjoining prepositional phrase "after our likeness" (Gen 1:26), R. Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi) associated כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ with the ability "to understand and to gain wisdom."[52] He noted that man was made "with a stamp like a coin" while simultaneously observing that all men are physically different, unlike a coin.[53] Rashi made an obvious inference to a spiritual interpretation of the image of God. Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv added that reason alone makes man an image-bearer, "Man's God-like uniqueness lies in his

[49] Zlotowitz and Scherman, *Bereishis = Genesis*, 69.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Rabbi Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg et al., eds., *Sapirstein Edition Rashi: The Torah with Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated and Elucidated* (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 1999), 1:16.

[53] Ibid.

willingness always to utilize his intellect as the basis of his decisions."[54] Ramban concluded that both צֶלֶם and דְּמוּת speak to man's similarity to both his physical and spiritual origins, but the reason behind the spiritual similarity can be attributed to the נֶפֶשׁ being immortal.[55] Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam) elaborated further and included the human volition:

> Man alone among the living creatures is endowed — like his Creator — with moral freedom and will. He is capable of knowing and loving God and of holding spiritual communion with Him, and man alone can guide his actions in accordance with reason. He is therefore said to have been made in the form and likeness of the Almighty.[56]

We can conclude that the Rabbis understood the image of God as the spiritual qualities of humanity in male and female alike. Zlotowitz summarized the rabbinic position best by affirming that the phrase "created in the image of God" describes man's spiritual resemblance to God.[57] The following section will explore the early church fathers' conclusion on the image of God.

The Early Church Fathers and the Image of God

The early church fathers overwhelmingly connected the image of God to spiritual interpretation as opposed to physical, with very few exceptions. Louis Berkhof suggested, "The early church fathers agreed that the image of God in man consisted primarily in man's rational and moral characteristics, and in his capacity for holiness."[58] Frederick McLeod disagrees with the idea of attributing a spiritual interpretation of the *imago Dei*. He argues that the whole

[54] Herczeg et al., *Sapirstein Edition Rashi,* 1:16.

[55] Chavel, *Ramban (Nachmanides)*, 53.

[56] Zlotowitz and Scherman, *Bereishis = Genesis*, 70.

[57] Ibid, 73.

[58] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 202.

composite of soul and body is what constitutes a person, resulting in man as the image of God, not in a bodily or spiritual sense, but only in relation to his ability to rule.[59]

According to Robert Culver, the traditional Roman Catholic doctrine states that man's power of reason and free will constitute the remnant of the image of God. He points out that, by applying this process of reasoning, man has the ability to know about God and himself.[60] Culver's view is reiterated in the teachings of the early Church Fathers, Origen and Irenaeus.[61] This section presents the concept of the image of God in man proposed by the four most outstanding early fathers, namely Ireneaus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian.

Irenaeus

Irenæus was the first voice to significantly contribute to biblical anthropology in his polemic against gnostic heretics and elaborate on how the image of God was lost during the fall and restored through salvation. In his defense of Christ's humanity, he explained that it was the incarnate Christ that would restore the image that Adam lost:

> For I have shown that the Son of God did not then begin to exist, being with the Father from the beginning; but when He became incarnate and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus.[62]

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[59] Frederick G. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington, DC: Catholic University, 1999), 82–235.

[60] Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publication, 2005), 254.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Irenæus of Lyons, "Against Heresies," in *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 1:446.

It seems that Irenæus understood God's image as being connected to the spiritual, particularly its restoration through the work of salvation. And yet some of his statements could be interpreted as ascribing the image to the physical. In the same treatise, he wrote:

> Now the soul and the spirit are certainly a *part* of the man, but certainly not *the* man; for the perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God.[63]

In his attempt to explain how the image was lost by sin, Irenæus ascribed the image to what remains of the original creation, the earthly part, and argued that without the restoration of the likeness through God's Spirit, man would continue to be imperfect.[64] He rationalized that, by "receiving the Word of God as graft,"[65] a person would participate in works of righteousness—those actions that pertain to a spiritual man—and "arrive at the pristine nature of man—that was created after the image and likeness of God."[66]

Clement of Alexandria

Clement of Alexandria was almost a contemporary of Iranaeus. His theology was developed at the end of the second century. Clement considers the image and likeness as the universal endowment of humanity. He also seemed to emphasize the fruit of the Spirit as evidence of God's image in man. On more than one occasion, Clement argued in favor of the restoration of the image of God by learning and expanding the knowledge of God through Christ Jesus. He reasoned that God's image could not be a physical representation because God is

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[63] Irenæus of Lyons, "Against Heresies," 531.

[64] Irenæus explained, "But if the Spirit be wanting to the soul, he who is such is indeed of an animal nature, and being left carnal, shall be an imperfect being, possessing indeed the image [of God] in his formation (in plasmate), but not receiving the similitude through the Spirit; and thus, is this being imperfect," Irenæus of Lyons, "Against Heresies," 532.

[65] Irenæus of Lyons, "Against Heresies," 536.

[66] Ibid.

immortal.[67] Clement led the next generation of church fathers to continue to perceive image bearing as being connected to the spiritual realm instead of the physical.

Tertullian

Tertullian, a prominent theologian of the era, significantly contributed to the development of biblical anthropology. Regarding the image of God in man, Tertullian—when discussing Bethesda's healing—asserted that humanity retained the image of God after sinning, and it could only be restored to the likeness of God through the renewing activity of the Holy Spirit. He wrote:

> An accession of efficacy was granted to the waters and to the angel. They who were wont to remedy bodily defects, now heal the spirit . . . . The guilt being removed too. Thus man will be restored for God to His 'likeness,' who in days bygone had been conformed to 'the image' of God; for he receives again that Spirit of God which he had then first received from His afflatus but had afterward lost through sin."[68]

Tertullian also connected the image of God to the spiritual, but his viewpoints deviated from those before him by advocating that the image is best understood through human volition:

> Therefore it was proper that (he who is) the image and likeness of God should be formed with a free will and a mastery of himself; so that this very thing—namely, freedom of will and self-command—might be reckoned as the image and likeness of God in him.[69]

Tertullian did not simply isolate the image of God in man's free will as an aspect of his nature but held the view that God constituted man as a free person: "the very essence of the

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[67] Clement of Alexandria, "The Stromata, or Miscellanies," in *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 2:370.

[68] J. L. North, *Early Christian Thinkers: The Lives and Legacies of Twelve Key Figures* (ed. Paul Foster; Downers Grove, IL: InterVanity Press, 2010).

[69] Tertullian, "The Five Books against Marcion," in *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Peter Holmes (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 3:301–2.

spiritual aspect of man is "freedom and power of his will."[70] He concluded that volition is what makes a man spiritual, which in turn, comprises the expression of God's image.

Augustine

Augustine significantly advanced the understanding of image-bearing as spiritual by insisting that the immortal image of God can only be found in the immortal aspect of man—his soul. In his treatise On the Trinity, Augustine rejects any connection between God's image and the human body because God lacks a physical body.[71] Augustine perceived God's image in man as an endowment of God. He writes, "When God made man according to His own image, He gave him a soul so endowed with reason and intelligence that it ranks man higher than all the other creatures of the earth because they lack intelligence." He believed that the image must be defined as the power to remember God, understand and love Him, and be a partaker of Him. Augustine perceived that the image of God is a property of the interior man, which comprises the mind and not the body.[72]

Augustine also believes that before the fall of man, Adam and Eve's will was free from the infection of sin. However, as a result of sin through their disobedience, all of the progeny of the human race has "inherited a crippled, distorted, bent will."[73] Augustine's ongoing controversy with Pelagius centered on the constitution of the human will; specifically, what was left of the will following the fall of man? Pelagius believes that humanity possesses the pre-fall ability of Adam and Eve to make the right decisions, giving humans a choice between right and

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[70] Tertullian, "The Five Books against Marcion," 3:301–2

[71] Augustine of Hippo, "The City of God," in *NPNF*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Marcus Dods (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1887), 1:241.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 137.

wrong without the taint of the Original Sin.[74] According to Pelagianism thinking, it was not the inherent sin of Adam and Eve that posed a threat to mankind—it was their poor example.[75] Pelagius believes that the human will is untouched by the Original Sin and is wholly and completely intact despite the fall of man. The controversy between Pelagius and Augustine is centered on this argument.

Moreover, Augustine's ideology of the Original Sin and its impact on humanity revealed much of what he believed about the image of God in man, specifically concerning God's Grace. Mainly, he views man's need for God's intervention as "inherited disease and inherited guilt."[76] Augustine also believes that when Adam sinned, humanity sinned with him. This view bases its understanding of the Original Sin upon the principle of Adam's "seminal relationship" with the rest of mankind.[77] As a result, he concluded that while mankind exists with the inherited infection of Original Sin, the image of God continues to be characterized by a distorted or skewed nature.[78] However, through God's sovereign act of Grace through Jesus Christ, mankind can be healed from the slavery of sin. Until the time divine intervention occurs, mankind will continue to exercise their will in a distorted manner.[79] The subsequent section will examine the medieval and reformation viewpoints on the image of God.

[74] Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 136.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

Medieval and Reformation Scholars on the Image of God

Medieval and Reformation scholars enlarged upon Irenaeus' distinction between the image and likeness to create a distinctive anthropology. Although they still conceived the image as man's natural powers of reason and freedom of will, the likeness became slightly more nuanced.

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas is regarded as one of the great philosophical theologians of the church. They advanced Augustine's conclusions that the image of God was found in the rational soul and not in any of man's physical attributes. In the landmark work, *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas argued:

> Man is said to be after the image of God, not as regards his body, but as regards that whereby he excels other animals. Hence, when it is said, "Let us make man to our image and likeness," it is added, "And let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea" (Gen. 1:26). Now man excels all animals by his reason and intelligence; hence it is according to his intelligence and reason, which are incorporeal, that man is said to be according to the image of God.[80]

Aquinas believes that the image of God was impressed on man's soul like a coin, thereby providing man and God a point of contact, even if the image is foreign to man's nature.[81] This point of contact is what permits a man to know God or possess a nature that enables humans to turn to God."[82] For sinners, the image is damaged, and for believers, the image is restored to its original condition through grace. Aquinas notes that, as man is said to be the image of God

[80] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province; Clairmont, CA: Cayote Canyon, 1265), I.3.1.

[81] Ibid, I.93.8.

[82] Ibid.

because of his intellectual nature, he is ideally like God according to his philosophical nature.[83] As one of the most prominent voices during the medieval age, Aquinas' view of the image of God establishes Augustine's influence on church dogma and affirms the substantive interpretation throughout the period.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther, a reformed theologian, contends that the image of God did not pertain to rationality and free will but man's original righteousness—perfect knowledge of God, belief in his goodness and faithfulness, no fear of death or any danger, and contentment with God's favor. Luther also broke away from the Medieval consensus that the image was unaffected by the Fall. He points out that even though human nature before the fall "remained perfect and uncorrupted by sin," the image of God was far different—a man was created for a life that was far more excellent than the physical.[84] Luther rejected Augustinian speculations pertaining to the image as reflecting the Trinity. He wisely cautions against natural qualities, which are interpreted as the image, thereby stating that even those possessed by the soul are corrupted by sin:

> I fear, however, that since this "image of God" has been lost by sin, we can never fully attain to the knowledge of what it was. Memory, mind, and will we do most certainly possess, but wholly corrupted, most miserably weakened; nay, that I may speak with greater plainness, utterly leprous and unclean. If these natural endowments, therefore, constitute the image of God, it will inevitably follow that Satan also was created in the image of God, for he possesses all these natural qualities and to an extent and strength far beyond our own.[85]

Although Luther believed the image was "marred and obscured" by the Fall, he argued that Adam possessed it as a spiritual quality, "Adam possessed it in its moral substance or nature;

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[83] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.93.8.

[84] Martin Luther, *Commentary on Genesis*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker (trans. Henry Colesc; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 1:108.

[85] Ibid, 115.

that he not only knew God and believed him to be good, but he lived a truly divine life."[86] Luther believed that the gospel would restore God's image and once again restore a spiritual quality to mankind:

> Now the very intent of the gospel is to restore this image of God. Man's intellect and will have indeed remained but wholly corrupted. The divine object of the gospel is that we might be restored to that original and indeed better and higher image; an image, in which we are born again unto eternal life, or rather unto the hope of eternal life by faith, in order that we might live in God and with God and might be "one" with him . . . . That is, he shall be a spiritual man, in which state he shall return to the image of God; for he shall be like unto God in life, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, etc.[87]

John Calvin

John Calvin understood the image to consist of original righteousness. Like Irenaeus and Aquinas, he believed the image was internal and resided in the soul. Calvin and Luther also believed that the image involved human mentality and morality. Calvin based his conclusion on the idea that the image could only be explained in any detail by the New Testament. He refers to texts such as Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 and concludes that the description of the present restoration of the image in believers is synonymous with man's original state, which was characterized by knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.[88]

Calvin also believed that the image of God was in the soul, "For though the divine glory is displayed in man's outward appearance, it cannot be doubted that the proper seat of the image is in the "faculties of the soul."[89] According to Grenz, "for Calvin, the *imago Dei* does not lie

[86] Luther, *Commentary on Genesis*, 116.

[87] Ibid, 118–20.

[88] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. Henry Beveridge; West Roxbury, MA: B & R Samizdat, 2015).

[89] Ibid.

primarily in possession of the powers of reason and will but in their proper ordering and right functioning so that the human person mirrors God."[90]

Calvin specifically distinguished the terms צֶלֶם and דְּמוּת and rightly concluded that the terms do not stand for two different things but instead indicate that man is an image that is like God:

> Hence there is an obvious absurdity in those who indulge in philosophical speculation as to these names, placing the Zelem, that is the image, in the substance of the soul, and the Demuth, that is the likeness, in its qualities, and so forth. God having determined to create man in his own image, to remove the obscurity, which was in this terms adds, by way of explanation, in his likeness, as if he had said, that he would make man, in whom he would, as it were, image himself by means of the marks of resemblance impressed upon him.[91]

In his debate with Andreas Osiander, a contemporary Lutheran theologian who argued in favor of the idea of God's image encompassing the whole Adam, Calvin again rejected any connection between the physical body and image-bearing. While acknowledging that man's body and soul comprise a whole, Calvin surmised, "there is no absurdity in holding that he is called the image of God in respect of the soul."[92] This understanding of the text also led him to reject the functional interpretation of the image, which is based in part on the image encompassing the physical:

> Nor is there probability in the opinion of those who place likeness to God in the dominion bestowed upon man, as if he only resembled God in this, that he is appointed Lord and master of all things. The likeness must be within, in himself. It must be something which is not external to him but is properly the internal good of the soul.[93]

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[90] Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 11.

[91] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.4.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

Consistent with Luther's viewpoint and relying on Augustine's perspective, Calvin concluded that the image was corrupted by sin. He defines the original image as Adam's ability to be "united with God" in the "true and highest perfection of dignity," which would be impossible for Adam if he "were not like to him."[94] The image of God was not completely lost due to the fall of man, but it was severely damaged to the point of utter deformity. He expounds this idea further by stating that even though the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed in him, it was corrupted to such a great extent that anything that remains is a fearful deformity."[95] How did Calvin define such a deformity? He argued that man lost the spiritual qualities of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness according to Paul's teachings in Colossians 3:19 and Ephesians 4:24, "after Paul, I make the image of God to consist in righteousness and true holiness."[96] However, those spiritual qualities mentioned must be renewed when we come to salvation in Christ: "We now see how Christ is the most perfect image of God, into which we are so renewed as to bear the image of God in knowledge, purity, righteousness, and true holiness."[97] Calvin concludes that the more man resembles God spiritually, the more he is the image of God:

> Therefore, as the image of God constitutes the entire excellence of human nature, as it shone in Adam before his Fall, but was afterwards vitiated and almost destroyed, nothing remaining but a ruin, confused, mutilated, and tainted with impurity, so it is now partly seen in the elect, in so far as they are regenerated by the Spirit. Its full lustre, however, will be displayed in heaven. But in order to know the particular properties in which it consists, it will be proper to treat the faculties of the soul.[98]

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[94] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.4.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.

In sum, the survey has shown scholars, from the rabbis to the early church fathers until the medieval era, wrestling with biblical words and phrases to derive the precise sense of the meaning of the image of God. In the following sections, it is essential to perform a synthesis of the various modern interpretations to demonstrate an understanding that encapsulates the four main approaches: structural, relational, functional, and holistic. These interpretations have their limitations, as they do not satisfy all inquiries.

Modern Interpretations

This section will evaluate substantive, relational, functional, and holistic interpretations of the *imago Dei*. The image of God in man is traditionally conceived from these four significant interpretations, wherein each captures some aspect of human nature. Noreen Herzfeld provides a helpful summary: (1) the substantive interpretations, which view the image as an individually held property that is a part of our nature, most often associated with reason; (2) relational interpretation, in which God's image in humanity is found within the relationships we establish and maintain; (3) the functional interpretation, in which the image of God is perceived in action, precisely our exercise of dominion over the earth[99], and (4) and the holistic interpretation, which states that the image of God in man describes Him in the totality of His existence.[100] Since the last half-century, the physical, which forms part of the substantive and functional interpretation of the image of God, has dominated Old Testament scholarship. We now turn to the substantive interpretation of the image of God in man.

The Substantive Interpretation

[99] Noreen Herzfeld, "Creating in our own Image: Artificial Intelligence and The Image of God." *Zygon* 37, no. 2 (June 2002): 303–316.

[100] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 66.

The substantive interpretation is one of the oldest efforts to understand and categorize the image of God in man. Traces of this view are found as early as in Irenaeus' works and modern theological treatises.[101] Substantive proponents believe that the image of God in man must relate to some way(s) in which humans are akin to God but unlike other created animals. As humans and other animals are all created beings, those aspects we share in common with animals cannot constitute what distinguishes us from them. As we are made in the image of God, there has to be some resemblance to God that He imparted to humans and is not shared by the animals. Therefore, there must be some aspect(s) of the structure or substance of our human nature that shows that we are created in the image of God.

While this view is historically dominant, it holds the weakest scriptural support and foundation. According to Millard Erickson, "The common element in several varieties of this view is that the image is identified as some definite characteristic or quality within the makeup of the human.".[102] Gregory Boyd claims that this view is supported by many theological giants such as St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and John Calvin. They believe that the substantive view reveals the locus of the image of God in man as the human soul.[103] John Hammett notes that the focal point of the substantive view is the capacity of humanity to share a relationship with God, incorporating other capacities that contribute to the image of God, such as emotion, will, reason, and conscience.[104] The ability to reason reinforces much of the substantive view. As Erickson

[101] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 520.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 76.

[104] John S. Hammett, "Human Nature" in A Theology for the Church (ed. Daniel L. Akin; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 387.

notes, human beings are known as "homo sapiens" or the "thinking being."[105] Boyd's systematic framework of the substantive view reinforces the idea that, as humans possess a soul, the capacity for moral goodness exists in humans. In this context, a comparison is drawn with animals that live and act instinctively. God called mankind to pursue holiness, hate evil, and choose to do good (2 Chr 7:14; 2 Tim 2:19–22).[106] The possession of a "sense of the divine" (Ps 19:1–4; Rom 1:19–20) and the capacity to love (Lev 19:18; Deut 6:5; Matt 22:36–40) are other critical attributes of the human soul.[107]

Louis Berkhof argues that the image of God includes specific attributes that are uniquely human, such as intellectual power, natural affections, and moral freedom.[108] Other scholars who support the substantive view argue that the image of God is universally given to all humans, and no one has more of it than others. Hence, even non-Christians are still fully human, just as the devoted followers of Jesus Christ are considered to be intrinsically human. As an image-bearer, all humans are endowed with the ability to reason, distinguish between available alternatives, recognize the truth, and make intelligent choices based on the sound judgment of facts. Erickson adds that this view of the image of God in man admits the possibility of rational or natural theology, even without the aid of the Scriptures. He continues by saying that such a view holds that humans can gain some true knowledge of God and, as such, are ethical beings and capable of doing some good works apart from grace.[109] While this interpretation has been supported by some of the greatest theological minds in western church history, it is certainly not sufficient.

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[105] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 521.

[106] Boyd and Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*, 76.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology,* 202.

[109] Erickson, *Christian Theology, 521*.

We, therefore, now turn to the second interpretive method for defining the divine image of God in terms of the relational interpretation.

The Relational Interpretation

Many modem theologians conceive the image of God as something that is significantly more dynamic than historical definitions have allowed in the past. The relational interpretation of the image of God in man disagrees with the idea that the image is something that is resident or inherent within human nature. Instead, it is how humans establish, experience, and maintain relationships. Karl Barth and Emil Brunner are the foremost influential voices in developing a neo-orthodox definition of the *imago Dei.* While there may be considerable differences between these writers, their commonality lies in their basic understanding that the image of God is, at its most basic level, an experience.[110] Erickson summarizes Barth's view, "The image of God is not to be understood in terms of any structural qualities within humans; it is not something a human is or possesses. Instead, the image is a matter of one's relationship with God; it is a human experience. Thus, it is dynamic rather than static."[111]

Brunner states, "We would do well to understand 'image' in the sense of reflection"—a reflection of God's glory "as a mirror" (cf. 2 Cor 3:18). Brunner wrote, "Man's meaning and his intrinsic worth does not reside in himself, but in the One who stands 'against' him, in Christ, the Primal Image, in the Word of God."[112] Brunner explained that man's creation in the image of God entails that God created us as rational beings who share a love relationship with Him,

[110] Erickson, *Christian Theology, 521*.

[111] Ibid, 464–65.

[112] Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (trans. Olive Wyon; London: RTS-Lutterworth Press, 1939), 96.

thereby summoning us to respond to God's "Thou art mine" with a profound answer—"Yes, I am Thine."[113] Joel Beeke disagrees with Brunner's view; he explains that if the image of God consists of nothing more than a reflection in a mirror, as Brunner suggested, then when the mirror turns away, the image disappears. Therefore, the image of God must be more than a relationship.[114]

For Brunner, the image of God is rooted in God's purpose when creating humanity. God does not desire automation or a response like the animals from humans. He intentionally created man free so that man could freely love Him in return.[115] Brunner explained this concept by stating, "Hence the heart of the creaturely existence of man is freedom, selfhood, to be an "I," a person. Only an "I" can answer a "thou," only a Self which is self-determining can freely answer God." Barth removes any potential element of man being capable of choosing God—because man was entirely incapable of choosing righteousness apart from a work of God. Thus, according to Brunner, man was created with the freedom to choose so that he could freely love.[116] Furthermore, Brunner distinguishes between two senses of the image of God—the formal and the material. The formal image is what makes a person human and distinguishes humans from animals.[117]

Johan Buitendag states that the material aspect of the *imago Dei* was completely lost at the time of the Fall, "making human beings 'anti-personal persons', who are without

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[113] Ibid, 98, 103.

[114] Joel R. Beeke and Paul M. Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 2: Man and Chris* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2020), 238.

[115] Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption (*trans. Olive Wyon; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 55.

[116] Ibid, 56.

[117] Ibid.

justification." While the material image can be present or absent, the formal image is always present.[118] Barth held comments on the unity between God and humans, akin to the unity between mother and fetus; however, this view underwent several changes as Barth's theology evolved. In the final analysis, Barth believed unity was lost since the Fall. However, just as there is a necessary and eternal relationship between the members of the Trinity, humans also need to establish and maintain relationships—human-to-human and human-to-God.[119] Grenz also perceives the image of God in man as being expressed in his relationships rather than as a structural gift. He argues, "The divine image is a shared, corporate reality. It is fully present only in the community."[120]

Alan Torrance supports the relational view of the image of God but rejects the substantive and functional arguments. He states, "What has characterized theological anthropology in recent years . . . . has been the shared conviction that anthropology must begin not with the individual defined in terms of individual capacities, capabilities, or attributes but in terms of that communion and relationality constitutive of the triune God."[121] Ron Highfield perceives the image of God in man as reflecting the relationship between members of the Trinity. He argues, "God's very being is relational, for God is Father, Son, and Spirit." We must reflect the image of God to the extent that we maintain relationships with God and our fellow human beings.[122] Another supporter of the relational view is Nicola Greegan, who concludes, "There is

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[118] Johan Buitendag, "Nature as Creation From an Eco-Hermeneutical Perspective: From a 'Natural Theology' to a 'Theology of Nature." HTS: Theological Studies 65, no 1 (2009).

[119] Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* 183.

[120] Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God (*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

[121] Alan J. Torrance, "What is a Person," in *From Cells to Souls - and Beyond: Changing Perspectives on Human Nature (*ed. M. Jeeves Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

[122] Ron Highfield, "Beyond the "Image of God" Conundrum: A Relational View of Human Dignity." *Christian Studies* no 24 (January 1, 2010): 21–32.

no assumed faculty or characteristic like intelligence that is thought to "house" the relationality. Indeed, the relationality, like Israel's special relationship with God, is understood as, at least partly the result of God's decree or election or calling."[123] Greegan states that relational understanding is the biblical teaching on *imago Dei*. According to her, the Scripture views man's essence in terms of his relationship with God. The "relational is a movement also away from the individualism of the modern age, with its accompanying structural definitions of person or image, in terms of rationality or a separable soul."[124]

Lastly, Immanuel Kant rejects the relational view of the image of God in man. He sees human dignity as inherent instead of man gaining his majesty and dignity by virtue of his relationship to God. According to Kant, "autonomy is the ground of the dignity of human nature and every rational creature." Kant further argues that "The essence of things is not altered by their external relations." In other words, man is in the image of God because of something intrinsic in his nature and not because he is related to God.[125] Relationality is a fundamental quality in the image of God in humanity with reference to how we relate to God and other creatures on the earth. More importantly, the relationship of unity and love between a man and a woman point to the relational nature of the image of God. Adam and Eve symbolize the relationship that exists in the Godhead. Gilbert Meilaender affirms that it is impossible to think of humanity without contextualizing it with respect to a relationship with God. The human relationship composes the sexual distinctiveness that humans share in the image of God.[126] Barth

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[123] Nicola Hoggard Creegan, "Being an Animal and Being Made in the Image of God." *Colloquium* 39, no 2 (November 1, 2007): 185–203.

[124] Creegan, "Being an Animal and Being Made in the Image of God," 185–203.

[125] Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals (*trans. James W. Ellington; 3 ed; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981).

[126] Gilbert Meilaender, "Touched by the Eternal," *Theology Today* 50, no. 4 (January 1994): 535.

and Brunner's impact on twentieth-century theology has been immense, as they brought relationality to the forefront of understanding the divine image of God. We now turn to the third interpretive method for defining the divine image of God in terms of function.

The Functional Interpretation

Although this view can be traced through the centuries, only recently has it been urged with increasing forcefulness. The core of this interpretation of the image of God is anchored on the key verses of Genesis 1:26–28. The functional interpretation of the image of God in humanity rejects the substantive and relational postulates. The relational view draws upon the philosophy of existentialism, whereas the functional view derives its conclusions from philosophical functionalism or pragmatism. This view believes that the image is not something humans possess through a relationship with God; instead, it is something that man is commissioned to do. This view seeks to find the difference between mankind, animals, and the rest of creation and identify how mankind is similar to God.[127] More specifically, it believes that man was made to have dominion and demonstrates that image in fulfilling that functional role. Boyd points out that the exercise of dominion and rule over creation, as recorded in Genesis 1:27–28, illustrates the functional view of mankind in the image of God. Just as God is the Lord and ruler of all creation, humanity reflects the image of God by exercising rule over the remainder of creation.[128]

[127] Erickson, *Christian Theology,* 527.

[128] Boyd and Eddy, *Across the Spectrum* 79.

David Clines rejects the Patristic view that the image resides in the soul and its faculties because he does not believe that the Bible teaches that man was composed of two parts—body and soul. Clines concludes:

> Man is created not in God's image since God has no image of His own, but as God's image, or rather to be God's image, that is to deputize in the created world for the transcendent God who remains outside the world order. . . . The whole man is the image of God, without distinction of spirit and body. . . . The image is to be understood not so much ontologically as existentially: it comes to expression not in the nature of man so much as in his activity and function. This function is to represent God's lordship to the lower orders of creation.[129]

As G. C. Berkouwer explains, genuine insights can be derived from the functional interpretation, for Genesis 1:26–28 intertwines the divine image and dominion. Although Genesis 1:26–28 does not explicitly identify the image as dominion, dominion was granted in a distinct word from God after He made man in His image. This suggests that the image of God, or at least some aspects of it, does not merely pertain to dominion but the ground and capacity for dominion.[130] Beeke argues that an exclusively functional interpretation is reductionistic. He goes on to say that, while Genesis 1 certainly reveals God's power and authority, it also reveals His wisdom, goodness, and relationships. These factors have some expression in our interpretation of "Let us make man in our image." If the image is entirely functional, then what meaning can it have if human beings fail to perform that function? In other words, is man still God's image if he fails to act like it? This question has profound implications for human dignity, especially for people without the fitness to rule.[131]

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[129] David J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," Tyndale Bulletin 19 (1968), 236.

[130] G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God, Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 236.

[131] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology,238*.

Furthermore, Gerhard von Rad asserts that the close relationship of the term for God's image with that for the commission to exercise dominion clearly emerges when we understand "image" as a plastic image. Consider the example of a powerful earthly king who, to indicate his claim to dominion, erected his image in the provinces of his empire where he does not personally appear. Similarly, man is placed on the earth in God's image as His sovereign emblem.[132] Berkhof proposes that some believe that dominion is an office given to man and not a part of the image. He emphasizes that God mentions man's creation in the divine image and His dominion over the lower creation in a single breath and that this is "indicative of the glory and honor with which man is crown" (Ps 8:5, 6.).[133]

Biblical scholars analyze Psalm 8 and delineate its importance in the interpretation given to the Priestly account of creation found in the Hebrew Bible. This psalm becomes essential, as at its hub stands the anthropological investigation, "what are humans that you are mindful of them, mere mortals that you care for them" (Ps 8:5). Psalm 8 can be connected to the creation accounts in Genesis, as they both facilitate a holistic understanding of the universe as the work of the creator God, and they both portray the unique role played by human person amidst all of creation.[134] In verse 5, "What are humans that you are mindful of them, mere mortal that you care for them?" we see the emphasis on the fragility and mortality of humankind to whom God has given great dignity. In verse 6, we read, "Yet you have made them little less than a god." The Hebrew word *elohim* literally translates to "God" or "the gods" or members of the heavenly court. It has to be noted that the Greek version translated *elohim* as "angel" or "messenger." The

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[132] Herzfeld, *Creating in our own Image*, 303–316.

[133] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 202.

[134] Phyllis A. Bird, "Bone of My Bone and Flesh of My Flesh*," Theology Today* 50, no. 4 (January 1994), 521.

intended meaning is that God created humans to exist almost at the same level as the beings in the heavenly world. In Hebrew 2:9, we find the well-known fulfillment of verse 6 in Jesus Christ, who was humbled before he was glorified.[135] Proponents of the image of God as functional or dominant use verse 7, "You have given them [the human beings] rule over the works of your hands, put all things at their feet," to support the idea of the dominant role played by humans in God's creation. Erickson expresses difficulties within this ideology, stating that, while there is a parallel between Genesis 1 and Psalm 8, the words "image" and "likeness" do not appear in the latter text and highlighting the fact that Genesis 1 has no explicit equation of the exercise of dominion with the image of God.[136]

John Kilner disagrees with the notion that the image of God in humanity has to be understood in terms of capacities, functions, or relationships. He claims that efforts "to establish our status by breaking it down into ways, we are like God is arguably misguided." Instead, Kilner sees the image of God as something that was created in man, which is not expressed by any of the various interpretations that scholars and theologians have employed.[137] Kilner further argues that the image of God in man has not in any way been damaged or diminished by the Fall of Adam.[138] Ronald Allen believes that the image of God in man is not solely represented by any one of the traditional views. Instead, the image of God describes man in his whole being (including his body), in his relationship as male and female and with God, and as having dominion over God's creation order. He writes, "the image of God in man is inclusive and

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[135] Donald Senior and John J. Collins, *The Catholic Study Bible: The New AmericanBible (*New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 687–8.

[136] Senior and Collins, *The Catholic Study Bible*, 687–8.

[137] John F. Kilner, "Humanity in God's Image: Is The Image Really Damaged?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 601–617.

[138] Ibid.

descriptive of his entire being. It is the essence of what man is."[139] Like the substantial and relational, the functional interpretation of the *imago Dei* has also run into the problem of non-acceptance, primarily because of its inability to satisfy the environmentalists, in particular.

The way in which humanity represents God on earth is partly expressed in Genesis 1:26–28. Man in the image of God is the permanent link between God and his world; therefore, humanity in the image of God is a reflection of order and suitability on the earth. The following section will explore the image of God from a holistic perspective.

The Image of God as Holistic

There has been a tremendous need to seek a combination of all the interpretations pertaining to the image of God in humanity because a single interpretation does not satisfactorily reveal the meaning of the image of God. One would have to look critically at all the explanations accepted by the majority of people to decipher the truth.[140] Therefore, the urgent need to interpret the *imago Dei* as holistic arises. Reformed theologians such as Anthony Hoekema, David Clines, F. K. Schumann, and Claus Westermann have emphasized and supported the holistic functional nature of the image of God.

A critical analysis of the creation of humanity in the Bible reveals an element of wholeness in human beings (Adam) who God created, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen 1: 27). Thus, from a deductive and inductive look at Genesis 1:26–27, one can accurately deduce that Adam is holistic and inductively recognize that he is multigender as both male and female. There is no textual reason to understand the role played by Adam in Genesis 1:26–27 to mean anything short

[139] Allen, *The Majesty of Man,* 84.

[140] Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 28.

of a holistic human being. Eve was not created from the dust of the ground, as were animals, but instead from Adam, thereby symbolizing a share in the *imago Dei* and an explicit equality with Adam (Gen 2:21–24).

Several arguments support the image of God as the whole human being. F. K. Schumann elaborates on wholeness when he writes, "The *imago Dei* does not consist in any particular detail of the person but describes the human being as a whole without limiting itself to anything taken in isolation."[141] Schumann seems to highlight that, even though it is good to analyze the corporeal and spiritual aspects of the human being, it is necessary to identify the human being as representing God's image in the totality of a person. Claus Westermann also points out that Genesis 1:26 is neither concerned with the corporeal nor with the spiritual qualities of people; it is only concerned with the person as a whole.[142] Like Schumann and Westermann, Wenham adds, "The image of God must characterize man's whole being, not simply his mind or soul on the one hand or his body on the other."[143] Herman Bavinck supports the holistic view of the image of God as the best theological formulation of biblical teaching. He proposes, "A human being does not bear or have the image of God but . . . he or she is the image of God." He states, "This image extends to the whole person . . . in soul and body, in all his faculties and powers, in all conditions and relations."[144] In light of the presence of God's image in every facet of human existence, we must seek to glorify God in all that we do (1 Cor 10:31).

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[141] F.K. Schumann, *Von Geheimnis der Schopfill1g: Creator spiritus und imago Dei* (Gutersloh: Der Rufer Evangelifcher,1937), as cited in Westermann, 150.

[142] Claus Westermann, *Genesis I-II (*trans. 1. 1. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 150.

[143] Gordon J. Wenham*, Genesis 1–15, Word Biblical Commentary 1* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 30.

[144] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (ed. John Bolt; trans. John Vriend; 4 vols; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008), 2:554–55.

One of the most profound and recent discussions of the holistic functional understanding of the image of God has been undertaken by Anthony Hoekema. He stated that the image of God in man describes Him in the totality of His existence. Thereafter, he posed the following questions:

> Must we think of the image of God in man as involving only what man is and not what he does, or only what he does and not what he is, or both what he is and what he does? Is "image of God" only a description of the way in which the human being functions, or is it also a description of the kind of being he or she is?[145]

Hoekema defends and develops a view of the image of God in which humans are believed to have been made by God with specific structural capacities (to "mirror" God) so that they might function appropriately when carrying out the kinds of responsibilities in the relationship He has assigned to them, in particular, to do (to "represent" God). He offered an example of an eagle's ability to fly, which depends on the power of its wings, and concluded, "Similarly, human beings were created to function in certain ways: to worship God, to love their neighbor, and to rule over nature. However, they cannot function in these capacities unless God has endowed them with the structural capacities. Therefore, structure and function are both involved when we think of man as the image of God."[146] The focus is on the functional and relational responsibilities, whereas the structural capacities provide the conditions necessary for that functioning to be carried out.

Furthermore, Hoekema describes the relational elements of this functioning in terms of how we relate to God, others, and the world God has made. God has made us in a particular way

[145] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 66.

[146] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 69.

so that we can function in this threefold arena of relationality, and this constitutes what it means to be created in the image of God.[147] Hoekema summarizes his view as follows:

> The image of God, we found, describes not just something that man has but something man is. It means that human beings both mirror and represent God. Thus, there is a sense in which the image includes the physical body. The image of God, we found further, includes both a structural and a functional aspect (sometimes called the broader and narrower image), though we must remember that in the biblical view, structure is secondary, while function is primary. The image must be seen in man's threefold relationship: toward God, toward others, and toward nature.[148]

Another enlightening contribution in support of the holistic functional understanding of the image of God was made by David Clines. He asserts that recent biblical scholarship has been well-nigh unanimous in rejecting the traditional view of man as a 'composition' of various 'parts' and has emphasized that, in the biblical view, man essentially forms a unity. When this insight is applied to the doctrine of the image, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the whole man is in the image of God.[149] According to the Old Testament, man is a psychosomatic unity; therefore, the corporeal animated man is the image of God. The body cannot be left out of the meaning of the image—man is a totality, and his 'solid flesh' is as much the image of God as his spiritual capacity, creativeness, or personality, as none of these 'higher' aspects of the human being can exist in isolation from the body. The body is neither a mere dwelling-place for the soul nor the prison-house of the soul. In so far as man is a body and a bodiless man is not man, the body is the image of God—for man is the image of God. Man is the flesh-and-blood image of the invisible God. This is not to say that it is the body as opposed to something else, for example, the spirit, that comprises the image of God. This is because the body is not 'opposed' to the spirit.

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[147]Ibid.

[148] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image, 95*.

[149] Clines, "The Image of God in Man," 67.

Indeed, as far as the image is concerned, at least, what the body is, the spirit is. It is the *homo*, and not the *animus* or the *anima*, that is, the *imago Dei*.[150]

Furthermore, Clines proposes that man is created in God's image or rather to be God's image, to deputize the created world for the transcendent God who exists outside the world order. This essentially means that man is God's visible corporeal representative of the invisible, bodiless God; he is a representative rather than a representation, as the idea of portrayal is secondary to the significance of the image. However, the term 'likeness' assures that man is an adequate and faithful representative of God on earth. The whole man is the image of God, without distinction between spirit and body. All mankind, without distinction, is the image of God. The image is to be understood not so much ontologically as existentially—it is not expressed through the nature of man but rather through his activity and function. This function is to represent God's lordship to the lower orders of creation. Man's dominion over creation can hardly be excluded from the content of the image itself. Mankind—both the human race and individual men—do not cease to be the image of God so long as they remain men; to be human and to be the image of God are not separable.[151] Barth rightly stated that man would not be man were he not the image of God. He is God's image; in that he is man.[152]

Hoekema and Clines' proposals are complementary as they shed light on the structural, relational, and functional elements needed to understand what it means to be in the image of God in Genesis 1:26–28. Yet, while all three are required, the structural interpretation serves the functional purpose to be carried out in a relationship. While all three aspects are involved, priority is given to the God-ordained functioning of human beings in carrying out the purposes

[150] Ibid, 101.

[151] Clines, "The Image of God in Man," 101.

[152] Barth, *Church Dogmatics,*184.

He has for us. According to Bruce Ware, the image of God can be best summarized in this language:

> The image of God in man as functional holism means that God made human beings, both male and female, to be created and finite representations (images of God) of God's own nature, that in relationship with Him and each other, they might be His representatives (imaging God) in carrying out the responsibilities He has given to them. In this sense, we are images of God in order to image God and His purposes in the ordering of our lives and the carrying out of our God-given responsibilities.[153]

The understanding of the holistic approach is that the whole human body reflects the image of God. Over the years, the holistic approach of the image of God has gained some level of support and popularity. However, it has not been demonstrated that it is sufficiently coherent to serve as a satisfactory interpretation of the image of God.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the survey has shown that identifying the image of God specifically with humans' mental abilities, moral qualities, spiritual, relationships, or functions does not adequately account for what has already been stated in the Scriptures. We have found that each of these approaches has significant biblical strengths; however, none of these views are sufficient on their own. Due to the complexity of human beings, it is an overstatement to highlight one aspect over another. Humans are composed of different parts, and each part's function is vital to human behavior. Therefore, this study does not necessarily suggest a different approach but instead another angle on what the image of God entails.

As God's attributes are many, and human beings reflect God through God's image, the holistic approach becomes incredibly essential. The image of God in humanity is like a mosaic—all the different pieces are crucial to the portrait, but the difficulty lies in connecting the pieces.

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[153] Bruce A. Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God." Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (2002): 7: 14-78.

This dissertation adds another piece to the portrait. Man is a permanent link between God and His world; therefore, male and female in the image of God is a reflection of "order and suitability" on the earth. This concept will be explored in more detail in chapter five.

Now that we have examined the historical interpretation of the image of God, we will now turn to the next chapter for an exegetical and biblical theology of Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1–3, and 9:6 to understand the meaning of creation in the image and likeness of God.

CHAPTER 3

AN EXEGETICAL AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

Having examined the history of interpretation of the image of God, this chapter will analyze the theological and exegetical significance of the image of God in the Old Testament to provide a framework with the understanding that male and female by design reflect God's "order and suitability" in design.

The first nine chapters of Genesis contain only three explicit references to the image of God in the Old Testament—Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1, and 9:6. This section of Genesis is known as the primeval history, which, in literary strands, is typically assigned by critical biblical scholars to the priestly writer(s).[154] With the exception of a few apocryphal or deuterocanonical references (Wis 2:23, Sir 17:3, and 2 Esd 8:44), the idea that humans are made in God's image did not surface again until the New Testament.[155] Although the appearances are limited, each reference of the image occurs at a significant time in the Genesis story: (1) at the culmination of God's creation narrative; (2) at the beginning of a new stage of humanity post Fall; and (3) at the beginning of a new covenant with humanity after the flood. Charles Sherlock points out, "By placing these texts at such key positions, the opening book of the Bible emphasizes that the concept of being made in the image of God is of fundamental importance to what it means to be human . . . it undergirds all that is said and disclosed about human nature from this point on in Israel's history."[156]

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[154] Wenham*, Genesis 1–15,* 27–8.

[155] Richard J. Middleton, *The Liberating Image*: *The* Imago Dei *in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 16.

[156] Charles Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 30.

The last century has witnessed an extensive array of opinions regarding the meaning of the image of God among Old Testament scholars, which have strayed from historical interpretation. The meaning of the image of God does demand a theological answer, but an exegetical study cannot be ignored, in particular, one that relies on the sufficiency of the Scripture. As Ellen Davis claims, "the *imago Dei* is inherently powerful and open-ended—its meaning cannot be fully grasped within the first chapter of the Bible, even by the most thorough exegete. Instead, one must keep reading and living in biblical faith to know what our creation in the image of God yet might mean."[157] We will now examine the Old Testament (Gen 1:26–27, 5:1–3, and 9:6) references to establish the context and meaning.

Old Testament References

The author uses the expression בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים "in the image of God" in two of three passages relating to the creation of man (Gen 1:26–27, 9:6). We will begin with the primary text of Genesis 1:26–27 and its translation, followed by a study of the terms to determine where image and likeness appear in the Hebrew Bible and the usage in the book of Genesis.

An Exegesis of Genesis 1:26–27

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ&הִים נַעֲ שֶׂ ה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ
וְיִרְדּוּ בִּדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַ שָּׁ מַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמ ה וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ
וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶ שׂ הָרמֵֹ שׂ עַל־הָ ָ אָרֶץ:
וַיִּבְרָא הִימאֱ! ו אֶת־ ָ הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱ&הִים בָּרָא אתֹוֹ
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא א ָ תָם:

> And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the beasts and over all the earth and over every creeping thing which creeps on the earth.' And God created the man in his image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

[157] Ellen F Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

The term "image" צֶלֶם is not a commonly used word in the Old Testament. It appears 17 times in the Hebrew Bible, and 10 out of 17 indicate a physical image, such as a statue, figure, or replica. Two references compare human beings with the shadow, and five refer to human beings as created in the image of God. Regarding the root and meaning of צֶלֶם, we perceive that it is derived from the root word *slm*, which means representation or likeness. It is also translated as shade or shadow, or image. Also, צֶלֶם represents human actions such as carving or cutting.[158] The first instance of צֶלֶם appears in the first account of the creation of man. God creates male and female "in our image" בְּצַלְמֵנוּ; this phrase is repeated with a third person suffix in 1:27 for emphasis, "in his image" בְּצַלְמוֹ. The text also explicitly states that God created male and female "according to our likene*ss*" (כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ). The phrase modifying "in our image" is not repeated in the remainder of the pericope.[159] The Greek word *eikon* is the primary New Testament term for Christ as God's "image." One may wonder why the authors employed these terms for "image" to describe humanity and Christ. According to John Kilner, the answer most likely does not have to do with the terms' precision but with their flexibility and range. Authors in the Bible also employ other Hebrew nouns such as *pesel* (Exod 20:4; Isa 40:20) and *masseka* (e.g., Exod 34:17; Isa 30:22) to mean "image."[160]

The word צֶלֶם often describes physical objects that are "cut out," such as three-dimensional statues of false gods (Num 33:52; 2 Kgs 11:18; 2 Chr 23:17; Amos 5:26; Ezek 7:20). In 1 Samuel 6:5, it refers to images of mice and tumors that priests tell the Philistine lords to send back to Israel as a guilt offering with the stolen ark to "give glory to the God of Israel." It

[158] Jeff A. Benner, "Biblical Word of the Month Image," Ancient Hebrew Research Centre, Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine (2006).

[159] Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (trans. M. E. J. Richardson; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 584.

[160] Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 54.

also describes a two-dimensional painted picture of men (Ezek 23:14).[161] The plural construct form of צֶלֶם in Ezekiel 16:17, when rendered as צַלְמֵי זָכָר "images of male," certainly does not refer to a statue, but perhaps the phrase refers to "phallic symbols," which were used for pornographic purposes during cultic ceremonies.[162] The figurative use of צֶלֶם as a semblance of a shadow (Pss 39:7; 73:20) is further removed from the original understanding of the statue.[163] However, this phrase still relates to image, "Because a shadow is the image or likeness of the object casting it." Despite scholars' certainty that image means statue or idol,[164] it is remarkable that צֶלֶם does not become the proper designation for idols in the remainder of the Old Testament. Instead, the most common is גִּלּוּל.[165] J. Maxwell Miller defines צֶלֶם as "a concrete term which is normally used in the Old Testament to refer to a model or an idol of something and always has to do with a similarity in physical appearance."[166] Friedrich Horst further explains צֶלֶם to mean a hewn or carved statue such as an idol, an altar, and also a sculpture—a facsimile in general. Finally, on one occasion, these words convey the connotation of relief and engraving. This word, therefore, signifies a manufactured work in contrast to its subject in every case. It means the picture is prepared as a 'copy' and stresses its faithful agreement with the 'original.'[167] Other references of צַלְמֵי can be found in 1 Samuel 6:5, 11, wherein the term designates golden models

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[161] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos, 2000), 853.

[162] Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 1081.

[163] Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm, HALOT, 1029, BDB, 854. Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 810.

[164] Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 215.

[165] Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm, HALOT, 1029. BDB, 854.

[166] J. Maxwell Miller, "In the 'Image' and 'Likeness' of God," *JEL* 91 (1972): 291.

[167] Friedrich Horst, "Face to Face: The Biblical Doctrine of the Image of God," *Interpretation 4* (July 1950): 260.

of boils and mice. Psalms 39:7 denotes a fleeting human image, whereas Psalms 73:20 describes the physical form of the psalmist's enemies. Ezekiel applies the term to depictions of Babylonian royalty carved in stone relief and decorated with red paint. Five times צֶלֶם denotes molten images, anthropomorphic metal images, and images of Baal, Sikkuth, and Kiyyun.[168]

The meaning of צֶלֶם ranges from three-dimensional objects to two-dimensional pictures to shadows, thereby revealing that the meaning of the word in Genesis 1:26–27 is some type of form[169] and not necessarily a statue, as the only modifier for this image is the likeness of God. This point has led all lexicons to define צֶלֶם in this passage as likeness, as a form that resembles God. Hence, some interpreters concluded that the likeness is a functional representation of God for varying reasons, whereas more traditional ones perceived it as a simple resemblance to God.[170] Perhaps צֶלֶם is best read in Genesis 1:26–27 as some type of form that resembles an invisible God and not as a statue representing God because God is a spirit that dwells in inaccessible light.

To summarize, Genesis 1:26–27 explains how man is like God. The term צֶלֶם "image" does not mean a physical or spiritual statue but rather a form that resembles an invisible God and not a statue representing God, as God is a spirit. This form is created in God's model, not as God or an epiphany because God is not male or female. In other words, this form can be "order," "appropriateness," or "suitability," which comprise the characteristics of man that reflect God. Humanity in the image of God cannot be confined to function and dominion because Adam and Eve were made into the image of God before they were given instructions to rule and procreate.

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[168] Horst, "Face to Face," 260.

[169] Willem VanGemeren, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 810.

[170] Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm, HALOT, 1029, BDB, 854.

The abstract noun "likeness" דְּמוּת is derived from the verb *dmh*. The nominative term דְּמוּת "likeness" appears 25 times in the Hebrew Bible, and modern lexicons define it as "model," "shape," or "likeness," which is closely related to the צֶלֶם of God. By contrast, it means "resemblance" or "similitude in older lexicons."[171] The term דְּמוּת usually describes appearances (something resembles something else in appearance). The psalmist makes a simple comparison, where the speech of the wicked is compared to a serpent's venom (Ps 58:4). In 2 Kings 16:10, King Ahaz sends Uriah the priest, a model (like in appearance), to the altar; in this case, דְּמוּת indicates a shape.[172]

Most of the occurrences of דְּמוּת are concentrated in the book of Ezekiel, where the prophet uses דְּמוּת to describe the contents of his visions. In the middle of an object resembling gleaming metal was "the likeness of four living beings" whose "appearance was of man" (1:5). The דְּמוּת of their faces resembled human faces (1:10). Ezekiel further describes their appearance as having the דְּמוּת akin to the burning coals of fire (1:13). Over their heads was the דְּמוּת of a brilliant expanse over which was the דְּמוּת of a sapphire-studded throne. Seated above this דְּמוּת of a throne was a דְּמוּת with a human form (1:26). The frequent occurrence of דְּמוּת in the descriptions of Ezekiel's visions demonstrates that the prophet struggled to describe what he saw.[173] For example, Ezekiel did not see a man but something that resembled דְּמוּת of a man. Similarly, he did not see a throne but something that resembled דְּמוּת of a throne. Nowhere else in Scripture do צֶלֶם and דְּמוּת appear together or in connection to one another as they do in Genesis 1:26. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that דְּמוּת refers to likeness, pattern, and resemblance, but it does not seem to indicate a copy or a facsimile, as can צֶלֶם. In sum, while the

[171] Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm, HALOT, 1029, BDB, 854.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

semantic ranges of דְּמוּת and צֶלֶם overlap, specifically in the area of representation, these terms are not always synonymous. Barth echoes the same sentiment, as he does not view the two terms צֶלֶם and דְּמוּת as synonymous. He observes that צֶלֶם,which is used to describe plastic or painted representations and even idols, emphasizes more the character of the image as a completed work (in contrast to its subject), whereas דְּמוּת in some sense analyzes the concept and origination of the image and means a 'copy' or 'duplicate' or 'imitation' (in contrast to an original).[174] Jürgen Moltmann maintains that צֶלֶם means a concrete representation, whereas דְּמוּת is used to represent similarity.[175] A transcendent God, who by nature is a spirit, emerges from this text—this is the God who created a finite, physical human being that resembles Him out of the ground. The grammatical construction of each passage seems to support a spiritual, physical, and functional interpretation. Thus, the passage supports the overall thesis that male and female created in the image of God is a reflection of order and suitability in design. The next section will examine the meaning of the prepositions בְּ, and כְּ when used in conjunction with the words "image" and "likeness."

The Prepositions בְּ and כְּ

The meaning of the prepositions בְּ, and כְּ when used with the words "image" and "likeness" will be examined in this section. The preposition בְּ, which precedes צֶלֶם, often means "in," "at," "among," "upon," "on," "within," and "according to."[176] The preposition כְּ can mean "as," "as many as," "according to," "on," and "in." We can see the overlap, particularly in terms of "in" and "according to." The author uses the prepositions interchangeably בְּ with צֶלֶם and כְּ

[174] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 197.

[175] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation* (New York: Harper, 1991), 218.

[176] Koehler et al., HALOT, 103–5.

with דְּמוּת in Genesis 1:26 but switches it to כְּ with צֶלֶם and בְּ with דְּמוּת in Genesis 5:3.[177] Clines points out that בְּ in Genesis 1:26 is a *beth essentiae*, and he advocates translating the text to read, "Let us make man as our image to be our image." Thus, one may say that according to Genesis 1, man neither has the image of God nor is he made in the image of God, but he himself is the image of God.[178]

The preposition "in" should be understood as meaning "as" or "in the capacity of." Humanity was created "as" the image of God. The concept can be conveyed if we think of "image" as a verb—humans are created as God's imagers—they function in the capacity of God's representatives. The image of God is not a quality within human beings; it is what humans are. Clines summarizes that what makes man the image of God is not that corporeal man stands as an analogy of a corporeal God, for the image does not primarily mean similarity, but the representation of the one who is imaged in a place where he is not. According to Genesis 1:26ff, man is set on earth to represent the absent God who is nevertheless present by His image.[179] Now that we have examined the prepositions בְּ and כְּ, the next section will shed light on the plural language associated with the image of God.

The Plural Language associated with the Image of God

According to Wenham, the plurality in the expression "let *us* create humankind in *our* image" may point to a plurality *within* God. Christians perceive the Trinity in this language. However, an ancient Israelite or Jew never would have made this presumption.[180] Wenham went on to say that plurality may be an example of the "plural of majesty," the grammatical use of the

[177] Koehler et al., HALOT, 103–5.

[178] Clines, "Image of God in Man", 80.

[179] Ibid, 87.

[180] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 27–8.

plural to point to "a fullness of attributes and powers." However, the plural of majesty is not used in conjunction with pronouns or verbal forms, the latter of which is present in Genesis 1:26 and 11:7.[181] Anthony Hoekema suggests that the use of the plural "indicates that the creation of man is in a class by itself since this type of expression is used of no other creature."[182]

In Deuteronomy 6:4, Moses writes, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! In this text, God is saying to the people of Israel; that He is the only God. Over the years, interpreters have struggled with the meaning of the plurals, "Let us make man in Our image and Our likeness." This has given rise to several interpretations, which have impacted one's understanding of the image of God. The first reasonable possibility is that God was addressing angels in his heavenly court (Pss 82; 89:5–8). Many Jewish interpreters from Philo favored this possibility while drawing a parallel with Isaiah 6:8: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Gordon Wenham agrees with this view, stating that in the Old Testament, angels were sometimes portrayed as men (Gen 18:2).[183] The text in verse 27 clearly states that the angels did not participate in the creation of humankind. The singular suffix, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." There is no contradiction if "let us create" is believed to be an announcement of the association between the single Creator and a group.[184] Gerhard von Rad is also in favor of this view. He believes that Psalm 8 reflects Genesis 1, that man is said to be made a little lower than *elohim*. Therefore, this means that God's image does not directly refer to Yahweh but to the angels. Hence, in verse 26,

[181] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 27–8.

[182] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 12.

[183] Wenham*, Genesis 1–15,* 27–8.

[184] Ibid.

"Let us" prevents one from referring to God's image directly to God the Lord.[185] Heiser wisely states that we use this sort of language regularly as humans. A mother could announce to her family, "let's make dinner," and then proceed to do so herself, for her family's benefit, without directly seeking their involvement in the event. This is more coherent than a mere rhetorical self-reference, as it involves the audience without requiring their active participation.[186] Gerald Bray notes that it is more probable that God had been speaking to the heavenly hosts. However, this raises questions as to whether angels are also created in the image of God and their participation in the work of man's creation.[187] David Clines asserts that this view would imply that man was made in the image of *elohim* as well as of God Himself ('in our image'); it would mean that *elohim* shared in the creation of man ('let us make').[188]

With respect to the possibility of angels, Clines disagrees with this argument. He notes, "we may ask, why an author who was too sensitive to write 'I will make man in my image' proceeded to say in the next verse, 'God created man in his image.'"[189] A further objection is that *elohim* would have been said to have shared in man's creation—a fact that is seldom recognized by the scholars who see the heavenly court here. The Old Testament consistently represents creation as the act of Yahweh alone, and we cannot evade the force of 'let us' by explaining it as a mere consultation before the work of creation began. As Barth points out, Genesis 1:26 "does not speak of a mere entourage, of a divine court or council which later disappears behind the

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[185] Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary (*ed. G. Earnest Wright et al.; trans. John H. Marks, Revised Edition. The Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 58.

[186] Heiser and Barry et al., *Image of God*.

[187] Gerald L. Bray, "The Significance of God's Image in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* 42, no. 2 (November 1991): 19.

[188] Clines, "The Image of God in Man," 67.

[189] Ibid.

king who alone acts. Those addressed here are not merely consulted by the one who speaks but is summoned to an act . . . of creation . . . in concert with the One who speaks."[190]

One point in favor of the identification of 'us' with the יַהֹלֶא is the appearance of יַהֹלֶא in Psalm 8, which bears very close affinities with Genesis 1:26. Here, man is created a little lower than יַהֹלֶא, which could be interpreted as meaning a little lower than the יַהֹלֶא or the heavenly court. However, even if this is the correct understanding of Psalm 8, it is not necessary to find the exact reference in Genesis 1. It would seem that, in general, the difficulties involved in this interpretation of the plural outweigh the superficial suitability of the identification.[191] Clines claims that in the Job parallel, the angels only witnessed creation, whereas Genesis has God inviting them to create with Him. Yet God did not receive any assistance from a created being when He created everything (Isa 44:24).[192] Therefore, Clines concludes that there is no mention of angels in the first 25 verses of Genesis. In fact, there is no reference to angels until Genesis 3:24.[193]

In reference to Isaiah 6:8, the plural language in Genesis 1:26 may be self-deliberation or self-encouragement. This perspective is akin to the "editorial we." The plurality describes how people deliberate with themselves. However, it is difficult to see how this view can work in tandem with the meaning of the image as God's representative. It is also difficult to establish the coherence of this view with Psalms 8, in which humanity is said to have been created a little lower than *elohim* (Ps 8:5). The word *elohim* is to be taken as plural, as evident from its citation in Hebrews 2:7, where the writer quotes the passage from the Septuagint, which renders *elohim*

[190] Clines, "The Image of God in Man," 67.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Ibid.

[193] Ibid.

as "angels."[194] Some look to humanity as the referent of the plurality. Bray writes, "A more awkward question is raised by the use of the plural in Genesis 1:26, implying that man, as the image of God, somehow reflects a plurality in God."[195] We now turn to the second Old Testament passage, which directly references the divine image.

An Exegesis of Genesis 5:1–3

זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדֹת אָדָם בְּיוֹם בְּרֹא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם
בִּדְמוּת אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ׃
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בְּרָאָם וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמָם
אָדָם בְּיוֹם הִבָּרְאָם׃ ס
וַיְחִי אָדָם שְׁלֹשִׁים וּמְאַת שָׁנָה וַיּוֹלֶד בִּדְמוּתוֹ
כְּצַלְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת׃

> This is a book of the generations of Adam: In the day of God's creating man, in the likeness of God, He made him. Male and female (he) created them, and blessed them, and called their name Man, in the day of their being created. And Adam lived 130 years, and begat in his likeness, according to his image, and called his name Seth.

Verses 1 and 2 recapitulate several aspects of Genesis 1:26–28, which include the image and likeness, the unity of humanity, the creation of human beings as male and female, and their blessings. The word pairing דְּמוּת and צֶלֶם in Genesis 1:26 show up again in Genesis 5:1–3 in the account of Adam begetting his son Seth—he had begot or borne a son in his own "likeness" דְּמוּת and in his own "image" צֶלֶם and named him Seth." A man "begets" יָלַד man; God "creates" בָּרָא man. This account closely echoes the motifs of humanity created in the divine image and the blessing of procreation in Genesis 1:26–28—God created Adam and Eve בִּדְמוּ אֱלֹהִים "in the likeness of God." Thus, this narrative includes Adam's offspring. The text emphasizes the genealogy תּוֹלְדֹת of Adam. By imitating 1:27–28, Moses ties the significance of the genealogy to the creation theology, where human life stands in the descent of God and is the pre-eminent recipient of God's blessing. However, this linkage is achieved by several lexical repetitions,

[194] Heiser and Barry et al., *Image of God.*

[195] Bray, "The Significance of God's Image in Man," 197.

including “man,” “created,” “likeness,” “male and female,” and “blessed.”[196] Here Moses explains how the image of God is passed on to the next generation. Adam and Eve were blessed and had another son after Cain and Abel and named him Seth. Adam’s new son was born to him בִּדְמוּתוֹ כְּצַלְמוֹ in his “likeness, after his image.

The two terms דְּמוּת and צֶלֶם are not always semantic equivalents. However, Genesis 5:3 may be an example where the terms are used interchangeably. Here דְּמוּת and צֶלֶם express a resemblance between children and parents, specifically Seth’s likeness to his father, Adam, but they do not suggest an exact copy, facsimile, or replica. Seth may resemble his father, but he is not Adam. Similarly, Adam and Eve resemble God, but they are not God. However, no explanation has been given as to what constitutes the likeness to God. The NIV’s rendering of “own” image and “own” likeness specify what has already been reasonably implied by the text: as God bequeathed His image to humanity, Adam endowed his image to Seth, including human sinfulness and its consequences.[197] Matthews notes that procreation is the mechanism that assures the passing on of the divine “image.” Seth is not “created” (Gen 1:27) or “formed” (Gen 2:7) as Adam was, but he was “fathered” and thereby is the recipient of Adam’s human legacy. Seth perpetuates the blessing bestowed upon humanity, but also he inherits the consequences of his father’s sin.[198] This statement could be used to argue that Jesus was born with original sin, but as Paul noted in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49, Adam was a living creature created from the dust of the ground, the natural, and Jesus, on the other hand, is a life-giving being created from heaven, the spiritual man. Christ is Adam’s antitype and antidote; for what Adam bequeathed, Christ

[196] Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 307.

[197] Ibid, 310.

[198] Ibid.

surmounted and surpassed. Unlike Adam's disobedience in the "garden," Christ's Gethsemane triumphed in obedience, and because of his obedience, we reap righteousness and life "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 5:18–21).[199]

We see the same pairing of terms in a bilingual Aramaic–Akkadian inscription on an Assyrian provincial official statue from the ninth-century B.C.E. The statue, which was found at Tell Fakhariyeh in the upper Habur region of Syria, is referred to as "likeness" (Aramaic = *dmwt*) and "image" (Aramaic = *ṣlm*, Akkadian = *ṣalmu*) in the Aramaic text. The Akkadian version renders both Aramaic terms as *salmu,* suggesting, as many others have noted, that צֶלֶם and דְּמוּת are semantic equivalents both here and in Genesis 5:3.[200]

The Aramaic cognates *səlem, selem*, and *salm* appear 17 times in the Book of Daniel. In every instance, except *səlem* in Daniel 3:19, the term denotes an anthropomorphic statue.[201] We can, therefore, conclude that within the Bible, Hebrew צֶלֶם and Aramaic səlem, selem, and salm typically refer to a concrete object made of metal, painted stone, or human flesh, which is a representation and a likeness copy of an original.

Moreover, aside from צֶלֶם*,* five occurrences in Genesis (1:26; 1:27 (2x); 5:3; 9:6), all of which refer to the creation of mankind, over 50 percent of the Hebrew attestations of צֶלֶם and over 94 percent of its Aramaic cognates in Daniel are used in a pejorative sense to denote a counterfeit image.[202] An explicitly favorable meaning of צֶלֶם occurs only when it describes the

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[199] Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 310.

[200] Randall W. Garr, "Image' and 'Likeness' in the Inscription from Tell Fakhariyeh." *IEJ* 50 (2000): 227–234.

[201] In Daniel 3:19 *salem* refers to Nebuchadnezzar's facial expression: "the image/expression of his face changed."

[202] Seven out of thirteen uses are derogatory: Num 33:52; 2 Kgs 11:18; 2 Chr 23:17; Ezek 7:20; 16:17; 23:14; and Amos 5:26.

creation of humanity *bəselem elohim*. *Dəmûth and tselem* in Genesis 5:1–3 seem to be synonymous. Both terms refer to the pattern, similarity, and resemblance. More specifically, Genesis 5:3 suggests that in humans, these qualities, whether good or bad, are passed on biologically through reproductive means from the parents to their children.

In sum, the language in Genesis 5:3 echoes that of Genesis 1:26. Although the order of "image" and "likeness" is reversed, it is a direct referent back to the original creation narrative. Just as Adam was made in the image and likeness of God, so his son Seth was brought forth in his likeness and after his image. One observation to note here is that the author did not speak of Seth being born in the likeness and image of Adam and Eve but explicitly claims that Seth was born in the likeness of Adam (only). However, this statement does not mean that Seth is male and not female because we know that man created after Adam and Eve continues to be made equally in the image of God. Bruce Ware notes that the parallel nature of this language with Genesis 1:26 has the effect of indicating that Seth is born in the image of Adam, who is himself the image of God, so that Seth, by being in the image of Adam, is likewise in the image of God.[203]

Some scholars believe that Seth's line was perhaps the first evidence of the renewal of God's image from the Fall. By this genealogy in Genesis 5:1–3, Mathews points out that creation's order is perpetuated; we hear the same drumbeat of God's orderly creation through the birth of human life.[204] Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Seth was not identical to Adam but was like him in many ways, thereby being a part of his being "in the image." Similarly, male and female are like God and, therefore, part of His being "in the image and likeness of God."

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[203] Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God." 85.

[204] Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 308.

The grammatical construction of Genesis 5:1–3 does not support any specific interpretation (physical, spiritual, or functional); therefore, it would be overly restrictive for us to assert one. We will now investigate the final explicit mention of the divine image in the Old Testament.

An Exegesis of Genesis 9:6

שֹׁפֵךְ דַּם הָאָדָם בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשָּׁפֵךְ כִּי בְצֶלֶם
אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם:

> Whoever sheds the blood of the man, by man is his bloodshed: for in the image of God made he the man.

The four references to man as created in the image of God are confined to Genesis. The final instance of בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים appears after the flood narrative when God makes a covenant with Noah. God's image is the reason behind the severity of Genesis 9:5–6. God alone may make or dispose of a person as He sees fit.[205] According to Wayne Grudem, the murder of another human being entails an attack on "the part of creation that most resembles God."[206] Calvin concurs that because man is God's image-bearer, one cannot injure another human being "without wounding God himself."[207] Essentially, this is because humans were made in God's image. This principle is illustrated in Zechariah 2:8–9, "for he who touches you, touches the apples of His eye." Yahweh responds to the nations who plundered Israel, "For I am going to raise my hand against them, and they shall become plunder for their slaves." Thus, the murder of a human who has been created in God's image, even if it is by another human being, is at some level an attack on God Himself and, therefore, must be punished. Having been created in the image of God, we represent Him in the realm of order, law, and justice.

[205] Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 308.

[206] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 444.

[207] Calvin, *Genesis*, 90.

In Genesis 9:6, the elevation of human life is visible. The Bible clearly speaks of the similarity between human and animal life. The beasts of the fields are souls that live and were brought forth from the earth (Gen 1:24). The Scripture regards all animals as having the spirit of life (Gen 6:17; 7:15) and the spirit-breath of life (Gen 7:22). The Scripture also states that man was formed from the ḏust from the ground and became a soul that lives because of God's *breath of life* (Gen 2:7). In fact, the Scripture continually reminds us of human earthliness, "he is like the beasts that perish" (Ps 49:12, 20) and "all go to one place" (Eccl 3:19–21). In essence, man and beast are composed of the same material and receive life from God.

In the light of Genesis 9:6, humans are different from animals because they are created in God's image. Unlike animals, God has fellowship with man and not animals (Gen 1:28–30; 3:8–9). Humans are commanded to obey God's decrees, thereby making a person a moral being (Gen 2:16–17). Man is held accountable for his moral choices (Gen 3:9–13). Finally, unlike the animals, man shares eternal life with God, unlike the animals (Gen 2:9, 16; 3:22). Humans and animals have a body and soul, and each returns to the dust, but only man's soul lives forever. Only man נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה resembles God and has fellowship with God. These characteristics set humanity apart from the rest of creation as a reflection of God. Gen 9:6 tells us that God demands a high price from man for taking human life. Everything God created is good and valuable. Hence, when we perceive the goodness of creation and value it as God does, we function in divine order, ultimately reflecting God's image. This passage contributes to the overall thesis that male and female created in the image of God is a reflection of order and suitability in design. We see God's order between humans and animals—to attack a human being is to attack God's image.

Conclusion

In this chapter, Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1–3, and 9:6 were analyzed to provide a proper exegetical and theological understanding of the image and likeness of God. The study has shown that "image" צֶלֶם does not necessarily mean a physical or spiritual "statue," but rather a form that is created in God's model, not as God or an epiphany of God. Based on the thorough study of the terms צֶלֶם "image" and דְּמוּת "likeness," one can conclude that man created in the image and likeness of God cannot be confined to man's intellectual, moral, spiritual abilities or physical resemblance; however, when we function "orderly" and "appropriately" and do not tamper with God's design of things, we reflect our Creator.

Now that we have analyzed Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1–3, and 9:6 in terms of their historical-grammatical contexts, we will expand our study in the next chapter to explore several New Testament texts which demonstrate the unfolding character of the *imago Dei*, which Jesus Christ fulfills.

CHAPTER 4

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE IMAGE OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the previous chapter, we laid out an exegetical and biblical theology of the corresponding text of Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1–3, and 9:6 to grasp the contextual understanding of the meaning of the image of God. The study has shown that the image of God does not necessarily mean a physical or spiritual "statue" but rather a form and function of God. As seen above, "the image of God" does not occur often in the Old Testament, but it re-emerges in the New Testament. This chapter will provide a canonical and theological reading of the image of God from a selection of New Testament texts to see what light this might shed on the "order and suitability" focus of this dissertation.

The New Testament is a fundamental marker of God's "order and suitability" in design. The work of Christ applied to human hearts is such an unstoppable, unopposable force that it transforms them entirely. It opens our eyes to the goodness of male and female and the corresponding beauty of all living beings according to God's design. The most significant weight in the New Testament of the image lies upon the figure of Christ, who is the true image of God. There have been ongoing debates concerning which New Testament text directly refers to Genesis 1:26–28. Most New Testament references to the image of God are found in the Pauline and General Epistles. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' response to the Pharisee's question regarding divorce alluded to the image of God concept in "male and female."

Bray analyzes several New Testament texts (Matt 19:2–6 and Matt 22:20–21 and parallels Mark 12:16 and Luke 20:24; Jas 3:9; 1 Cor 15:46–49; Col 1:15–20; Col 3:9–10; Eph 4:22–24; 2 Cor 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4–6; Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 11:7; Heb 1:3; 1 John 3:2) and concludes that the image of God in man is understood as something implanted in Adam during his creation.

This is mentioned only twice in the New Testament, specifically, in 1 Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9.[208] Like many New Testament writers, Paul outlines a path to help us understand what it means to be "created in the image of God." Paul's theology is centered around the impact of divine revelation or grace on human beings. We will now take a closer look at what the following New Testament passages state in light of what has already been studied in the Old Testament on the image of God to develop a keen understanding of male and female patterned after Christ in the context of the New Testament.

Matthew 19:2–6

Matthew 19:2–6 affirms the image of God concept in male and female. Jesus' response to the Pharisee's question regarding divorce alluded to God's creation of "male and female." Jesus notes, "at the beginning, the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'" Jesus declined to go along with the accepted rabbinic methods of understanding the question and appealed to the creation narrative, which was weightier than what Moses stated considerably later. Presumably, God could have created the race in various ways, but from the beginning, He chose to make them male and female (Gen 1:27).[209] John Chrysostom comments that Jesus posed a strong argument not only from the creation perspective but also from the perspective of God's commands. During the creation of Adam and Eve, God made one man and one woman only—this was His will; otherwise, He would have formed many women.

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[208] Bray, "The Significance of God's Image in Man," 222.

[209] Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 480–481.

Further, God also commanded that one man should be joined to one woman.[210] Our sexuality is of divine ordinance; it is intended to be exercised in monogamous relationships. We can, therefore, conclude that Jesus regarded Genesis as the true history of creation and the solid foundation of God's design for male and female. Jesus' teaching explicated the Creator's original design for men and women, especially marriage. He illuminates what it means to be male and female. When we adhere to the divine ordinance of suitability in design, we reflect God's image on the earth.

Matthew 22:20–21

There have been some debates over whether Jesus' legion in Matthew 22:20–21, which has parallels in Mark 12:13–17 and Luke 20:20–26, alludes to the image of God. The Pharisees and Herodians asked Jesus, "Is it right to pay imperial taxes to Caesar or not?" (v. 17). Jesus replied:

> **18**But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? **19**Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, **20**and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" **21**"Caesar's," they replied.

The Greek word *eikon* can be literally translated to mean "image," which is equivalent to the Hebrew word *ṣelem* mentioned in Genesis 1:26–27, which indicates an object shaped to resemble the form or appearance of something or, in simple words, its *likeness*.[211] After asking people whose "image" (*eikon*) was on the denarius, Jesus advised them to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Matt 22:21). Some interpreters

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[210] John Chrysostom, *"Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel according to St. Matthew,"* in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. George Prevost and M. B. Riddle, vol. 10, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), 382.

[211] William Arndt and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 281.

perceive this passage as a definite or a possible reference to male and female being made in the image of God. An association with Caesar's image entails an obligation to Caesar; therefore, an association with God's image entails an obligation to God.[212] I. Howard Marshall and Robert Stein reject this view, stating that Jesus does not explicitly associate people with the image of God in this text. Therefore, one should be careful not to look for details regarding God's image here.[213] John Nolland suggests that Caesar has the right to the tax money stamped with his image and inscription, and, by implication, God has the right to human beings stamped with His image and inscription.[214] Jesus makes a subtle yet powerful contrast. Caesar's image is on the coin—therefore, he can lay a claim for money through taxation; however, God's image is on humanity, so He can lay a claim on each image-bearer. It is evident that this passage has some bearing upon the current study of male and female created in the image of God as a reflection of order and suitability. For it is with such inscriptions that God imprints His image on humanity with an impression that is neither made by hammer nor by chisel but by His divine wisdom. Just like Caesar required his image to be imprinted on every coin, God has chosen man, whom He has created to reflect "order and suitability" in the earth for His glory.

James 3:8–12

In line with the Old Testament use, the Book of James mentions the divine image as something implicit in the human condition. James 3:8–12 has an obvious connection to Genesis 1:26. Despite the horrendous corruption of man's inner life and outward behavior by the Fall

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[212] Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 98–99.

[213] I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke. New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 736.

[214] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 898.

(Gen 6:5), God's image continues to make human life sacred and far more valuable than that of any animal (9:5–6; James 3:9). The continuing image also provides an essential ground for submission to proper human authority (1 Cor 11:7). James 3:8–12 states:

> **8**But no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. **9**With it, we bless our Lord and Father, and with it, we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. **10**From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. **11**Does a spring pour forth from the same opening, both fresh and salt water? **12**Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

Here we see James' teaching on the difficulty of taming the tongue, thereby recognizing the tongue as a "restless evil" that both curses and blesses. James rebukes men for the inconsistency of blessing our "Lord and Father" while simultaneously cursing fellow humans who are made in the likeness of God. The text demonstrates the continuation of the image of God after the fall remains intact. I-Jin Loh points out a few things about James' concept related to the likeness of God. First, human beings are made in the "likeness" of God—the same term used by the Septuagint, which is translated as *demut* in Genesis 1:26, thereby rendering verse 9 to be a clear allusion to the Genesis text.[215] As one is in the image of God, we must be a source of "fresh water" as opposed to a curser, which reflects our Creator.

Anthony Hoekema offers a helpful recap of the significance of "likeness" γεγονότας concerning this text. He explains:

> The thrust of the Greek expression *kath' homoiosin theou gegontas* is this: human beings as here described have at some time in the past been made according to the likeness of God *and are still bearers of that likeness. For this reason,* it is inconsistent to praise God and curse men with the same tongue since the human creatures whom we curse still bear the likeness of God. *For this reason,* God is offended when we curse men.[216]

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[215] I-Jin Loh and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Letter from James*, *UBS Handbook Series* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 10.

[216] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 20.

While this text does not explicitly speak to what the image of God entails, James provides insights into some elements that comprise the divine image. Despite the fall of man into sin and misery, all human life is sacred. God created people of both distinct genders "in the image of God" (Gen 1:27), which affirms the ground of equality and equal dignity for men and women. It is a serious injustice to harm or abuse lives created in God's image. Hence, the line of argument seems to follow Genesis 9:6, which prohibited homicide based on God's image. This passage does not support the concept of male and female as reflecting order and suitability. The NT writer has not provided a specific commentary regarding what the image of God entails, even though he confirms that all human beings are image-bearers of God.

1 Corinthians 15:46–49

First Corinthians 15:46–49 directly references the image of God in humanity. Paul writes:

> **46**If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: **47**"The first man Adam became a living being," the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that, the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. **48**As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. **49**And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

In this paragraph, we grasp a full range of Paul's thoughts. He provides an anthropological view, making a distinction between "the first human being" Adam and "the second human being" Christ typology based on Genesis 2. Mark Taylor comments that the use of the Adam–Christ typology harks back to 15:21–22 and the designation of Adam as the representative head of old creation, through whom came death, and Christ as the representative man of the new creation, through whom comes the resurrection of the dead.[217] In Paul's

[217] Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 28, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2014), 408.

anthropology, it becomes clear that human beings have worn the image of the earthly human being, and only after the resurrection shall humanity completely wear the image of the heavenly human being.

Paul quotes Genesis 2:7b, "The first man Adam became a living being," and adds, "the last Adam, a life-giving spirit," to further explain the polarity between the natural body and the spiritual body. The connection of Paul's argument with the Genesis text is more apparent in Greek than in English, as the translated phrase "living being" (*zaō psychē*) corresponds to the description of the present earthly body as "natural" (*psychikos*). On the other hand, the phrase "life-giving spirit" describes the risen Christ, the last Adam, in his transformed state and corresponds to the description of the resurrection body as "spiritual." As with the term "spiritual," the word "spirit" does not mean "immaterial" but rather designates that which is the opposite of and belongs to a different order than the "natural." The modifier "life-giving" is a participle form of the verb meaning "to bring to life," which appears in 15:22 and 36.[218]

The comparison between Adam and Christ continues in 15:47–49 with a slight shift in the terminology—from "first Adam/last Adam" to the "first man/second man" and the "man from earth/man from heaven." Genesis 2:7 is still the background text, wherein "the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being," along with Genesis 5:3, which refers to Adam bearing a son in his own image.

The prepositional phrases "of the dust of the earth" and "from heaven" could either indicate the origin or the character of each representative man. Although the two are related, in context, the emphasis falls more on the latter; that is, the prepositional phrases "from earth" and

[218] Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 408.

"from heaven" are somewhat synonymous with "natural" and "spiritual" and carry a qualitative sense of "having to do with human life that is characterized by being either 'of earth' or 'of heaven.'" Humanity is marked by its relation to Adam or Christ. While God created man in His own image (Gen 1:26–27), the background text to 15:49 is most likely Genesis 5:3, which refers to Adam's descendants "in his own image." Humans continue to bear the image of God (Gen 9:6), even if altered by Adam's fall. The image of God "does not need to be regained, but to be perfectly restored/renewed."[219]

Finally, Paul's theology is that we will be like Christ at the resurrection; however, in our present existence, we should also strive to emulate Him in our daily lives. The 'image' (*eikon*) includes the whole person, and not just the body. As noted in Romans 13:14 and Galatians 3:27, we should emulate Christ in our behavior. In the "image" (*eikon*) of God, male and female reflect God both in terms of the spiritual body and the moral character. 1 Corinthians 15:46–49 contributes to the overall thesis that male and female created in the image of God is a reflection of order and suitability in design. For example, verses 48–49 apply the image of God concept in man, and Paul makes it clear that those who follow the man of dust would be like him, and those who follow the man of heaven would also be like Him. This suggests that when we follow Christ, the perfect image of God in humanity, we reflect order and suitability in design.

Colossians 1:15–20

In this passage of Scripture, Paul begins an investigation of the "image" (*eikon*) concept. He explicitly identifies Jesus as the image of God. Paul declares:

> **15**He is the image **(***eikon***)** of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16**For by him, all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or

[219] Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 408.

> dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17**And he is before all things, and in him, all things hold together. **18**And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything, he might be preeminent. **19**For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20**and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

This text is foundational to the New Testament concept of humanity, which states that the transformation into the image of Christ is the declaration that Christ is the image of God. In verse 15, Paul straightforwardly affirms that He, the Son of God in whom we have redemption, "is the image of the invisible God," thereby signaling a meaningful reflection of God. Jesus is the revealer of God to the world. In his Prologue (1:18), John wrote, "No one has ever seen God, but God, the only son, has made him known." Kilner points out that Paul connects the person of Jesus with the pre-incarnate Christ, God's 'beloved Son, in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins (v. 13–14). By doing this, Paul is identifying Jesus with God Himself. As the image and firstborn son, Christ is God at work in creation and redemption."[220] Thus, as Christ came in a fully human form (Heb 2:14–18), He simultaneously perfectly revealed the image of God to humanity. Hughes and Bray argue that this is a reference to Christ's deity.[221] In this context, it is likely, as verse 16 indicates, "by Christ, everything was created in heaven and on earth . . . all things were created through him and for him." The term "for him" means "for his glory"—everything is from Him, through Him, and for Him. In essence, male and female were created in the image of God for the display of His glory on the earth.

Here we see Jesus Christ is portrayed as the fullness of Godhead—not merely in His deity but also in His humanity. It is the person of Jesus Christ, and not only his divine or human nature but also the image of God. In verse 18, Herman Ridderbos references Christ as the

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[220] Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny,* 60.

[221] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 73.

"image" of God, as the "firstborn" of all creation, and "firstborn" from the dead constitutes obvious allusions to Genesis 1. The sense of depicting Christ as the second Adam in Colossians 1 differs from the references in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5. In the latter references, Christ is described as the second Adam who follows the first in the order of redemptive history. In Colossians 1, however, the second Adam is antecedent to the first.[222] Ridderbos proposes a double Adamitic significance to Christ, in which the redemptive significance of Christ as the second Adam is completed by the recognition of Christ as the pre-existent Son of God.[223]

According to N. T. Wright, humanity was created as the climax of the first creation (Gen 1:26–27). The true humanity of Jesus is the climax of the history of creation and the starting point of the new creation. From all eternity, Jesus had been the 'image of God' in his very nature, perfectly reflecting the character and life of the Father. Thus, it was appropriate for Him to be the 'image of God' as man and share the same relation with the Father that humanity had been intended to bear.[224]

Douglas Moo proposes that the connection between Colossians 1 and Genesis 1:27 leads many interpreters and commentators to perceive these passages as an echo of the Genesis passage.[225] The Genesis passage used the plural pronouns "us" and "our" in the phrase, "Let us make mankind in our image and our likeness," which points to the plurality in one God. Genesis 1:12 points to the Holy Spirit's inclusion in the plurality, whereas Colossians 1:15 indicates

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[222] Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: Are Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 78–85.

[223] Ibid.

[224] N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, *vol. 12, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 74–75.

[225] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 117.

Jesus' inclusion, as the pattern in which humans were made by the Triune God. He is the image, and humans are made according to the image.[226]

Bruce Ware elucidates further on the idea of Jesus as the image of God:

> Our Lord Jesus surely exhibited this expression of the image of God in His own human, earthly life. Made fully human and filled with the Holy Spirit, He was a fully faithful representation of God through His human and finite nature (as He was, of course, intrinsically and perfectly in His infinite divine nature). In relationship with God and others, He then sought fully and only to carry out the will of the Father who sent Him into the world. More than any other man, Jesus exhibited this as His uniform and constant desire. He represented God in word, attitude, thought, and action throughout the whole of His life and ministry. So the responsibilities God gave Him, He executed fully. Clearly, a functional holism was at work in Jesus as the image of God. As such, Jesus was in human nature the representation of God so that, in relation to God and others, He might represent God in fulfilling His God-given responsibilities as He functioned, always and only, to do the will of His Father. [227]

In short, humanity was designed to be God's vehicle to function in an orderly and appropriate manner to facilitate God's self-expression within His world. Jeffrey Lamp made an interesting observation in this context, noting that several scholars perceive wisdom as the fabric of thought from which Colossians1:15–20 flows. There are several parallels between Colossians1:15–20 and wisdom both in terminological and conceptual areas (Prov 8:22–30; Wis 7:22, 9:9; Sir 1:4, 24:9, 43:26).[228] Paul Davies notes that wisdom is used in Colossians 1:15–20 to describe Christ in his creative role.[229] These verses contribute to the thesis that male and female in the image of God reflect "order and suitability," as the passage does not present a series of merely propositional statements of metaphysical reality. Instead, it utilizes the full

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[226] Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 118.

[227] Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God," 7: 14–23.

[228] Jeffrey Lamp, "Wisdom in Col 1:15–20: Contribution and Significance." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 41* (1998): 45–53.

[229] Paul Davies, 152. Pollard ("Col 1:12–20" 574) says as much when he suggests that in Col 1:15–20 Paul may be expounding upon 1 Cor 8:6, where wisdom categories are used to describe Christ in his creative role, and upon 1 Cor 1:24, 30, where Christ is called of God in his redemptive role.

scope of the wisdom framework as a communication vehicle to present Christ in his preeminence in terms of his creative and redemptive significance. More specifically, as the writer of Proverbs informs us, Wisdom was God's first creative act—at the "beginning of his work" (Prov 8:22b). Therefore, we can conclude that wisdom is essential for creation to function properly.

Colossians 3:9–10

All human beings are made in the image of God. There are no biblical grounds for excluding anyone. The process of being transformed into the image of God is further elucidated in Colossians 3:9–10: "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." The last phrase clearly echoes Genesis 1:26–27; here again, Paul engages in intertextual interpretation. Paul instructs that the process of being transformed into the "image" (*eikon*) of Christ is performed through the 'putting off the old self,' which literally translates to 'sinful human nature.' The 'old self' is decidedly different than the 'new self;' humanity is renewed in Christ. All those with this new nature can be corporately referred to as one new man.[230] Kilner points out that "the distinctive feature of that new humanity is that the power of sin has been broken in Christ." Paul reminds Christians that they have taken off the old humanity, that is, the covering of sin that defined who they were and how they lived, which prevented them from being who God intended them to be at creation. They clothed themselves with the new humanity in its place.[231]The work of Christ supersedes the power of sin and allows humanity to be transformed into His perfect image.

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[230] Martha King, *An Exegetical Summary of Colossians* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 245.

[231] Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny,* 253.

When referring to the new man, Paul does not indicate a new physical being but rather an immaterial entity. Therefore, this passage does not essentially support the thesis that male and female are created in the image of God as a reflection of order and suitability, because being renewed in Christ, who created us, is not necessarily something that results in a distinction between the compatibility of male and female. This is because there is neither male nor female in Christ. Genesis 2:7 gives us a very personal account of how God made the first man when it says: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The text emphasizes that man's physical origin can be traced to inanimate materials that are found in the soil on the earth's surface.

Ephesians 4:22–24

We also see the idea found in Colossians 3:9–10 being alluded in Ephesians 4:22–24. Here Paul urges:

> **22**That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, **23**and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, **24**and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

The use of creation language and the parallel with Colossians 3:10 makes it likely that the phrase "according to God" refers to the divine image. As in Colossians, Paul contrasts this renewed image with "deceitful lusts" in Ephesians 4:22 and connects it to "righteousness and true holiness" (v. 24), which literally means "righteousness and piety of truth." God had determined to establish His image on the earth from the beginning, and His intention has been realized through Jesus Christ. Both the Ephesians and Colossians passages teach that the *telos* of Jesus' redemption make us more like God, precisely, more like Christ—the perfect image of

God.[232] As it pertains to the divine image in humanity, these passages explain that the old humanity has been stripped off, and the new humanity has been put on. This refers to Christ as the prototype of the new humanity, which is created 'with God' (*kata theos*) in righteousness and holiness.[233] As Harold Hoehner comments, the new man has been identified as one characterized by righteousness, which has its source in truth. The new man is completely different from the old man, whose desires and lifestyles have their source in deception.[234] As the new creation in God's likeness, believers are to be righteous as He is righteous and holy as He is holy. Likewise, Peter O'Brien explains the theological rationale of the text, stating that God is not only the author of this mighty work but also, ultimately, the pattern or model of the new creation. The new humanity is created to be like God, as it is patterned after God. This is because the spirit of the mind is renewed according to the truth.[235]

Paul continues in the next chapter: "Therefore be imitators of God" (5:1). In other words, Paul says that when we follow the example of Christ, our destiny is the reflection of God-glorifying attributes, as we are created "according to God's" (*kata theon*) standards. Living in righteousness and holiness and not tampering with the things that God created is a summary statement of what living in accordance with God's intentions entails. It is "according to God" in that this same pair of traits is connected with God in the Old Testament—"His work is perfect" (Deut 32:4).[236]

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[232] Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny,* 253.

[233] Glenn Graham, *An Exegetical Summary of Ephesians* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2008), 374.

[234] Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 613.

[235] Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,1999), 332.

[236] Kilner, Dignity and Destiny, 263.

In sum, the theological claims concerning the likeness of God in Ephesians 4:22–24 parallel the image of God in Colossians 3:9–10, which allude to Genesis 1:26–28 to suggest that Christ leads the new humanity in "filling" everything. The new humanity reflects "order and suitability," which follows the pattern of Christ's humanity as the image and likeness of God. God intends humanity to fulfill what God had in mind when He created humanity in the first place according to the divine image.[237] Hence, when we interfere with or alter human identity, which God has created in His image as perfect, we fail to glorify our Creator.

2 Corinthians 3:18

Here again, we see that 2 Corinthians 3:18 contains similar material as Colossians 3:9–10 and Ephesians 4:22–24. However, special emphasis is placed upon the roles of the Son and the Holy Spirit in relation to the transformation of the new humanity:

> **18**And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Paul teaches that through the ongoing work of Christ's salvation, humanity is currently being conformed to His image from one degree of glory to another. While the passage does not explicitly state what is involved in the process of being transformed into the image, it affirms that this transformation is facilitated through the work of God—specifically, through the working power of the Holy Spirit. Murray Harris made an interesting observation concerning 2 Corinthians 3:18. He stated that God's action in the world is known in Jesus Christ, who is the image of God—Christ both shares and expresses God's nature.[238] David Garland comments that

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[237] Kilner, Dignity and Destiny, 264–265.

[238] Murray Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

we can never encounter God and remain unchanged. Beholding this glory affects our transformation, as we are changed into a veritable likeness of Him. In 1 Cor 11:7, Paul refers to man as "the image and glory of God" (see Gen 1:26–27; 5:1; Wis 2:23; Sir 17:3).[239] The work of the Holy Spirit reveals Christ in a way that makes us like Him. When the Holy Spirit pulls aside the veil of our hardness, what we see in the Word is God's very "glory." The Holy Spirit makes all relationships possible and guides every human being toward God. This passage seems to support the relational concept, as the Holy Spirit provides the means by which human beings commune with God and one another.

2 Corinthians 4:4–6

Another example of the New Testament verses that explicitly identifies Christ as the "image" (*eikon*) of God is found in 2 Corinthians 4:4–6. Here the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, is further elucidated. Paul writes:

> **4**whose minds the God of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. **5**For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. **6**For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Paul explains that Christ is the image of God—the one in whom the "glory" (*doxa*) of God is known. This further enlightens the meaning of Corinthians 3:18, which states that the Lord's glory is beheld. According to Stanley Grenz, two significant clauses within 2 Corinthians 4:4–6 implicitly affirm the Christological fulfillment of the divine image. The first is the reference to Christ, who is "the image of God." Grenz notes that this is an "implicit allusion" to the creation narrative and Genesis 1:26–27, specifically. The second allusion is found in 4:6

[239] David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, *vol. 29, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 200.

("Let light shine out of darkness"), with Paul referencing Genesis 1:3.[240] Grenz's "implicit allusion" to Genesis 1 is hermeneutically appropriate.[241] G. K. Beale agrees with Grenz and points out that the terms "image of God" and "light shine out of darkness" are clearly allusions to Genesis 1, and the creation narrative provides information that ties back to the Genesis narrative. This new information indicates a Christological reorientation even though it is not the primary issue Paul addresses in the passage.[242]

Like Grenz, Beale points out that Paul stresses that the gospel concerns "the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God" and believes that this may be an allusion to the creation of man in Genesis 1:26 ('Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'). Paul also speaks of Christ as the 'last Adam,' comparing and contrasting him with the 'first Adam' (1 Cor 15:45–49). He goes on to say that they may also be an allusion to Israel's wisdom literature, for their Wisdom is personified and her glories celebrated: "For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness" (Wisdom of Solomon 7:26). The fact that elsewhere Paul ascribes to Christ that role in creation, which Israel's wisdom literature ascribes to Wisdom, strengthens the possibility of such an allusion (cf. Prov 8:22–31 and Col 1:15–20). Bringing the two possible allusions together, it has been suggested that, for Paul, Christ is the likeness of God after the fashion of Adam as far as his humanity is concerned and after the fashion of Wisdom as far as his transcendence is concerned.[243]

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[240] Grenz, "Social God, Relational Self," *Horizons,* 44.

[241] Ibid.

[242] G.K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 31.

[243] Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 8, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 104.

Furthermore, Kilner emphasizes that verse 6 explains the "glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." As Christ is God's image, God and Christ are so closely associated that the glory of one is essentially the glory of the other. As the image of God, Christ is the expression, revelation, and very presence of God.[244] Essentially, Paul seems to indicate that Christ, as God's image, is the greatest manifestation of God's glory—a visible expression or reflection of who God is and the magnificence of the very attributes of God. We can, therefore, conclude that 4:6 is an allusion to the creation of male and female as a couple, which is created in God's image and commanded to multiply and dominate creation, which comprises the overarching theme of Genesis 1:26–28. Therefore, this passage supports the concept of dominion.

Romans 8:29

Romans 8:29 speaks to the image being a part of the redemption process. Paul looks ahead to the completion of all things in the new heaven and new earth and writes, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." When we examine the text, we see Paul's rich concept of conformity to the image of God's Son. As the second Adam, Christ is the head of the new humanity. Therefore, just as Adam shares the image with his descendants, Christ shares the image with those of us who are 'in Christ.' Both Romans and 2 Corinthians teach that humanity is currently being conformed to His image through the ongoing work of Christ's salvation. Although these passages do not speak directly to what is involved in the process of being transformed into the image; however, the text affirms that this transformation is propelled by the work of God, specifically, the Holy Spirit. Kilner believes that Paul signals the crucial importance of the image concept in this text by interrupting his summary description of what

[244] Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 62.

God has done for Christians (foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified) with an explanation of the central role that the image of Christ plays in this context. Christians become the human image of God in Christ by being conformed to Christ.[245]

Beeke concludes that the image of God spans history from creation to new creation and sums up the destiny of man in Christ. It is a glorious image, an image of sonship, and the image of Christ. Therefore, the biblical theme of God's image draws our hearts upward to Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God. It is not merely about our past and present but the future of the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.[246] Theologically, this is fitting, as Jesus is the perfect image of God. Jesus is the fulfillment of male and female, and as human beings progressively conform to the image of Christ, their identities are also realized in him.

1 Corinthians 11:7

First Corinthians 11:7 is another New Testament text that directly alludes to Genesis 1:26–28. Paul writes, "A man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man." As in 11:3, Paul's argument derives from the larger biblical framework involving the husband's relation to God and the wife's relation to her husband according to the creation narratives of Genesis 1:26–27 and 2:18–23. By design, men and women have distinct origins and were created for unique purposes. The Genesis account affirms that the woman was created from the man's rib, and she was created for him. In stating that men are the image and glory of God, Paul does not indicate that women were not created in the image of God. The problem faced by modern interpreters is that Paul only mentions that man is in the image of God, but "woman is the glory of man." The prioritization of men over women

[245] Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 62.

[246] Beeke, *Reformed Systematic Theology, 223*.

appears to be interpreted by many scholars and theologians as Paul's understanding of Genesis 2:7–23. As the argument shows, Paul's concern is that both the man and the woman are the glory of one another. Genesis 1:27 affirms that all humans bear the image of their maker (cf. 1 Cor 15:49). Paul's point seems to be that only man is the direct creation of God, as the woman is "from the man" (Gen 2:18–23).[247]

There is a big difference between saying that women are not in the image of God and not mentioning that women are made in God's image. According to Jouette Bassler, Paul does not deny that women are created in God's image; however, in this text, he does not affirm it either.[248] As a result, his silence leaves room for assumptions. Within the context of broader Pauline writing, Paul taught that both men and women were created in the image of God. This is affirmed in Galatians 3:27–28, where Paul proclaimed, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Thus, we know that for Paul, "race, social status, and gender do not form barriers between Christians."[249] Jonathan Parnell proposes that this text does not mean that the gospel wipes out manhood and womanhood, but what it does mean is that our fundamental reality in life is our identity in Jesus Christ.[250] In Christ, there is no confusion between manhood and womanhood.

How does one interpret 1Corinthians 11:7? Philip Hughes argues that this text is unrelated to a theology of the *imago Dei.*[251] Sherlock suggests that, given the context of the

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[247] Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, 262.

[248] Jouette M. Bassler, *1 Corinthians,* in *Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. Carol A. Newsom, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, and Sharon H. Ringe, Revised and Updated; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 562.

[249] Sherlock, *Doctrine of Humanity,* 51.

[250] Jonathan Parnell & Owen Strachan, *Designed for Joy: How the Gospel Impacts Men and Women, Identity and Practice (*Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2015), 15.

[251] Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 22–24.

Book of 1 Corinthians, Paul primarily calls for a semblance of clarity and recognition between the two sexes. Within this text, Paul does not deny that a woman is made in the image of God. Instead, Paul adds that a woman is additionally the glory of man.[252] Kilner elaborates on this, stating:

> Paul does affirm that men are God's image, but he does not say that only men are involved in the image and glory of God. He affirms this status of men and then makes a different affirmation of women—that a woman is a glory of man. The contrast here between men and women involves glory only, with the understanding that God's image encompasses both male and female being so obvious from Genesis 1:27 that Paul does not need to restate the woman's image status here.[253]

Thus, Parnell wisely states that godly men love the glory of women because women's glory is their glory. He goes on to say that too often, the magnification of the virtues of one sex leads to the denigration of the other. However, God designed masculinity and femininity to complement one another. Therefore, there is no godly masculinity wherein feminine virtue is not celebrated. This means that we can measure a man's faithfulness by the flourishing or glory of the woman. Thus, the fruitfulness of the wife and children is evidence of God's blessing on the husband.[254]

This passage makes a tremendous contribution, supporting the concept of male and female created in the image of God as a reflection of "order and suitability" in design. God created man and woman equally, sharing the same dignity, value, and human nature. Paul's point is that God designed the sexes keeping in mind different and specific roles that they need to fulfill within His created order. This functional difference places man as the head of the household, who protects and cares for the family. On the other hand, women are intended to

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[252] Sherlock, *Doctrine of Humanity,* 51.

[253] Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 94.

[254] Parnell and Strachan, *Designed for Joy, 39.*

honor their husbands while acknowledging the equality in which they were created. However, in instances where these roles are not recognized, our functioning as the image of God is hampered and diminished. Male and female bear and express God's image as they function in a manner that acknowledges God's order and suitability on the earth.

Hebrews 1:3

The Hebrews writer develops the image of God concept in a very similar way. God's purpose in the redemption of Jesus Christ is such that the repentant is conformed to the image of His Son, who is the "exact imprint of God's very being." Michael Heiser comments that the writer of Hebrews uses the exact verbiage, referring to Jesus as "the express (*charaktēr*) image of God" (Heb 1:3). As humans gave visible form to God, so Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). Jesus was truly incarnate, as he became human to atone for humankind and serve as an example for humankind (Phil 2:6–10; 1 Pet 2:21).[255] According to Ramsey Michaels' interpretation of the verse, the English translation of the phrase "the very character of God" cites Genesis 1:26–27 in connection with the creation of humans, whom God formed "in the likeness of his own image."[256] Michaels' interpretation of the passage is a boon to my thesis, for he has shed light on the fact that the "express image of God" is linked to male and female created in the image of God. Male and female is an exact expression or image of God. In essence, the human soul is stamped and marked with the seal of God.

Heiser went on to say that these New Testament passages convey that Jesus was the image of God. As Jesus imaged God, we must image Jesus. In so doing, we fulfill the rationale behind our creation. This process is gradual: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the

[255] Heiser and Barry et al., *Image of God.*

[256] Ramsey J. Michaels, *"Commentary on Hebrews,"* in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews*, vol. 17 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2009), 327–328.

glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).[257] As Warren Wiersbe states, putting 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:15, and Hebrews 1:3 together, we perceive Jesus as the fullness of the image of God.[258] Calvin also agrees that we see the perfect image of God in these passages.[259]

1 John 3:2

Bearing the image of Christ is an eschatological concept; it contains elements both of the now and the not yet. 1 John 3:2 reads, "We are God's children now, but it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him." This excerpt pertains to the idea of being remade in the likeness of God when He is revealed to us. The text also builds on the work of Genesis 1:26. I. Howard Marshall points out that the effect of seeing Jesus is to make us like him, just as a mirror reflects the image of the person in front of it.[260] Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."

1 John 3:2 is similar to Genesis 1:26–28; the subject of both texts is humanity in relation to God, in general, and God's self-revelation, in particular. In Genesis 1, the relationship between God and humanity is illustrated through dominion. God created and ruled over all things, and the principal teaching is that God's earthly image of male and female will reflect who He is as affirmed in creation as "order and suitability" in design. In Genesis 1, male and female

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[257] Michaels, *"Commentary on Hebrews,"* 327–328.

[258] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor Books,1989), 2:116.

[259] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:165.

[260] I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 173.

are given dominion over the earth because God's dominion over all things had been revealed by the fact that God created male and female in His image. Likewise, in 1 John 3:2, the fullness of humanity will be known when God in Jesus is perceived through divine revelation. 1 John 3:2 supports the concept of dominion, as God created humanity with specific abilities and attributes, which are necessary to be a reflection of His image to fulfill the created order.

Revelation

The term "image" (*eikon*) in the Book of Revelation does not necessarily point us in the direction of the idea that male and female created in the image of God is a reflection of order and suitability. However, the term "image" (*eikon*) indeed reflects the prohibition of images found in Deuteronomy 5:8 and Exodus 20:4. John refers to the image of the beast seven times in the text. In his apocalyptic worldview, John divided those who worship the Lamb (Jesus Christ) from those who worship the image of the beast. John views the image of the beast as the mark of Roman imperial rule and economic oppression. The author of the Apocalypse, Philo, in his political writings, describes early Jewish struggles with the image of the emperor, in general, and with the ruler cult, in particular, contextualizing both in terms of Gaius Caligula's maniacal drive to erect his image in the Jerusalem Temple and the erection of other rulers' images in Diaspora synagogues. The purpose of John's vision is to urge his audience to remain steadfast in their worship and obedience to God and resist the image of the beast. In this case, according to John, the image of the beast symbolizes all that stands in opposition to the glory of God.[261]

The use of the term *eikon* in the epistles of Paul and writers in the Pauline tradition differs significantly from the way in which John uses the term in the Apocalypse. Drawing on

[261] Heiser and Barry et al., *Image of God*.

the creation story of Genesis 1:27–28, Paul displays many similarities to Philo's Middle Platonic understanding of *eikon*. Instead of referring to an idol, which symbolizes an oppressive power, the image of God in Paul describes the intimate relationship between God and God's human creatures.[262]

In sum, the significance of the image of God in the New Testament is far-reaching. As Wayne Grudem states, "as we reflect on the excellence of all the rest of God's creation: the starry universe, the abundant earth, the world of plants and animals, and the angelic kingdoms are remarkable, even magnificent, but we are more like our Creator than any of these things." [263] Finally, the more we understand God, the more we will realize that we are made in His image as a reflection of His intended "order and suitability" in design.

Christological and Eschatological Interpretations

In many instances throughout the Scriptures, Paul alludes to the Genesis account in such a way that he reveals the mission of the Messiah is to restore original righteousness and holiness to mankind.[264] Jesus Christ is the true image of God (*eikon tou theou*, 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), not in a derived sense but the "very image of his substance (Heb 1:3); demonstrating for mankind what God's holy character is like." Robert Culver believes that "in His last redemptive work…He made it possible for human beings to recover the lost moral likeness which was possessed by the man of paradise but lost wholly in the fall."[265]

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[262] Heiser and Barry et al., *Image of God*.

[263] Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000).

[264] Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2005).

[265] Ibid.

According to C. F. H. Henry, the modern Christological and eschatological interpretations indicate the restoration of the image of God in humanity, as the promises of Christ include the redeemed man's conformity to the image of the Son.[266] Barth explains that only through the study of Christ can humans truly understand humanity, for true uncorrupted human nature can only be found in Jesus, who symbolizes the fullest illustration of God's revelation to man.[267] Eric Flett proposes that Thomas Torrance's theological anthropology understood the *imago Dei* to be "…a dynamic and relational reality that not only is given in the interpersonal structure of humanity but is reflected in humanity's response to activity with God and other persons in the context of the created world."[268] Finally, Hoekema points out that the eschatological interpretation of the image of God in the New Testament is the final goal of human sanctification—when they shall be totally like God and shall perfectly image God. All believers are increasingly invoked to imitate God and Christ, who is the perfect image of God.[269]

Conclusion

This chapter analyzes how the New Testament Scriptures present the idea of the image of God, which cannot ignore the example of Jesus Christ, who incarnated and became the perfect image of God in human form—truly God and truly human. The idea of the phrase "image of God" is understood differently in the New Testament, as the anthropological concepts in the New Testament are rarely explicit. Nevertheless, Paul and many New Testament writers were great interpreters of Genesis 1:26–28 and its implications for Christians. They charted a path to

[266] C. F. H. Henry, "Image of God." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd edition (ed. Walter A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 592.

[267] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 185.

[268] Eric G. Flett, "Priests of Creation, Mediators of Order: The Human Person as a Cultural Being in Thomas F. Torrance's Theological Anthropology." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58, no.2 (Jun 2005): 172.

[269] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 30.

aid us in understanding the use of the phrase "image of God" in the New Testament. The New Testament theology depicts Jesus not as one created in the image of God but as God's image who appears in creation.

Paul identifies Jesus as the image of God in two passages (Col 1:15 and 2 Cor 4:4). Christ, however, far exceeds Adam and all mankind in glory, for he is God's eternal and coequal image and the Creator of all things. Furthermore, Paul views all human beings as made in the image of God (1 Cor 11:7, parallel with Gen 1:26–27 and 9:6). Here, Paul uses the term "image" by alluding to the text of Genesis 1:27 in terms of male and female as a couple created in God's image and commanded to multiply and have dominion over creation. In addition, Paul has a vision for the gradual transformation of believers into the image of God from the lens of the "already/not yet" eschatological tension (Col 3:9–10; Eph 4:22–24; 2 Cor 3:18). God renews His image from glory to glory through the spiritual union of the sinners with Christ. Lastly, Paul also looks forward to the completion of the believers' transformation into the image of Christ during the resurrection (1 Cor 15:49 and Rom 8:29).[270] Finally, more than any other writer, Paul, in his theology, shows that the Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, is the true image of God (Col 1:15). To be male or female is to be created in the image of God, irrespective of age, race, creed, or character.

We now turn to Chapter five to develop the "order and suitability" in design concept as a reflection of the aspect of creation. It will become more apparent as we explore the "order and suitability" concept that when we find our proper place in God's design of things, we reflect who God is as the Creator.

[270] D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992).

CHAPTER 5

THE IMAGE OF GOD AS ORDER AND SUITABILITY IN DESIGN

The creation account in Genesis 1–2 highlights the "order and suitability" of design as a hallmark of creation. It testifies to the wisdom of the Creator. Jeremiah 51:15 states, "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding." God's divine design neither confines nor discriminates; it is beautiful, wise, proper, and very good. Stephen Charnock compared God's creation design to the skillful crafting of a musical instrument that is tuned to play beautiful music.[271]

In this chapter, I will offer an alternative within the framework of how we might understand the image of God, as seen in "male and female," as a reflection of "order and suitability" in design. The "order and suitability" in design concept provides the necessary conceptual tools to understand the image of God concept better. First, I will explain the terms "order" and "suitability" and describe how these terms apply to the image of God as reflected by both sexes (male and female).

Second, I will investigate the presence and significance of the creation motifs and ideological elements in "Wisdom literature" (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job), which is also present in Genesis 1–2. This information will help provide a theological framework for understanding what wisdom says about God's creation, in particular, the creation of both male and female in His image. Old Testament scholarship generally recognizes that wisdom theology informs us about Genesis and the creation of male and female in the image of God. A prominent scholar on this topic, Leo Perdue, notes that in the context of Wisdom literature, we see the

[271] Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2010), 179.

theme of "God's wisdom as the divine capacity to design, form, and order creation and to rule providentially; over what has been brought forth into being."[272]

Third, I will examine the theme of creation and the terminology that connects passages from the "Wisdom literature" with creation terminology predominantly found in Genesis 1–2. For example, the writer of Proverbs states that Wisdom is the firstborn of creation (Prov 8:22–26); she helped God in creation. Indeed, she called herself the architect of creation (v 30). The poet in Job chapter 28 asserts that wisdom is the logic by which God created the world. On the other hand, Ecclesiastes maintains that the three-fold interrelationship of the divine, human, and earth characterizes other parts of the Wisdom literature. All things are made in wisdom, for they are all made to answer the end they were designed to serve, which is the good of the universe. The psalmist surveys God's provision of water and food for the various plants, animals, and men. He breaks into wonder at the works of God: "O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom, you made them all" (Ps 104:24).

Common Use of "Order"

The Oxford English Dictionary includes many definitions of the word "order." Although I have included three definitions here, the first two are most important for this study. 1.a. The way in which people or things are placed or arranged in relation to each other. 1.b. A state in which everything is in its correct or appropriate place. 1.c. A state in which the laws and rules regulating the public behavior of members of a community are observed and authority is obeyed. God placed and arranged things in an orderly manner in the creation narrative because He is a God of order, and not of disorder. Creation is not haphazard; it is very much a reflection of a

[272] Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom & Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 326.

God of order. This idea is further elaborated in the second definition. In Genesis 1–2, God makes everything in its correct or appropriate place. For example, in Genesis 1:26, God declares humanity's particular existence, and in Genesis 2:7, 21–22, this particular existence is created. Male and female, by design, reflect God's order in design.

Common Use of "Suitability"

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "suitability" as the quality of being right or appropriate for a particular person, purpose, or situation. The synonyms of suitability in this context include fitness, appropriateness, worthiness, desirability, eligibility, acceptability, rightness, agreement, adequacy, propriety, and suitableness. In the creation narrative, God created everything that is right, appropriate, and suitable for a particular purpose and situation. God created "male and female," not as something else. There is intentionality, wisdom, and purpose in the creation of Adam and Eve. We perceive "suitability" in the creation of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:7, 21–22) and Genesis 2:19–20 when Adam names the animals, "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and the fowl of the air, and to every beast." It is noteworthy that Adam did not name the animals randomly; he gave them names suitable to their character.

Now that we have defined the meaning of "order" and "suitability," we will begin our study of the Book of Proverbs and then move to Ecclesiastes and Job to examine the theological connection between Wisdom literature and Genesis 1–2, wherein the creation of male and female as a reflection of the "image of God" has been outlined.

Creation Motifs in the Book of Proverbs

This section will review the biblical evidence offered to vindicate the thesis that male and female created in the image of God is a reflection of divine "order and suitability" within the

design of creation as it unfolds in Wisdom literature. The most penetrating contribution to the theology of creation is found in the personification of wisdom and its connection to creation. The Bible describes a person who navigates life well as "wise." A wise person knows the right time to speak, the right time to apply the principles of the Bible, and, more importantly, to live life with incredible boldness despite inevitable difficulties. God's design of things in creation is a part of His Wisdom, thereby suggesting a more significant concept than just the fact that God created male and female in His image. David Firth echoes this thought by stating that there is an order and pattern to creation, which is known to wisdom. Proverbs 8:24–29 presents this in terms of the physical creation. However, what wisdom says about herself in moral terms in 8:7–8 and the fact that she delights in creation implies a moral pattern and purpose. By being acquainted with Wisdom and heeding her instruction, humans can live in harmony with God's order.[273]

In the Book of Proverbs, a significant number of texts address aspects of creation theology, which, in turn, indicates that the author knew about the creation account of Genesis 1–2. In a unique way, the Book of Proverbs develops the role of wisdom in the creation of the world. It also enriches the Genesis account by taking us into the thoughts of the Creator. The new element carefully developed in Proverbs 8 is that God created the universe through wisdom. We see this stated very early in Proverbs 3 that wisdom was the agent of creation: "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding, He established the heavens" (3:19; Gen 1:1).

The intertextual connection between Proverbs 8:22–31 and Genesis 1–2 has been a topic of interest among scholars. The key topic of creation in verses 22–31 stresses the authority of wisdom as the mediator between God and the world, an authority communicated with the origin of the cosmos, and the integral involvement of wisdom in creation. These verses have been the

[273] Firth, *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom*, 58.

subject of much scholarly discussion and, therefore, need some unpacking. I contend that this passage is central to understanding the author's perspective on the creative order in which male and female by design reflect God's "order and suitability," which results in a tremendous appreciation of human existence. The text reads (in the NLT translation):

> **22** The Lord formed me from the beginning,
> before he created anything else.
> **23** I was appointed in ages past,
> at the very first, before the earth began.
> **24** I was born before the oceans were created,
> before the springs bubbled forth their waters.
> **25** Before the mountains were formed,
> before the hills, I was born—
> **26** Before he had made the earth and fields
> and the first handfuls of soil.
> **27** I was there when he established the heavens,
> when he drew the horizon on the oceans.
> **28** I was there when he set the clouds above,
> when he established springs deep in the earth.
> **29** I was there when he set the limits of the seas,
> so they would not spread beyond their boundaries.
> And when he marked off the earth's foundations,
> **30** I was the architect at his side.
> I was his constant delight,
> rejoicing always in his presence.
> **31** And how happy I was with the world he created;
> how I rejoiced with the human family!

Verse 22 begins with an allusion to the creation narrative of Genesis 1 through the word "beginning," when it states, "The Lord formed me from the beginning before he created anything else." The meaning of the verb "me" (*qānâ)* is a key component of the interpretation of the whole passage. Here, the verse describes God's creation of wisdom as His first creative activity in the world and the pattern by which it was created. This verb has been primarily interpreted as acquire, possess, or create. William Irwin proposes another meaning, "to be, or become, parent

of."[274] He points to Eve's giving birth to Cain, which could hardly mean "create," as mothers do not "create" their children.[275] Michael Fox has argued that while both "acquire" and "create" are legitimate translation values, "possess" is not. He believes that the word's lexical meaning indicates "acquire" and "one way something can be acquired is by creation." Although the English word "acquire" seems to imply that its object existed beforehand, this is not necessarily the case for Hebrew *qānâ.* This semantic opposition may be unnecessary, as the meaning "to create" for this root word has been well established in both the Old Testament and extra-biblical literature.[276] Matthew McAffee further argues that the meaning "acquire" is more likely a semantic development of "create," as the act of creating grants the Creator ownership of his creation.[277]

Another important term for understanding this passage is the word "beginning" (*rēʾšîṯ)*. Contextually, the sense of most naturally means "beginning" and not simply "the first" or "foremost (act)," as some commentators have suggested. Irwin argues that the origin of Wisdom long preceded the creation of heaven and earth "in the beginning," which stresses a "sharp contrast" between them.[278] Contrary to Irwin's reasoning, the point of the passage is to establish Wisdom's pre-existence in the created order, which *rēʾšîṯ* essentially does. George Landes interprets the word here in Proverbs 8 in light of his assumptions about the meaning of *rēʾšîṯ* in Genesis 1:1, also preferring "first" or "foremost" over "beginning." He explains: "I am unaware of any creation tradition within Israel or elsewhere in the ancient Near East which refers to an

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[274] William A. Irwin, "Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?" *JBL* 80 (1961): 133–42.

[275] Ibid, 135.

[276] Michael Fox, *Proverbs 1–9,* AB 18A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 279.

[277] Matthew McAffee. "Creation and the Role of Wisdom in Proverbs 8: What Can We Learn?" Welch College, Gallatin, TN, *STR* 10.2 (FAU 2019): 31–57.

[278] Irwin, "Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?" 140.

absolute beginning—that is, a beginning of all things, including the gods."[279] The uniqueness of this concept in the ancient world leads Landes to reject the word "beginning" as a likely translation. Roland Murphy, however, believes that "beginning" should be the preferred translation, arguing that the "beginning of the Lord's ways would mean that Woman Wisdom is the firstborn, and therefore preexistent before anything else, despite the various translations."[280] He also suggests that this could be a reference to Genesis 1:1, taking into consideration the parallels between these two passages.[281] Similarly, William McKane rejects Irwin's proposal, instead favoring "first of his ways," which signifies the "first of his creative modes."[282] We can conclude from the verse that God created Wisdom in the beginning of His creative activities, before the works of old.

In verse 23, Tremper Longman suggested that this magnificent poem indicates that God created the cosmos by virtue of His age-old wisdom. It is a powerful metaphor that affirms that God's wisdom preceded every other thing in creation.[283] Walter Kaiser also comments that Wisdom claims to have been present at creation; indeed, she claims to have functioned as one of the means by which Yahweh created the world.[284] Here, Wisdom recalls her partnership with God which began at daybreak, from the start of the primeval times of the earth.

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[279] George M. Landes. "Creation Tradition in Proverbs 8:22–31 and Genesis 1," in *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Meyers,* ed. Howard N. Bream et al., Gettysburg Theological Studies 4 (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1974), 287.

[280] Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs,* WBC 22 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 52.

[281] Ibid, 48.

[282] William McKane. *Proverbs,* The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 354.

[283] Tremper Longman, III, *How to Read Proverbs* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 2002), 105.

[284] Walter C. Kaiser. "Integrating Wisdom Theology into Old Testament Theology: Ecclesiastes 3:10–15," in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer* ed. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Ronald F. Youngblood (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 206.

Perdue helps to set the scene further, "Wisdom is the firstborn, the first and best, of all the things formed and brought into existence."[285] Wisdom is given legitimacy and authority at the cosmic or creation-wide level. Additionally, the language found in the formulas "when there were *no*…" or "before" (8:24–26) followed by the affirmative "when" (8:27–29) reveals a two-fold cosmic understanding. First, order is introduced, not *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) but instead into a formless chaos. This point means that God brings form to a primordial state of disorder. Second, creation has a three-dimensional structure (earth, the oceans, and the heavens), where the earthen mountains act as pillars above the oceans (the deep), and the heavens hold back the waters above.[286] Most importantly, the sage here understands that the world is clearly and carefully ordered and secured.[287]

An intriguing point in verse 26 is wisdom's claim to be older than the "dust of the world." Although this could be simply taken at face value, allusions to the creation story in context imply that this is a veiled reference to the formation of Adam from the dust (Gen 2:7). The Hebrew reads, "Before he made … the head of the dusts of the world." In Genesis 1–2, "dust" is only associated with the creation of humanity. There is no account of the creation of dust itself. The "dusts of the world" is humanity, formed of the dust, and its head is Adam. The term "dust" also indicates our fragility and mortality and implies that the decision to accept or reject wisdom is a life-or-death choice. When God cursed Adam, He told him that he was but dust and would return to the dust (Gen 3:19). This concept frequently reappears in biblical wisdom, where "dust" represents human mortality. The frailty associated with being human only

[285] Perdue, *Wisdom & Creation,* 90.

[286] Ibid, 90–91.

[287] Ibid.

increases our need for wisdom. Wisdom was here before us or our world.[288] Male and female, as dust, created in the image of God, is a part of the created world and cannot live in a manner that is contrary to the order and design by which the world was created. Ultimately, by Wisdom, the formless, chaotic dust became Adam, who, in turn, fathered the human race. This point is key in understanding the important role played by wisdom as the "handmaiden" of creation. Wisdom instilled elements of order, design, and suitability within creation.

In verses 8:27–29, the narrative focuses on wisdom's claims to have been present at creation. Wisdom specifically points to two of the most spectacular aspects of creation, namely the making of the heavens and the placing of restraints over the power of the sea (Gen 1:1–10). This carries two implications. First, if Wisdom played an integral role in these two most extraordinary works of God, then Wisdom must be present if human endeavors are to succeed. Second, if the very universe is made in accordance with the principles of Wisdom, it is folly for anyone to live in a manner that is contrary to those principles.[289]

The iconic Biblical scholar Gerhard von Rad also perceives the mention of wisdom in these passages as significant in the ordering of creation. Fox, in his writing, summarizes von Rad's position on seeing wisdom "as the primeval order itself, or as the order-mystery, or as the order-producing force with which God informs the world."[290] William Brown airs von Rad's suggestion and posits that Wisdom is intimately connected to the world, which is "made both secure and enthralling by God, a world of delight and discovery, a world of wonder."[291] Wisdom

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[288] Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 109.

[289] Ibid.

[290] Michael V. Fox, "Ideas of Wisdom in Proverbs 1–9," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116, no. 4 (1997).

[291] William P. Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder: Character, Creation, and Crisis in the Bible's Wisdom Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 16.

manifested in God's plan and in the creation of all things. The psalmist writes, "O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all" (Ps 104:24).

Building upon the order and design of creation, Annalea Thiessen explains in her article that the sage communicates an ordered world within which human is likewise positioned and oriented. Notably, the created order is defined by limits or parameters. For instance, the sea is "assigned… its limits," and the earth's foundations are "marked out" (8:29). The understanding is implicit—to comprehend order is to grasp limits. Men and women are understood to exist within this created order and, therefore, they are likewise limited. However, this limitation is joy-inducing—Wisdom rejoices and delights in "the human race," which lives within the boundary given in the "inhabited world" (8:30, 31).[292] Here, we observed the orderliness of wondrous creation. The sage of Proverbs writes Wisdom into its origins, playing a significant role in shaping the perceived world and orienting the perceived self.

Kaiser summarizes the central purpose of the passage stating that, in His infinite Wisdom, God is described in the passage as an architect who builds the cosmos and the earth. It begins with "The LORD formed me from the beginning (*reshit*)" (Prov 8:22), which is reminiscent of the very first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning (*b^{e}reshit*) God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). Later, when the poet says, "I was born before the oceans were created," the word "oceans" (*t^{e}homot*) echoes the *t^{e}hom* over which the Spirit of God hovered (Gen 1:2). "When there were no depths, I was brought forth (*ḥîl*, 'to be in labor')" (v. 24; also v. 25).[293] Furthermore, Gale Yee notes that the language used is highly figurative and is taken from

[292] Annalea Thiessen, "Order, Limits, and Wonder: The Place of Creation in Wisdom Literature," *Prandium - The Journal of Historical Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Fall, 2017).

[293] Walter C. Kaiser, "Integrating Wisdom Theology into Old Testament Theology: Ecclesiastes 3:10–15," in *A Tribute to Gleason Archer* ed. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Ronald F. Youngblood (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 206.

the experience of human reproduction verbatim.[294] Beeke asserts that God worked in a wise and orderly manner to prepare a proper environment that He populated with living creatures. He also states that the Wisdom of God appears in a prominent manner in the way in which He crafts the world to be a home for man: "he created it not in vain (*tohu*), he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa 45:18).[295]

Kaiser insightfully expresses the theological connection between Wisdom and creation, for example, the pushing back of the waters and the establishment of their boundaries (Prov 8:29) and the pushing back of the waters to form the dry ground on the third day (Gen 1:9–13). Wisdom was not only there in the beginning, but it was also the agency through which creation came into existence. It was through divine Wisdom that the world came to be.[296] This is affirmed in Psalms 136:5, "To Him who by wisdom made the heavens."

One of the most discussed terms from Proverbs 8 is verse 30. The difficulty pertaining to its interpretation can be evidenced from ancient times and has left behind a pathway of discussion that can be traced up into modern times. The treatment of the verse primarily pertains to the relevance of understanding wisdom's role in creation. The first and perhaps oldest approach interprets the Hebrew word *'āmôn* as "artisan, craftsman." Its etymology can be derived from Akkadian *ummanu*, which means "military force, workforce."[297] However, this view is not without its problems. Its only other occurrence is in Jeremiah 52:15, where it is thought to indicate "craftsman, artisan." Although this meaning has been disputed, the more

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[294] Gale A. Yee, "The Theology of Creation in Proverbs 8:22–31," in *Creation in the Biblical Traditions,* ed. Richard J. Clifford and John J. Collins, CBQMS 24 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1992), 91–93.

[295] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology,238*.

[296] Kaiser, "Integrating Wisdom Theology into Old Testament Theology, 206.

[297] Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm, BDB, 52–53; HALOT, 63.

established artisan term has been attested once in Song 7:2.[298] This view applies to Wisdom when describing her as a master artisan who actively participated in God's creative work. Another approach derives this word from the root meaning of the word "to confirm, support," used here in the sense of nurturing man just as a parent nurtures a child. As an active participle, it might refer to Wisdom supporting God's creative work; as a passive participle (that is, one who is raised), it characterizes Wisdom as a passive entity bringing delight to God as He creates the world. Scholars have noted problems with this suggestion, as Wisdom as a young child does not seem to fit the context of the poem from a broader context.[299]

The artisan interpretation understands Wisdom as being integrally involved in the creation event and being used by God as a master craftsman—He made the world with the aid of Wisdom. However, other proposals emphasize that Wisdom stands outside the created order, only as a spectator witnessing God's creative activity. However, one dominant aspect persists—prior to God's creation of the material world, Wisdom was there with Him from the very beginning. The context of the poem seems to support the notion of Wisdom's participation in God's creative activity. Bruce Vawter states that if God "created" Wisdom at the beginning of his way (v. 22), it is also logical to assume that this was done so that God might utilize Wisdom as He created the world.[300] Some scholars argue that Wisdom reflects the second person of the Trinity, whereas others believe that it is a reflection of one aspect of God as Creator. Either argument supports the thesis. The theological message of the poem is critical to this dissertation,

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[298] Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm, BDB, 52–53; HALOT, 63.

[299] Alice M. Sinnott, *The Personification of Wisdom, Society for Old Testament Study Monographs* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 27.

[300] Bruce Vawter questions the validity of simply arguing for Wisdom's priority in the order of creation without having had any role in creation itself. As he argues, "it seems to me that here wisdom is said to have pre-existed the created order and therefore to be outside it, though in some fashion it subsequently became instrumental in the production of the created order" ("Wisdom and Creation," *JBL* 99 [1980]: 213).

as it urges men and women to live life by the principles of wisdom, which is patterned after the Wisdom of the Creator. Ross suggests that the reference to God delighting in His creation (vv. 30—31) recalls that "God saw that it was good" in Genesis l.[301]

In verse 31, we see God "rejoicing" (*śāḥaq)* as He contemplates the works of His hands. Rejoicing (*śāḥaq)* renders a verb, meaning to act joyfully or celebrate. The same verb is used in 1 Samuel 18:7 when referring to the woman who sang and danced as they greeted David on his return from defeating the Philistines. Wisdom is represented here as dancing to celebrate creation.[302] The description of rejoicing in the text suggests that God celebrated (danced and sang) because He was happy with His design in creation. The same joy extends to the humanity of the excellence of His wonderful creation, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). The dissertation emphasizes this interpretation to show that God's design of male and female is a part of his Wisdom. Creation reflects God's Wisdom—creation reflects "order and suitability" in design; therefore, humans should not tamper with the created order.

What does Proverbs say about Humanity and Marriage?

Humanity and marriage are another passage of focus concerning creation and its orienting role in Proverbs 20:27, "The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord." In this passage, the term used for 'the spirit' is (*nĕšāmâ*) and for 'man' or 'human' is (*ādām)*; together, they provide an applicable linguistic match to Genesis 2:7. Humans are male and female, united by God in a marriage relationship: "He who finds a wife finds a 'good' (*ṭôb*) thing and obtains favor from the

[301] Allen P. Ross, "Proverbs," in *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs,* vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelein: Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 946.

[302] William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Proverbs*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 195–196.

Lord" (Prov 18:22). In this case, *ṭôb* is used in conjunction with the verb "to find" to mean "to find (one's) fortune,"[303] that is to say to find a person of great value. Its meaning is further clarified by the phrase, "obtain favor [*rāṣôn*] from the Lord," which means that the husband has been blessed by the Lord.[304]

Roland Murphy asserts that the text implies that "the husband has little to do acquiring such a prize. She is a gift from God."[305] This idea goes back to Genesis 2:22–24, where God brings Eve to Adam and blesses them. The concept of marriage found in Proverbs is the one established in Genesis. A man and a woman are united in the presence of God—He blesses them, and a partnership is instituted among the three of them. At that moment, the couple makes a covenant with and before the Lord, and the two of them establish a mutual, loving friendship (Prov 2:17).[306] Here again, the principles of wisdom are woven into the fabric of the created order and design for marriage. The created order for marriage is beautiful, as it was designed by an all-wise God. The delight of wisdom harks back to Genesis 1, where God's creation is repeatedly referred to as "good" and "very good." The word "delight" refers to something in which people take pleasure or joy. It is used, for example, in verses 30 and 31, "and my delight was with the son of man." God was satisfied with His created order and design.

To summarize, the creation theology presented in Proverbs 8:22–31 unquestionably demonstrates the creation narrative in Genesis 1–2. It, therefore, draws from the interpretive fountain in promoting the place of Wisdom in the origins of the world. First, the image provided

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[303] Koehler and Baumgartner, HALOT, vol. 2,371.

[304] The semantic field of the noun *rāṣôn* includes the idea of *bĕrākâ*, "blessing." See H. M. Barstad, "רָצָה *rāṣâ*," in *TDOT*, vol. 13, 625.

[305] Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs,* Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 22 (Dallas, TX.: Word, 2002), 138.

[306] Marriage as a covenant, in which God is involved as a witness is implicitly found in Genesis 2:21–24 but can be also found in other places in the Old Testament (e.g., Mal. 2:14).

by these texts is that of a God who creates effortlessly, assigns roles to the different elements, and establishes limits for everything to function in proper harmony. For example, the sea is assigned its limits, "Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea" (Eccl 1:7). The sky is firm above, and the earth's foundations are "marked out." Specifically, the things that God created, He makes them perfect, right, proper, and suitable to function appropriately, thereby reflecting who God is as Creator. In the case of humanity, an embryo cannot become a living human being without undergoing fertilization, that is, the fusion of a female egg cell and a male sperm cell. This "order and suitability" is the same across the spectrum of species.

Second, the language of birth is exclusively associated with Wisdom. Under the influence of Ancient Near Eastern creation ideas, some have concluded that this passage depicts wisdom as a goddess. However, the text seems to indicate that wisdom is a personification of a divine attribute. Third, compared to Genesis, Proverbs 8 echoes the origin of Wisdom. Here "Wisdom originates from God's very self."[307] Creation is not haphazard—creation reflects a God of order, not disorder. God always rejoices in His works because they are all done in wisdom. Also, the same wisdom is spoken of in Proverbs 9. Here wisdom is represented as manifest in all the works of God in the material world (9:1–12). Finally, Proverbs 8 unfolds our understanding of the role played by Wisdom in God's creation, in particular, the creation of male and female in His image. In Wisdom, male and female are made according to God's design and are a reflection of "order and suitability," which highlights the thesis of this dissertation.

[307] G. Yee, "An Analysis of Prov. 8:22–31 According to Style and Structure," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 94:1 (1982): 91.

Creation Motifs in the Book of Ecclesiastes

God is the creator of the world, and His "order and suitability" hold the fabric of life together. This dissertation explores the interpretation of the Book of Ecclesiastes with a specific focus on Wisdom's role in creation. This raises a pertinent question—What does wisdom have to say about God's creation, particularly male and female created in the image of God? Ecclesiastes maintains the three-fold interrelationship of divine, human, and earth, which has been found to characterize other parts of the Wisdom literature.[308] As Perdue points out, the creation theme pervades the entire Wisdom literature genre; "creation theology and its correlative affirmation, providence, were at the center of the sages' understanding of God, the world, and humanity."[309]

This part of the study will focus on the Book of Ecclesiastes, primarily Chapter 3, and the potential echoes of the creation of male and female in the image of God in light of the creation motif of Genesis 1–2. Nearly every commentator recognizes that the Book of Genesis has influenced Ecclesiastes. There are a few passages where this influence is clearly evident, indicating that the author was acquainted with Genesis 1–2, even though the acknowledged presence significantly varies among commentators. Ecclesiastes' opening and closing reflections are involved with creation—a description of natural routines in 1:4–7 describes the earth's duration, the rising and setting of the sun, the circuits of the wind, and the ever-flowing rivers running into a never-filling sea. The book similarly ends with creation—12:1 commands the reader to remember the Creator, followed by the timeframe for obedience: "before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain" (12:2).[310] Hans Hertzberg comments that in Ecclesiastes 12:2, exactly like in the creation account, there is a

[308] Katharine J. Dell, "The Cycle of Life in Ecclesiastes," *Vestus Testamentum* 59, no. 2 (2009): 189.

[309] Perdue, *Wisdom & Creation,* 20.

[310] Michael V. Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions, SOTSup* 71 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 300.

distinction between light and heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and stars).[311] We can see that both 1:4–7 and 12:2 have creation in mind, thereby eliciting a sense of order.

The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes also affirms the existence of a God of "order and suitability" in design. According to Garrett, Qohelet observes that the eternal perfection of God's work overwhelms all human endeavors and mocks human aspirations to become eternally significant. No one can thwart or change God's will, as His ways are beyond our understanding.[312] Human beings have a desire to be like God, as recorded in Genesis 3:5, 22. As Garrett further points out, if we were able to know all, master life, and be like God, we would feel no need for piety. But humanity is far from divine stature. We are altogether contingent beings, and our only appropriate response is reverence.[313]

A Suitable Time for Everything

God holds the key to the cycles of life and the time at which things occur, as Qoheleth outlined in Ecclesiastes 1–8. The poem's purpose is to demonstrate that everything happens at the appropriate time. Garrett comments that this text is a masterpiece of wisdom poetry.[314] J. A. Loader observes that the verses move back and forth between the desirable and undesirable aspects of life.[315] Qoheleth affirms God's pattern and order for creation and human existence in the following verses. He writes:

1 For everything, there is a season,

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[311] Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg and Hans Bardtke, *Der Prediger/Das Buch Esther,* KAT 17/45 (Stuttgart: GUtersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963), 230.

[312] Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 110.

[313] Ibid, 110.

[314] Ibid, 297.

[315] J. A. Loader. *Ecclesiastes: A Practical Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986.)

a time for every activity under heaven.
2 A time to be born and a time to die.
A time to plant and a time to harvest.
3 A time to kill and a time to heal.
A time to tear down and a time to build up.
4 A time to cry and a time to laugh.
A time to grieve and a time to dance.
5 A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones.
A time to embrace and a time to turn away.
6 A time to search and a time to quit searching.
A time to keep and a time to throw away.
7 A time to tear and a time to mend.
A time to be quiet and a time to speak.
8 A time to love and a time to hate.
A time for war and a time for peace.

Qoheleth launches into verse 1 with this statement, "For everything, there is a season and a time for every activity under heaven." The following seven verses will particularize this opening statement. Qoheleth intends to cover *everything (kôl*), which refers to every event and situation in life, leaving no exception. The second colon is more specific in that it refers to *every activity*.[316] The Hebrew word for *activity* (*ḥēpeṣ*) has an interesting etymology. In certain contexts, it means "pleasure," and that meaning reappears in 5:3 and 12:10. However, in other contexts, it clearly means "activity" (here and in 3:17; 5:7; 8:6).[317] James Crenshaw explains that it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw a distinction between the two "time" words used in this verse—*season* (*zemā*n), which occurs in late Hebrew and Aramaic passages in the Bible.[318] Building on this observation, Tremper Longman adds that the more common Hebrew term for time (*ʿēt*) occurs uncharacteristically in the second colon of the line, where we usually find the rarer term. We cannot be sure why the poet chose to reverse the normal order; however, it is

[316] Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 97.

[317] Ibid.

[318] James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes, Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 50.

probably because time (ʿēt) is the term that is repeated throughout the whole poem. According to most commentators, both words "indicate specific points in time rather than continuity."[319]

Graham Ogden and Lynell Zogbo carefully attend to the phrase "for everything," which introduces this very general statement about time. In Hebrew, there is a simple noun clause "to [or, for] everything [all], a season." "All" refers to events or actions within human life on earth. If terms such as "all" and "everything" are considered too general, then a longer clause can be used, for example, "all events," "all activity," "all things happen at fixed times," "every event has its appointed time," or "there are appropriate times for everything that happens in the world." The Hebrew term for *season* (*zemā*n) is derived from a root word that means "devise, plan." It comes to mean "appointed time," "designated time," or "appointed hour," as in Daniel 2:16, and the length of time that Nehemiah set for his absence from Susa (Neh 2:6). The question that many people ask in this context is as follows: Who determines the times? The TEV translation answers the question—these are the times that "God chooses."[320] God is ultimately responsible for the time in which the events in human history occur.

Another observation of Ogden and Zogbo is that a time for every activity under heaven introduces a second term for time, matching the one in the first half of the verse and its sense of moments or points of time. With the phrase "every activity," we are introduced to the word "activity" (*ḥēpeṣ*), which is derived from the root meaning of the word "pleasure." It can mean "will" or "purpose." Moreover, its meaning can be interpreted as "everything we do" or "everything we plan." For "under heaven" describes events on earth that both people and God propose to do. For example, there are situations or events that tell people that it is time to do

[319] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 97.

[320] Graham S. Ogden and Lynell Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998), 96.

something: "[When nine months are past] a child is born; [when a person grows old] he will die" to convey the sense of verse 2a, and "[when the rains come] we plant [crops]" and "[when the south-east wind blows] we can dig up [crops]" in verse 2b.[321]

Philip Ryken echoes that the Preacher's conclusion is that the times and seasons under heaven are fixed by God who is in heaven.[322] In essence, from birth to death, there is a time and a season for everything under heaven. This is because God Himself is eternal, and He exists outside of time. Moses understood this in His prayer in Psalm 90:2: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." The only reason behind the fact that there is such a thing as time is because God created it, and as God is the creator of time, He also controls it. The poem reframes the concept of time literally as the ticking of a clock; God assigns time for things to happen, and humans cannot do anything about it. God sets a fixed time for a child to be born and to die; there is an appropriate time to plant and an appropriate time to pluck up (v. 2).[323] No human or plant controls the start and finish of its existence. When we look at the poem's structure, we see completeness—each line combines two opposites to represent the whole. For example, Genesis 1:1 states, "God created the heavens and the earth." Here, the author uses two opposites, namely "heavens and earth." Therefore, when the poem says, "a time to be born, and a time to die," it represents all of human life. God's sovereignty over the times and seasons of life is complete and all-encompassing.

In verse 2, "A time to be born, and a time to die," there is a sense of wonder in the process of childbirth and the gift of life. However, there is uncertainty about when and how

[321] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 96.

[322] Philip Graham Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway 2014), 79–80.

[323] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 96.

breath will come. Furthermore, humans do not decide the biological component; it is ordered and designed by God before birth. Similarly, there is uncertainty about death, as no one knows the exact moment when breath leaves the human body. The second part of verse 2 reads, "A time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted." Although human activity encompasses the primary action of planting, it is also described as a part of "God times." Building on the interpretation of time, Dell proposes that God knows the cycles of life and decides the time when every activity will come into effect. For example, human beings assume that the clouds full of rain will empty onto the earth, yet no one knows the precise moment the cloud will burst and the rain will fall. Also, it is inevitable that a tree will fall, but no one knows the direction where it will fall.[324] This suggests that there is an element of life that humans do not understand. Therefore, it does imply that when we find our proper place in God's order and design of things, it reflects an aspect of who God is, and when we are out of alignment with God's timing, in essence, we are tampering with what God has created in His image.

In verse 3, the poem continues with two additional pairs of contrasting opposites. This time, however, there is a notable twist compared to verse 2, wherein the positive, desirable, or constructive actions precede the undesirable. In this verse, the reverse occurs. On the negative side, the verse speaks of killing and tearing down, whereas, on the positive side, it acknowledges that there are occasions when healing and building occur.[325] The first pair describes the sphere of the animate, most likely specifically human (to kill . . . to heal). To kill and heal are not exact semantic opposites, but the former is an intentional act to end a life, and the latter refers to the

[324] Dell, "The Cycle of Life in Ecclesiastes" 189.

[325] Ibid.

efforts made to preserve a life.[326] Qoheleth describes what occurs under the sun; he does not make any moral pronouncements. Ogden and Zogbo point out that a time to kill may refer to God's actions in the world, but it is more than likely that it refers to wars between peoples.[327] Qoheleth indicates that we do not always go about killing, whether it be people or animals. There are times when we may have to kill; however, on the whole, we only kill when it is appropriate to do so. A time to heal is the opposite of the previous saying. It indicates that healing is induced for individuals and situations at appropriate times. Thus, we may translate that "there are times when we may kill, and there are times when we can bring healing." Again, the emphasis is on the actions appropriate to their time. The second pair (to tear down . . . to build) at least loosely connects with the first. There are times when we have to break down something, and there are times when we need to rebuild.[328] As Philip Ryken so wisely notes, Jesus knew when it was time to heal. He performed the miracles of the kingdom—he made the lame walk, the deaf hear, and the blind see. Jesus also knew when it was time to break down—he drove the moneychangers out of the temple (Luke 19:45). He was aware of the time to build up, such as when he built his church on the rock (Matt 16:15–16l cf. 7:24).[329] This emphasizes the cycle of life, as controlled by God but experienced by humans, in terms of the cycles God ordered and designed in the natural world.

Subsequently, we move to the realm of emotions in verse 4, "there is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." This verse presents two closely related pairs of contrasting emotions. First, on the negative side, the verse states that there are occasions

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[326] Dell, "The Cycle of Life in Ecclesiastes" 189.

[327] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 96.

[328] Ibid.

[329] Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters*, 79–80.

that elicit unpleasant emotions, such as crying and mourning. On the positive side, stand laughter and dancing. The first colon contrasts crying with laughter. The second colon focuses on the contrast, thereby making it more specific and concrete as it contrasts mourning with dancing.[330] Ogden and Zogbo propose that there are appropriate times to weep in the scope of life under the sun and appropriate times to laugh. Qoheleth sometimes uses "laugh" with a negative connotation (7:3). However, this verse appears to be referring to joyous laughter.[331] This descriptive list covers the entire spectrum of human emotion, not just sorrow and joy, but everything in between. We would certainly love to control which ones we experience most, but that is far beyond us. Here again, we see how God controls the times.

In verse 5, the pair of contrasting opposites is harder to categorize because they do not seem related at first, unlike the other pairs of contrasting opposites that precede and follow it. The first speaks of a time to cast away stones and "a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing." Indeed, this pair of contrasting opposites stands out in more than one way. First, both pairs are lengthier than the others, and no textual evidence supports a change. Second, the meaning of the first pair (v. 5a) is obscure and debated, whereas all the others are simple and clear.[332] In the spectrum of human relationships, there is an appropriate time to come together and a time to break up.

In verse 6, this pair of contrasting opposites has to do with possession. Life under the sun also includes a time to seek, and a time to lose, a time to keep, and a time to cast away. We are

[330] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 98.

[331] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 96.

[332] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 99.

more than familiar with the ebb and flow of pursuing things and letting things go. As much as we would love to determine their arrival and departure, God is the master of all.[333]

Up until this point, the two pairs of contrasting opposites in each verse have been closely related to one another. In verse 7, the relationship between the two pairs is not so obvious, "there is also a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." The tearing of the clothes was an essential ancient biblical mourning ritual (Gen 37:29; 2 Sam 13:31), and the clothes would be repaired at the close of the mourning period. Indeed, silence is occasionally described as a reaction to tragedy (this perhaps refers back to Lev 10:3 and certainly Job 2:13, where there is a connection with the rending of clothes). H. L. Ginsberg notes that the times of speaking and silence may be connected with the very important wisdom theme of knowing the proper time to speak and to refrain from speaking (see Prov 10:19; 13:3; 16:24; 17:27; 21:23; 25:11, and especially 15:23).[334] Qohelet tells us that there is an appropriate time to be silent and an appropriate time to speak (Job's friends). Unfortunately, even though determining those times would be convenient, they are not up to us.

In verse 8, the poem ends with two contrasting pairs with a definite connection. The first pair (love . . . hate) cites the strong personal emotions of attraction and repulsion. A time to love does not necessarily have sexual nuances and can be broader in meaning, also speaking of the love between a father and son or between God and people. It denotes a caring attitude toward another person. Furthermore, in Scripture, the word speaks more of loving action than of simple emotion: "A time to act lovingly [or, caringly]."[335] A time to hate should not be thought of as encouraging a person to hate someone else. Qoheleth never suggests that God agrees with that

[333] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 96.

[334] H. L. Ginsberg. *Studies in Koheleth* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1952).

[335] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 96.

kind of activity. It is also not clear whether love and hate are used with human objects in mind. Quite possibly, in this context, Qoheleth is thinking of the right time for these activities in a figurative sense. For example, we should "love good" and "hate evil."[336] Longman believes that the second pair manifested as the state of peace and war, and Qohelet expresses the latter pair in nominal form, perhaps to affect a sense of closure.[337]

Building upon the theological meaning of the poem, Amy Plantinga-Pauw asserts that most of the items in verses 2–8 are not really a matter of human choice or planning. Birth and death and the seasons for planting and harvest are hardly within human control. We do not "decide" to mourn or dance; instead, something happens to us that makes one or the other appropriate.[338] Plantinga-Pauw's main point is that God is sovereign over all creation, and time and seasons are a critical component of His sovereignty being revealed to humanity. Therefore, we cannot simply select the parts we want from life and discard the rest. Mobley echoes that the polarities sketched in this justly celebrated poem span the entire orbit of our lives, of every season. This poem is about the cycles, circles, patterns, and progressions that govern existence. There is an ethic implicit in this poem; there are choices for us to make. Given the various seasons and times, those with ears capable of hearing would be wise to moderate their behavior accordingly.[339]

The Preacher's imperative in the poem is that humans must live their lives according to God's order and design. We must realize that God has outlined the appropriate time for each

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[336] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 96.

[337] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 99.

[338] Amy Plantinga-Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Presbyterian Publishing, 2015).

[339] Mobley, *The Return of the Chaos Monsters,* 117.

thing to be done, as established in verse 1. Although these verses are interpreted as dealing with the timeliness or appropriateness of human action, when considered within the context of the entire book, it can be discovered that it deals with God's sovereignty, which encompasses past, present, and future, for nothing happens outside of His knowledge and control (2:24–26; 3:14). For instance, an appropriate time and place had been ordained for Jesus' birth and death by God. In short, the poem signifies that man's responsibility is to discern the right times for the right actions, and the outcome will be "beautiful" when our actions align with God's timing (v 11).

God Made Purpose and Beauty in Everything

The purpose of the poem was to set the stage for the discussion in 9–15. God has established seasons and times for various emotions and activities "under the sun." In these verses, Qoheleth regards God as the absolute and arbitrary master of our destiny. He writes in verses 9–10:

9 What gain have the workers from their toil?

10 I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with.

Starting with verse 9, Qohelet asks the rhetorical question concerning the profit of toil in the world. Without a detailed explanation, Qohelet casts doubt over the benefit of doing anything in a fallen world where everything has its proper season or opportune moment. Verse 10 continues the thought of verse 9, wherein Qohelet follows his question with the strong statement that he has seen God's burden on the human race.

Modern scholars have suggested almost a dozen different interpretations for verse 11. Longman claims that this verse is widely thought to be one of the hardest in the book to interpret; however, its difficulty is not a function of the vocabulary.[340] The text reads:

> **11** God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

The first part of the verse strikes the reader as one of the most beautiful and inspiring of the Bible. Flowing from the poem in verses 1–8, this verse comments that "God has made everything beautiful in its time." The verb "make" (ʿâsâ) occurs twice in this verse, and there is also an example of the cognate noun *maʿăśê*, which refers to "the work" of God (cf. 7:13; 8:17). James Loader comments that even though the teacher affirms the appropriateness (*yapeh*) of God's creation, he never refers to the created order as something that is good (cf. Gen 1:13).[341] Longman notes that the word "everything" (*kôl*) in 3:11 resumes "everything" in 3:1. Qohelet's point of reference in 3:11 is that God makes everything "suitable," "to fit beautifully," "under the sun," and even the events that occur through human agency happen in their proper time. It is interesting to note that this verse echoes Genesis 1, even though it uses a different vocabulary. For example, in Genesis 1, God pronounces each step of His creation as "good" (*ṭôb*) (1:4; 10; 12; 18; 21), and on the sixth day (1:31), He says it was "very good" (*mᵊʾōḏ ṭôb*). The word "beautiful" (*yapeh*) in this verse seems to be an alternate way of describing creation as in Genesis 1.[342] Many translations use the word "appropriate" (NAB, IB, JB, NASB, NEB), and TEV uses the word "right" to describe the relationship between the time and events.

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[340] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 99.

[341] James Loader. *Ecclesiastes: A Practical Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

[342] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 99.

Furthermore, NRSV uses "suitable," which also gives the sense of the use of this Hebrew word in Ecclesiastes.[343] Fox argues that verse 11 does not refer to God's original act of creation. The use of the word "Everything" in verse 11 and verse 1 is extremely poignant, and the pairs in verses 2–8 comprise the range of events and actions in human life rather than the significant constituents of creation, as described in Genesis 1.[344]

God made everything beautiful out of nothing. The NET echoes that God has made everything "to fit beautifully" in its appropriate time. Genesis 1:1–2 states, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters." As creation implies a beginning, everything God created has a beginning, and it originated from God's mighty work and not from something that existed. At the end of the six days, with male and female on earth, "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (v. 31). Gordon Wenham concurs that the final refrain of "very good" on the sixth day functions as a declaration of perfection over creation.[345] Wenham's point suggests that God was satisfied with all aspects of creation. As God was satisfied with everything He created, it is evident that the way God created men and women is such that we do not tamper with His design. God created male and female, both distinct genders, in His image (Gen 1:27). The gender distinction between the two sexes is not evil or any form of deficiency, but a part of God's original creation, which He pronounced as "very good" (v 31). However, there is a widespread view in secular academic circles regarding the concept of "plastic sexuality," which argues that there is no fixed meaning to sexual identity. In fact, anyone can shape their sexual identity as

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[343] August H. Konkel & Tremper Longman III, *Cornerstone biblical commentary. Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2006), 274.

[344] Michael V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes (*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

[345] Wenham*, Genesis 1–15,* 27–8.

they choose. The idea that someone is a "man" or a "woman" is a societal construct, and anyone can reject their biological identity and choose another one. Adrian Thatcher, a proponent of "plastic sexuality," argues that human sexuality is something "malleable" and something "able to adjust to changing circumstances"—that is, a person's sexual identity is something "in his or her control."[346]

However, as Christians, we can oppose this idea by demonstrating reasons in the Bible for arguing that human sexual identity is deeply profound and essential to God. Immediately after God announced that He would create man in His own image, He created Adam and Eve in two distinct genders. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Indeed, human sexual identity is fixed and will last through eternity. Furthermore, as it is eternal, it cannot be relative or plastic. Matthew Henry wisely comments that everything is as God has made it and how He has appointed it to be and not as it appears to us.[347]

Additionally, God's beauty and design are perceived through the male and female genders and across the spectrum of species—from the glowing birds in the air to the fish in the sea. The universe is filled with thousands of beautiful creatures of different kinds. When we walk into a supermarket, we see the great variety of beautiful foods produced by plants to safeguard our nutrition and enjoyment. We cannot forget the beautiful flowers that bring joy to our hearts and fill our homes with fragrances of all kinds. This affirms a God of order and not of disorder.

In the broader context, the expression "in its time" (3:11a) is an essential qualification of what precedes it. The phrase takes us back to 3:1, where the only difference is that our present

[346] Adrian Thatcher, "Postmodernity and Chastity," in *Sex These Days: Essays on Theology, Sexuality and Society* (eds. Jon Davies and Gerard Loughlin; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 127–130.

[347] Matthew Henry, *Ecclesiastes - Complete Bible Commentary Verse by Verse* (Grupo Oxigênio Ltda-ME, 2016), 8.

verse tells us that God is involved with the connection between an activity or thing and its proper time.[348] Hence, we can translate this verse to mean that God makes everything that He created right, proper, perfect, and suitable to function correctly, thereby reflecting God's identity as affirmed in creation. When things in creation function as God intended, we will enjoy it because it is a Godlike quality. Indeed, the male and female genders, even though made from elements found on the earth, were not created through a natural process but rather through the supernatural work of God (Gen 2:7) as a reflection of God's "order and suitability" in design.

Commenting on the essential meaning of verse 11, Ryken states that the verse strongly affirms the goodness of God, who "has made everything beautiful in its time." So many people resent God's control over time and eternity and prefer to set their own agenda, but the Preacher saw the beauty of God's sovereignty. Not only is there a time for everything, but also God always does things at the right time. Therefore, the Preacher praised God for His beautiful timing.[349] In the Old Testament, "beautiful" is a visual term. Ordinarily, it refers to something that we can see. For example, the word is used to describe Job's daughters as the best-looking women in the country (Job 42:15). In this sense, one can conclude that God's timing is "beautiful" or "suitable." No matter at what time He does things, God is right on time. He knows when it is time for breaking down and building up, for keeping and casting away.[350]

Mobley's conclusion from verse 11 is that the squares are all there, but human beings lack the perspective to see the patterns they form. There is meaning and substance to everything; there is a season and a time, but we see it through a dark glass.[351] Essentially, everything God

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[348] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 99.

[349] Ryken, *Ecclesiastes: Why Everything Matters*, 79–80.

[350] Ibid.

[351] Mobley, *The Return of the Chaos Monsters,* 113.

made is meaningful, purposefully, and significant, but it is beyond human apprehension and comprehension. Qoheleth shares a brilliant ambivalent affirmation—there is a plan, but good luck in figuring it out. There are patterns, but a mist of *hebel* obscures our ability to see and control them.[352] Michael Eaton comments that verses 9, 10, and 11b stress human inadequacy under God's disposal of the epochs of life. Events and characteristic seasons of time are imposed upon men: no one chooses a time to weep or a time to die. All this puts humanity in its place, far from being a master of his fate and the captain of his soul.[353] Hence, this suggests that the role of God as Creator and providential sustainer has ordered and designed things the way in which they are created, and men should not tamper with it.

In the second part of the verse (3:11b), we learn that God has done something that sounds marvelous on the surface; however, in the final analysis, it is the source of much human frustration. Qohelet writes, "He has also set eternity in the human heart, yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end." The expression, "God has set eternity in men's hearts," can be interpreted to mean "the future," "the world," "ignorance," and "darkness." Reading the verse in its proper context shows that the heart in question is the human heart. The crux interpretation in this passage is the word "eternity" (*ʿôlām)*. The term "eternity" has been used more than 400 times in the Hebrew Bible, describing ages past and times to come. Longman proposes that the placing of "eternity" (*ʿôlām)* in human beings might be analogous to God endowing His human creatures with His image (Gen 1:26–27). He explains further that Qohelet uses a verb that is common in Genesis 1, namely the verb "to make" (*ʿâsâ*). The other choice is "created" (*bārāʾ*), which is used sparingly in the creation account and with particular

[352] Mobley, *The Return of the Chaos Monsters*, 118.

[353] Michael A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes: An introduction and commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 90–91.

reference to the creation of humanity.[354] Fox also states that God has put *ʿōlām* in the hearts of men, which is the base of human personality, "the center of existence."[355] Eaton's analysis is that the eternity of God's dealings with mankind corresponds to something inside us. We have the capacity for eternal things; we are concerned about the future and want to understand "from the beginning to the end." The Scripture speaks of our creation in the "image" or "glory" of God (Gen 1:26)—a glory that is essentially forfeited (Rom 3:23) and yet not obliterated (1 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9).[356]

In recent literature, John Jarick has captured the sense of this phrase "placement of eternity in the heart human," when commenting on both the Hebrew and Septuagintal text:

> In 7:27, 28, Koheleth recorded that he had wanted to discover the sum of things but could not, and in 8:17, he noted that people seek to find out "all the work of God … that is done under the sun," but cannot. 3:11 makes excellent sense as a kind of parallel to these two verses. The human being has *ʿôlām*, "eternity," in his heart— his Creator has made him a thinking being, and he wants to pass beyond his fragmentary knowledge and discern the fuller meaning of the whole pattern— but the Creator will not let the creature be his equal. As surely as God has put *ʿôlām* in the human heart (a consciousness that there is more than the immediate kairos of this or that [vv. 2–8] in which the creature finds itself), he has also put a veil upon the human heart, so that the finite human mind is unable to reach beyond the kairos into the *ʿôlām* to see as God does.[357]

Ernst Jenni, in his exhaustive study on the meaning of the term "eternity" in the Old Testament, has concluded the primary meaning of "most distant time/either" with a view to the past, to the future, or both.[358] However, when this notion is applied to the context of Ecclesiastes 3:11, the problem becomes evident. What does the author mean in saying that "God has also placed 'most distant time' in the human heart?" Scholars have proposed no less than ten

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[354] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 102.

[355] Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, 109.

[356] Eaton, *Ecclesiastes: An introduction and commentary*, 95.

[357] Jack Jarick, *Gregory Thaumaturgos' Paraphrase, SBLSCS 29* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 26.

[358] Ernst Jenni, "Das Wort *'ôlàm* im Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttesta-mentliche Wissenschaft* 65 (1953): 24–27.

interpretive options to resolve the enigma of this verse; this study will evaluate six interpretive options.

Evaluation of Interpretive Options

Some interpreters seek to resolve this problem with different metonymical nuances of "eternity" (*ʿōlām)*, all with some sort of temporal connotation. First, Christian Ginsburg aptly states that this term "invariably signifies time past or present, unmeasured time, or eternity, and is used in all the other passages of this book (1:4; 2:16; 3:14; 9:6; 12:5)."[359] Second, commentators would undoubtedly associate the use of *ʿōlām* in 3:11 with the occurrence of "forever" (*ʿōlām)* later in verse 14, "I know that whatever God does will endure forever." Choon-Leong Seow comments, "It is difficult to believe that *hä'öläm* in verse 11 could be radically different in meaning from *le oläm* 'eternal' only three verses later in verse 14." Third, as the term "time" (*ʿēṯ)* is used no less than 28 times in the first part of the chapter (v. 1–8) and repeated in the preceding line (v. 11a), it would be difficult to deny that *ʿōlām* has some kind of temporal nuance in this context.[360] Again, Seow notes, "No one can avoid the immediate contrast between hä'öläm "eternity" (3:11b) and *bë'ittô* 'in its time' (3:11a).[361] While not adopting a temporal meaning, Crenshaw concurs, "The contrast between *'et* and *hä'öläm* is a strong argument in favor of reading 'eternity' in 3:11."[362] Fourth, the qualification "from beginning to end" (v. 11c) also suggests a time-related connotation for this phrase. As Brian Gault states, even though the normal usage of *ʿōlām* as "eternity" and the time-related terms in the context (vv. 1–

[359] Christian D. Ginsburg, *The Song of Songs and Coheleth* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1857), 308.

[360] Choon-Leong Seow, *Ecclesiastes, Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1997), 163.

[361] Ibid.

[362] Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 98.

8, 11a, 14) may support a temporal meaning, each of the options in this category must be evaluated based on its own strengths and weaknesses.[363]

Bo Isaksson makes a significant contribution to the first interpretative option. He admits that "eternity" is used almost exclusively with a temporal meaning and interprets the term as "eternal work," thereby translating the expression, "He has also set the eternal work in the hearts of men." Isaksson accurately recognizes Qoheleth's emphasis on the work of God and humanity's inability to understand this work and the time-related terms used in the context. However, he makes an unjustified leap from generic references to the work of God in the context of creation, describing this "eternal work" as "creation in its widest sense, in time and space, the created and ongoing history."[364] Despite the few examples of God placing something in the heart (1 Kgs 10:24; Jer 31:33), Isaksson neither validates this broad meaning of eternity nor supports the notion that God put all this in the hearts of humans. Instead, he seems to import the concept of "work" from the latter part of the verse back into the term *ʿōlām*. Gault proposes that this meaning can be deemed unlikely.[365]

James Barr proposed a second interpretive option. His translation reads, "Also He has set perpetuity in their heart." The reference to perpetuity would seem to indicate the consciousness of memory and an awareness of past events. According to Barr, man's predicament is such that he has this awareness and yet cannot work out the total purpose of God.[366] While Qoheleth used the term *ʿōlām* earlier in the book to describe "ages long ago" (1:10), the notion of past time is not explicit but is instead derived from the context. Jenni notes that a past meaning for *ʿōlām* can

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[363] Brian P. Gault, "BIBLiOTHECA SACRA 165," (January-March 2008): 39–57.

[364] Bo Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth* (Stockholm: Uppsala University, 1987), 176–89.

[365] Gault, "BIBLIOTHECA SACRA 165," 39–57.

[366] James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time, 2nd ed* (London: SCM, 1969), 124.

be recognized only when the surrounding context contains a temporal indicator.[367] Gault comments that Qoheleth gives no such indication in this context. Thus, more problematic for this position is the inconsistency created by Qoheleth's own words in 1:11, "No one remembers the former events, nor will anyone remember the events that are yet to happen; they will not be remembered by the future generations." Does God give humanity this awareness, and yet no one remembers past events? This option also seems improbable.[368]

The third interpretive option proposed by Jenni and Murphy, as reflected in several modern English translations (NEB, NJB, NRSV, REB), renders the sentence as a metonymy of association: "God has put an awareness of the remotest time in the human heart." Contrasting this term with "time" *ʿēṯ*, which means a definite period of time, Jenni and Murphy suggest the meaning of "a sense of duration" for *ʿōlām*.[369] Thomas Krüger defines the word as "distant time," noting that "the term may refer to a concept or idea of a 'distant time' that extends far beyond the life of an individual human being in the direction either of the past or the future or both."[370]

Moreover, appealing to the temporal usage of this term elsewhere in the book to denote virtually unlimited time past or future, Iain Provan points out that humans share a sense of the whole sweep of time with God, but their sense of time past and future is insufficient for the task of understanding the times—it always slips away from them (1:11, 2:16).[371] Martin Shield defines the term similarly, stating that in the present context, the term most likely has roughly the

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[367] Jenni, "Das Wort *'ôlàm* im Alten Testament," 24–27.

[368] Gault, "BIBLIOTHECA SACRA 165," 39–57.

[369] Jenni, "Das Wort *'ôlàm* im Alten Testament," 34–35.

[370] Thomas Krüger, *Qoheleth (*trans. O. C. Dean Jr.: Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 87.

[371] Iain Provan, *Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs, NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 90.

same meaning as in verse 14 and refers to the entire expanse of time—from the beginning to the end. In contrast to most commentators, Shields proposes a positive reading of the final clause of this verse: "without which human beings cannot discover the work that God has done from beginning to end."[372]

Shields continues by saying, "Qoheleth appears to be asserting that human beings ought to be able to discover the work that God has done from beginning to end precisely because God has placed eternity in their hearts. Indeed, Qoheleth summarizes what God does from beginning to end in verses 14–15. Clearly, he could not have meant that human beings can fully understand what God has done and plans to do because elsewhere, he has denied that we can. Nonetheless, Qoheleth demonstrates awareness of what God has done beyond the immediate, from beginning to end, as it were."[373] Although certainly creative, this view creates a contradiction and then makes an assumption to alleviate the tension. Viewing Qoheleth's comments in this verse as an affirmation of man's ability to discern the divine program contradicts later comments concerning the futility of such an endeavor (8:17). Thus, to solve this new problem, Shields suggests that the ability to discern the plans of God is merely partial.[374]

Craig Bartholomew describes the plight of humanity similarly, "in a timed world; humans recognize that 'there is a time and a place and to discern this they need a sense of the larger picture, what philosophers might call origin and telos. However, they cannot get access to this 'duration.'"[375] Although proponents of this view claim that "eternity" (*ʿōlām)* normally means "duration" or "an awareness of unlimited time," this view extracts much from this one

[372] Martin A. Shields, *The End of Wisdom* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 139.

[373] Ibid, 42.

[374] Ibid.

[375] Craig G. Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes, Analecta Biblica* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1998), 243.

term that has not been attested elsewhere. Furthermore, other statements from Qoheleth state that humanity does not remember past events (1:11) and cannot know the future (3:22; 6:12; 7:14; 8:7; 9:12; 10:14). This fact, when combined with the sheer ambiguity of this "awareness," weighs against the likelihood of this position.[376]

The fourth interpretation option views the term *ōlām* as a reference to the indefinite future, "the things to come" (1 Kgs 8:13; Pss 77:8, 145:13; Dan 9:24).[377] Essentially, this view points out that God has ingrained a desire to know the future in human beings. A few English translations render the phrase as "a desire to know the future" (CEV, GNT, NCV, TEV). In their marginal reading, Adele Berlin and Marc Brettler provide a remarkable elucidation of this view: "God preoccupies man with the attempt to discover the times of future events."[378] According to this view, God has not only ordained all the events that will occur in life (Ecc 3:1–8), but He has also preoccupied humanity with the desire to discover the orchestration and timing of future events (vv. 9–11). Despite fitting in perfectly with the description of God's absolute sovereignty over the timing of human events (1–10) and man's ignorance of the future (v 11c; cf. 3:22; 7:14; 8:7; 9:12; 10:14), this option proposes a new meaning for *ōlām*.[379] As Jenni notes, "*ad-ōlām* almost always indicates successive temporal continuation in the future."[380] No other passage in the Old Testament supports the metonymical usage, "a desire to know the future." Therefore, this rendering seems to be based more on the subsequent result, "so that man cannot discover the work of God from beginning to end" (v. 11c) than a meaning inherent in the word *ōlām*. This

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[376] Gault, "BIBLIOTHECA SACRA 165," 39–57.

[377] Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm, BDB, 762; HALOT, 799.

[378] Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1610.

[379] Gault, "BIBLIOTHECA SACRA 165," 39–57.

[380] Jenni, "Das Wort *'ôlàm* im Alten Testament," 24–27.

semantic nuance based on a contextual reading, unattested elsewhere in biblical Hebrew, seems unconvincing.[381]

One of the fifth interpretation proponents, D. Eichhorn, renders the sentence, "He has also placed a desire for permanence in their hearts." He states, "Everything in creation fulfills its purpose at the appropriate time and then disappears. Absolutely nothing on or off the Earth exists permanently. Mankind foolishly clings to the idea that there is immortality of one kind or another for humans or animals. This idea, this hope, 'makes it impossible for mankind to comprehend what God has done from beginning to end.'"[382] Ginsburg also supports the idea that God has placed a desire for permanence in the hearts of man. He wisely asserts that in addition to this excellent order of things, God has also implanted in the hearts of men a desire for that which is beyond time and that the failure of men's efforts to secure lasting good can be attributed to his ignorance of the works of God.[383]

According to Gault, this temporal rendering of the phrase "a desire for permanence" fits nicely with the catalog of opposites (vv. 2–8) and the futility of human toil (v. 9) and aligns with the time-related terms in the context. Yet, he found two significant problems in this context. First, this metonymical nuance imports into this term much that is not found elsewhere in the Old Testament. Second and more problematic, this notion of "a desire for permanence" is difficult to explain in light of the parallel line, "so that they cannot find out, from beginning to end, the work which God has done" (v. 11c).[384] How does humanity's "desire for permanence" relate to their inability to discover the divine program? Some may suggest that God has ingrained in people a

[381] Gault, "BIBLIOTHECA SACRA 165," 39–57.

[382] D. M. Eichhorn, *Musings of an Old Professor* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1963), 49–59.

[383] Ginsburg, *The Song of Songs and Coheleth*, 308.

[384] Gault, "BIBLIOTHECA SACRA 165," 39–57.

desire for permanence to divert them from seeking to understand His work in the world. This, in turn, suggests that such a pursuit might be successful without this distraction. However, this proposal contradicts Qoheleth's conclusion later in the book that such an endeavor would be futile, "Then I discerned all that God has done: No one really comprehends what happens on earth. Despite all human efforts to discover it, no one can ever grasp it. Even if a wise man claimed he understood, he would not really comprehend it" (8:17). If such an endeavor is ultimately futile, then why would God need to divert men's efforts with such an apparent distraction? Gault concludes that this interpretation raises questions instead of providing answers. Therefore, it is an improbable way to resolve this enigmatic verse.[385]

The sixth interpretive position is the perspective advocated by Don Richardson in his book *Eternity in Their Hearts*. Like the preceding options, this view translates *ōlām* as a metonymy with a temporal nuance, rendering the phrase "a sense of eternity." This is the most frequent translation among the English versions: "the timeless" (NAB), "eternity" (ASV, ESV, HCSB, NASB, NIV, NKJV, RSV), or "an awareness of eternity" (CJB) in addition to the translations provided by many scholars and commentators.[386]

Franz Delitzsch facilitates the clearest elucidation of this view, describing the meaning of *ōlām* in light of the surrounding context with the phrase *desiderium aeternitatis.*

> He has also established in man an impulse leading beyond that which is temporal toward the eternal. It lies in his nature not to be contented with the temporal but to break through the limits which it draws around him, to escape from the bondage and the disquietude within which he is held, and amid the ceaseless changes of time to console himself by directing his thoughts to eternity. . . . In fact, the impulse of man shows that his innermost wants cannot be satisfied by that which is temporal. He is a being limited by time, but as to his innermost nature, he is related to eternity. . . . It is not enough for man to know that everything that happens has its divinely ordained time. There is an instinct peculiar to his nature impelling

[385] Gault, "BIBLIOTHECA SACRA 165," 39–57.

[386] Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1981), 28.

him to pass beyond this fragmentary knowledge and comprehend eternity, but his effort is in vain, for "man is unable to reach unto the work which God accomplished from the beginning to the end."[387]

Like Delitzsch, Anthony Tomasino arrives at the same conclusion, stating that the phrase can be understood to mean that God has given humanity an innate sense of eternity.[388] Other scholars have described this concept as "a capacity for eternal things,"[389] "an awareness of one's extra-temporal significance," [390] "a longing for eternity," [391] or "a consciousness of the eternal."[392]

Seow is a proponent of this view and contrasts this position with the previous options. The noun does not refer to what one would call 'timing,' 'a sense of time,' or the like (so NRSV: 'a sense of past and future'). It simply means 'eternity'—that which transcends time. It refers to a sense of that which is timeless and, as such, stands in contrast to 'it's time.'[393] Seow further explains, "the word *hä'öläm* 'eternity' refers probably to a consciousness of or yearning for that which transcends the present—it includes everything 'from beginning to end'. . . Qoheleth is thinking here of the effort of people to bypass the moment to grasp the totality of existence." Humans cannot discover that sort of thing; however, humanity knows of eternity but can only

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[387] Franz Delitzsch, *Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1877), 687–88.

[388] Anthony Tomasino, "Eternity," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. Willem A. VanGemeren; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:350.

[389] Eaton, *Ecclesiastes: An introduction and commentary*, 81.

[390] Donald R. Glenn, "Ecclesiastes," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament* (ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck; Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985; reprint, Colorado Springs: Cook, 1996), 247.

[391] Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs,* 299.

[392] Graham S. Ogden, *Qoheleth* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 55.

[393] Seow, *Ecclesiastes,*163.

cope with activities in their time. The eternity in human hearts only underscores the ephemerality of the moment that each person experiences.[394]

Although the Old Testament does include a few places where something is said to be put in the human heart (Exod 35:34; 36:1; 1 Kgs 10:24; 2 Chr 9:23; Ezra 7:27; Ps 4:7), "it makes little sense in Hebrew," as Whybray notes, "To say that God put eternity into man's mind, since the Hebrew language hardly allows such an expression to be understood as an ellipsis for 'the notion of eternity."[395] With the recurring refrain "under the sun" (29 times), the author evaluates life on this earth within the bounds of time. Thus, a notion of eternity makes little sense in this context. Despite its traditional acceptance, this option is alien to Qoheleth's worldview and, therefore, it must be judged as an unsatisfactory explanation.[396]

Finally, six interpretive options have been evaluated, and the conclusion is revolutionary for understanding the meaning of this passage and its application. The interpretive options highlight a very dominant theme in the book—the vast distance between God and mankind. This distinction accentuates God's absolute sovereignty and incomprehensibility on the one hand and the puniness and finitude of humankind on the other. Again and again, Qoheleth emphasizes that no man can understand what God is doing in the world.[397] Given the context, the irony displayed in 3:11 is palpable.

Walter Kaiser makes a significant observation and contribution to the discussion when he points out that 3:11 refers to "a deep-seated desire, a compulsive drive … to know the character,

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[394] Seow, *Ecclesiastes,*176.

[395] R. N. Whybray, *Ecclesiastes, New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 73–74.

[396] Gault, "BIBLIOTHECA SACRA 165," 39–57.

[397] Roland E. Murphy, *Ecclesiastes, Word Biblical Commentary 23a* (Dallas: Word, 1992).

composition, and meaning of the world . . . and to discern its purpose and destiny."[398] Kaiser is correct—humans have a compulsive "drive to know" the future, which leads to frustration and exasperation. Indeed, there are appropriate times for everything, and God does know these times, but no one can discover God's actions. Ultimately, there is nothing (from beginning to end) that human beings can truly fathom. A. R. Fausset's interpretation of the verse is that God has given humans the capacity to understand the world of nature as reflecting God's wisdom in its beautiful order and times (Rom 1:19–20). He says that God makes everything beautiful in His time, but man cannot see it, notwithstanding that God has set eternity in man's heart.[399] These are good points of correlation. Wisdom does not grasp some things; nevertheless, many things in God's order and design make sense, which is the basis of natural law. Psalms 90:1–5 represents man, in the consciousness of his frailty, taking refuge in God's eternity. In addition, Romans 1:20 shows that God hath set in man's intellect the intuition of God's eternal power, as manifested in His works of creation. It is man's privilege to discern something eternal behind the fleeting present world.[400]

In assessing the significance of verses 12 and 13, it is clear that Qoheleth makes a personal claim for humans to enjoy life whenever they can. The text reads:

> **12** So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can.
>
> **13** And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God.

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[398] Bo Isaksson, *Studies in the Language of Qoheleth* (Stockholm: Uppsala University, 1987), 176–89.

[399] A. R. Fausset, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Job–Isaiah*, vol. III (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 521.

[400] Fausset, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical*, 521.

Qohelet, in verse 12, advises humans to give up trying to fathom God's way in the world. Instead, it implores humans to enjoy the present and accept the opportunities available as a gift from God. The act of surrender to the eternal God relieves us of the burden of trying to be God. Verse 13 specifies this enjoyment in the same manner as 2:24: eating, drinking and enjoying work. Yet the final thought of the verse is new. Qohelet points out that no one can take even these small, temporal enjoyments for granted. God must permit the opportunity and the attitude that is predisposed toward it. As Crenshaw rightly states, "even the power to follow his advice is a divine gift."[401]

Qoheleth asserts that there is no possibility that human beings can alter the ways of God, as the immutability of divine activity has no necessary dependence on the machinations of men and women. God exercises absolute sovereign control over the created order. This emphasis is indicated more clearly in verses 14 and 15. The text reads:

> **14**And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God's purpose is that people should fear him.
>
> **15**That which is has already been, And what is to be has already been, And God requires an account of what is past

In verse 14, Qohelet concludes, "I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it." This passage links back to verse 11 with the theme that what a sovereign God does is eternal. The creation of male and female in the image of God is eternal. Although God has made everything suitable in its time (v 11a), everything that God does is eternal (verse 14a), and it is not bound by time. Longman notes that Qohelet speaks vaguely and generally when he refers to "everything God does," and the verb used in this context is from ʿāśâ. By this expression, he certainly refers to "making" (ʿāśâ, v. 11)

[401] Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, 50.

everything appropriate for its time, thereby referring back to vv. 1–8.[402] Here, we see an intertextual theological connection between Ecclesiastes and Genesis 1–2. The verb ʿāśâ "to make, do" has extreme theological and exegetical significance; every one of the 12 occurrences in the creation account speaks of God's creative activity. It occurs four times between the second and third day of creation (Gen 1:7; 11–12; 16) and three times on the sixth day (Gen 1:25–26; 31), thereby referring to the creation of the beast of the earth and humanity, male and female. Genesis 2:2–4 and 18 use ʿāśâ again five times to describe God's finished work and the creation of a helpmate for Adam.

Qohelet establishes another connection with Genesis. He states: "God made (ʿāśâ) man (ʾ*ādām*) upright (*yāšār*), but they have sought out many devices" (Eccl 7:29). Thus, Qohelet found that humans are responsible for their actions. This verse "is an obvious reflection on the first few chapters of Genesis,"[403] even though the vocabulary is different in some cases. The verb ʿ*āśâ* and the noun ʾ*ādām* are both used in Genesis 1:26 to imply the creation of humans—the use of ʾ*ādām* in both passages is generic.[404] In agreement with the theology of Genesis, Qohelet indicates that, originally, humans were created "upright" (*yāšār*, "morally straight"). However, Qohelet specifies that they lost this uprightness when 'sin entered in' (Gen 3:1–7; Rom 5:12). This theological reasoning is clearly based on the teaching found in Genesis 1–3.

Ogden and Zogbo point out that earthly events are limited and marked by fixed moments, but God stands outside these limits. We know a little about what God does, but His actions are actually of a different order: eternal, complete, and unchanging.[405] The "The work of God" is a

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[402] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 103.

[403] Ibid*,* 107.

[404] Ibid.

[405] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 104.

Hebrew expression that constantly occurs in Ecclesiastes, as Qoheleth struggles to understand the relationship between what God does and what people do. It is a term that includes a possible reference to God's work in creation, which is immutable. This confirms the distance between humans' dependent and God's absolute sovereignty over everything. In translation, we can say "all God's works," "every action of God," or "everything God does" endure forever. The word "endure" is literally "is" or "exists," indicating that what God does will remain forever or last through eternity. Although Qoheleth has already indicated that there is a definite limit to what the human mind can know, he clearly states that at least we can understand what God does remains forever.[406]

The word "forever" *ōlām* is the same basic term used in verse 11 to describe the consciousness that God implants in our minds. Here it is used as an adverbial phrase. When Qoheleth claims that what God does endures forever, one may ask: "What kinds of things does he have in mind?" In the context of this chapter, scholars believe Qoheleth keeps in mind the order within creation and the times over which God has control. The true sense of the phrase is that God's order will remain constant.[407] Ogden and Zogbo's analysis of the text is essential for the thesis: "the order which God has established will remain constant." Qoheleth expresses a point of view that is very much in keeping with the teaching of Job and Proverbs. The poet in Job asserts that God's order was established through wisdom. He "gave the wind its weight and apportioned out the waters by measure; when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunderbolt" (Job 28:25–27).

[406] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 105.

[407] Ibid.

Similarly, Proverbs affirms that the created order is defined by limits and parameters—the sky is "fixed," the sea is "assigned its limits," and the earth's foundations are "marked out" (Prov 8:28–29). The reference here implies that the Creator had established an order for male and female that, therefore, cannot be changed but will remain forever. God made man from the dust of the earth and animated him by his life-breath. Furthermore, when we look at God's creation across the spectrum of species, everything reflects "order and suitability" in design. For example, the sun rises, and at night it goes down and is hidden, but the following day it makes its way back to the place of morning rising. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; round and round goes the wind, and the wind returns on its circuits. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; they continue to flow to the place where the streams flow (Eccl vv. 1:5–7). In the context of verse 4, the phrase "the sea is full but never overflows" suggests that hurricanes, earthquakes, tornados, storms, tsunamis, and typhoons become dangerous and destructive because they are outside God's fixed limits and parameters.

The syntax and semantics of the sentence, "nothing can be added to it or taken from it," indicate that it is a proverbial statement. As a proverb, we are not surprised to find similar statements with nearly identical vocabulary elsewhere (Deut 4:12; 13:1; Prov 30:6).[408] Furthermore, Ben Sira uses the expression reminiscent of Qohelet when he states, "One cannot take away, and one cannot add, and one should not investigate God's wonders" (Sir 18:6).[409] We can conclude from verse 14 that "whatever God does always remain," "whatever God does never end," or "nothing that God does can be changed." No one can add to it or be subtract from it because the work of God is perfect in every way.

[408] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 103.

[409] Ibid.

Longman's treatment of the text supports my thesis that nothing can be added or changed in God's order and design of male and female created in His image, as echoed in Genesis 1–2. This means that God made male and female to function appropriately, and in the scheme of things, does not need to be corrected. As the words translated for "male" and "female" are used for animals as well as human beings, gender has a biological component that is firmly rooted in the physical body. This implies that the gender of each person corresponds to his or her biological sex as male or female.[410] Hence, when we assign a gender identity to a person, which is different from their genitalia because of biological observations about the person's brain or some personality tendencies, this suggests that we are tampering with God's order and design. The promotion of plastic sexuality to erase the fixed nature of human sexual identity is an example of tampering with God's design. Social scientist Milton Diamond, a proponent of plastic sexuality, claims that a person can "develop and express his or her potential in any direction, on all levels of sexuality, without attaching a negative value to any variation just because it is different."[411] Also, Anthony Giddens, another supporter, asserts:

> "Sexuality" today has been discovered, opened up, and made accessible to the development of varying lifestyles. It is something each of us "has," or cultivates, no longer a natural condition which an individual accepts as a preordained state of affairs. Somehow, in a way that has to be investigated, sexuality functions as a malleable feature of self, a prime connecting point between body, self-identity, and social norms.[412]

Such thoughts regarding human sexual identity can be characterized as intentional, self-conscious rebellions against God, as they disregard the Creator's will, purpose, wisdom, and work. Beeke explains that gender is not merely a personal mindset or a social construct but an

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[410] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology,* 270.

[411] Milton Diamond, "Human Sexual Development: Biological Foundations for Social Development," in Frank A. Beach, ed., *Human Sexuality in Four Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 58.

[412] Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love & Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 15.

aspect of God's fixed order in creation.[413] Specifically, Beeke's claim supports my thesis that male and female are an aspect of God's fixed order in creation, as echoed in Genesis 1–2. The theological implication of man and woman created in the image of God as a reflection of suitability in design suggests that the way God created men and women is such that we do not tamper with God's design.

It has been impossible for commentators to reach an agreement regarding the meaning of the second part of the verse, "God does it so that people will fear him." Qohelet asserts that God's purpose behind His actions is to strike fear in the hearts of His creatures. The expression to fear God is perhaps one of the most pious statements in the Bible (see Prov 1:7 and Ps 111). Nonetheless, commentators who read this sentence as an expression of a right attitude with God do not take into account the overwhelmingly negative context that surrounds the phrase, both here and in its other occurrences in the Book of Ecclesiastes (5:6; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12, 13; 12:13 5).[414] Ogden and Zogbo comment that the subject of the verb "fear" is generally supplied from the first conclusion in this subsection in verses 12–13. This, in turn, means that the subject of "fear" is believed to be "men" or "people." Fear refers to reverencing, respecting, or being in awe of God. Therefore, this part of the verse can be translated to: "God has done this so that people may honor him,"[415] to convince them that there is a God with sovereign dominion over them so that they can worship and acknowledge Him in all their ways. On the other hand, Longman concludes that Qohelet believes that God acts the way He does to frighten people into submission and not to arouse a sense of respectful awe of His power and might.[416]

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[413] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology, 270.*

[414] Ibid, 104.

[415] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 105.

[416] Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes,* 104.

Verse 15 concludes the section and emphasizes the thought of the previous verse—everything God does lasts forever, and nothing can alter it. The verse opens with "Whatever," referring to "everything." It is followed by the clause "that was," which points to some completed action (reflected as a present condition in RSV). Thus "whatever presently exists," "whatever has existed," or "whatever happens" captures the intended meaning of the verse. The line should be translated as "Whatever [or, Everything that] has been, already is." The use of the word here already appears odd in this context, for it usually refers to something that came about in the past rather than in a present state. Here, we can assume that it means something that "continues to be [or, exist]." This renders a clause in which the use of the word "whatever" (RSV that which) from the previous clause must be assumed. It uses the infinitive of "be" to indicate what will come into existence. These things, which will appear in the future, already have been, meaning they have existed in the past. TEV states that "whatever happens or can happen has already happened before" loses the poetic balance of the Hebrew but indicates the meaning clearly.[417]

Henry explains that we must acknowledge the inviolable steadiness of God's creation in whatever changes we see or feel in this world today. The sun rises and sets, the moon waxes and wanes, yet both are where they were, and their revolutions follow the same method from the beginning according to the ordinances of heaven. Therefore, they are in alignment with the events of Providence. That which is to be has already been; in other words, God has not just begun to use this method. Things have always been mutable and uncertain as they are today. We speak inconsiderately when we say, "Surely the world was never so bad as it is now" or "None ever met with such disappointments as we meet with." The world, as it has been, is and will be

[417] Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Ecclesiastes*, 105.

constant in inconstancy, for God requires that which is past to be repeated.[418] In other words, everything God created continues to exist or be; no one can alter it.

August Konkel makes a wise observation, stating that the concluding verses (3:14–15) make it clear that the Teacher does not for a moment doubt God's control and sovereignty. No one can change the world God created and placed us in. He has placed eternity in our hearts and given us a sense that is "suitable," "appropriate," and "right." However, He has not allowed us access to that information. Furthermore, what God has done is eternal and "final." Things will not change; they will be the same in the present as they have been in the past, and the future will follow suit.[419]

In summary, Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 affirms the existence of a God of "order and suitability" in design. The textual connection between Ecclesiastes and Genesis becomes obviously undeniable when we read the word of Qoheleth in the light of the creation motif. Qohelet acknowledges the order of God's universe; He sees God in complete control. As Mobley so brilliantly indicates, no one could alter the fundamental nature of the world.[420] Henry echoes the same sentiment, noting that God has made all things beautiful. Everything is done well, as in creation, and so in providence, and we shall see it when the end comes. However, until then, we are incompetent judges of it.[421] He further explains, "God has not left himself without a witness of his righteous and beautiful ordering of things. He has set eternity in men's hearts, given man a large desire and a power, in good measure, to comprehend and understand the history of nature,

[418] Henry, *Ecclesiastes*, 8.

[419] Konkel and Longman III, *Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs*, 276.

[420] Mobley, *The Return of the Chaos Monsters,* 115.

[421] Henry, *Ecclesiastes*, 8.

with the course of human affairs, so that, if men did but give themselves to the exact observation of things, they might in most of them perceive an admirable order and contrivance."[422]

In the context of Qoheleth's words, he also emphasizes that everything God has made will remain forever, which harks back to God's design of male and female as good and very good (Gen 1:26–31). Thus, this suggests that the role of God as Creator and providential sustainer has ordered things the way in which they are created, and men should not tamper with it. The idea that what God has made in His image and likeness can be culturally relative or plastic can be characterized as an intentional rebellion against the work of the Creator.

Creation Motifs in the Book of Job

In God's wisdom, he orders the cosmos to work the way in which it does. He can interfere or even micromanage, but that is not typical. In its fallen state, the world can only operate by His wisdom.[423] What we find in God's creation of male and female is a reflection of order and design, a dominant theme in the creation motif of who God is as Creator. The Book of Job is generally recognized as being acquainted with the creation account of Genesis and using it to develop some of its arguments. The Book of Job contains a significant number of creation motifs and discussions.

In the Book of Job, we do not find a study of male and female origins. Nevertheless, the writer is acquainted with the creation of humans as recorded in Genesis. For example, Elihu states that "no one says, 'Where is God my Maker' (*āśâ*)" (Job 35:10). The verb *ʿāśâ* ("to make, do, create") is "the commonest verb for 'create'" in the Old Testament. This is the same verb used in Genesis 1:26 when God said, "Let Us make (*ʿāśâ*) man in Our image." This suggests that

[422] Henry, *Ecclesiastes*, 8.

[423] John H. Walton and Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Job* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015), 14–15.

Elihu assumes that God is the Creator of humankind. The Book of Job also uses the same participial form to refer to God as "He who made me" (Job 31:15). He refers to himself as "the work" (*maʿăśēh*) of God's hands (14:15), using a noun derived from the verb *ʿāśâ*.[424] The connection between the use of this verb in Job and Genesis is strengthened when linked to the "breath" of God and "clay."

In verses 10:8, Job sees God as a potter or artisan: "Your hands fashioned (*ʿāṣab*, 'to shape, form') and made (*ʿāśâ*) me altogether." There is an echo of this passage in Proverbs 8:30 in reference to "I was beside Him as a master craftsman or artisan." He proceeds to clarify that concept by saying, "You have made [*ʿāśâ*] me as clay [*ḥōmer*]" (v. 9).[425] M. Graupner notes the verbs *ʿāṣab* ("to fashion") and *ʿāśâ* ("to make") are used as synonyms to refer "to God's act of creation."[426] In this context, John Hartly made an interesting point that the term *ʿāṣab* stresses "the artistic skill of a craftsman in making an image"[427] or even an idol. Here, Job considers God as an artisan who shaped and created humans from clay. Clay is the raw material used by the potter to produce what is intended. When used in reference to God, it points to God's sovereignty and cares for humans (for example, Jer 18:4–8; Isa 64:8).

In the context of creation, *ḥōmer* is considered the raw material that God used to create humans. Although this term is not used in Genesis 1–2, we find the use of the phrase "of dust [*ʿāpār*] from the ground [*ʾădāmâ*]" here (Gen 2:7). In the Book of Job, "clay" (*ḥōmer*) and

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[424] Gerhard F. Hasel, "יגע *yāgaʿ*," in *TDOT*, vol. 5, 390.

[425] "As clay" is a literal translation of the Hebrew *kaḥōmer* and could be expressing the idea that God worked on the clay to fashion humans. Because of the parallelism of the two verbs, it could be that *ʿāśâ* is, in this particular case, expressing the idea of making or creating someone by molding clay (cf. 10:9; NIV).

[426] M. Graupner, "עצב *ʿāṣab*," in *TDOT*, vol. 11, 281.

[427] John E. Hartly, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988), 186.

"dust" (*ʿāpār*) are practically used as synonyms (Job 10:9).[428] Humans "dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust" (4:19). When they die, they return to dust (34:15)—an idea that is explicitly found in Genesis 3:19. The conceptual connection, therefore, is quite clear.

In Genesis, the theological movement from clay to a living human being occurs when God breathes "into his nostrils (*ʾap*) the breath (*nišmat*) of life (*ḥayyîm*)" (Gen 2:7). There is an echo of the passage in Job: "For as long as life is in me (literally, *nišmatî bî* or 'the breath is in me'), and the breath (*rûaḥ*) of God is in my nostrils (*ʾap*)" (27:3). The Hebrew term *nĕšāmâ* designates the divine gift of life bestowed to humans at creation, which constitutes the dynamic nature of human life that is sustained by the "spirit of God" (*rûaḥ ʾĕlōah*).[429] H. Lamberty-Zielinski suggests that they are given "to human beings as life-giving powers." However, when God withdraws both of them, the result is death (Job 34:14, 15).[430]

The second passage of focus is Eliphaz's conversation with Job, in which he asks Job, "Were you the first man to be born (*yālad*), or were you brought forth (*ḥîl*) before the hills?" (Job 15:7). This passage deals with two different moments—existence and pre-existence. The first indicates the moment when the first man was born or came into existence—the image of birth is used to speak about creation—while the second highlights the time before creation—before the hills were created. Was Job the first man created, or was he created before anything else? Here, Psalm 90:2 could be applicable: "Before the mountains (*harîm*) were born (*yālad*) or You gave birth (*ḥîl*) to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are

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[428] See Helmer Ringgren, "חמר*ḥmr*," in *TDOT*, vol. 5, 3.

[429] T. C. Mitchell, "The Old Testament Usage of *Nešāmâ*," *VT* 11 (1961): 177–87, has strongly argued that the divine action of breathing into Adam the *nĕšāmâ* distinguishes humans from the animals. Since human life was a divine gift, and He is the One Who is constantly preserving it, it could be said that "breath as the characteristic of life shows that man is indissolubly connected with Yahweh." See Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. M. Kohl (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress, 1974), 60.

[430] H. Lamberty-Zielinski, "נְשָׁמָה*nešāmâ*," in *TDOT*, vol. 10, 67.

God." J. Schreiner and G. Botterweck assert that this passage indicates that the verbs *yālad* and *ḥîl* can be used figuratively to refer to the divine work of creation.[431] We can conclude, in this instance, that the birth of the first man designates the creation of the first human being and most likely alludes to Adam.

The third passage of focus is Job 20:4–5; Zophar asks Job: "Do you know this from of old, from the establishment (*śûm*, or 'to place, to put') of man (*ʾādām*) on earth?" Robert L. Alden points out that the biblical background for this statement is Genesis 2:8: "The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed (*śûm*) the man [*ʾādām*] whom He had formed."[432] According to Clines, the presence in Genesis 2:8 of the noun *ʾādām* and the verb *śûm* make the connection between the two passages practically unquestionable. What Zophar brings to the table "is traditional wisdom, which he pretends to be as old as Adam, and he marvels ironically that Job has not yet learned it."[433]

Survey of God's Order and Design in Creation—Job 38–41

The most powerful creation language of Wisdom literature is found in God's response "from the whirlwind" in Job 38–41. Here, we can see how the language orients the sage through God's "order and suitability" in design. Richly packed in each line of these divine rhetorical questions are powerful pictures of the wonders of creation. This is an almost inverse echo of Proverbs 8, where God asks Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Who determined its measurements . . . when the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors . . . when I made the clouds its garment . . .

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[431] J. Schreiner and G. J. Botterweck, "ילדyālad," in *TDOT*, vol. 6, 80; and A. Baumann, "חילḥîl," in *TDOT*, vol. 4, 345.

[432] Robert L. Alden, *Job,* NAC, 11 (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 214.

[433] David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20,* Word Biblical Commentary, 17 (Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1989), 349.

and prescribed bounds for it?" (Job 38:4–10). As Perdue notes, from here through verse 20, a sense of order is perceived in "the four spheres of earth, sea, heavens, and underworld."[434] Brown concurs that the structure is not only carefully planned but also "complex and wondrous," as we also saw in Proverbs.[435] Likewise, as in Proverbs, the order is determined by the established limits. As God continues (38:22–38) with creation theme questions, which evoke images of light, snow, rain, and clouds, it is significant that "the questions are not mere assertions of God's transcendence and omnipotence as new information for Job" but, instead, these questions invite Job into a space of wonder.[436] This wonder is pushed further with the images of earthly creatures in Chapters 38 and 39, where God's rhetorical questions bring Job into the very wildness and beauty of the animal world: "Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? …The ostrich's wings flap wildly, though its pinions lack plumage … Do you give the horse its might? …Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars?" (39:1, 13, 19, 26). Thereafter, more famously, God insists that Job "look at Behemoth" (40:15) and Leviathan (41:1), wild and mysterious creatures.[437] Here, after Job has suffered inexplicably, God asserts that he "made [Behemoth] just as [he] made [Job]" (40:15), thereby connecting Job, through perplexity and wonderment, with these wild creatures: "[Job] finds himself strangely mirrored in the alien otherness of creation."[438]

Brown unpacks the characteristic connections made between humans and creatures, including strength and confidence, which are paradoxically developed in Job until "he is able to

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[434] Perdue, *Wisdom & Creation*, 170.

[435] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 112, 114.

[436] T.C. Ham, "The Gentle Voice of God in Job 38," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 3 (2013): 536.

[437] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 115.

[438] Ibid, 125.

speak without fear." This leads to the assertion that this divine response transforms Job's self-perception and understanding, as he "discovers himself as a child of the wild," identifying with the "frail and the fierce."[439] Whether or not we accept this proposition of connection, it is at least certain that Job's perception is transformed, as seen in his response: "…I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (42:3b). In other words, the poetry of God's question-filled response elicits a new self and world perception.[440] This ultimately facilitates a sense of God's "order and suitability" to Job and bestows a kind of wisdom that orients him. G. K. Chesterton says: "Instead of proving to Job that it is an explicable world, He insists that it is a much stranger world than Job ever thought it was."[441] The sage of the Book of Job positions and orients readers by illustrating the wonder and order of creation—an orientation that is essential for knowing how to live.

Wisdom Created the Universe—Job 28

Wisdom is described as elusive and precious, and it cannot be mined, brought, or found. It can only be obtained through "the fear of the Lord" (v. 28). Chapter 28 of the Book of Job powerfully meditates on the nature of wisdom and humans' relationship with it. This chapter begins with an extended description of human industry, describing the work of mining for precious stones and metals. In this pursuit, humans "put their hand to the flinty rock, and overturn mountains by the roots. They cut out channels in the rocks, and their eyes see every precious thing. The sources of the rivers they probe; hidden things they bring to light" (28:9–11). In carving up the natural landscape to search for valuable natural resources, human activity is

[439] Brown, *Wisdom's Wonder*, 125.

[440] Ibid, 111.

[441] G. K. Chesterton, *Introduction to the Book of Job*, *American Chesterton Society*, Kindle Edition, 2014.

likened to that of the divine. Job describes God as one who "removes mountains" (9:5) and declares that He is the one who "has cut a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt" (38:25).

The poet explains that human skills lack wisdom in all its divine-like dominion. Job affirms that wisdom cannot be possessed utilizing human craft, and its value cannot be reduced to the world's richest (28:12–19). Only God has wisdom, and it is through this wisdom that God "gave the wind its weight and apportioned out the waters by measure; when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunderbolt" (28:25–27). Robert Alden proposes that verse 25 reflected the creation of the world when both wind and water were present (Gen 1:2). He also suggests that verses 26–27 resemble the wisdom hymn in Proverbs 8:22–31. The overall teaching of this passage is that the sovereign God utilized wisdom from the very beginning, as referenced in Proverbs 8:22–29.[442] Konkel makes the same theological connection to Proverbs 8. He points out that God alone understands wisdom, and the forces of creation, such as wind, rain, and storm, were set in place and are governed by wisdom. By Wisdom, the orders of the natural world were achieved (Prov 8:22–31).[443]

Despite the apparent similarities between human and divine control over the natural order, the presence of wisdom makes all the difference. A man or woman seeking wisdom inside mountains would purchase it with the world's wealth; however, the solution to the search for wisdom is God, the fear of the Lord, and the practice of shunning evil (28). Here, we see the

[442] Robert L. Alden, *Job*, *vol. 11, The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 277.

[443] Konkel and Longman III, *Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs*, 174.

theological connections between the Wisdom books. "The fear of the LORD" appears at the beginning of Proverbs (1:7), at the end of Ecclesiastes (12:13), and in the middle of Job.[444]

Wisdom is the logic with which God created heaven and earth. Therefore, the creation of male and female is not the work of chance or fate, but it was constructed according to certain specifications and the methods used to prove God's infinite wisdom and perfection. Through wisdom, each created element has been ordered, blessed, and oriented toward flourishing.[445] For example, in the original creation of male and female, the male was made in the image of God first, as God formed him from the dust of the ground in an unmediated fashion. Thereafter, the female was made in the image of God, in a mediated fashion, as God chooses, not more dust, but the very rib of Adam by which He would create the woman fully and equally in the image of God. Thus, while both are fully the image of God, the text seems to suggest that both are not constituted as the image of God in an identical way. By wisdom, God constructed them according to His specifications and methods. This observation supports and validates the thesis of the role played by wisdom in the creation of male and female in the image of God as a reflection of "order and suitability" in design.

Ellen Davis echoes the playful portrayal of Wisdom in Proverbs 8:22–31: "both complements and amplifies the picture of creation in Genesis 1, with its more somber statement of divine approval: 'And God saw that it was very good."[446] Apart from God's Wisdom, human striving is at best vain and worst destructive. On the other hand, God's Wisdom orders rain to fall in the desert "to satisfy the waste and desolate land" (38:27). In this context, human

[444] Konkel and Longman III, *Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs*, 174.

[445] Ellen F. Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000) 68.

[446] Ibid.

technology has been employed in such devastating pursuits as mountaintop removal for coal extraction.[447] While embracing the hope of Job means reckoning that human safety, according to our understanding, will not necessarily be preserved, we could do far worse than to fear the Lord, trusting in the one who guides the stars and blesses the wastelands with rain.[448]

In summary, our examination has provided enough biblical evidence to suggest that Job is influenced by the creation account of Genesis, particularly the origin of humans. Both the author and the speakers were well acquainted with the creation narrative, which contributed to the development of the dialogue. More specifically, an account of the creation of humans is used as a rhetorical tool to communicate the following ideas: (1) the common origin of humankind (Job 33:6); (2) the fragility of human existence; (3) the value of human life as very good (10:8, 9; 27:3); and (4) the superiority of God as Creator over humans as creatures (31:14, 15; 34:13–15).

In the Book of Job, God's "order and design" in creation is a fundamental gift from a generous God. The divine discourse in Job emphasizes our human limitations in relation to exercising control over the created order. Job teaches us that the cosmos is mysteriously and miraculously in God's hands. Therefore, we can trust that God does indeed set a limit to human wickedness (38:12–15). This blessing is derived from reconsidering what it means to be human: relinquishing our pursuit of security in exchange for wisdom and seeking to live righteously with all of God's creatures in praise, wonder, and gratitude.

Despite all our technological and scientific advances, we cannot give an account of the time when the earth was formed and the "morning stars sang together, and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy" (38:7). Neither will we be able to command the dawn nor change the

[447] John McQuaid, "The Razing of Appalachia: Mountaintop Removal Revisited," *Yale Environment 360,* at http://e360.yale.edu/content/feature.msp?id=2150 (accessed April 25, 2012); M. A. Palmer et al., "Mountaintop Mining Consequences," *Science* 327/5962 (8 January 2010): 148–149.

[448] Ibid.

course of the stars, binding the chains of the Pleiades or losing the cords of Orion (38:12, 31–32). God's Wisdom orders rain to fall in the desert "to satisfy the waste and desolate land" (38:27). It is God, and only God possesses wisdom, and it is through the wisdom that God "gave the wind its weight and apportioned out the waters by measure" (28:25–27).

Indeed, God foresees and takes care of events, and nothing comes from Him at random. The plans of God are invisible; in fact, silver and copper have a place, whereas nobody has ever known the "place" of wisdom but only God.[449]God guides and limits the cosmic elements like a parent, and we are best advised to assume our place among the great diversity of God's children. However, to do otherwise is irreverent and, by extension, irresponsible. Like Job and his friends, human beings are ignorant about God's creation and, therefore, interfere with the excellency of the way in which God created men and women, as found in Genesis 1–2.

Conclusion

The three wisdom books discussed herein contain several references to the creation account recorded in Genesis 1–2. The references to the creation of humans, animals, natural phenomena, and the earth found in these books are all compatible with what we find in Genesis. The most penetrating contribution to the theology of creation is found in the personification of Wisdom and its connection to creation. God's creation includes Wisdom, which was created in the mystery of the Creator before it was expressed in the objective phenomena of creation as we know it today.

In the context of the Wisdom literature, we see the theme of "God's Wisdom as the divine capacity to design, form, and order creation and rule providentially over what has been

[449] Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti, eds., *Job*, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 142.

brought forth into being."[450] From this understanding, a framework of God's "order and suitability" of the world across the three books has been developed to support the thesis—male and female in the image of God is a reflection of "order and suitability" in design. We have learned that the wisdom of the sages is deeply grounded in the creation language. As the writers of Wisdom literature are known for their focus on the skills of the living, it is imperative for us to perceive the profound wisdom found through perceiving the natural world around us through the eyes of "order and suitability" in God's intended design.

In this chapter, we have explored the intertextuality connection between Genesis and the Wisdom books to understand the role played by Wisdom in the creation of male and female in the image of God. We now turn to Chapter six to examine the Song of Songs and its affiliation to Genesis 1–2 to present a biblical framework for understanding the subject of male and female.

[450] Perdue, *Wisdom & Creation*, 326.

CHAPTER 6

COMPATIBILITY AND SUITABILITY

We see compatibility and suitability in God's design of things in creation, which comprises a reflection of the image of God. As John Walton asserts, Genesis 1–2 illustrates that "God made everything just right and set it up to function properly within his purposes."[451] God created everything and assigned specific roles to them to function and glorify Him. The "order and suitability" approach of this dissertation argues that male and female in the image of God is a reflection of order and suitability in design.

This chapter will focus on the compatibility and suitability of God's design of male and female in His image, paying particular attention to the biblical vision of complementarity of male–female within marriage as "one flesh." This will be accomplished by a close reading of the Song of Songs and its affiliation to Genesis 1–2 to present a framework for understanding male and female as created in the image of God. Song of Songs is another book of Wisdom that informs us that male and female created in the image of God is much more than two genders or two sexes of humanity. Instead, it intentionally suggests that there is something profoundly significant to the suitability and compatibility of male and female as reflecting something of the image of God.

Song of Songs Among the Wisdom Literature

The Song of Songs plays an essential canonical function as a part of the Wisdom literature, both as a tool for the development of wisdom theology, for instance, through the

[451] John H. Walton, *Genesis* (The NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 202–203.

anecdote of the sexually aggressive woman in Proverbs 7,[452] and as a canonical extension of the picture of Proverbs 31 and Ruth.[453] While Ruth and the Song have contested status among the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament, the thematic continuity between Proverbs 31 and Ruth seems to suggest an ongoing concern for the development of wisdom theology. As Childs notes, the Song of Songs presents an essential development of the canon's understanding of human sexuality, as it paints the picture of the promiscuous woman in Proverbs 7.[454] While the harlot in Proverbs is predatory and works without the freely given consent of her target, the man and woman in the Song seek one another and love mutually without compulsion.[455]

In modern scholarship, the Song of Songs has not generally been recognized as a wisdom text, but as Firth notes, there is wisdom to be found in the Song for those seeking it.[456] There is a wide spectrum of defenders who treat Song as Wisdom literature. Among those who treat the Song of Songs as Wisdom literature, the following pertinent question is raised: On what basis do they treat it as Wisdom literature? One of the most thorough defenders is Michael Sadgrove. He points to the evidence of the didactic refrains addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem throughout the book (2:7; 3:5; 5:8; 8:4), the abstract wisdom teaching about love in the last chapter of the book (8:6–12), and the riddle of the vineyards, which begins in 1:6 and concludes in 8:11–12. For Sadgrove, the last aspect forms a frame for the whole book as a wisdom puzzle.[457] Firth

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[452] Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press,1970), 192–193.

[453] Kenneth C. Way. *Judges and Ruth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 183, 203.

[454] Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*, 192–193.

[455] Ibid.

[456] Firth, *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom*, 101.

[457] M. Sadgrove, "The Song of Songs as Wisdom Literature," *in Studia Biblica 1978 Papers on Old Testament and Related Themes, Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies* JSOTSup 11, E. A. Livingstone, ed., (Sheffield: JSOT, 1979): 245– 248.

observes that Song has a long history of connection with wisdom going as far back as the LXX when the Song of Songs began to be grouped with the other wisdom books. He also points out that there is evidence of wisdom in the genre of the Song of Songs, in its instruction for women, in its parallels with the personified Woman Wisdom, and the role of Solomon.[458] Childs also observed that Song has affinities to other Wisdom literature and uses sexual language (Prov 7:6ff.; 9:1ff.). For example, the Israelites also made a closer connection between the singing of songs and "wisdom" than modern Occidentals do.[459] Furthermore, Garrett, while assessing the Song of Songs, proposes that Song not only celebrates love but also teaches love; therefore, it is in a class by itself among the books of biblical wisdom.[460] Indeed, upon reading Song of Songs, much of that basis is connected back to God's design of male and female as "very good."

Song of Songs and Creation

Song of Songs shares essential connections with the broader Old Testament, in particular, its theology of creation and gender. Possibly, more explicitly than any other book in the Old Testament Writings, the Song of Songs seeks to firmly position itself within the creation paradigm of Genesis 1–3. This is accomplished in more subtle and obvious ways, but even a casual reading of the Song reveals the high degree of correspondence the Song of Songs has with the primeval history, as recorded in Genesis. Barth made one of the most profound attempts at the theology of the Song of Songs; in his discussion of the doctrine of creation, he draws a

[458] Firth, *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom*, 101.

[459] Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 366.

[460] Ibid, 367.

parallel between Genesis 2 and Song of Songs to unravel how the Bible, despite the corruption of humanity during the fall, maintains the pristine picture of covenant love and sexuality.[461]

As G. Lloyd Carr so brilliantly notes, "the Song of Songs is an extended commentary on the creation story, an expansion of the first recorded love song in history." Subsequently, Adam said, "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)." [462] Of all the images used throughout the Song of Songs to describe the lovers and their surroundings, the garden imagery that permeates the book is perhaps the most explicit theme utilized by the poet(s), which is likely to draw connections to the creation account.

The Garden

The parallels between the gardens in the Song of Songs and Genesis have been well noted. The Song of Songs fits well in the biblical tradition of utilizing garden imagery to signify relationships between important persons, places, and events and the creation account. Most notably, the two gardens occupy the bookend creation accounts of Scripture in Genesis 1–2 and Revelation 21–22. Iain Provan, alluding to Songs' place in this tradition, writes, "Also, located in the wondrous yet risky space between Eden and Jerusalem are the gardens of the Song of Songs, which tells us of a blossoming love that recaptures something of Eden and foreshadows something of Jerusalem, even though touched by sin and darkness. These are the gardens of human love—places of seclusion, intimacy, and security…"[463]

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[461] Barth, *Church Dogmatics.* Vol. III, 375.

[462] G Lloyd Carr, *The Song of Solomon: An Introduction and Commentary*. *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 35.

[463] Iain Provan, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 357.

The themes of nature and garden imagery run throughout the entire Song and are used in a variety of ways. In many places, one of the lovers is described with plant imagery. The woman uses the image of a vineyard metonymously with her own body (cf. 1:6); she calls herself a rose and a lily (2:1). Her beauty is described as an orchard full of pomegranates, henna, saffron, cinnamon, and many other kinds of fruits and spices (4:13–15); the woman herself is even referred to as a garden (4:15). Moreover, the reference to the woman being dark yet beautiful may be a subtle reference to the nakedness of humanity in the Garden.

Much like the woman's physical description, the man is likened to an apple tree in an orchard (2:3), his lips are described as lilies (5:13), and his physical appearance is described to be as striking as the cedars of Lebanon (5:15). While gold alone may seem a weak premise to base such a connection on (cf. the many uses of gold throughout the Song of Songs, e.g., 1:11; 3:10; 5:11, 15), several other items seem to hint at allusions to Eden. References to precious stones such as topaz and lapis lazuli (5:14) seem to parallel the description of Eden in Ezra 28:13. Moreover, the use of certain fruits (the pomegranate, in particular) seems to be reminiscent of the decorations of Solomon's Temple (cf. 1 Ki 7:20), which serves as a clear parallel to Eden as God's dwelling place with mankind, as well as the priestly garments (cf. Ex 28:33), the vestments to be worn by the mediators between God and mankind in God's sacred place—an echo of Adam and Eve's priestly role in the Garden. Throughout the Song of Songs, the poets utilize garden imagery to suggest to the reader that this is a place where men and women experience unbroken union, as designed in the initial creation. Provan provides valuable insights when he comments on the purpose of the garden imagery in the Song of Songs:

> The Song of Songs evokes Genesis 1–2 and calls us to refuse to accept the inevitability of living out in our relationships the fallenness of Genesis 3–11. The woman who in Genesis 3:1–6 took the initiative and introduced alienation into relationships becomes in the Song of Songs the woman who, in taking initiative, draws the man into intimacy. The man and

> the woman together restore in their love what was fractured in the Fall —a world in which man and woman, made in God's image and jointly commissioned to the task of exercising dominion over the earth, meet face to face as equals…[464]

Here, we see God's sacred place. Humanity comes together to experience unfallen creation in harmony and perfect union with one another, not as competitors or rivals, but as partners and lovers. While the garden imagery in Song of Songs is a clear indicator of this, the most important place in Song of Songs where this idea is displayed is in the refrain in 7:10. The phrase "I *am* my beloved's, And his desire *is* toward me" is used three times with variation throughout the Song of Songs. First, in 2:16, the woman affirms her and her lover's mutual ownership of their vineyard. Second, in 6:3, the woman demonstrates her submission to the man by reversing the order of the refrain to place herself as the object of ownership first in the phrase. Finally, in 7:10, the order of words remains reversed, yet here is the only place where the lover's desire is also said to be for the woman.[465]

The placement of the word "desire" *(tᵊšûqâ)* in 7:10 appears to be significant for the interpretation of this verse (and indeed the entirety of the Song of Songs), as this term is used only three times in the entire Hebrew Bible. First, desire is mentioned when God judges Eve in Genesis 3:16 and declares that her desire will be against her husband, thereby recognizing the brokenness in their relationship. The woman in the Song of Songs has abandoned her desire for domination and replaced it with a desire only for her lover, which he likewise mirrors. [466] Verse 10 sums up the entirety of Song's position on the ideal ordering of male and female unions. Lovers ultimately only experience union when they are on the same page, working together for

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[464] Provan, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 357.

[465] Iain Duguid, *The Song of Songs: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 147.

[466] Provan, *Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 358.

the benefit of one another and in conjunction with one another. The Song of Songs describes the ideal relationship between a man and a woman. The two partners are genuinely one flesh, undivided by competing desires. They find themselves united by a mutual desire for one another. In short, from a biblical and theological perspective, the Song of Songs functions as a canonical bridge reaching back to the creation narratives of humanity in the Garden.

Marriage and Love in the Song of Songs

What does intimacy between a man and a woman have to do with our knowledge of God? After all, God loves us as a whole person and not as disembodied souls. He created us with body and soul integrally united together. He gave male and female the precious gift of sexual enjoyment within the parameters of marriage. This gift comes to life in the Song of Songs.[467] Marriage and fidelity within marriage are everywhere set forth as the boundaries of sexuality. However, Song of Songs, unlike Proverbs, is not a series of warnings on the dangers of sexuality and the need for chastity. Instead, it is a celebration of the joy and the passion of love.[468] As Barth perceived, the united love of the man and woman in Song of Songs fulfills the creation covenant and facilitates a re-enactment of the love of the first man and the first woman. It is not a parable, but for the believer, it is an integral part of the testimony of the power of grace over sin and the flesh.[469] The Song of Songs presents sexuality as a *good thing protected by marriage and not as an evil thing made permissible by marriage.*[470]

Several scholars have argued that the Song of Songs does not promote monogamy, as there is no mention of marriage and the couple is unmarried. Garrett comments that there is

[467] Konkel and Longman III, *Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs*, 341.

[468] Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 376–377.

[469] Barth, *Church Dogmatics.* Vol. III, 375.

[470] Ibid.

adequate evidence to assert that the theme of the Song of Songs is the love between a man and a woman as they approach and experience their wedding. The idea of marriage and exclusive love is present everywhere.[471] He also makes an interesting observation that, in the same way, the text speaks against other forms of sexual behavior (homosexuality, and so on)—not by decree but by example. The Song of Songs portrays how the sexual longings of man and woman ought to be fulfilled.[472]

The Song of Songs reflects what God created when He made male and female in the Garden. This is what God intended in terms of suitability and compatibility, but the fall has unfortunately skewed God's original intent. However, within marriage, there is the possibility and opportunity for a glance at what God created as "very good," as we see reflected in the celebration book of Song of Songs.

The next section will examine the biblical purpose of God's intent for a suitable helper for man. Within the context of creation, God instructs humankind to be fruitful and multiply. This seems to suggest that solitude prevents man from fulfilling the design of creation and, therefore, it is "not good."

Suitable Helper for Man

Ware brilliantly states that whatever is created in the image of God is very significant.[473] There is correctness as to how God has designed the sexes to be compatible and suitable. The first clues necessary to understand how male and female relationships play a critical role in the image of God are primarily found in Genesis 2:18 and again later in verses 24. After God created Adam and gave him directions concerning his duties in the Garden of Eden, God did not leave

[471] Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 379.

[472] Ibid.

[473] Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God," 7: 14–23.

him to explore the world and discover his destiny alone. God saw his work as incomplete, as Adam could not reproduce his kind independently. As a result of the apparent lack of a suitable companion for Adam versus the animals, we read, "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fitting for him'" (Gen 2:18). Here, we see how God declares that something is "not good" (*lō' ṭôḇ*) in His creation for the first time in the Scripture. In verse 18, God says, "it is not good for the man to be alone." Some same-sex proponents use this verse as the central pillar of their argument for the inclusion of same-sex coupling to debate loneliness while downplaying any sexual component. However, this argument cannot stand when considering the description of what God determines is a suitable companion for man. God created a suitable helper for Adam—Eve—who acts as his intellectual, moral, and physical counterpart. As McKeown points out, though man's loneliness is a central idea in this section of Chapter 2, the incompatibility of the animals for the man bespeaks the duality of the sexes (that is, male and female) and man's total aloneness in this regard. [474] Russell Reno adds that man's aloneness makes it impossible for him to be "fruitful and multiply," which was an obvious concern of God. [475] Reno made an interesting point; in the context of creation, God commands male and female to be "fruitful and multiply;" therefore, a man being alone would prevent him from fulfilling God's design of creation, which is "not good."

The Hebrew word translated as "helper" (*'ezer*) is often used to refer to God, who is our helper elsewhere in the Bible. (See Ps 33:20; 70:5; 115:9; and so on). It is a strong word, referring not to a lesser assistant but someone who supplies strength to those in need. The usage of the Hebrew term does not suggest a subordinate role, a connotation that the English word

[474] Russell R. Reno, *Genesis* (Brazos Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), 66–67.

[475] Ibid.

"helper" can have. In the Bible, God is frequently described as the "helper," the one who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves, and the one who meets our needs.

The key Hebrew phrase, which addresses the issue of sexual complementarity, is '*ezer kenegdo*. There are only two places in the Hebrew Bible where this exact phrase appears, and both of these instances can be located in Genesis 2 (vv. 18 and 20). As such, the phrase is hard to interpret and has been variously rendered by modern translations:[476] "a help meet for him" (KJV); "a helper suitable for him" (NASB; NIV); "a helper fit for him" (ESV); "a companion who corresponds to him" (NET); "a companion who will help him" (NLT); "a helper as his partner" (NRSV); and "a fitting helper for him" (NJPS). All of these translations affirm the concept of a suitable "helper" *('ezer*) without doing translational "justice" to the second word in the phrase, *kenegdo*. *Kenegdo* is a combination of three different Hebrew words—the preposition כְּ, the word *negdo*, and the third masculine singular pronominal suffix וֹ. The כְּ means "like" or "as," and *negdo* can be rendered as an adverb of location, meaning "in front of" or "opposite of." As the object of the clause, the וֹ simply means "him," or if it is rendered as a genitive, it can be translated as "his." When these words are considered in conjunction with one another, the idea that is generated is "as/like in front of him" or "as his opposite." God seems to be declaring that the man needs a suitable helper who, when standing "in front of him" (*negdo*), is his opposite. As such, the physical complementarity of the man and woman comes to the forefront instead of the simple idea of a "fitting helper," which most translations present in a non-sexual way. Not surprisingly, other scholars have noted a similar interpretation. Gordon Wenham notes that *kenegdo* has the idea of "matching him," which, amongst other things, includes the procreation of children.

[476] John Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 176–77.

On the other hand, Ross explains that the idea behind *kenegdo* means a correspondence between the man and the woman at the physical, social, and spiritual levels.[477] George Coats is more cryptic when he notes that "no helper fit for intimacy with the man appeared among the animals."[478] Bill Arnold concludes that the context refers to a relationship that "has marriage and procreation in view, as well as general human companionship."[479] Sarna succinctly expresses that "Celibacy is undesirable."[480]

Moreover, Robert Gagnon claims that while it is true that the phrase undoubtedly includes nuances of social and psychological complementarity, the physical and sexual component cannot be overlooked either, especially when the entirety of the phrase is considered.[481] The physical complementarity is further supported by the second appearance of the phrase '*ezer kenegdo*' in verse 20. In this second occurrence, after all the animals had been created and paraded in front of the man for him to name, God again notes that there was no "suitable helper" for the man. There can be no question, therefore, that the author wants to stress that the man lacks a companion to "be with" beyond mere emotional friendship (Gen 17:4). The man needs a mate for companionship and to fulfill the purposes of procreation and sexual pleasure.

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[477] Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 126.

[478] George W. Coats, *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 49–60.

[479] Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis (*New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 55.

[480] Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, *The JPS Torah Commentary* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1991).

[481] Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 460–69.

According to William Johnson, if sexual coupling was in view, the female animals could have fulfilled the sexual needs of the man.[482] In this context, this is blatantly absurd. Man's aloneness is "not good," as the animals could never be suitable sexual or emotional mates for the man (cf. Lev 18:23; 20:15). Hence, man would never be able to procreate with animal species—he needed a helper that "suits him." In verse 22, God sees it fit to "build" (*bānâ*) a woman with the perfect physical anatomy that would "suit" a man's anatomy when they stood "in front of" (*negdo*) one another. This physical complementarity is bolstered by what follows in Genesis 2:24–25. Eve was created to help Adam but not as one who is inferior to him, but instead as a helper "fit for him" or "a help corresponding to him," that is, "equal and adequate to himself." In other words, Eve was Adam's equal but, simultaneously, differed from him in ways that complimented him. This created order is truly remarkable because it honors men and women. Aida Bensancon Spencer notes that there is no possibility, according to Genesis 1:26–27, that Adam, the male, could by himself reflect God's nature. Male and female are needed to reflect God's nature.[483] Spencer's statement is very profound in connecting the male and female aspects to the image of God. The God of order and wisdom created man and woman with an inherent incompleteness that could only be supplied by fellowship and partnership with someone who matches and complements them. Peter Lombard asserts that the woman was not made from his head as if she was "set over man in domination," nor from his foot, "as if subject to him in servitude," but from his side, "for the partnership of love."[484] In short, in this context, the word "helper" seems to express the idea of an "indispensable companion." It suggests that the woman

[482] William Stacy Johnson, *A Time to Embrace: Same-Sex Relationships in Religion, Law, and Politics* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 127–29.

[483] Aida Bensançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 29.

[484] Peter Lombard, *The Sentences* (trans. Giulio Silano, 4 vols; Toronto:Pontifical Institutes of Mediaeval Studies, 2007–2010), 2.25.5–6.

would supply what the man lacked in the design of creation, and logically it would follow that the man would provide what the woman lacked.

God's Suitable Union of Man and Woman

When God created male and female in the Garden of Eden, His intentions were associated with compatibility and suitability. However, the fall has unfortunately skewed God's initial plans, resulting in disordered desires, such as same-sex attraction, heterosexual lust, or the complete suppression of any sexual desire. Nevertheless, within marriage, there is the possibility and opportunity for a keen glance at what God created as "very good," as we see reflected in the celebration book of Song of Songs. The Song of Songs shows us with incredible beauty what a picture of sexual wholeness would look like—one man and one woman profoundly and permanently bonded together in a uniquely loving relationship.

Genesis 2:24 is a profound passage of the Scripture that teaches the suitable union of man and woman. Almost every person who has attended a wedding has heard the text of Genesis 2:24 recited or read at some point in the marriage ceremony: "Therefore a man shall forsake his father and his mother and shall cling to his wife. And they shall become one flesh." A straightforward reading of the text clarifies that this is a picture of the marriage union of Adam and Eve. Indeed, Jesus quotes the text when discussing the sanctity of marriage versus divorce (Matt 19:5). The central purpose of Genesis 2:24 was to teach the Israelite audience and all humanity about the sanctity of marriage and the antiquity of the institution. Adam received Eve from God to love and cherish her as his own body: "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). As the first married couple, they lived together without fear or shame, enjoying total openness and intimacy. God was there at the beginning, bringing validity to this fundamental societal pillar within which a family could be formed and thrive. God designed marriage for joy. Calvin

concluded that marriage is "the best support of life," for God made woman "as a companion and an associate to the man, to assist him to live well."[485]

Despite the explicit instruction and marriage paradigm set forth within the second chapter of Genesis, one must be vigilant not to read Genesis 2:24 out of context. A segment of modern exegetes has not been deterred from trying to contort this portion of Genesis to fit a mold cast by the proponents of same-sex marriage. The basic argument can be summarized as such—as Genesis 2:18–25 focuses on the aloneness of Adam, marriage, at least as presented in Genesis 2, was basically ordained by God to combat this condition. Marriage, in this context, was not intended for procreation, as some propose, but to establish a "family" through the bonds of kinship ties. As such, any pairing of individuals (male–male, female–female, male–female) can meet the criteria outlined in Genesis 2 to eliminate loneliness and establish a kinship bond that reflects a nuclear "family."[486] In light of the ongoing discussions surrounding the viability of scriptural support for same-sex marriage, the Genesis text presents God's design of heterosexual marriage. First, Genesis 2:18–25 paints a more comprehensive picture of Genesis 1:26–28. Second, the phrase "one flesh" in Genesis 2:24 is not isolated to kinship ties alone but also has procreation in view.

Furthermore, Wayne Grudem brilliantly states that God's created order for marriage is beautiful, as it is God's way of bringing amazing unity to people so different as men and women. God took delight in it and thought it was "very good." When it functions in the way God intended, we will enjoy this relationship and delight in it because there is a God-like quality

[485] Calvin, *Genesis*, 90.

[486] John J. McNeill, *Sex as God Intended: A Reflection on Human Sexuality as Play* (Maple Shade, NJ: Lethe, 2008), 23–26.

about it.[487] Grudem explains further that the beauty of God's created order for marriage finds expression in our sexuality within marriage. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24).[488] From the beginning, God designed our sexuality to reflect unity and differences and beauty simultaneously. As husband and wife, we are most attracted to the parts of each other that are the most different. Our most profound unity—physical, emotional, and spiritual unity—is derived from being most different. In our physical union, as God intended it, there is no dehumanization of women and no emasculation of men. Still, there is equality and honor for both the husband and the wife.[489] We can conclude from Grudem's comments that sex within marriage is precious to God. It is designed by Him to show equality, difference, and unity simultaneously.

Moreover, God has ordained from that sexual union the most amazing and astounding event—the creation of a new human being in the image of God. Within this most intimate of human relationships, we see equality, difference, unity, and much godliness simultaneously. The marriage of the first man and woman foreshadows the covenant relationship between Christ and his church (2 Cor 11:2‑3; Eph 5:28‑32). The holy temple of the garden is a home where love abounds.[490] In the next section, we will review the key phrases that elaborate on the idea of two becoming one flesh.

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[487] Wayne Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002).

[488] Ibid, 54.

[489] Ibid, 55.

[490] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology,*270.

Two Becoming One Flesh: Genesis 2:24

Genesis 2:24 is filled with an abundance of information concerning the union between man and woman. However, gaining traction in the recent debate is the assertion that, unlike Genesis 1:26–28, Genesis 2:24 is not about procreation but instead becoming "one flesh," which is only focused on kinship ties. What does it mean for the man and woman to become "one flesh"? No one can deny that when God brought Eve to Adam, the result was a marriage arrangement that certainly included emotional and kinship bonding. However, the story does not end there; Adam and Eve had to become "one flesh." This does not simply indicate kinship ties, as proposed by some scholars, but it includes the sexual and procreation facet as well. In interpreting the meaning of "one flesh," some scholars vacillate between the idea of sexual activity and procreation and the resulting kinship bonds. As Raymond Ortlund Jr. points out, becoming "one flesh" means a lot more than sex: "It is the profound fusion of two lives into one, shared life by the mutual consent and covenant of marriage. It is the complete and permanent giving over oneself into a new circle of shared existence with one's partner."[491] John Hartley, for example, suggests that the "one flesh" notation does not point explicitly to sexual connectedness or the children that would result from such a union; however, he does conclude that "it does not exclude these expressions of their union."[492] On the other hand, Christopher Seitz believes that becoming "one flesh" is also a metaphor for "sexual coupling."[493] Moreover, Christine Curley notes that even though some cannot procreate due to some physiological or biological issues of

[491] Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr. "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1–3." In *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, 95–112 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991) 40.

[492] John Hartley, *Genesis* (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 58.

[493] Christopher Seitz, "Human Sexuality Viewed from the Bible's Understanding of the Human Condition," ThTo 52 (1995): 244.

the man or woman or both, undoubtedly, this is a result of the fall, but that does not exclude the possibility of children for the majority of married couples.[494]

As Reno points out, Genesis 2 does much more than present the picture of a man and woman coming together to create a kinship bond where sexual encounters within marriage are God's design; the "one flesh" notation also anticipates the bearing of children. [495] Martin Luther understood Genesis 2:18–25 to depict a clear picture of marriage for the propagation of the human race.[496] Luther went on to say that couples who marry but refuse to procreate display evidence of a fallen nature, whereby God's greatest temporal gift to a couple—offsprings—is blatantly rejected.[497] One could argue that having a child within the marriage bond is perhaps the best demonstration of becoming "one flesh." Hence, when you look at a child produced by sexual coupling, it becomes clear that two separate individuals have literally become "one flesh." The closing line of Genesis 2:25 reinforces the sexual component of the narrative: "The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed." Procreation was understood in the Genesis 2 account, especially in light of Genesis 1:28. Indeed, marriage offered the institutional parameters for the family to emerge. In this regard, Meredith Kline aptly notes:

> Created male and female, man was to multiply through sexual fruitfulness. In Genesis 1, the procreation mandate is formulated in simple, functional terms. Genesis 2 adds the institutional (i.e., the familial) aspect, so assigning human procreation to its proper context in the marital relationship…. It was within this marital relationship of legal troth that the procreation function of the cultural commission was to be fulfilled. As the words

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[494] Christine Curley and Brian Neil Peterson, "Eve's Curse Revisited: An Increase of 'Sorrowful Conceptions,'" *BBR* 26 (2016): 1–16.

[495] Reno, *Genesis*, 66– 67.

[496] Martin Luther, *Luther's Commentary on Genesis: Volume I Chapters 1–21* (trans. J. Theodore Mueller; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 55, 56.

[497] Ibid.

> of the marriage ordinance in Genesis 2:24 indicate, in this covenantal union, the man and the woman were to become 'one flesh.'[498]

At this point in our study, it is essential to examine the phrase "one flesh" *'eḥāḏ bāśār*. The phrase "one flesh" occurs only in verse 24 in the Old Testament and must be interpreted in light of verse 23. There the man declares that the woman is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. To be one's "bone and flesh" is to be related by blood to someone. For example, the phrase describes the relationship between Laban and Jacob (Gen 29:14), Abimelech and the Shechemites (Judg 9:2; his mother was a Shechemite), David and the Israelites (2 Sam 5:1), David and the elders of Judah (2 Sam 19:12), and David and his nephew Amasa (2 Sam 19:13, see 2 Sam 17:2; 1 Chr 2:16–17). The expression "one flesh" seems to indicate that they become, as it were, "kin," at least legally (a new family unit is created) or metaphorically. In this first marriage in human history, the woman is literally formed from the man's bone and flesh. Although later marriages do not involve such a divine surgical operation, the first marriage sets the pattern for how later marriages are understood and explains the reason behind why marriage supersedes the parent-child relationship.

The other places the words *eḥāḏ bāśār* are found are in the New Testament (Matt 19:4–6; Mark 10:8; 1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31). The retention of the word "flesh" (*bāśār*) in the translation often leads to improper or incomplete interpretations. The Hebrew word refers to more than just a sexual union. When they unite in marriage, the man and woman "become" (*hayah*) a new family unit. Building upon the "one flesh" interpretation, A. F. L. Beeston asserts that the basic connotation of the words "one flesh" seems to present the idea of complete unity and solidarity

[498] Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Oakland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000), 68–69, 71.

between a man and a woman.[499] Lee McGlone points out that Genesis 2:24 suggests that God created two individuals with "uniqueness of personalities," bringing the two together for a particular purpose – to be "one flesh."[500] Wenham argues that the understanding of "one flesh" involves the concept of kinship.[501] Thus, the basis for his opinion can be found in Genesis 2:23, as the writer of Genesis proclaims the woman as she is brought before the man. The man states, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of Man" (NKJV).

In other places of the Old Testament, when the words "bone*"* (*ʿeṣem*) and "flesh" (*bāśār*) are juxtaposed, there is an indication of kinship (Gen 2:23; 29:14; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:12; 1 Chr 11:1; Job 2:5). James Brownson observes that the "one flesh" union is about kinship rather than a "physical gender complementarian" idea.[502] Robert Chisholm states, "The expression 'one flesh,' used of the relationship between the first man and woman (Gen 2:24), draws attention to the inseparable bond inherent in the marriage relationship."[503] Robert Lawton wisely comments that the idea of a man and woman becoming "one flesh" seems to be an ideal principle that lays the foundation for unity and solidarity for the man and the woman.[504] H. Leupold remarks that "one flesh" consists of a "complete identification of one personality with the other in a community of interests and pursuits, a union consummated in intercourse."[505] As Victor

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[499] A. F. L. Beeston, "One Flesh," Vetus Testamentum 36/1 (1986): 117.

[500] Lee McGlone, "Genesis 2:18–24; Ephesians 5:21–6:9," *Review and Expositor* 86 (1989): 245.

[501] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 71.

[502] James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 32–36.

[503] Robert Chisholm, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 777.

[504] Robert B. Lawton, "Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105/1 (1986), 98.

[505] H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, vol.1 Chapters 1–19 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), 137.

Hamilton wisely states, “What is being pinpointed is solidarity. A man by himself is not one flesh. A woman by herself is not one flesh.” “Covenantally joined with his wife, the man and his spouse become one flesh.”[506]

In relation to verse 24, two words that further affirm a covenantal relationship between a man and a woman are “leave” (*ʿāzaḇ*) and “cleave” (*dāḇaq)*. The verb “cleaves to” has the basic idea of “stick with/to.” For example, it is used when describing Ruth staying with her mother-in-law (Ruth 1:14). There is intentionality in the actions of the man and woman to “leave” or “forsake” their past and “cleave” to a new life. The verb translated “leave” (*ʿāzaḇ*) normally means “to abandon, to forsake, to leave behind, to discard,” when used in reference to a human subject and object (see Josh 22:3; 1 Sam 30:13; Ps 27:10; Prov 2:17; Isa 54:6; 60:15; 62:4; Jer 49:11). The word “leave” also conveys the sentiment that the man and his wife move from their parent's home to a new home. The verb “cleave” frequently describes adhering, specifically firmly, as it happens with glue. While leaving their existing societal units, the idea is that the two come together to create a new societal unit. The overall context of this passage describes the inseparable relationship between the man and the woman in marriage as God intended. Von Rad interprets “one flesh” for the purpose of children. He notes, “Whence this inner clinging to each other, this drive toward each other which does not rest until it again becomes one flesh in the child.”[507] Similarly, Wenham notes that “one flesh” includes a variety of concepts beyond kinship ties, two of which are sexual union and children—the natural product of the marriage bond.[508]

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[506] Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapter 1–17*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 180–181.

[507] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 85.

[508] Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 71.

Focusing on the obvious reasons behind heterosexual marriage, Os Guinness observes that heterosexual marriage produces "fruit"/children.[509] On the other hand, Ware compares human marriage with the union of Christ and the church, noting, "human marriage is the shadow of the reality of the union of Christ and the church (Eph 5:32)."[510] To emphasize Ware's point, it can be highlighted that the same way in which a husband procreates and brings forth a new generation, so the love between Christ and his "bride" produced "children" in a metaphorical sense, that is, the love resulted in the creation of spiritual children through the spreading of the gospel to propagate the belief in God to the next generation (Matt 28:16–20; Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:47–48; Acts 1:8; 13:46–47; and so on). However, failure to do so would cause the church to cease within one generation. In contrast, same-sex unions can never reflect this vital aspect of the marriage metaphor. Companionship is an essential element of marriage, as is sexual pleasure rooted in God's good design of sexual order and appropriateness. Same-sex coupling may meet the criteria of companionship; however, the suitability and procreation aspect can never be attained. The paradigm of male–female coupling is the only paradigm endorsed by the Bible in Genesis 1 and 2. We perceive the same for all creatures; they still breed within male–female categories and produce after their own kind.

Building upon the male–female coupling paradigm endorsed by God, Garrett asserts that a cursory reading of the Song of Songs, especially Chapters 3–6, reinforces the physical and psychological complementarity of the husband and the wife.[511] In the Song of Songs, we have an idealized presentation of mutual love between a man and a woman, as it was designed to be at

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[509] Os Guinness, *Impossible People: Christian Courage and the Struggle for the Soul of Civilization* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2016), 110, 220–21.

[510] Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God," 90.

[511] Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs,* 347–432.

creation. The themes from the Garden of Eden abounding in the Song of Songs; here, we are confronted with love as it was intended to be in the beginning. We hear God pronouncing the divine marriage benediction once again, which was first addressed to Adam and Eve in their primeval home: Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become "one flesh" (Gen 2:24). At the beginning of the Song of Songs, we encounter the lovers longing for sexual union and a full and comprehensive possession of each other. Their eagerness for such sexual union is not seen as an unspiritual or unsanctified desire in any sense. On the contrary, this was how it was intended to be in the beginning—one man and one woman being united and becoming one flesh. The Song of Songs intends to teach us that sex is good and pure within marriage, and it is the appropriate object of longing and desire before marriage.[512]

The presence of genealogies throughout Genesis underlines the unstated reality that procreation was central to marriage (Gen 4:17–22; 5:1–6:1; 10:1–32; 11:10–26; cf. 1 Chr 1–9; Matt 1; Luke 3:23–38; and so on). We consistently find references to married couples wanting offspring amid barrenness or other difficulties (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Tamar, Hannah, Samson's mother, Ruth, Elizabeth, and so on). Sarah, Rachel, Leah, and Hannah all defended their marriages—and, to a degree, their worth as women—based upon their ability to procreate (for example, Gen 25:21; 29:31–32; 30:1–2; 1 Sam 1:11), especially after God lifts the curse of barrenness from their lives (Gen 29:32–35). Therefore, we can conclude that these women understood marriage and procreation to go hand in hand; companionship was important, but it was not the primary issue in many cases.

[512] Duguid, *The Song of Songs*, 39–40.

In addition, the flood narrative and its aftermath affirm God's plan for marriage and the biblical authors' mindset related to human coupling in the context of marriage. God's preservation of four married couples from the devastation of the flood followed by the command of God to procreate (Gen 9:1, 7), which, in turn, is followed by genealogy in Chapter 10, makes explicit both the biblical author's and God's purpose of highlighting the complementarity of the sexes for procreation. There is an important reason behind why God asked Noah to bring the animals two by two (male and female) to be on the ark in the first place. God's purposes of procreation and coupling (physiologically) were central even for the animals (6:19; 7:2, 3, 9, 16).

In summary, Genesis 2:18–25 must be understood in light of Genesis 1:26–28 and the overall context of the creation narratives. Procreation and heterosexual coupling are the only paradigms outlined in the Bible. In fact, God chose what was natural, a man and a woman, for his well-ordered creation. Therefore, we do not have the right to tamper with God's design of marriage to fit our cultural context and liking. Once we move beyond the teaching of the Bible, all ethical moorings are dismantled, and the ever-shifting sands of cultural biases rule as opposed to the scriptural condemnation of sin. As John Wright points out, the union between the man and the woman in Genesis 2:24 becomes the standard for all subsequent one flesh unions for the man, the woman, and their community.[513] In light of the apparent connections between the one-flesh union and the expected procreation from that union, we can conclude that Chapter 2 cannot be limited to kinship ties only. The first one-flesh union was Adam and Eve uniting into one flesh and becoming the standard for all one-flesh unions that followed.

[513] John Wright, "Sexuality Within the Old Testament," *St. Mark's Review* (June 1981): 4.

Genesis 2:18–25 versus Genesis 1:26–28

At the heart of the scholarly debate is the historical and critical assertion that the two creation accounts found in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and 2:4b–25 stem from two different sources and present two completely different creation accounts with different foci.[514] According to source theorists, the first account is attributed to the putative Priestly author, and the latter account is assigned to the so-called Yahwist or the "J" source. Therefore, a strong argument has been proposed that the Priestly source focuses on procreation, as seen in the statement in Gen 1:28, "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth," whereas the "J" source is concerned with kinship ties that remedy the loneliness exemplified in Gen 2:18.[515] Based upon this scholarly assertion, many affirming scholars are more than willing to offer their full support for the inclusion of same-sex couples and marriage in the church because, they claim, the "J" source has opened the door for any marriage relationship that remedies loneliness through the establishment of a kinship bond. There are at least four major problems with this line of argumentation. To review, when Jesus taught about the sanctity of marriage, he linked the teaching of Genesis 1:27 with Genesis 2:24 (Matt 19:4–6). Jesus perceived similarity in the foci of these two texts. In Genesis 1, God created humans with differences of gender for the purpose of procreation within a family or marital structure, as seen in Genesis 2. Second, scholars' assertions that Chapter 2 only deals with loneliness are misguided, and a false dichotomy is affirmed. While Chapter 2 presents the marriage bond as a remedy for loneliness, it also teaches the physical complementarity of men and women for sexual pleasure and procreation.

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[514] Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. Mark E. Biddle; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 4–14.

[515] John J. McNeill, *Sex as God Intended: A Reflection on Human Sexuality as Play* (Maple Shade, NJ: Lethe, 2008), 23–26.

Many scholars ask, Do the two creation accounts present two contradictory stories of creation? According to various scholars, there are several ways of understanding the two Genesis creation accounts. Gerhard Von Rad, for example, perceives the accounts of P and J as coming from different traditions, whereby the J source is more interested in anthropological concerns.[516] Coats points out that Chapters 1 and 2 are not parallel accounts but instead focus on different things—the cosmos versus paradise gained.[517] John Walton asserts that Chapter 2 is a "sequel" to Chapter 1; it presents the creation of more humans at a later date.[518] Walter Brueggemann, James McKeown, and John Hartley argue that the second creation story is a completely separate account that should not be taken as a parallel telling of creation, a position that hardly seems tenable in light of the precise connections between the two (see more below).[519] In this context, Tremper Longman III wisely proposes that Chapter 2 is a synoptic presentation of the creation of man in Chapter 1.[520]

Despite these conflicting views, it has been concluded that the second account complemented the first account. For example, McKeown concludes that the two accounts are "complementary," with the second one covering select aspects of the creation event in more detail. In addition, E. A. Speiser notes that even though these may be derived from different sources, "the subject matter is ultimately the same in both sources."[521] Nahum Sarna asserts that

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[516] Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (OTL; rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 76.

[517] Coats, *Genesis, 52.*

[518] John Walton, "A Historical Adam: Archetypal Creation View," in *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (ed. Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 108–11.

[519] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 58.

[520] Tremper Longman III, *Genesis, The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 46–47.

[521] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis, The Anchor Bible 1* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 14–20.

Chapter 1 focuses on the "heavens and the earth," whereas Chapter 2 centers on the "earth and heavens" (Gen 2:4b), which, in turn, drives one to the conclusion that Chapter 2 complements Chapter 1 by zeroing in on the creation of humans and the role played by humans.[522] Moreover, T. Desmond Alexander concurs that these chapters are complementary—one broadly focused and the other "zoomed in." He believes zooming entails drawing attention to the creation of the Garden of Eden, its animals, and the man and the woman.[523] Kenneth A. Mathews points out that this was a common feature in ANE creation accounts (for example, Sumer and Babylon), where a more detailed treatment follows a more general overview.[524] Matthews goes on to say that, as it was the common pattern in ANE creation accounts, it should not be surprising to find that the motif of procreation—a central tenet of Genesis 1:26–28—is also a focus of Chapter 2.[525]

Conclusion

This chapter presents an explicit explanation of Genesis 2:18 and 2:24 as God's suitable paradigm for the union between a man and a woman. The discourse in Genesis 2:24 makes it clear that God's purpose is that man and woman functionally will become "one flesh." Although the fall of Adam has resulted in disordered desires, such as same-sex attraction, heterosexual lust, or complete suppression of any sexual desire, the Song of Songs shows us with incredible beauty what a picture of sexual wholeness would actually look like—one man and one woman profoundly and permanently bonded together in a uniquely loving relationship.[526] Suitability and

[522] Nahum Sarna, *Genesis*, 16.

[523] T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 120.

[524] Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1—11:26, The American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 188–89.

[525] Ibid.

[526] Duguid, *The Song of Songs,* 39–40.

compatibility within marriage are what God created, as reflected in the Song of Songs. The first chapter, Song of Songs, starts with the woman proclaiming, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" This exclamation clarifies that she has more in mind than merely sharing a Bible study or a cup of tea with her husband-to-be. The uninhibited celebration of the idealized love of the man and the woman provides a model for how love was intended to be from the start. The Song of Songs celebrates heterosexual monogamous marriage as God's intended design. It shows us the feelings of tenderness, excitement, and intimacy that are intrinsically associated with this relationship.[527]

When God created marriage, He made it beautiful, right, proper, and suitable to function correctly, as a reflection of who God is, as affirmed in creation. The first union, Adam and Eve, represents all subsequent unions. Two examples of unions in the Old Testament, which can be viewed as models parallel to the prescribed divine unions intended in Genesis 2:24 are Isaac's union with Rebekah (Gen 24:1–67) and Joseph's union with Asenath (Gen 41:45). Finally, when we follow God's design of marriage, as sketched in these texts (for example, Gen 2:18–24; Prov 5:15–19; 31:10–31; Mark 10:2–12; Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18–19; and 1 Pet 3:1–7), we are most satisfied, and God is glorified.

[527] Duguid, *The Song of Songs,* 39–40.

CHAPTER 7

THE IMPLICATIONS OF A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW AND SOCIETAL PERSPECTIVE

Standing for the Truth

As we discussed in previous chapters, one of the foundational realities of human beings, men and women alike, is that we are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27). In other words, we are created in a special way to display the full grandeur of our Creator. We do this with our creative ideas, divine wisdom, taking dominion, and relationships, reflecting God's order and suitability in design. As Parnell points out, we are created as men or women to inhabit our manhood and womanhood to the glory of our Creator. God did not make us all the same. God loves diversity and revels in it.[528] Parnell makes an interesting observation, even though some will argue that "diversity" is to be celebrated through multiple sex orientations, the argument in this study is that diversity is seen in creation, and in some manner, it is a reflection of God's Being, but it is always set in proper order and design, not disorder.

Parnell explains further that God created a world that pulses with differences and explodes with color, including roaring waterfalls and self-inflating lizards. But humankind, man and woman, is the pinnacle of His creation. In Christ, we understand that our manhood or womanhood is not incidental. It is not unimportant. It is the channel through which we will give God glory all our days. Our God-given sexuality is a gift.[529] We have been created as "male and female," and not as something else, to reflect God's image through "order and suitability." There is intentionality, wisdom, and purpose in the creation of Adam and Eve.

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[528] Parnell and Strachan, *Designed for Joy,* 14.

[529] Ibid, 19.

This chapter will explore the implications of a Christian worldview and societal perspective of what it means for the church today that male and female created in the image of God is a reflection of "order and suitability" in design. Today, under the moral philosophy, virtually anything is acceptable and should be tolerated if it involves the mutual consent of those involved. This ultimately rejects God's moral laws and replaces them with emotional subjectivism. What does this mean for the church, with these different issues, namely male–female role relationships, suitability and compatibility in marriage, same-sex marriage, gender identity, and homosexuality? More importantly, how will the church carry out its biblical roles without allowing it to be persecuted for speaking the truth? The obvious answer is that the church cannot act in an unbiblical manner or compromise with cultural standards and ignore the Word of God. When biblical teachings concerning manhood and womanhood are rejected, this can be disastrous for families and marriages. It can also lead to gender confusion in adults, children, and multifaceted societal problems. Biblical teaching opens our eyes to the significance of manhood and womanhood and the corresponding beauty of living according to God's intended design and not our own design.

Tampering with the Image of God

In recent years, the twisting of the Bible's teaching on manhood and womanhood has undermined biblical authority. The Bible clarifies that marriage is between one man and one woman, and not one woman and another woman. The Bible speaks very clearly about the perversion of non-monogamous and heterosexual sexual activity. The Bible is clear concerning male–female role relationships in the home and church; however, people are trying to get the Bible to say what it has not clearly proclaimed to fit their own narrative in those areas. For example, many social scientists have promoted a very different view concerning human sexual

identity. This view is referred to as the "constructionist" view, and it is based on the idea that human sexual identity is "plastic," and individuals are free to "shape" their sexual identities in any way they choose. This leaves us to ask, who are we to tamper with what God has created in His image and has pronounced that it is "very good?"

Bruce Ware further explains the implication for the church, stating that the present era of transition for the church affords an opportunity to offer a fresh statement of God's design for human beings. The Scriptures affirm that God created male and female as sexual beings. The current situation challenges the people of God to think through the implications of our created maleness and femaleness and apply them to the questions and issues of our day. The biblical declaration that our sexuality is a divinely given aspect of our humanness demands that we live together as a community comprising of male and female.[530] Ware went on to say, despite this amazing secularization of sex in the Old Testament, it is not without significance that in both Genesis narratives, God chooses to create what would mirror the divine being—He creates male and female. This aspect of the Genesis stories indicates that our sexuality and human sexual distinctions are somehow grounded in the divine reality and that the existence of two sexes is important for understanding God.[531] To emphasize, our existence as male or female is, by design, willed and affirmed by God. Our sexuality is a positive dimension of who we are as God's creatures.[532] The "order and suitability" concept is foundational to our existence in God's image and how we reflect the character and nature of God.

God gives and affirms our sexuality; therefore, we must acknowledge and accept our existence as male or female. We are who we are because God has created us to be male or female

[530] Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God," 83.

[531] Ibid.

[532] Ibid.

and not both.[533] For example, to be embodied as a female when one's sex is a male involves tampering with God's creation. Human beings' sexuality is not to be replaced or denied. Instead, humans need to see themselves as sexual beings who have been created by God's divine design. The New Testament repeatedly calls for the responsible stewardship of our bodies (1 Cor 6:20; 10:31). We need to glorify God in our bodies and use our sexuality to fulfill God's intention.[534] As sexual creatures, we actualize the divine design of "order and suitability" to reflect the nature of God, which ultimately brings glory to the Creator.

Suitability and Compatibility Within Marriage

Through all creation, we see suitability and compatibility in design—not just a reflection of who God is as a being but who God is as a Creator and Designer. In Proverbs 8 and Ecclesiastes 3, we see wisdom in creation and how creation reflects the wisdom of God. Wisdom is about understanding roles and designs and when things are appropriate and not appropriate. The fundamental statement of the excellence of how God made men and women can be found in Genesis 1:31: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, *it was very good*."

The Bible teaches that the formation of a woman from a man demonstrates the fundamental unity and equality of human beings (Gen 2:21–23). In Genesis 2:18, 20, the word "suitable" (*kenegdo*) denotes equality and adequacy. The book of Song of Songs reflects what God created when He made male and female in the Garden. Song of Songs re-established what God intended in terms of suitability and compatibility, but the fall has unfortunately skewed

[533] Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God," 83.

[534] Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethic: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 52.

God's original intent. However, within marriage, there is the possibility and opportunity to glance at what God created as "very good."

The beauty of God's created order for marriage finds expression in our sexuality within marriage. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). A man has to enter into a relationship with his feminine partner through marriage. Christ attributed these words to the Creator and taught us to look to this text as the foundation for our understanding of marriage (Matt 19:4–6). "Leave" implies the public formation of a new household distinct from that of "his father and his mother." "Cleave" (*dabaq*), on the other hand, means to cling to or hold on tightly (Ruth 1:14), to adhere as if glued together (2 Sam 23:10). It is a term used for the covenantal loyalty that Israel should have toward the Lord.[535] Paul indicates that "one-flesh" primarily refers to sexual union, for it is even obtained in a relationship with a prostitute (1 Cor 6:16). At the same time, the original "one-flesh" in the Garden was more than physical, for we read in Genesis 2:25 that the man and woman were "naked" and "were not ashamed," which signifies complete freedom and openness with each other—a relationship without personal barriers. Christ said that this covenantal and physical union is a lasting bond that we cannot violate without sinning against the Creator, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt 19:6).[536]

From the beginning, God designed our sexuality to reflect unity, differences, and beauty simultaneously. As husband and wife, we are most attracted to the parts of each other that are the most different. Our most profound unity—physical, emotional, and spiritual unity—is facilitated when we are the most different. In our physical union, as God intended it, there is no

[535] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology,* 277.

[536] Ibid.

dehumanization of women and no emasculation of men, but there is equality and honor for both the husband and the wife. Furthermore, there is one of our deepest human joys and our deepest expression of unity. This means that sex within marriage is precious to God. It is designed by Him to show equality, difference, and unity simultaneously. It is a great mystery how this can be so, and it is also a great blessing and joy.[537] Barth made one of the most profound attempts at a theology of Song of Songs without recourse to allegorism. In his discussion of the doctrine of creation, Barth draws a parallel between Genesis 2 and Song of Songs to unravel how the Bible, despite the corruption of humanity at the fall, maintains the pristine picture of covenant love and sexuality.[538] Barth further notes that, unlike Proverbs, Song of Songs is not about the warnings of the dangers of sexuality. Instead, it is a celebration of the joy and passion of love. The united love of the man and woman fulfills the creation covenant and re-enacts the love of the first man and the first woman.[539] God designed our sexuality as a good thing protected by marriage, which we see reflected in the Song of Songs.

Furthermore, Proverbs 5:18–19 gives us this remarkably strong counsel: "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou always ravished with her love." It is God's design for a husband and wife to passionately enjoy each other's bodies.[540] William Gouge wrote, "As the man must be satisfied at all times in his wife, and even ravished with her love; so, must the woman be satisfied at all times in her husband, and even

[537] Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, 54.

[538] Barth, *Church Dogmatics.* Vol. III, 376.

[539] Ibid.

[540] Ibid.

ravished with his love."[541] As Konkel notes, in Song of Songs 4:11, the man describes specific parts of the woman's body with suggestive metaphors, anticipating his physical touch. Stating that her lips are sweet like nectar and that honey and milk are under her tongue indicates his desire to explore those regions. Deep kisses will do the job, to be sure. Again, we see the use of images that invoke the senses—in this instance, taste—is notable. The woman is now likened to a garden with a water source (4:12). Here, the Garden is an image of a woman's sexuality. And there is a spring or fountain in the midst of this Garden, which is suggestive of the woman's most intimate place—the locus of lovemaking.[542]

On the other hand, the Scripture rebukes those who practice or promote sex outside of the marriage of one man and one woman. We find both truths in Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." The "bed" (*koitē*) is a euphemism for any form of sexual activity (Rom 13:13). Sex in marriage is not unclean in God's sight. However, sex outside of marriage is forbidden. The term "whoremongers" (plural pornos) refers to those who engage in fornication (*porneia*), a broad term for sexual immorality. Furthermore, adultery violates the marriage covenant through engagement in sexual activity with an outsider. The law of Moses forbade premarital sex (Ex 22:16–17; Deut 22:13–21) and demanded the death penalty for adultery for both the man and the woman (Deut 22:22–29). In the new covenant, such behavior calls for church discipline (1 Cor 5:9, 11).[543]

God instituted marriage for enjoying sexual intimacy. Sex is not a casual encounter for the sake of pleasure but an exploratory exercise to perceive how compatible two people are or

[541] William Gouge, *Of Domestical Duties* (1622; repr., Pensacola, FL: Puritan Reprints, 2006), 158.

[542] Konkel and Longman III, *Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs*, 367–368.

[543] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology,* 277.

a mere expression of affection and attraction. Sex belongs to the covenantal relationship between one man and one woman—a beautiful aspect of their companionship and partnership, which is guarded by the bond of a solemn life-long commitment. The Westminster Confession of Faith (24.1) reflects this idea when it says, "Marriage is to be between one man and one woman."[544] Moreover, from that sexual union, God has ordained the most amazing, the most astounding event—the creation of a new human being in the image of God! Within this most intimate of human relationships, we show equality, difference, unity, and much Godlikeness all at once.

Male–Female Role Relationship

As a part of the creative order, male and female have different roles. We see in the Scripture that manhood and womanhood are beautiful masterpieces of a good and loving God. He designed our differences, all of which are incredibly profound. They are not mere physiological prerequisites for sexual union. They go to the root of our personhood. This section attempts to define some of those differences as God designs them to be according to the Bible.

Adam and Eve were created equal in God's image and distinct in their manhood and womanhood. Their distinctions in terms of masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God. Although Adam was created first, he did not play any part in Eve's creation, except for providing one of his ribs, which was not his choice. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the fall and was not a result of sin. Also, the differentiation between male and female has no bearing on the fall; it is something that God had intended from the beginning.

[544] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology,* 277.

First, understanding man's role and value in the created order will help shape the discussion. Although the New Testament explicitly demonstrates man's value within the context of the church and family, it is essential to look at the creation story to fully grasp the value God places on man. According to John Piper and Wayne Grudem, man possesses an intrinsic value that is directly derived from his creation.[545] God's indelible fingerprint is seen within the making of man. Only with the creation of man do we see God interact with His work.

Second, God made man in His image (Gen 1:26–27). No other aspect of creation reflects the image of God except human beings. As indicated in Chapter 2, some scholars have argued that the image of God is in man's soul, which reflects God's righteousness. Others have proposed that the reflection of God's image in man is relational, substantial, and functional. Nevertheless, whether one interprets the image of God in the soul of man or, as this dissertation suggests, "order and suitability," as it unfolds in Wisdom literature, it is evident throughout the Scriptures that man is the only created being that reflects its Creator.

Third, in the creation story, God departs from the generalized blessing over creation and declares an individual blessing directly to male and female, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:28). This ultimately highlights the responsibility that God gave to Adam. God gave Adam specific responsibilities and duties within the Garden, including naming the animals and maintaining the Garden. Genesis establishes a hierarchy in which the male–female dynamic is observed. As with Adam, Eve also has an

[545] John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 96.

intrinsic value and purpose. After God had made the entire earth, every creature living on the earth, every plant growing from the ground, and Adam from the dust, He noticed that something was inappropriate. He said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a help meet for him" (Gen 2:18). With all that God had created, He noticed something was missing from His creation, and God knew that, for His masterpiece to be complete, Adam needed a suitable companion. After Eve's creation, God looked at His entire creation and declared it was "very good." Piper insightfully states that women were created with a specific purpose that only they could fulfill. A woman was created to be a man's helper, a companion like no other within the Garden could have fulfilled. God displayed a woman's value when He created her to be the help meet to a man. No other creature on earth was made for Adam; she alone was Adam's equal.[546]

Building upon the male–female role relationships, in the New Testament, a man still holds the responsibility of presiding over the family, which includes looking after his family's physical, spiritual, and mental well-being. As man was created first and given the responsibility and privilege of having dominion over God's creation, some scholars believe that this constitutes a deliberate act and an essential indication of man's primary responsibility to God for the marriage relationship (1 Tim 2:12–13).

Andreas Köstenberger wisely proposes that the biblical text does not position the man and woman against each other but instead presents their union as exceedingly intimate and harmonious. The idea that the genders are locked in an adversarial, antagonistic relationship is utterly foreign to the biblical creation account. On the contrary, the claim that the man's headship and the woman's role as his suitable helper reflect the man's superiority and the woman's inferiority is likewise not borne out by the Genesis account. Instead, God's plan for

[546] Piper and Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, 101.

humanity is one of partnership. The man, as the God-appointed leader, and his wife alongside him jointly represent the Creator by exercising dominion over the earth. This also reflects an aspect of "image-bearing." In this vein, God places man in a position of accountability and responsibility to his Creator.[547] The term "helper" (*'ezer*) is also applied in the Scripture to refer to God; as God is not an inferior being, the term helper does not convey the woman's inferiority to the man. Hence, as the activity of helping is extremely broad in scope, it can be done by someone with greater or lesser authority. Repeatedly in the Psalms (Ps 33:20; 70:5; 115:9; and so on), God is referred to as the helper. This shows how significant and special the woman's role is in partnering with the man to subdue the earth.

The Bible teaches that men and women fulfill different roles in relation to each other, charging a man with a unique leadership role. It bases this differentiation not on temporary cultural norms but permanent facts of creation. This is seen in 1 Corinthians 11:3–16 (especially vv. 8–9, 14), Ephesians 5:21–33 (especially vv. 31–32), and 1 Timothy 2:11–14 (especially vv. 13–14). Differentiated roles for men and women are never traced back to the fall of man and woman into sin. Instead, the foundation of this differentiation is traced back to the way things were in Eden before sin warped our relationships. Differentiated roles were corrupted and not created by the fall. They were created by God.[548] In relation to the woman, the man is called to account for his leadership, provision, and protection. This is illustrated in Genesis 3:9 when God says to Adam first, "Where are you?" Eve had sinned first, but God did not seek her out first. Adam must give the first account to God, as he is responsible for safeguarding the moral life of

[547] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 35.

[548] Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 40.

the family in the Garden of Eden.[549] This does not suggest that the woman has no responsibility; it simply means that man bears a unique and primary role.

Gruden believes that the created order is fair. On the other hand, Egalitarians argue that the created order is "not fair" for men to have a leadership role in the family simply because they are men. Gruden goes on to say that as this difference is based on God's assignment of roles from the beginning, therefore, it is fair.[550] Gruden also made a very interesting point, stating that we see a relationship between the Father and Son when we look at the Trinity. The Son cannot say to the Father, "It's not fair for You to be in charge because You are the Father." The Son cannot say to the Father, "You've been in charge for fifteen billion years, and now it's My turn for the next fifteen billion?" Instead, He fulfilled the Psalm that said, "I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart" (Ps 40:8; compare Heb 10:7). And with respect to his relationship with the Father, He said, "I always do the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8:29). He said, "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). The order of relationships within the Trinity is fair. Therefore, the order of relationships established by God for marriage is fair.[551] The inference here is that the unity in the Trinity is not compromised by the differing roles between the persons involved in the Trinity. Hence, God's beautiful design for marriage is not compromised by differing roles but celebrated.

Furthermore, Piper and Grudem make an interesting observation that at Pentecost, without distinction, the Holy Spirit dwells in women and men and sovereignly distributes gifts without preference as to gender (Acts 2:1–21; 1 Cor 12:7, 11, 14:31).[552] Here, the text seems to

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[549] Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 40.

[550] Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, 54.

[551] Ibid.

[552] Piper and Grudem, *In Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 480.

suggest that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit on men and women at Pentecost without regard to gender affirms the beautiful order of creation. As the apostle Peter teaches, both women and men are called to develop their spiritual gifts and use them as stewards of the grace of God (1 Pet 4:10–11). Herein, we can infer that men and women are divinely gifted and are empowered to carry out their ordained roles in the world. God will not do anything on the earth without using humans. There is an interesting illustration in the Book of Judges where God used Deborah, a prophetess, a judge, a mother, and a wife, to deliver the children of Israel from the hand of Jabin, the king of Canaan (Judg 4–7). This demonstrates that woman leadership is possible. God has gifted and empowered both genders to bring His will to fruition. Additionally, men and women received the same redemptive freedom through Jesus Christ.

Aida Bensançon Spencer makes a tremendous contribution to the topic. She brilliantly writes, "Females and males are needed in positions of authority in the church and society to help people better comprehend God's nature. God's image needs male and female to reflect God more fully."[553] For example, the New Testament testifies to women being given gifts from God for holding authoritative positions. Women were apostles, prophets, teachers, coworkers, ministers, and church overseers. Paul affirms Junia, Priscilla, and Phoebe. Phoebe and Priscilla provide clear teachings and lead men. The Bible also records the leadership roles of Mary Magdalene, Joana, Mary, Salome, Anna, Miriam, Huldah, Deborah, Philip's four daughters, Lydia, Chloe, and more. We have seen through examples and teachings that God used the roles and characteristics of men and women to help humans understand God's nature, as both male and female reflect God's image.[554]

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[553] Aida Bensançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 29.

[554] Ibid, 135.

God's created order is beautiful and best for us, as it originated from an all-wise Creator, and it truly honors men and women. It does not lead to abuse but instead guards against it because both men and women are equal in value before God. The biblical text tells us that after God created male and female, His evaluation of what He created was "very good." When human beings function in the way God intended, we will delight in His creation because there is a God-like quality about it.[555] For several decades, some elements of society have been pushing the discussion in the opposite direction, but there is much evidence from natural law, our observation of the world, and our inner sense of right and wrong—that men and women have a sense that different roles are right. God's created order for male–female role relationships is beautiful, as it is God's way of bringing amazing unity to people who are so different as men and women. When we are not faithful to the intended divine order of the male–female role relationship, this suggests that we are tampering with God's creation.

Gender Identity

In the study of the image of God, we cannot avoid the topic of gender identity. The first two chapters of Genesis lay the foundation for a Christian worldview of sex, marriage, role relationships, and family. Genesis continues to be the model for understanding God's will for humanity. Male and female are at the heart of the order that God has implanted in the world through nature. The theological implication of male and female being created in the image of God as a reflection of "suitability in design" suggests that God created men and women in such a way that we should not tamper with God's design.

There has been a foundational shift in our culture. More than any other time in Christian history, the present generation finds themselves entrusted with unparalleled responsibility for

[555] Piper and Grudem, *In Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 480.

shaping and expressing their sexuality. Recently, I read the story of a transgender swimmer who competed for three years as a male swimmer for the University of PA. Over the last year, he has transitioned to a woman, and now she is competing as a female swimmer, breaking all records. Her dominance in the pool has raised questions about the NCAA's policies pertaining to transgender women athletes and the proper balance between inclusion and fairness.[556] Although this example is rare, it does become an issue when it occurs. This is best explained by the fall, which corrupted the natural order of creation.

God created Adam and Eve in two distinct genders. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Beeke contributes to this topic by commenting that gender is not merely a personal mindset or a social construct but an aspect of God's fixed order in creation. As the words translated as "male" and "female" are used by animals and humans, gender has a biological component that is firmly rooted in the physical body. This implies that the gender of each person corresponds to his or her physical sex as male or female. Therefore, it is not helpful to assign a gender identity to a person that is different from their genitalia because of biological observations about the person's brain or some personality tendencies more commonly found in the opposite sex.[557] There are rare cases of hermaphroditism, where babies are born with both male and female genitalia, and doctors have to decide by surgically forming the child as a male or female. Years later, the child might wonder why they felt trapped in a different body. In our fallen world, these complications arise, which seem difficult or impossible to unravel.

[556] Transgender Swimmer: https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/18/sport/lia-thomas-transgender-ivy-league-swim-championships/index.html.

[557] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology,* 270.

Recently, I engaged in a conversation with an OBGYN who shared that she attended a transgender panel discussion and was amazed by the advanced surgical interventions available for transgender people. However, she noted that despite the surgical advancements, it would be difficult for her to participate in the aftercare because of the medical ramifications of the treatments, such as cancer and disease-causing hormones, phalloplasty, permanent wounds masquerading as female genitalia, and more. More importantly, she believes that a person's sex is biological; it is something that we cannot change but is given to humans by God. Furthermore, male and female chromosomal makeup is expressed in their anatomy, and it is apparent that God designed male anatomy differently from the female anatomy. She also noted that she felt disturbed on finding out that the healthy biological baby boy or girl she delivered had given up his or her identity and chosen to transition to another sex with the parents' support. She clearly remembered the joy and excitement of the parents of the newborn, as evident from the parents' proactive name selection to the selection of clothing based on the sex of the baby.

Research has shown that, in many countries, when parents are asked if their newborn is a boy or girl, they answer, "the child will decide what sex they want to be later." Larry Grabb argues that it is absurd for the decision to adopt the social identity of a boy or a girl to be left up to a child.[558] Parnell concludes that parents have put their feelings aside and embraced their child's desire to be something other than what God created them to be.[559] It is obvious that our society is undergoing a radical transition in terms of understanding gender. Thus, this transition presents Christians with a tremendous challenge. Society believes that gender is not determined

[558] Larry Grabb, *Fully Alive: A Biblical Vision of Gender that Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotype (*Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 24.

[559] Parnell and Strachan, *Designed for Joy,* 91.

by the biological sex, which has been pre-designed by the Creator but has been self-determined by each individual.

The Bible has given us the necessary tools, so we do not have to guess what it means to be male and female. Every single person is created in God's image. God did not make us into undifferentiated genderless robots; instead, he made us male and female (Gen 1:26–27). Beeke concurs that God created people of both distinct genders "in the image of God" (Gen 1:27). Although different from one another, men and women share one human nature and have the same value. God reveals His glorious attributes in both men and women. Male and female people enter equally into the worship of God (cf. Gal 3:28). Men and women share the royal commission to subdue the earth and exercise authority over it (Gen 1:28). The gender distinction between the two sexes is neither an evil nor a deficiency but an intrinsic part of God's "very good" original creation (v. 31). [560] Raymond Ortlund writes, "Man was created as royalty in God's world, male and female alike bearing the divine glory equally."[561] To be male or female is to naturally have the parts and traits exclusively given to humanity by God.

As Parnell so brilliantly stated, in God's design of male and female in His image, men are called to be men, and women are called to be women. We are not free to choose our sexual predilections.[562] As Qoheleth reminds us, "Whatsoever God does; it shall be forever" (Ecc 3:14), expressing the thought in the context of permanence. God's measures are never broken; what He has purposed shall be effected, and the world can neither defeat nor disannul it. J. Budziszewski explains that everything in us has a purpose; everything is intended for something. There is

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[560] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology*, 271.

[561] Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr. "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1–3." In *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, 95–112 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991) 40.

[562] Parnell and Strachan, *Designed for Joy,* 19.

something missing in a man that a woman must provide, and there is something missing in a woman that only a man can provide.[563] Budziszewski makes an interesting point, as there is no deficiency in God's design. In terms of our biological functions, we can perform every vital function by ourselves except one—procreation. For example, we use our own digestive system to digest food; we use our own ears to hear and eyes to see, but human beings and living creatures across the spectrum of species cannot procreate without the involvement of the male and female elements. This idea elegantly illustrates that male and female are designed for each other among human beings. In essence, Parnell and Budziszewski indicate that we do not have the authority to recreate our gender, and when we do, it suggests that we are tampering with God's order and design. When we tamper with God's design, it will ultimately no longer function as it was designed to—it will malfunction or work imperfectly. These statements are based on the theory of natural law and reinforce an important point that is integral to the argument of this dissertation.

Moreover, even though different cultures find diverse ways to express gender, gender is based on biological differences between men and women. According to Albert Mohler, "The binary system of gender is grounded in a biological reality and is not socially constructed. We affirm that biological sex is a gift from God to every individual and the human community to which that individual belongs."[564] The biblical doctrine of creation grounded in God's divine "order" affirms that gender is not something we choose, but it is instead a divinely ordained facet of our humanity (Gen 1:27). It is "very good" for a man to be a man, and "very good" for a woman to be a woman (v. 31). When we tamper with what God has created in His image, for

[563] J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2004), 96.

[564] Mohler R. Albert, Jr., *We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage, and the Very Meaning of Right and Wrong* (Nashville: TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 80.

example, by trying to erase the differences between male and female or constructing a genderless society, such actions suggest that we are not reflecting God's image of "order and suitability" in design. In fact, we are out of God's alignment. It leaves us to ask, Who are we to be tampering with what God has created as "very good"?

Human Sexual Identity

What was God's purpose in creating us as sexual human beings? A question such as this offers the beginning point to attempt to provide a Christian perspective on the phenomenon of human existence as male and female. The task of developing a Christian response to the ethical issues surrounding human sexuality must begin with a keen understanding of our sexuality in light of the Christian faith. The first statement made at the birth of a baby is the sex. One of the main characteristics we notice in encountering other human beings is their sex.

Our identity as men and women is incredibly essential for our professional relationships, healthy marriages, families, and churches, but more importantly, it is crucial for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the world. What we believe about our identity is integral to who we are as individuals, couples, and families in pursuing our purpose. In the Bible, God has provided us with clear guidance on the foundational questions of male and female identity and roles. However, with the influence of various philosophical and theoretical beliefs, it has been difficult for people to grasp the biblical truth.

In recent years, a growing number of social scientists have been promoting a very different view of human sexual identity. In this view, the "constructionist" argues that human sexual identity is not fixed but rather malleable or plastic. Our sexuality was not designed by a secular entrepreneur or a victimizing pornographer; instead, it was created by the intelligence and brilliance of our Father. How does the church prepare to deal with the rise of plastic identity?

To answer this question, the Bible provides us with biblically sound theological reasons for believing that human sexual identity is deeply profound and essential to God and will last through eternity. Therefore, it certainly cannot be culturally relative or plastic, as it is eternal. More importantly, the idea of plastic sexuality reconfigures sexual ethics and is especially opposed to gender roles. The idea of plastic sexuality requires a profound commitment to believing there is nothing insightful about sexual identity. Plastic sexuality is simply sex without purpose, and one without purpose has no moral limits other than insisting that all moral limits have to be rejected. [565] God never acts without a purpose; he must have some profound eternal purpose for male and female that would last forever.

Is Sexual Identity Eternal?

Biblical evidence shows that male and female will keep their specific gender identities beyond the resurrection into eternity. In the fourth century, Augustine studied the question and concluded that the Bible teaches that both men and women will keep their specific gender identities beyond the resurrection and into eternity. Augustine responded to some who said women would cease to be women after the resurrection. He commented that those who believe that there will be two sexes in the resurrection are more sensible."[566] Using Augustine's work as a guide, Daniel Heimbach expanded upon Augustine's initial efforts with four biblically sound theological reasons for asserting that God in the Bible gives us an essentialist view of human sexuality.[567] First, in the creation account, we understand that when God created Adam and Eve,

[565] Albert, *We Cannot Be Silent,* 59.

[566] Augustine, *The City of God*, 19.22.17.

[567] Daniel R. Heimbach, "The Unchangeable Difference: Eternally Fixed Sexual Identity for an Age of Plastic Sexuality," *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2002), 284–285.

He created embodied spirits. God did not first create non-material beings and then material bodies. Instead, each was made whole in a single divine act of creation. Thus, each being is presented as something we might call a "materialized spirit." In other words, the creation record teaches that men and women are beings who exist spiritually and physically at the same time. "The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). Also, "the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man" (Gen 2:22). Not only is human existence spiritual—but it also requires embodiment to be whole. Thus, if embodiment includes sexual identity and if the embodiment is essential to being human, then sexual identity must be essential to human existence. It is only logical to assume that because God in creation made sexual identity important to embodied human life, then absent specific revelation to the contrary, we must assume that sexual identity will always remain essential to embodied human existence.[568]

Second, the Bible supports an essentialist view of human sexuality, as when God created Adam and Eve, He demonstrated that human sexual identity has absolutely nothing to do with sin. However, due to the fall, what we now experience of human sexuality is affected by sinful human nature. As human sexuality existed without sin before the fall, there is at least no moral reason for opposing the idea that we shall continue to be sexual creatures after God does away with all moral corruption—that is, after the entire created order (including human beings) is released from the curse imposed by God as a consequence of sin (Rom 8:20–21).[569]

[568] Heimbach, "The Unchangeable Difference, 284–285.

[569] Ibid.

Third, the essentialist view of human sexuality is presumed in the biblical hope of bodily resurrection. There is a restorative and not just a reconstructive purpose in God's promise of bodily resurrection. In the resurrection, we will experience a continuity of being and personal identity that links the new with what was old. Paul teaches that we will be "changed" (1 Cor 15:51–52). At the resurrection, "the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality" (1 Cor 15:53). Yet those same beings who once were mortal will then "clothe" themselves with immortality at the resurrection. As we know, there will be continuity of personal identity, and because sexuality has always been part of that identity, Augustine was led to say, "He, then, who created both sexes will restore both."[570]

Augustine also understood that human sexuality existed before the coming of mortality and the fall (Gen 2:25; cf. 2:17). Augustine also understood from creation that human sexual identity is not merely good in the sense of being sinless. It is also good in a constructive sense. The good of sexual being has to do with more than something it avoids, excludes, or merely is not. It also has to do with accomplishing something commendable—something truly worthy that would or could never be at all apart from God's creation of sexual identity. In other words, God generated sexual beings as good and for good. [571] At creation, human sexual identity is not only without sin, but it is also created to achieve something good. When God made Adam and Eve male and female, He had in view the achievement of some very good thing that can be achieved in no other way—not even in the relationship between human beings and God Himself. God was intentional when He created male and female in two distinctly separate acts to be sexually different. "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper

[570] Heimbach, "The Unchangeable Difference, 284–285.

[571] Ibid.

suitable for him'" (Gen 2:18). Through this statement, God revealed that human sexuality is not only a good thing in itself—it is also for something good. It realizes some good thing that does not exist apart from a relationship that consists of unifying the corresponding differences involved in human sexual identity.[572] Hence, this brings us back to the thesis that God is not necessarily a sexual being, but the appropriateness and functional orderliness of the sexes reflect something of God as an orderly being.

The argument that God's promise of bodily resurrection presumes the essential nature of human sexual identity has additional scriptural validation in accounts given by those who recognized Jesus after His resurrection. It also finds validation in Paul's revelation of an immediate connection or relationship between sexual activity and the bodies we have now and the purity of the eternal bodies we look forward to having after the resurrection. Following Jesus' resurrection, the disciples recognized the same male human being they knew and loved before the crucifixion. Peter boldly declared that "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact" (Acts 2:32). After Jesus' resurrection, angels also testified to His continuing male identity when they said, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). These accounts show that all who saw Jesus after His bodily resurrection just assumed that He remained a male human being.[573] We have direct evidence of continued sexual identity after the resurrection in Paul's teaching to new believers in Corinth. Paul writes:

> The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power, God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! (1 Cor 6:13b-15).

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[572] Ibid.

[573] Heimbach, "The Unchangeable Difference, 284–285.

Here we see that Paul links sexual sin involving the bodies we have now with the bodies we will have after the resurrection. Our sexual organs themselves, in Paul's language, are said to be "members of Christ" and, therefore, they are parts of our future resurrection bodies—bodies that in their entirety God "will raise" from the dead and bodies that in their entirety God wants us to use now for His glory and that someday He will also perfect for His glory through the resurrection.[574]

Lastly, human sexuality is expressed and, therefore, affirmed in the way in which Jesus answered a group of Sadducees. The Sadducees question Jesus regarding the seven brothers who married the widow after the previous sibling died. Whose wife would the widow be at the resurrection? Jesus teaches, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven" (Matt 22:23–32). Jesus' answer strongly points toward the continuing presence of sexual identity. The marriage practices will cease, but the sexual differences will continue. Hank Hanegraaff makes an interesting observation and contribution to this topic. He points out that tragically, what the Creator purposed to be pristine and pure, the creation has prostituted and perverted. God does not arbitrarily remove things; instead, He redeems them. Therefore, a person's sex will exist after the resurrection, as sex is not merely a word that describes an exotic experience—it is what humans are by essence. In the beginning, God created us "male and female" (Gen 1:27), which is likely how it will always be.[575]The Scripture has not revealed what it means to be male and female after the resurrection; however, we trust God's plans that eternal resurrected life will far exceed the joy and blessing of the fallen world.

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[574] Heimbach, "The Unchangeable Difference, 285.

[575] Hank Hanegraaff, *Resurrection (*Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2000), 137.

Genesis 1–2 narratives establish God's "order and suitability" in design, demonstrating that human sexual identity is fixed and real. Therefore, the church must firmly oppose the tide of culture no matter how strong it gets. The Scripture cannot be shaped to accommodate the goals and assumptions of plastic sexuality, and teaching based on the influence of plastic sexuality in our culture has no place in the life of the church.

Homosexuality

What does the Bible say about homosexuality? According to the Word of God, homosexuality is a violation of God's original intent. God's natural order in design for marriage is between one man and one woman. In other words, homosexuality represents aberrant, unnatural behavior epitomizing rebellions against the Creator's design of marriage as heterosexual. As Budziszewski observes, a legislature can no more turn sodomitical unions into marriages than it can turn dogs into cats; it can only unravel the institution of marriage by sowing confusion about its purposes.[576] As Paul stated in Romans 1:26–27, homosexuality is contrary to the nature God has assigned to men and women. Procreation is not intended to be between two men or two women; it goes against God's design and purpose for creating marriage in His created order, even though society would want us to believe that there is deficiency in God's design. Notice the strong language Paul uses in Romans 1:25, 28, where he writes that such people "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature instead of the Creator" and "did not see fit to acknowledge God."[577] We can infer from the text that humans ignore God's design and create our own design to appease our worldly appetites.

[576] Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know*, 202.

[577] Köstenberger, *God's Design for Man and Woman,* 55.

The Old Testament teaching on homosexuality draws attention to the Sodom and Gomorrah story in the backdrop of a city noted for its great wickedness (Gen 13:13; 18:20). The Lord did not find ten righteous people there. Therefore, He destroyed the city in a spectacular outpouring of fire and brimstone, which was visible for miles around (18:32; 19:24–29). The Scriptures reveal two kinds of wickedness which provoked this act of judgment. There was a grave injustice, as evidenced in the "cry" for help rising from the city (18:20–21; 19:13; cf. Ezek 16:49–50), and sexual perversion, as exemplified when the men of Sodom demand to "know" Lot's male visitors (Gen 19:4–5), a euphemism for sexual intercourse (v. 8).[578]

The law of Moses clearly prohibited sexual acts between men. Leviticus 18:22 says, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination." Leviticus 20:13 says, "If a man also lies with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them." Kevin DeYoung writes, "The reason the prohibitions are stated so absolutely is because men were designed to have sex with women, not a man with another male."[579] Some scholars argue that these passages also prohibit sexual relations with a woman during menstruation (18:19; 20:18), thereby showing that they do not reveal abiding moral principles. In response, Leviticus shows homosexual acts as serious violations of the moral law by imposing the death penalty on the perpetrators (20:13), whereas sexual relations during menstruation only make a man ceremonially unclean (15:24).[580]

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[578] Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18–50, New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 20–21.

[579] Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 41.

[580] Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology, 281.*

What is the New Testament teaching on homosexuality? The New Testament reaffirms this old covenant law, proving that it has abiding moral significance for all peoples. The books of Jude and 2 Peter offer divinely inspired commentary on Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude says that those cities suffered God's fiery destruction for "giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh" (Jude 7). Peter Davids explains that the phrase "strange flesh" cannot refer to the fact that the visitors were angels, for the Sodomites did not regard them as angels but as men (Gen 19:5), and the same sin is attributed to nearby cities that the angels did not visit. Therefore, we should understand "strange flesh" as condemning the men of Sodom and Gomorrah specifically for their homosexuality, as it violated the boundaries of God's created order for sexuality.[581]

Similarly, 2 Peter 2:7 speaks of "the filthy conversation of the wicked" in Sodom, where "filthy" (*aselgeia*) refers to sexual licentiousness or shameless sensuality. The longest statement in the Bible about homosexuality can be found in Romans 1:26–27:

> "For this cause, God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."

Given the mention of the two genders and the immediately preceding statements about sexual sin (v. 24), Paul wrote of "natural use" regarding sexual matters here. The word translated as "use" (*chrēsis*) frequently appears in other Greek writings with reference to sexual relations.[582] The apostle teaches us that sexual activity between people of the same sex is

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[581] Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude. The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

[582] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 94.

"against nature," which refers to God's created order for mankind. John Murray wrote, "The offense of homosexuality is the abandonment of the divinely constituted order in reference to sex."[583] God condemns sexual activity not only between men but also between women. For people who have given themselves over to same-sex erotic desires and practices, Paul's message of law and gospel comes through most clearly in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with humankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Paul reiterates the law of God that homosexuality is sin. The phrase "abusers of themselves with mankind" translates the same Greek word seen before in 1 Timothy 1:10, which means "males who go to bed with males" (*arsenokoitēs*). Here again, the word echoes the laws of Leviticus in its condemnation of all sexual activity between men—a connection strengthened by the fact that Paul has just written strongly against incest, another sexual sin that is condemned in Leviticus 18 and 20.[584]

In sum, as believers, we cannot respond to all of the scientific, political, and legal questions related to the issue of homosexuality in the church and the world. However, the Bible provides the fundamental truths and directions along with the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us through God to help us make wise and godly choices in a confusing world.

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[583] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 1:181n18.

[584] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 212–13.

The Holy Spirit Helps to Make Wise and Godly Choices

The work of the Holy Spirit draws our attention to the concept of God's "order and suitability" in design in male and female. The Holy Spirit's work encompasses both creation and redemption. In Genesis, we read that God formed human beings from the dust: "So God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen 2:7), and human beings became a "living being." The "breath of life" (*ruach*) identifies with the Holy Spirit, which gives life to human beings. The breath of life vivifies human beings, giving life and making it possible for human beings to love and obey God's commandments.

Furthermore, just as the Holy Spirit gives life to human beings, he plays an essential role in helping male and female to reflect God's image of "order and suitability" on the earth. Barth describes the Holy Spirit as a person who works with and through believers, as a Spirit of God and not the world, proceeding eternally from the Father and the Son. In other words, the Holy Spirit is not an individual's personal Spirit, but God's Spirit works through the spirit of humans to reveal a God who "reconciles" the world and humanity to God. [585] The Holy Spirit restrains evil and provides order. Finally, the Spirit leads and guides us to reflect the image of God. He is "God with us and God within us."

Conclusion

In this chapter, we explored the Christian response to societal confusion concerning what it means for the church today that male and female created in the image of God is a reflection of "order and suitability" in design. When we look at all of the different challenges concerning male–female role relationships, suitability and compatibility in marriage, same-sex marriage,

[585] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* IV.I, (trans. G. W. Bromiley; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 646.

gender identity, and homosexuality, it is biblically clear that male and female are set apart from everything else in the world with the unique identity of bearing God's image. This means we "image" God on the earth uniquely, as God's special agents, to do the same work He has done, such as creating, building, stewardship, and exercising oversight.

In many parts of the world, Christians are persecuted because they are not allowed to tell the truth regarding these issues. However, Jesus' statement to us reads: "You are the salt of the earth" and "You are the light of the world" (Matt 5:13–14). This applies to Christians of every age and culture. Significantly, our eyes must remain fixed on the foundational biblical texts that seek to shed light on the divine design that created us as human sexual beings. It is the church's responsibility to thoroughly examine sexual ethics to determine its implication and application to the sexual identity issues facing the world today.

CHAPTER 8

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The previous chapter dealt with the practical implications of worldview and societal practices. This concluding chapter aims to demonstrate how this thesis impacts our theological understanding of the image of God. Chapter one focused on the pinnacle of God's creative activity, particularly God's creation of male and female in His image and likeness. God chooses to introduce Himself to creation by making male and female in His own image and according to His likeness. Hence, humanity is an expression of God's sovereignty as, He commanded and established man's purpose, direction, and goal in creation.

The purpose of this dissertation was not to reject or dismiss the substantive, relational, spiritual, or functional concepts of the image of God but to suggest another approach to what the image of God in male and female entail. As concluded from the various scholarly views in Chapter two, the image of God in man could not be solely defined by any one concept because of the complexity of humanity. For if human beings were only bodies, they would have been instinctive animals, and if they were only spirits, they would have been considered angels and not human beings.

Although it has been difficult to define how man reflects God's image, several aspects of human existence show that humans are more like God than the rest of creation. In Chapter 3, the exegetical and biblical examination of Genesis 1:26–27, 5:1–3, and 9:6 provided a comprehensive theological understanding of the image and likeness of God. As the study has shown, the Hebrew words for "image" and "likeness" informed us that man is like God. Even though our physical bodies in no way should imply that God has a physical body because God is not male or female. Nevertheless, there are many ways in which our physical bodies reflect

something of God's character and thereby constitute an aspect of what it means to be created in God's image. The theological takeaway from Chapter three brings into focus the narrative of the indigenous intended will of God that men and women were created in the image of God to be a reflection of God on the earth. Human beings are the only part of creation that most image God. Therefore, understanding that male and female by design reflect God's "order and suitability" brings a tremendous appreciation of human existence.

The dissertation also provided an opportunity in Chapter four to examine the image concept in the New Testament as perceived in the earthly life of Christ. We learn that the redemption of male and female is in Christ and that the image concept began with a pattern for humans of God himself, which was later specified as God the Son, Jesus Christ, who became the perfect image of God in human form, truly God and truly human. We also learn that Sonship is at the heart of the image concept. Every human being is God's offspring, which is an allusion to the image of God. As Christians, we have a new nature in Christ that is "being renewed in knowledge according to the image of the Creator" (Col 3:10). The goal of our redemption in Christ is that we might be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29). Essentially, this entails to become more like God in terms of our thinking and moral character as we reflect his image of "order and suitability" on the earth. The incredible promise of the New Testament is that God's purpose for creating man in His image was completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ; Jesus himself is "the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4). Paul affirms that "Jesus is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15).

The New Testament theology depicts Jesus as the fulfillment of male and female, which sheds a bright light on this study. This means that everything that God wants us to know about Him has been revealed in the life and words of Jesus Christ. Human beings sexed bodies and

gendered human experience is evident in Jesus's incarnation as a man, whose earthly life and identity were shaped by his bodily sex and the gendered roles and relationships he had on earth as a man, son, brother, and teacher. The Wisdom literature speaks eloquently of the wisdom of God as a gift to human beings to lead us. Wisdom also emphasizes our responsibility to live a life pleasing to God. Jesus fulfills this covenant understanding in male and female by teaching us how to fulfill this responsibility in knowing and pleasing God. In 1 Corinthians 1:7-2:16, Paul describes how God's wisdom was hidden from man's full understanding until it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who is the wisdom of God.

The principal argument in defense of the "order and suitability" concept is that God created male and female in His image to glorify Him on earth. This study has demonstrated that interpreting the image of God in man as a reflection of "order and suitability" is another approach by which male and female reflect the image of God as it unfolds in Wisdom literature. Wisdom literature plays an incredibly essential role in the Bible because it contains specific references to creation as opposed to the history of Israel. It also teaches us that there is a cosmic order. For example, in the Book of Proverbs, this cosmic order is personified as female; she is *hokma*, "Wisdom." Also, in Job 28, this order was sewn into the fabric of reality in "the beginning" during creation.

Genesis 1–2 includes the indigenous intended will of God for humanity. Our investigation of the Wisdom literature enabled us to see the exceedingly rich intertextuality between the Wisdom literature and Genesis 1–2, which provides the requisite conceptual context to illustrate the creation language of wisdom by which God created male and female. As disclosed in Chapter five, Wisdom recalls her partnership with God in the beginning when He established the heavens and the earth. God's Wisdom was the divine capacity to design (*`esa)*

and order creation. This suggests that the creation of male and female is not the work of chance or fate, but instead, it was constructed according to certain specifications and the methods used to prove God's infinite Wisdom and perfection. God's Wisdom marks the created world, and humans are identified as God's representative within that creation order.

The "order and suitability" concept in Chapter five accommodates several divine constituent elements from diverse streams of thoughts within the Wisdom literature. First, this study has presented a comprehensive argument about wisdom's role in creation. The poet in Proverbs 8:22–31 walked us through all those evenings and mornings when there were no depths, springs, mountains, and hills and when God erected the heaven and earth. The creation tour is guided by Wisdom, the "handmaiden," "architect," "engineer," or "master artisan" who actively participated in God's creation. In the final analysis, wisdom demonstrated order, design, and suitability of function within creation instead of chaos and disorder.

Furthermore, the "handmaiden" interpretation of creation strongly argues in favor of God's image in humanity, as wisdom is personified as a reflection of God's creative person and not as a separate entity. From a theological standpoint, wisdom represents the outflow of divine activity, or to use the language of Proverbs 8:22, wisdom was the essence of "God's way." More specifically, God's activity or "way" becomes the standard by which all human behavior is deemed wise or foolish. The interpretive thrust of Proverbs 8 is to urge humans to live by the principles of wisdom, which is patterned after God's wisdom. In the context of the exuberant retelling of Genesis 1–2 in Proverbs 8, we find the explanation for why everything God created was so "very good." The pleasure emanated from God's joyful and playful collaboration with Wisdom.

Second, the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes also affirms the existence of order and design of things in creation. Ecclesiastes 3 illustrates God as the Creator and providential sustainer that created everything "suitable" and "beautiful" in its appropriate time (3:11). Unfortunately, the fall of Adam has affected or corrupted the natural order of things. As a result, men have a hard time figuring it all out. Many scholars believe that man's image was not damaged by the fall of Adam and that man is still in the image of God in every aspect of his life. However, man's ability to see from the beginning to the end is distorted. God has placed "ignorance," "opaqueness," or the Hebrew word "darkness," in man's heart" (3:11), which infers a lack of understanding and knowledge. Therefore, this suggests that as a result of the fall of Adam, God has placed darkness in man's heart which prevents him from knowing the things of God. Hence, man is burdened and cannot understand, know, navigate, and make wise choices. Although the darkness in man's heart prevents him from knowing what God has done from the beginning to the end, some things are apparent based on God's design of male and female; for example, men cannot have babies or undergo an abortion.

Moreover, Qohelet expanded the dialogue and stated, "God made man upright, but they have sought out many devices" (Eccl 7:29); "men's hearts are set to do evil" (8:11b). The inference here is that initially, humans were created "upright" and "righteous," but they lost this uprightness when "sin entered in" (Gen 3:1–7; Rom 5:12). When we look at the changes in the world today, we see things do not work as God designed them to function. God created male and female in His own image to function in a specific way. However, man always seeks answers to work around what God has designed, which is very obvious. For example, society has devalued the distinctions between male and female. Constructionists claim human sexuality is "plastic" and not "fixed;" therefore, individuals are free to "shape" their sexual identities as they choose.

As explained in Chapter 6, throughout all creation, we see compatibility and suitability in God's design of things, which is a reflection of the image of God.

As the research of Jack Jarick demonstrates, humans have "eternity" in their hearts— the Creator has made them thinking beings. However, they want to pass beyond their fragmentary knowledge and discern the fuller meaning of the whole pattern, even though the Creator will not let humans be his equal. [586] He further comments that God puts a veil upon the human heart so that the finite human mind cannot reach beyond the Kairos into eternity to see as God does.[587] The theological principles of Qoheleth's teaching are that humans should live their lives according to God's order and design.

Third, the discourse of Job 28 affirms the existence of a cosmic order of a great God. It demonstrates that God's "order and design" in creation is a fundamental gift from a generous God, which is an important theological message. The discourse discloses human limitations with respect to exercising control over the created order. The cosmos is mysteriously and miraculously in God's hands; therefore, we can trust that God sets a limit to human wickedness (38:12–15). Humans cannot always understand the actions of the inscrutability of a sovereign God. He does not deliberately hide wisdom from humans, but some things are beyond the grasp of man's wisdom to understand and have control over. J. Budziszewski believes that some things in God's design "we can't know."[588] As natural law proposes, many things in God's design make sense. Therefore, it is wise for humans not to tamper with what God has created as good and very

[586] Jack Jarick, *Gregory Thaumaturgos' Paraphrase,* SBLSCS 29 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 26.

[587] Ibid.

[588] Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know*, 56.

good. The theological takeaway in Wisdom literature is that God's creation works wonderfully in a way that humans cannot fathom or understand. Therefore, we should not tamper with it.

As stated in the introduction of this dissertation, the proposed goal was to present another concept for the creation of men and women in the image of God as it unfolds in the Wisdom literature. This dissertation recommends that male and female created in the image of God is a reflection of order and suitability in design. Through the exuberant reciting of Genesis 1–2 in Wisdom literature, this study has successfully shown that God's Wisdom instills elements of order, design, and suitability of function within creation. We find the explanation for why everything God created was so "good" and "very good." Therefore, this dissertation recommends that humans need not tamper with God's design. Finally, this study has strengthened our understanding of God's image in humanity through the articulated arguments. I hope this present dissertation has contributed to the ongoing scholarly discussions on the Bible's definition of human beings as created in the image of God.

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