Sexuality: On Being Human and Promoting Social Justice

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Based on a biblical definition of the soul, the image of God, and social justice, various options in human sexuality are considered and evaluated. Expressions of sexuality not corresponding to biblical standards are found to be dehumanising and contrary to social justice.

Keywords: soul, image, sexuality, humanness, social justice

This brief essay considers the main thesis of the book, *Kingdom through Covenant*, and the relation of that thesis to human sexuality (Gentry & Wellum, 2012). Understanding human sexuality entails grasping, first of all, what it means to be human and second, what is the purpose and role of human sexuality.

Being Human
As a foundation we shall start with a definition of "being human" within the context of a Christian worldview, that is, a worldview derived from Christian Scripture, the Old and New Testaments. The biblical teaching on creation determines our understanding of being human. For it is in the creation narratives that we understand, first, the nature of the soul according to the Bible, and second, the differences between humans and all creatures made by the creator God that are not human.

What is the Soul?
The fundamental text (Waltke, 1976) describing the soul is Gen. 2:7 which states,

> "And Yahweh God formed / shaped the man out of dust from the ground, and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul (*nepeš ḥayyâ*)."

This text provides a description of the creation of humans that complements the text in Genesis 1:26-28. It consists of just three short sentences. The first sentence informs us that in part humans are made out of 'dust' (Hebrew '*āpār*, i.e. 'loose earth' or 'soil') from the 'earth' or 'ground' ('*ădāmâ*) and personally fashioned by God as an artisan or potter would make an earthenware vessel. "Forming' or 'shaping', as Gordon Wenham notes (1987, 59), is an artistic and inventive activity that requires planning and skill (cf. Is. 44:9-10). One of the components of human beings, then, is the earth or soil. We can see this statement

corroborated by the fact that humans ingest the earth or soil to live. Gen. 3:17 confirms this actually stating that we eat the ground (the 3rd feminine singular suffix on the verb has the 'ground' ('*ădāmâ*), a feminine noun as its referent). What, in fact, we eat are plants, which are derived from the ground and later on (Gen. (9:2-3) we eat animals which in turn eat plants. Thus, we ingest the soil indirectly. Indeed, Gen. 3:19 repeats the statement that '*ādām* (humankind) was taken from the '*ădāmâ* ('ground') a synonym in this verse for '*āpār*, ('dust', 'loose soil'). Not only is the statement in Gen. 2:7a confirmed by the fact that we ingest the ground or soil, but it is also confirmed by the fact that upon death the body returns to dust. This is clearly stated in Gen. 3:19, but is open to observation and can easily be confirmed apart from Scripture. This material or physical component of humans is typically referred to in Hebrew by the term *bāśar*, (i.e. 'flesh' or 'body') and in Greek by σῶμα ('body').

The second sentence in the text "and he blew into his nostrils the breath of life," reveals that man's origin is not only from the earth, but also from heaven. The noun phrase "the breath of life" can be analysed as an epexegetical genitive (Waltke & O'Connor, 1990, § 9.5.3c) indicating that breath is that which is characteristic of life. When the breath is gone, the animal or human is considered to be dead—without life. Hans Walter Wolff concluded the same thing: "For Old Testament man, life is essentially manifested in the breath." (1974, 59)

The breath (*nǝšāmâ*), also referred to as the wind or spirit (Hebrew *rûăḥ*, Greek πνεῦμα) speaks of the immaterial component of human beings. Several other texts in the Old Testament clearly indicate that the life of humans, manifested by their breathing, comes from the spirit of God. For example, Job, whose words were approved by the Lord (Job 42:7), said:

"as long as my breath (*nəšāmâ*) is in me, and the spirit (*rûăḥ*) of God is in my nostrils" (Job 27:3, ESV)

Elihu, an Israelite, spoke in the same vein:
"If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit (*rûăḥ*) and his breath (*nəšāmâ*), all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust (*'āpār*)." (Job 34:14–15, ESV)

Almost identical to the statement of Elihu are the words of the Preacher, affirmed as truth (Ecc. 12:10):
"and the dust (*'āpār*) returns to the earth (*'ereṣ*) as it was, and the spirit (*rûăḥ*) returns to God who gave it." (Ecc. 12:7, ESV)

The prophet Isaiah, who based much of his instruction upon creation doctrine, also affirmed this truth:
"Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath (*nəšāmâ*) to the people on it and spirit (*rûăḥ*) to those who walk in it." (Is. 42:5, ESV)

We can see, then, that 'breath' (*nəšāmâ*) and 'spirit' (*rûăḥ*) are essentially interchangeable and synonymous in describing the immaterial aspect of humanity. The term 'breath' is a bit more earthy than 'spirit' and more suitable to the picture painted in a narrative portraying God as an artisan skilfully at work in the creation of man. Moses is careful in Genesis 1–2 to avoid making statements that would lead to considering humans in idolatrous terms. In addition, as Anthony Thiselton warns, *rûăḥ* denoting "Spirit of God" must not be confused with *rûăḥ* when the term denotes the human spirit (Thiselton, 2013, 6-8). The Old Testament can speak of "the spirits of all flesh" (Num. 16:22), or of the "breath of every human being" (Job 12:10). Yet by contrast, the forty-two instances of the Spirit in the book of Ezekiel emphasise that the Spirit of God is creative, dynamic, and transcendent.

The final sentence in Gen. 2:7, "and the man became a living soul," shows that the result of the union of "clods of earth" with the "breath of life" is called a living *nepeš* in Hebrew and has traditionally been translated by the English word soul. It is extremely important to grasp the syntax in Hebrew. The *lamed* preposition indicates that the *nepeš* is the goal or result of bringing the dust and the spirit together. The soul is a *tertium quid* (a third something) that is neither dust nor wind. Thus although one may say that they have a soul, it is more accurate to say that they are a soul. I have a soul because I am a soul. The soul is a way of referring to my being as a whole. The soul is the unique bringing together of the material and the immaterial. Indeed, the dividing point between the two is a mystery that may well be impossible for

us to penetrate (Heb. 4:12). Even the best research in science today cannot differentiate between the brain and the mind. And although the term *nepeš* is used in a great many ways in the Old Testament, it is clear that this basic text is not specifying the soul as an aspect or component of a human being, but denotes the body animated with the life of God as a whole.

The definition of a human being cannot end with just a description of the soul since all that has been said so far about human beings is also said about all animals in the Old Testament. First, their bodies, like the bodies of human beings, are also derived from the earth or soil according to Gen. 1:24, "let the earth bring forth living creatures according to its kind." Second, animals like humans also derive their life from the spirit of God. For example, Ps. 104:30, speaking of the animals says this: "When you send forth your Spirit, they [the animals] are created, and you renew the face of the ground" (ESV). The Preacher also notes similarities between animals and humans in their bodies and their spirits:
"I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth?" (Ecc. 3:18-21, ESV)

Both animals and humans come from the dust and return to the dust; both animals and humans have the same breath or spirit in them. Other texts affirm that animal life comes from the wind or spirit of God (Gen. 6:17; 7:15, 22). Third, animals are also called "living souls" in Scripture. Gen. 1:24 was just cited in reference to the animals: "let the earth bring living creatures according to its kind." The expression "living creatures" is rendering *nepeš ḥayyâ* in the Hebrew Text. It is normal in English translations of the Bible for *nepeš ḥayyâ* to be rendered by the expression "living creatures" in this verse as well as in Gen. 2:19, but the biblical text employs the same expression as it does for humans everywhere (cf. 1:30). From the biblical evidence, then, both animals and humans have souls, or to be more precise, are souls. They are living beings, the result of material and immaterial substance combined mysteriously by God into a unitary whole.

Personhood / The Divine Image
What then is (are) the difference(s) between humans and animals, if any difference exists at all? According to the biblical text, the only differences between humans and animals are that (1) humans are persons and (2)

that humans have been *made as the divine image*.

How is personhood defined? Generally psychologists define persons as beings that display emotions, mind, and will. In the Old Testament, the term "heart" conveys these three things in one word.

In Hebrew, the word "heart" refers to the core of who you are, the centre of each person. It refers, in particular, to the place where we feel, where we think, and where we make decisions and plans, i.e., emotions, mind, and will. This can be easily seen from the following illustrative passages:

> • *Feelings*
> "A glad heart makes a cheerful face, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed." (Prov. 15:13, ESV)
>
> "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." (Prov. 17:22, ESV)

When these proverbs refer to a "glad heart" or a "joyful heart" they are clearly referring to one's emotions and feelings in terms of a healthy psyche.

> • *Reasoning*
> "But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear." (Deut. 29:4, ESV)
>
> "Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." (Is. 6:10, ESV)

In both Deut. 29:4 and Is. 6:10, one understands with the heart; surely then what is being referred to is what we normally call the mind. This is the place where we reason and think and understand.

> • *Will*
> "The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps." (Prov. 16:9, ESV)
>
> "May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans!" (Ps. 20:4, ESV)

Prov. 16:9 and Ps. 20:4 show that the "heart" makes plans and has desires; it is the place where we make decisions. Concerning the Hebrew word "heart," H. W. Wolff says:

> "In by far the greatest number of cases it is intellectual, rational functions that are ascribed to the heart—i.e. precisely what we ascribe to the head and, more exactly, to the brain; cf. I Sam. 25.37. . . . We must guard against the false impression that biblical man is determined more by feeling than by reason." (Wolff, 1974, 46-47)

According to Wolff, the Hebrew word "heart" refers to the mind in approximately 400 out of 814 passages speaking of the human heart.

We should note, then, that the biblical language differs markedly from our own in the Western world. For us, the heart is associated with emotions, feelings, love, and esp. Valentine's Day. Conversely, for the Bible, the heart is the centre of our being where we reason and think and make decisions and plans. Today we can speak of people who cannot bridge the eighteen inch gap between the head and the heart. The ancient Hebrews knew no such gap. The heart is the centre of one's being and the place where emotions, mind, and will operate in harmony and union. Thus the heart is the key term in the Old Testament for identifying personhood.

Note, however, of 853 instances in the Hebrew Text, the term "heart" is not applied to animals. Fabry states:

> "The notion of an animal's *lēb* is largely unknown to the OT. According to Job 41:16(24), the *lēb* of Leviathan is hard as stone. The reference is to his belly, which is impervious to spears, swords, and arrows (v. 18[26]). The *lēb* of a lion is a metaphor for his courage. (2 Sam. 17:10) The Aramaic occurrences in Daniel likewise are not anatomically specific: Nebuchadnezzar is punished by being given a *lĕbāb ḥêwā'*, a 'bestial nature' (Dan. 4:13[16]; cf. 5:21); conversely, the apocalyptic lion is given a *lĕbāb 'ĕnāš* a 'human nature.'" (Dan. 7:4) (Fabry, 2003, 412)

Hans W. Wolff concluded much the same in his exhaustive research on the anthropology of the Old Testament:

> "… in contrast to the other main concepts, it [the heart] is almost exclusively applied to man. Where *bāśār* refers to animal flesh in more than a third of all its instances, *lĕb(āb)* [heart] is only applied to animals five times and four of these are in a comparison with the human heart (II Sam. 17.10; Hos. 7.11; Dan. 4.13; 5.21); only once does it refer exclusively to animals." (Job 41.24) (Wolff, 1974, 40)

We can conclude from these data that humans are endowed with personhood, while animals are not.

A clear definition of the divine image can be given by summarising the careful and painstaking study of Gen. 1:26-28 in *Kingdom through Covenant* (Gentry & Wellum, 2012, Chapter 6). According to the cultural setting and linguistic data of the ancient Near East in the Fourteenth Century B.C., how would the first readers of Genesis would have understood the text? The term likeness communicates that humans were

created to have a covenant relationship with their creator God and the term image communicates that they were created to have a covenant relationship with the earth and the creatures in it. The former relationship is pictured in terms of obedient sonship and the latter relationship is pictured in terms of servant kingship. On the one hand we are to relate to our creator as children responding with obedience and trust to a Father who gives good instructions, leadership, love and provisions for his family. On the other hand, as we spend time getting to know our Father, we represent his rule in the creation through humble service and wise stewardship. This view is corroborated from the cultural setting and linguistic data of the ancient Near East and more importantly, is supported by later texts in Scripture. Although image and likeness are synonyms, each carries a meaning that differs slightly from the other. In Egypt, by 1600 BC, the king was called the image of God because he was the son of God (Dion, 1985). We ought to assume a meaning in Scripture similar to that of the culture surrounding Israel unless the Bible clearly distinguishes its meaning from the culture. Thus image is linked with kingship that rules for God as his son. The term likeness is employed in the ancient culture, e.g. of the relationship of a king to his god, i.e. how his behaviour reflects the character of the god that he worships (Garr, 2003a). Likeness is also linked with generation of life and sonship in Gen. 5:3.

When the Hebrew text states literally that *God made humans in his image yet according to his likeness*, the preposition 'in' emphasises proximity while the preposition 'according to' indicates something similar, yet distinct and separate (Garr, 2003b, 95; Jenni, 1992). Thus man represents the rule of God in the world as the image, but in the matter of creating life and sonship, is only similar and not identical in the representation of his Father's image.

Moreover, the fact that the creation of humans as the divine image refers to the result and not the process clearly shows that the divine image cannot be conceived of in merely functional terms, but speaks of human essence or ontology. In computer language, we are talking about hardware and not software. We are hard-wired, as it were, to have covenantal relationships, with God on the one hand and with the creation on the other. Our ruling for God is a result of being made as the divine image and not the image itself. A merely functional definition of the divine image falls short of adequately accounting for the biblical data. The definition of the divine image proposed in here is functional, relational, and structural.

The meaning expected from the cultural and linguistic setting is strongly supported by Gen 5:3, Ps. 8, Luke 3:38 as well as Eph. 4:24 and Col. 3:10 (Gentry & Wellum, 2012, 195-197, 201-202, Ortlund, 2014).

Humans image the being of God because the biblical teaching—particularly in the New Testament—is that within the being of the one and only God we can distinguish different persons: Father, Son and Spirit. While the biblical data do not specify the relationship between Father and Son within the being of God as a covenant, nonetheless the description of this relationship does entail using precisely the same terms or words characteristic of covenant relationships: it is a relationship of obedience and trust, of faithful love and loyalty, and of social justice (justice and righteousness). Just as there are different types of covenants: parity agreements and non-parity agreements, we may note that most of the covenants in the biblical text are non-parity agreements: they are between persons who are greater and lesser in authority and whose functional roles are different. In this way they mirror the fact that the Father and the Son are equal in being but have different functional roles and are greater and lesser in authority. It is only in a relationship where we can speak of a greater and lesser in terms of roles that we can talk of obedience and trust: ḥesed and 'ĕmet. Both Muslim and Christian can affirm that God is great, but only the Christian can affirm that God is love: love requires relationships and without a Trinity, love cannot be defined apart from the creator-creature relationship. This leaves us with an extremely imperfect definition of love.

It is important to recognise that the biblical teaching does not support a theory of the supremacy of humans ipso facto. When one compares the human species with other animal species, our senses of hearing, smell, sight, taste, or touch are not necessarily better or superior. We do not seem by our physiognomy well designed to conquer others and survive. Our skin is not very tough and we have no sharp claws or terrible teeth. Scientists may attribute the supremacy of the human race to our minds, but this is inadequate.

It is the creation of humans as persons and as the divine image that gives humans a role as ruler over the earth. And this, in fact, is a gracious gift from God. Moreover it entails a rule of the creation by humans that calls for humble servanthood and wise stewardship of the creation. As Phil. 2 demonstrates, Jesus came to show that the kingship of God is completely opposite to the self-serving aggrandisement of kingship displayed throughout human history, beginning in the ancient Near East. The biblical instruction on the creation of humans as the divine image does not demonstrate the natural supremacy of humans but rather a graciously God-given dignity: we are hardwired for covenant relationships with our creator and with the creation.

Finally, we must note that the *imago dei* and personhood are vitally interconnected. Only persons enter and experience and fulfil covenant relationships. In the Bible, covenants are only made with persons not with animals and animals are not capable of covenant relationships.

Diminishing or Increasing the Divine Image

Since the creation of humans as the divine image entails covenant relationships—with God on the one hand and the creation on the other—and since faithfulness and loyal love are at the heart of covenant relationships, the divine image may be diminished or it may be increased. This can be observed and understood from the use of Prov. 3:1-4 in the New Testament.

First, consider the meaning of Prov. 3:1-4 in the context in which we find this text:

> "My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man." (NIV)

In the Book of Proverbs the king and queen of Israel are giving instruction to bring up and raise their son and they subsequently write down this instruction for the benefit of every father and mother in the covenant community. After the introduction (1:1-7), the book commences with the "Father's Praise of Wisdom"—a collection of 10 serious talks from father to son arranged to form an argument in favour of wisdom. Prov. 3:1-20 constitutes the Third Homily or Address from father to son. In contrast to the First Homily which warns against grabbing the good life by cheating and by violence, the Third Homily describes the right pathway to the good life: a right relationship to Yahweh. Verses 1-4 of Chapter 3 contain the introduction to the homily and these verses speak of a right relationship to our parents.

Since verses 1-12 are structured so that the odd verses are commands and the even verses are promises, the introduction constitutes two commands—each command followed by a promise—as the father calls on the son to hear the parental teaching.

Verse 1 presents the first command: the child must preserve the parental teaching. The father calls his teaching 'instruction' (*tôrâ*) and 'commands' (*miṣwâ*), the same words in Hebrew used for the covenant or law given by Moses at Sinai. Therefore the parental teaching is as authoritative and as important as the covenant instruction and stipulations given through Moses, because it is based on the Holy Scriptures.

Two verbs are employed to communicate the command in verse 1. The first is "Do not forget" (my instruction). In the Hebrew language, there are two words for 'forget'. One entails a mental lapse, i.e. absent-mindedness, and the other entails a moral lapse. The 'forgetting' here involves a moral lapse. This can be illustrated from Deut. 8:11-14. In Deuteronomy, Moses warns the people that when they enter the land

and have good houses, crops, and flocks and herds and have conquered their enemies, they may 'forget' the Lord. That is, they may be tempted to be self-sufficient and say, "Who needs the Lord?" This is forgetting God. It may be, then, that the child may later do well and become self-confident and may abandon the parental teaching. The second verb is 'preserve'. This same word is used in Is. 5:2 of guarding a vineyard from a watchtower so that birds or other predators may not steal the vintage. We must expect that the parental teaching will be attacked from without by society.

In verse 2, the promise of a long life for following the parental teaching is based squarely on the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20:12).

The second command in the introduction is in Prov. 3:3 and is a call to the child to maintain a right relationship to the parent. The father says, "Let kindness and faithfulness never leave you." In Hebrew, this entails the pair of words *ḥesed* and *'ĕmet*. Neither of these words has an easy equivalent in English; together they form the notion of faithful loyal love shown in the context of a covenant relationship. In Ex. 34:6 we see that this pair of words describes the heart of the being and character of God and forms the basis of his relations with his people in the covenant. In Josh. 2:14 the same pair of words speak of a covenant and pact of human friendship formed between the spies and Rahab, a prostitute in Jericho. The use of these words, then, demonstrates that a child is assumed to have covenant relationship and responsibilities toward his or her parents. The implication is that the motivation children have for obeying their parents is loyalty and not duress.

The call to the child to maintain a right relationship to their parent is also spelled out by two commands and the second is the double imperative "Bind them … write them." The sequence 'bind' and 'write' is also found in Proverbs 1:9, 6:21, and 7:3 and hearkens back to Deuteronomy 6:8-9 and 11:18-20. In all cases except Prov 3:3 the object of these two verbs is the commands given by Moses. In Prov 3:3, however, the third person plural pronoun "them" refers to *ḥesed* and *'ĕmet*, i.e. faithful loyal love. "Kindness and faithfulness" speak of the character or manner of the child's obedience. They speak of the quality or way of performing our covenant responsibilities as children. Thus, in essence, Prov. 3:4 is equivalent to the parallel passages, but instead of emphasising obedience to the parents' commands per se it stresses the character of that obedience. Just as wives in 1 Peter 3:3-6 demonstrate beauty not by cosmetics, hairstyle, and jewelry, but rather through character and humility, so the beauty of children lies in their obedience to their parents. Sons and daughters must internalise the home teachings and thus maintain a right relationship to their parents. Throughout the entire Bible, from begin-

ning to end, from Genesis to Revelation there is only one command for children: obey your parents. Lev. 19:3 is no exception since the command to observe the Sabbath is subordinated to the command to obey one's parents.

In the biblical texts, ḥesed and 'ĕmet, justice and righteousness are summaries of the requirements and stipulations in the covenant relationship, just as they are summaries of the character of the being of God himself.

The promise attached to the second command is "you will find favour and good insight in the eyes of God and man." In the context, "to acquire favour before God and humans" means that both God and others recognise that the child is developing behaviour and conduct that demonstrates ḥesed and 'ĕmet in covenantal relationships. This statement is nothing more and nothing less than another way of describing the divine image. The divine image consists of a covenant relationship with God on the one hand and with other creatures on the other, in other words, reputation for skilful relationships and getting along with both God and fellow humans.

Now in Luke 2:52 the author notes that Jesus *advanced* in wisdom and stature and favour with God and man. This evaluation of Jesus' early life is based squarely on Prov. 4:4 with the word stature added from 1 Sam. 2:26. In essence Luke is saying that Jesus increased in the divine image. It is clear, then, from these observations that the display of the divine image by a particular person can either be developed and increased or decreased and reduced, because the covenant loyalty and relationship can either deepen or lessen as our covenant obligations are fulfilled or not fulfilled through the exigencies of life. Every one may have the divine image, but one can decrease or increase in the demonstration of this day by day.

We should envision diminishing or increasing the divine image in two ways. First there are no doubt developmental stages which psychologists would want to classify, categorise, and describe. Second, just as chronological growth does not always bring developmental maturity, so disorders and deviance can result in diminishing appropriate growth or failing to reach a certain developmental stage.

It is not necessary to detail here appropriate developmental stages or growth in terms of increasing the divine image. From a theological viewpoint, this is the biblical teaching on sanctification: how, as Paul says, we become conformed to the image of the Son of God (Rom.8:29) who is the divine image (Col. 1:15). It may be necessary, however, to demonstrate briefly that this development begins in the womb.

Ps. 51:5-6 is a text that addresses specifically the issue of the divine image in the life of an unborn baby:

"⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶Behold, you de-

light in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart." (ESV)

Note in particular the words "inward being" in v. 6a and "secret heart" in v. 6b. Most commentators and English translations seem to understand here the inner person which is hidden from other people. Perhaps this is due to connecting this verse with the next where David asks for cleansing from his sin and we normally associate the cleansing of guilt with our inner person. This interpretation is not probable, due to the literary structure and the lexical meaning of the words.

According to the literary structure, first David acknowledges his crime, and then traces his moral weakness back to conception. In the following stanza, he asks for pardon and then power over moral weakness. Notice how the two-part confession is matched by the two-part prayer. This shows that v. 6 is clearly connected to v. 5, and not v. 7. The context is the problem of moral weakness traced back to his life within the womb.

The terms in Hebrew for "inward being" and "secret heart" are ṭuḥôṯ and sāṯum respectively. Neither one of these terms is used anywhere else in the Old

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Outline of Psalm 51

A.	Plea for Help	1-2
B.	Plight of Sin	3-6
	1. The Deed	3-4
	2. Moral Impotence Causing the Deed	5-6
C.	Prayer for Pardon and Perseverance	7-12
	1. Pardon for Actual Deed	7-9
	2. Power over Moral Impotence	10-12
D.	Request to Worship the Lord	13-17
E.	Postscript	18-19

Testament for the inner person. Instead the normal words for the inner person are 'heart' (lēḇ) or 'inwards' (qereḇ). The first term, ṭuḥôṯ, only occurs in Ps. 51:6 and Job 38:36. The noun comes from a root meaning to cover or smear over. The passage in Job is difficult, but surely has nothing to do with the inner being of a human. The second term, sāṯum, is a passive participle (i.e. verbal adjective) from a verb meaning to close or shut up. The "smeared over place" and the "closed up place" are better construed as references to the human womb. The literary structure connects v. 6 to v. 5, not to v. 7 and therefore requires that these words refer to the human womb.

In Ps. 51:5-6, then, David traces his moral weakness back to conception and affirms that even in the human womb God is seeking faithfulness or truth as well as wisdom. The categories of faithfulness and wisdom clearly speak of issues relating to the divine image. This text proves that the unborn already bear

the divine image. Even a baby in the womb can demonstrate character in relationship to its mother.

In our broken and fallen world we are also aware of cases of chronological growth without appropriate developmental stages or maturity.

The Divine Image and Sexuality

Down through the centuries, indeed from the start, God has sought to establish covenant relationships with humanity in general and also with particular individuals and nations. Why does he do this? The answer is that he does this because this is who he is in himself (Gentry & Wellum, 2102, 655).

The Bible teaches that God is a tri-unity: there is only one Supreme Being, and yet within the being of this one god we can speak of three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And the relationship of Father to Son and Son to Father, in the communion of the Holy Spirit is a relationship of devoted love, faithfulness, obedience, and trust. There is complete faithfulness and loyalty; there is truth and trust—all the characteristics of a covenant relationship. God wants to have precisely this kind of relationship with us because that is who he is in himself. We should remember that the biblical teaching concerning the being and nature of God is not a mathematical puzzle which we have to overcome in order to be considered orthodox, but rather conversely, it is only when we begin our thinking with this teaching that we can understand who we are and how we relate to our world. As Colin Gunton has said, "It is as if one had to establish one's Christian orthodoxy by facing a series of mathematical and logical difficulties rather than by glorying in the being of a God whose reality as a communion of persons is the basis of a rational universe in which personal life may take shape" (Gunton, 1991, 31-32).

Since we are made as the image of this God, i.e. to mirror this God, we ourselves are hard-wired in the deepest part of our beings to exist in covenant relationships, not only vertically in our relationship with the creator God, but horizontally with all his creatures—including other humans. God has established certain covenant communities in which we are designed to live and function. The first one we experience is the family. [All human beings come from one man and one woman.] Another that we can experience is marriage (defined as one man and one woman in a relationship dissolved only by death—why this is so we shall see later). And if a person becomes a follower of Jesus Christ, they become part of a third covenant community, the people of the new creation / new humanity. Note that the present humanity is committed to destroying itself and that the only humanity to outlast the present age is that of the New Humanity (in Jesus Christ, the first Man in the New Creation).

Sex is an appetite given to us by the creator God and, in fact, is specifically tied to one covenant community—that of marriage. It is an appetite like hunger and thirst, but is not to be awakened until the right time (see Song of Sol., 8). Most significantly, the sexual union between a man and a woman is designated in the Bible and the Ancient Near East as the single requisite covenant-ratifying (and -renewing) oath sign for the covenant of marriage.

Detailed evidence from Scripture for viewing marriage as a covenant and for viewing the sexual union with consent (i.e. both parental, in the case of dependent daughters, and mutual) as a marriage-constituting act is provided by G. Hugenberger (1994, 240-277). The *mōhar*, was not a bride price but a betrothal present, and does not relate to marriage per se, but to betrothal and gaining the consent of the parents. As to the sexual union, Gen. 29:21, "then Jacob said to Laban, 'Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed' " is a clear example showing that *copula carnalis* is not just a characteristic feature of marriage but rather the decisive expression of the end of betrothal and as such consummates the marriage (Hugenberger, 1994, Chapter 7). Moreover the Hebrew verb "to know" is frequently used of this marriage-constituting act: "and Adam knew his wife … (Gen. 4:1). In Hos. 2:22 [ET 20], the verb 'know' is used of the covenant between Yahweh and his people: "I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know Yahweh."

We now need to look at alternative arrangements which are advocated and loudly proclaimed today and see not only how they fall short, but why they also bring death and destruction resulting in an experience that both dehumanises and violates social justice. The following discussions of different kinds of sexual behaviour are intended to be brief and far from exhaustive. Discussion is limited to the connection of deviant behaviours with the notion that sex is the sign of a covenant relationship.

Using the gift of sex brings pleasure. Nonetheless, from the biblical definition, sex is designed to enable us to give to the other person in a one-man-one-woman-covenant-of-marriage-relationship. Both masturbation and pornography are forms of self-stimulation that cheat the person doing this from experiencing the redemptive side of sex in giving oneself in a covenant relationship. The practice of exciting oneself cannot work as a sign of a covenant relationship. The person is confessing a lie. In the end, this lie cheapens sex and does not bring real satisfaction. William Struthers has demonstrated that pornography actually rewires the male brain and deprives the person who engages in it of finding real intimacy in a marriage relationship (Struthers, 2009).

Current movies portray people having sex in all sorts of ways. It may be a man and a woman who are married in conventional terms, and one partner engages in sexual intercourse outside of the marriage.

Since sex is exclusive and integral to the marriage relationship, extra-marital sex clearly violates the covenant. Although Hollywood has no appreciation of biblical teaching, when they portray adultery, the partner who is wronged is always shown as crying out in pain. This response shows that being human requires covenant faithfulness as the biblical teaching makes plain. We are hard-wired for relationships that entail faithfulness and love. Thus even Hollywood acknowledges adultery as a violation. Since the biblical teaching connects sex with covenant, lack of faithfulness and loyalty results in a dehumanizing experience. And this dehumanizing experience is fully explored by the film industry. Moreover, in the biblical literature, word-pairs like ḥesed and 'ĕmet, or justice and righteousness are used to summarise all the instructions in the covenant as social justice (Gentry & Wellum, 2012, Chapter 15). Therefore failure to correlate sex and covenant loyalty constitutes social injustice.

It could also be that a couple who are married attempt to introduce a third person into the sexual experience such as is portrayed in the movie Garden of Eden based upon the book by E. Hemingway. This fails the biblical norm, however, because polygamous and polyamorous relationships obscure the covenant as an agreement between two parties. There is no way to engage in sex fully with three people at the same time. And when two of the three are sexually engaged, one of the three is left out in some way. In other words, if sex is tied to complete devotion and loyalty in a covenant relationship, it logically demands only one of each of the opposite sex.

Why shouldn't a human have sex with an animal? Especially if it brings pleasure? For example, a woman could have sex with a dog or a horse. This is not only attested in ancient documents more than two to three thousand years old (Hittite Laws, 187-188, 199; Strabo, *Geography*, 17.1.19), it is also portrayed on the internet today. First, since animals are not persons, such a relationship cannot be personal. Second, since animals are not made as the image of God, they cannot enter into covenant relationships. Important here is the text in Gen. 2:18-20 which describes the exercise of the first man in naming the animals. As he analysed the character of each he did not find any that corresponded to him (kĕnegdô). Among other things this must refer to the fact that the distinction between animals and humans lies in the capacity for covenant relationship (i.e. the divine image), since they are identical as souls. Dogs have been given an instinct that makes them seek a master. Dogs can be disciplined to be obedient and faithful, but this is not the same as covenant-keeping. Many consider their dogs their best friend. But a covenant relationship is only possible between image-bearers. So those who engage in these acts are following a path that is dehumanizing.

What about homosexuality? Is it possible for a monogamous homosexual couple to enter into a covenant since they are both image-bearers? Although both bear the image of God, it is impossible for their homosexual union to mirror the being of God. Within the being of God we see a Father and a Son, two who are not the same in authority and functional roles. This is why obedience and trust is possible within the being of God. If there are two beings who are the same, there is no a priori place for obedience or trust. It is interesting to note that in every homosexual relationship that I have observed, one of the two parties feel they must imitate the opposite sex. Within their own being they sense that a covenant relationship requires a greater and a lesser party so that obedience and trust are possible. This shows that this relationship is a lie, contravenes the reality of being human, and is dehumanizing. It is a lie because a covenant relationship that mirrors the being of God cannot be between two the same. It also shows why these relationships, at least in the Graeco-Roman world, were between older men and younger men and not between equals. Even hearts and minds far away from the Bible reach out for the truth of what it is to be human—a truth buried deep within their souls by the creator. We also see this truth in the fact that homosexuals are not content to practice their behaviour in private but in fact wish to wring from the rest of society approval for their lifestyle. This is prime evidence of a guilty conscience—their own soul cries out from within that they have pursued actions and attitudes contrary to the way we are hardwired.

In spite of an apparent concern for social justice, homosexuals are chief among those promoting social injustice, because at the heart of the community in which they live they fail to establish a covenant relationship that mirrors the being of the creator God. This, of course, assumes that they have the same partner for life—a situation that is extremely rare. The reality is that men and women are different, and that relating to the opposite sex is redemptive. That is, it brings you out of yourself. You have to give up your own interests in a way that two males or two females can never experience. And so, on another level, they fail to develop a covenant relationship, a truly human relationship.

This essay, of course, assumes the biblical teaching as axiomatic. If one begins from merely a human point of view and seeks to understand the trinity, it is like trying to solve an impossible mathematical puzzle. If, however, one begins from the biblical teaching about the trinity, only then can one explain all the phenomena in the creation / world satisfactorily. The perspective adopted here is also limited. The approach in ancient Hebrew literature is to take up a topic and develop it from a particular perspective. The author then stops and takes up the same theme again from another point of view. This pattern is holographic and is pursued

recursively at both the macro and micro levels. One begins a conversation on a topic and then closes that conversation down and begins another. Taken together, both conversations are like the left and right speakers of a stereo sound system: each differs slightly, and together they produce 3D Dolby Surround Sound or a 3D holographic image. Thus, in order to develop a full-orbed discussion on the biblical instruction concerning marriage even from the Creation Account, one has to recognise that Gen. 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-3:24 constitute left and right speakers. One has to hear them both to experience the fullness of Surround Sound, a figure of speech for full-orbed understanding. Here we have emphasised only the covenantal aspect of marriage and ignored the divine purpose of reproduction.

In conclusion, a definition of humanity and sexuality derived from Gen. 1 and 2 show that practices apart from a one-man-one-woman-covenant-of-marriage-relationship result in experiences that dehumanise and acts of social injustice: the people practising them are decreasing and diminishing the divine image.

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Note

Hos. 2:20 says "And I shall make for them [i.e. Israel] a covenant in that day with the wild animals, and with the birds of the sky, and with the 'crawlers on the ground' and bow and sword and war I shall break from the land and I shall make them to lie down in safety." Hebrew literature is repetitive and recursive. Statements in one section are to be balanced against discussion of the same topic at an earlier or later point. As Hos. 4:3 clarifies, the animals suffer because Israel has broken her covenant with God (Romans 8:20). In the New Covenant, however, Yahweh, will renew and restore the covenant relationship and the animals will thrive as a result. The "covenant with the animals," then, is the creation or new creation covenant in which blessing for the animals is *mediated* by an Adamic figure. In Isaiah 28:15 "the covenant with death" is a metaphor for the alliance with Egypt which provides no help against the Assyrian. There is no place in the Bible where covenants are made directly with animals or between them. They are not personal and only persons are capable of covenant relationships.