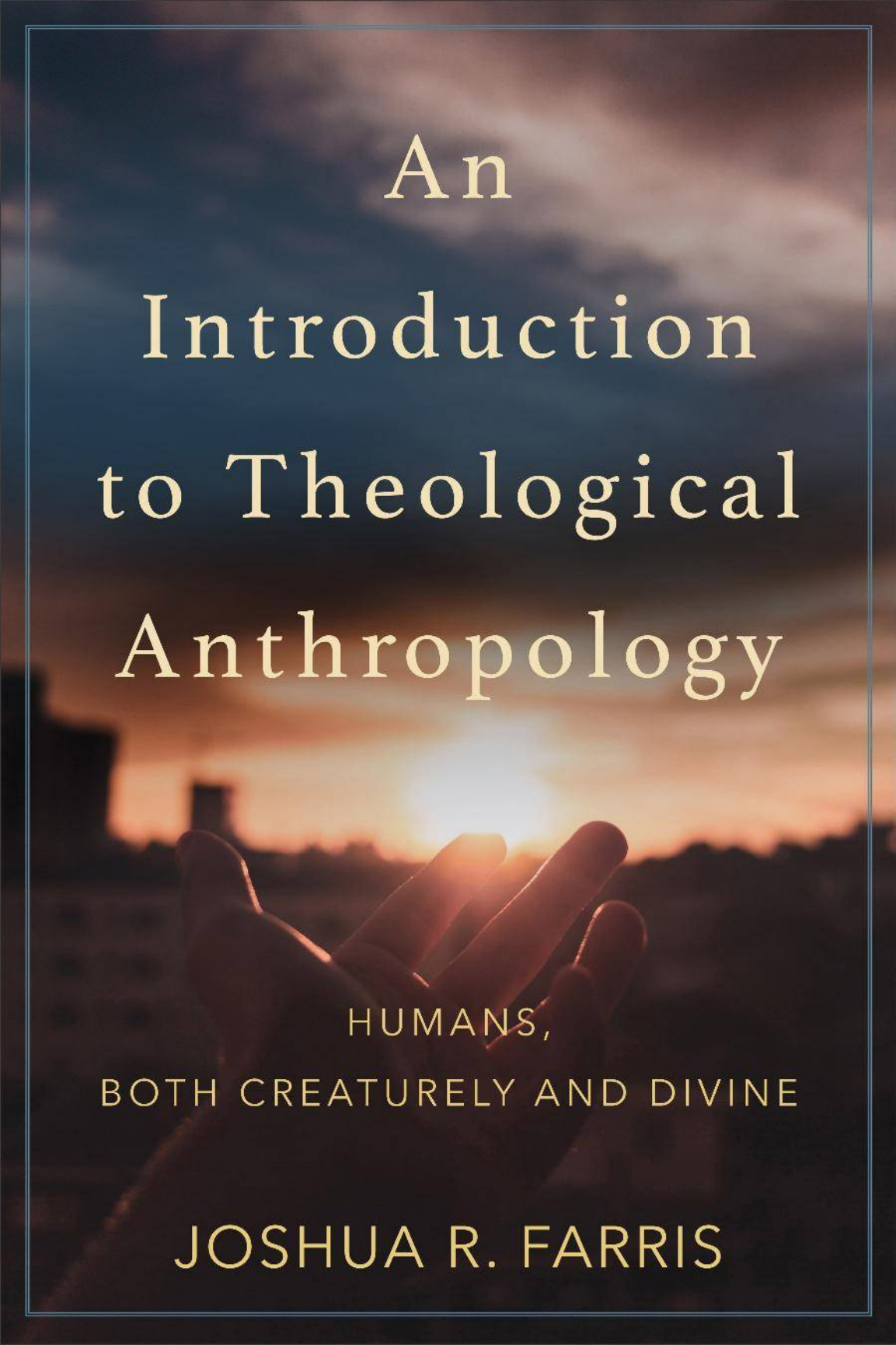
An
Introduction
to Theological
Anthropology
HUMANS,
BOTH CREATURELY AND DIVINE
JOSHUA R. FARRIS

An Introduction to Theological Anthropology

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Introduction

Where Do We Begin?

Humans, Prolegomena, and Method

For I know the plans I have for you.
Jeremiah 29:11

This is a journey. Consider the present chapter a map or a compass. It is a map in that it lays out the various directions that will follow in what is to come. It is a compass in that it provides the basic principles for theology and a way of approaching the human. I will lay out the broad parameters for thinking about theological anthropology and situate what is to follow in the broader theological categories concerning anthropology. What we have here, then, is an opportunity to gather some of the tools necessary for the journey of exploring theological anthropology.

Human Identity as Narrative Identity

In an attempt to answer the human identity question (What does it mean to be human?), I work through three interrelated subquestions: (1) What are we by nature? (2) Who are we in relation to one another? (3) Why do we exist? I take it that all three questions are central to the question of human identity. Commonly these are dealt with in isolated fashion, as if one question is more important than the others. However, if we are to obtain a full and

well-rounded theological understanding of the human, then we must discuss questions of human constitution as well as questions about who we are in relation to others and why we exist.

Analytic philosophical conversations on human nature are concerned with the constitution question of what it means to be human. By "constitution" I mean to convey that humans have parts that factor in their makeup, including essential and nonessential parts. Most contemporary explorations begin with the question of whether humans are material or immaterial or both. Often found in the province of philosophy of mind, these topics have been of renewed interest to Christian philosophers and theologians as they apply the data from the philosophy of mind to a wider set of anthropological concerns. Even biblical scholars are taking note of the human constitution question in their investigations of the biblical material on what it means to be human (see Joel B. Green, N. T. Wright, and John Cooper).[1]

Materialism is the view that humans are composed essentially of material parts and that there are no immaterial parts. Dualists, on the other hand, endorse the notion that humans are composed of both material and immaterial parts. Traditionally, some sort of dualism has been the default position of the church. Many of the divines in catholic Christianity (e.g., Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Calvin) endorse not mere dualism but substance dualism of some variety.[2] Substance dualism is the view that humans are composed of two substances (i.e., property bearers): soul (or mind) and body. On the other end of the spectrum, from materialism are those who hold that humans are not material at all but are immaterial beings through and through (this would fit under the categories of immaterialism or person-body dualism). There are a variety of positions on what it means to be an immaterial being through and through. I will offer up just one promising example: Berkeleyan idealism, a view named after the great philosopher Bishop Berkeley. An idealist of the Berkeleyan sort believes that there are souls (or minds) and bodies but that persons, and their bodies, are only immaterial in nature. Bodies are not material substances as with the materialist above; rather, they are dependent on minds, or one mind (i.e., the divine mind), and are experiential qualities. Only

1. Some may be perplexed by my inclusion of the philosophical theologian John Cooper, but I include him only because he has engaged substantially with the material in Scripture on this subject.

2. There are those from both camps who wish to claim Aquinas as support for their position. In fact, many interpret Aquinas's personal ontology as fitting within monism, but, as is often pointed out, Aquinas in fact speaks of the soul as having powers distinct from other material substances and as persisting during the intermediate state after physical death. Many theologians and philosophers see this as evidence that Aquinas was a substance dualist—or something near it.

minds and their ideas exist. There is another monistic view (i.e., ontologically, or what philosophers call the structure of being and existence, humans are one kind of thing) that is neither materialism nor immaterialism, called neutral monism.[3] Defenders of neutral monism argue that reality is neither mental nor physical, fundamentally, but something else. What that something else is remains to be seen, but what defenders can say is that at rock bottom there is not mental stuff and physical stuff but rather a discrete kind of substance or stuff that gives rise to the physical and the mental. It is a negative claim that distinguishes it from materialism and dualism, but given the fact that we have satisfying positive theories of mind and reality, we will set this view aside in the present context. There are sufficiently robust theories that are sensible enough for our consideration here. I will concern myself, however, with a closer examination of the first three—materialism, dualism, and immaterialism—when I take up the nature of human identity in chapter 1.

Narrative identity has to do with both our relations and our purpose. Our story, as humans, also has something to contribute to how we understand the nature of humanity. There are two questions (or sets of questions) that are distinct. First is the question of narrative for all humans. In this way, we are interested in questions of humanity in relation to God's creation of the world. What is our vocation on earth? How do we fit into God's plan of creation? How do we fit into God's plan of redemption? What is it that distinguishes humans from the rest of creation? Second, just as the question of human constitution has a universal answer, there is also a more particular or individual answer to the question of narrative identity. What is the narrative of individual human identity? In other words, who am I in relation to other human beings? Who am I in relation to God and the order of creation? More specific questions will certainly come up when reflecting on the narrative of individual humans—for example, What is my narrative in this life? I have a distinctive contribution to make in this life in virtue of my particular background as a male or female, as a Middle Easterner or Brazilian. I am what I am in virtue of my being a barber, a teacher, a police officer, a social worker, or some other specific vocation. These questions about our narrative are fascinating, but in the present context we are interested in the broader questions that situate and make sense of these roles in society. For example, I address particular identity questions as they pertain to God's intentions for us in creation and redemption. These questions provide the broader categories in which to synthesize one's sense of ownership

3. *Russellian monism* is another term for the view, named after the philosopher Bertrand Russell. See Stubenberg, "Neutral Monism."

of one's life. Narrative identity is incomplete without consideration of the who and the why questions.

The second question we will look at (after the constitution question) in striving to understand human identity is, Who are we in relation to others (other human beings or our environment)? The question of who I am in relation to God's creation has something to do with the way God has made me to participate in the environment. I am a human individual who finds some meaning and significance in relation to my environment and in relation to others. I am causally dependent on my parents for my coming into the world. I am causally dependent on other humans for governing society well. I am causally dependent on other humans for flourishing. I am causally dependent on other humans for understanding parts of the world that I do not have access to because of space limitations or a lack of skill.

Human purpose shapes human identity. Why in the world are we here? Why does it matter? Why did God create us, assuming there is a God? One of the assumptions of the present book is that we have a distinct purpose as God's image bearers on the earth and that this ought to shape how we perceive all the particularities of our situation and story in the modern world. The narrative of humans from Genesis to Revelation provides for us the framework for thinking about human purpose.

How Should We Approach the Study of Human Nature?

Answering the questions above requires stepping back to answer a broader question in Christian theology: What are we studying when we study Christian theology? The short answer is this: we are studying the trinitarian God of Christian monotheism.[4] God is foundational and central to the study of Christian theology. More specifically, Christian systematic theology considers the question of God in relation to his acts (e.g., creative and redemptive acts). The whole of Christian theology can be categorized accordingly.[5] Humans are products of God's highest acts in creation and redemption. It is important to note that the study of creation and redemption is a study of God and his acts because they serve as the macrocategories for thinking about the world, and more specifically humans, in one unified vision. Guided by this

4. For an introductory work on the basics of the Christian faith as codified in the Nicene creedal tradition, see Heine, *Classical Christian Doctrine*. For a more thorough treatment of the Nicene tradition as the background, context, and boundaries for theological reflection, see Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*.

5. See Webster, *Confessing God*. Also see a distinct version of theism called "theistic personalism" in Morris, *Our Idea of God*.

macrosystematic understanding, I will recommend several guiding principles for our study of the human.

I am working specifically within what might broadly be referred to as the evangelical Reformed tradition. By "evangelical" I intend to convey the idea that the Bible is the norming norm—that is, the norm that norms all other norms. The Bible is the highest authority for theological development. However, we must understand that the Bible is the church's book; hence, Scripture (divine revelation given to Christ's redemptive community) is intended to be read and appropriated in the community of faith. Following from this, there are other theological authorities involved in the appropriate placement of the building blocks that constitute Christian theology. These include creedal statements (e.g., the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), conciliar statements recognized by the universal church (e.g., the First and Second Ecumenical Councils), confessional statements (e.g., the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Westminster Confession), and the great theologians within one's tradition, reason, and experience. At this point, it might help to introduce a term that, as used here, may be new to some readers. The present book advances a theological anthropology that is also *catholic*. By "catholic" I basically mean to convey that theology is the product of the church's (i.e., the universal church's) ongoing reflections on doctrine conveyed to contemporary society yet not divorced from its historical development within this broad tradition, or Tradition. By "Reformed," in the phrase "evangelical Reformed tradition," I am roughly describing the tradition that renovated the church by steering it away from the doctrinal excesses found in the Roman Catholic Church concerning the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, justification, sanctification, ecclesiological excesses in papal teachings, and, potentially, soteriological excesses concerning Mary.

Some may call the tradition "catholic Reformed." By placing "catholic" first, one is highlighting the priority of the catholic church over all the major subtraditions (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestant Christianity).[6] One is giving not only logical priority to being catholic but also significance to one's identity as a catholic. Otherwise, one might refer to the present tradition as "Reformed catholic" so as to place an emphasis on "Reformed" as a descriptor of the catholic church.[7] The concern with using

6. For one helpful recent attempt to publicly advance a statement of unity, see "A Reforming Catholic Confession," https://reformingcatholicconfession.com. The present statement casts a broad net that is quite evangelical. The framers are operating with a view of "Reformed" or "Reforming" as nearly synonymous with Protestant.

7. In this context I am not attempting to specify the name "Reformed catholic" merely to Presbyterians or Anglicans, although some use it in that refined sense. Nor am I attempting to

this language is that the Reformed tradition is conceived of as one part of the larger church. One might prefer "Reformed Catholic" so as to highlight the church catholic while not subjugating the term *Reformed* to one description of catholic among many. The influential sixteenth-century English theologian William Perkins uses this term *Reformed Catholic* to describe the Reformed tradition in his Puritan context. He describes it in the following way: "By a Reformed Catholic, I understand anyone that holds the same necessary heads of religion with the Roman Church: yet so as he pares off and rejects all errors in doctrine (i.e., the parameters of which one theologizes), whereby the said religion is corrupted."[8]

I might add to this that a church is catholic if that church falls within a certain confessional stance and practice. Herein, the semitechnical term *rule of faith* (i.e., the standard by which we judge the interpretation of specific doctrines; carried along in the first four ecumenical councils, though some accept the first seven ecumenical conciliar statements) becomes important for describing churches as "catholic."[9] It seems to me that there are two necessary conditions for a church to be catholic. First, the church must confess the first four to seven ecumenical creeds within the Nicene tradition. By "confess" I mean to convey the idea that the creedal truths function as a guide to one's reading of the Scriptures and are the rubric for organizing theology (e.g., that God is creator of all things; we are creatures; Christ's incarnation, death, and ascension are the central events in creation and redemption; the church is unified and is the sphere of God's redemptive activity).[10] Second,

exclude Baptists from the fold of catholicity—that is, as noncatholic. There may be a sense in which Baptists could call themselves catholic, but this is an open discussion and an issue that deserves additional attention. This is relevant to the human story. For a useful contemporary exposition of an infant baptism perspective within the Reformed tradition that understands baptism in terms of external regeneration, see Sutton, *Signed, Sealed and Delivered*. For a sacramental believer's baptism perspective that assumes some version of regeneration, see Hicks and Taylor, *Down in the River to Pray*. The questions about how baptism is related to one's understanding of church and the individual not only bear on the human story but also tell us something about human nature. For example, an infant baptism perspective, of the kind advanced by Sutton, arguably presumes that humans are regenerate in terms of a status change (not in terms of internal regeneration), legally recognized as part of the covenant family at baptism, and granted a unique blessing. Human identity is necessarily (maybe essentially) covenantal and communal. There is a small but growing body of literature on baptism in relation to theological anthropology, but there is a need for additional research and reflection on this topic and the implications for other doctrinal topics.

8. Perkins, *Reformed Catholicke*, 555. Also see Warfield, *Westminster Standards*, 4.

9. For information on the first seven ecumenical councils, see "The 21 Ecumenical Councils," New Advent, http://www.newadvent.org/library/almanac_14388a.htm.

10. There are several other themes that should function as organizing concepts for how we think about humans. For example, in the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian statement, Christ's end implies human purpose.

this confessional stance has an impact on the reception and the practice of the church service (i.e., the "rule of practice").[11] In other words, the practice of the church has a sacramental order that is passed down from generation to generation. For example, the practice of the church concerning baptism understands baptism as one baptism for the forgiveness of sins (i.e., some understanding of regeneration is in order).[12]

It is in this broader context that we should understand and work out our theology. This applies to Christian theology generally and to anthropology specifically. With that in mind, in order to develop an appropriate understanding of the human, we must not just take up and read the Bible; we must also read it in light of what the church catholic has said in response to it. In this way, the readings, appropriations, and goals of the church have a role to play in the present dogmatic exercise concerning anthropology. So long as the church does not contradict a clear teaching of Scripture, we ought to understand the *anthropos* (the Greek word used for the human) not only as a product for philosophical speculation but also as a product that is ultimately understood in light of God's revelation to his church.

First, the study of the anthropos is properly directed to God as the final purpose of humanity and the proper object of worship. While this guiding principle is about God, it also communicates something important about humanity. Humans are created and redeemed by God. Humans are fully revealed by God in the Christian Scriptures. Given that the Scriptures yield the idea that humans are created by God as his unique creation and are central to his redemptive purposes, humans are intended for some kind of relationship to God.

Second, the study of the anthropos requires not mere analytic dissection of parts but rather attention to the whole macrostructure within Christian dogmatics (i.e., the doctrinal and theological essentials or central truths that constitute the one true faith passed down from the apostles and embodied in

11. Arguably, there is a catholic tradition, or Tradition, that is united on essential Christian truth following Ephesians 4:5. I have suggested that the unity of the church comes in two forms, doctrinal unity and practical unity. How we think about that unity also depends on other ecclesiological assumptions. The Roman Catholic Church has a centralized government that terminates in the Roman bishop—that is, the pope. The Reformed church often emphasizes a "confessionalism" as a form of unity. There is also a conciliar form of unity reflected in authoritative doctrinal statements as the culmination of received wisdom, which is characteristic of the Anglican Communion and, arguably, the Reformed tradition.

12. Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*, 1–17. The notion that catholicity is characterized by the "rule of faith" in the church's doctrine and practice seems to reflect the basic idea in Allen and Swain's helpful work. Allen and Swain are developing this notion from their tradition as Presbyterians, but much of what they develop applies more broadly to the Reformed tradition. For an Anglican perspective on what it means to be Reformed Catholic, see Fenwick, *Anglican Ecclesiology*, 414–28.

the life of the one universal church), reflecting the narrative of Scripture. In this way, an appropriate understanding of the human takes into account not only divine acts but also the logical relationship that the individual *imago* has to creation, to sin, to redemption, and to the eschaton.[13]

Third, the study of the anthropos requires situation in traditional sources of theological knowledge. By "traditional sources of theological knowledge" I mean to convey that there are normative sources that ought and commonly do inform our theological reflections, which include Scripture, tradition (or "Holy Tradition"), reason, and experience. In the present volume, I am interested in how the wider study of Christian dogmatics impinges on and informs our understanding of the nature of human beings in relation to God. Christian dogmatics is the study of theology in light of the conceptual topics that are central to a Christian understanding about a particular subject.[14] I like to think about the subject as theo-conceptual architecture because the dogmatician (i.e., systematic theologian) is seeking to put all the pieces together to make up one larger edifice.[15] Contemporary Christian dogmatics is similar to a jigsaw puzzle. As with a jigsaw puzzle, the pieces of systematic theology are shaped, affected, and colored by the other parts that compose the whole. In other words, the study of human nature is not reducible to the study of scriptural passages or the siphoning out of the doctrine of the *imago Dei* from the other categories. Rather, it is a study of the pieces in light of the whole. In studying a magnificent piece of art, you might focus your attention on one facet of the piece, but that aspect can be properly appreciated only in light of the whole. In photography, for example, a master photographer often focuses the lens in such a way as to highlight one feature of the whole picture. The focus may be on a bride with her bridesmaids in the background or on a rose in a field of green. By isolating, we are not severing but rather focusing. The traditional sources help us to read the biblical narrative on humans in this way.

At the center of the biblical narrative about humans is the notion of covenantal representation. In Genesis, God makes a covenant at creation. Humans are God's covenantal representatives in the world. Functionally and relationally, humans represent God to the world and the world to God. And

13. For one helpful model for approaching the task of systematic theology from an analytic perspective, see McCall, *Analytic Christian Theology*.

14. For one fine example in the Reformation tradition, see Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*. The section on the image of God in *Synopsis of a Purer Theology* provides clear parameters for a Reformed theological anthropology; Velde, *Synopsis*, 1:314–38.

15. For a discussion about theological method, see Farris and Arcadi, "Introduction to the Topical Issue." For a variety of different perspectives, see the entire special issue of *Open Theology* that this piece introduces.

God carries along the redemptive story, based on the blueprint from creation, through the covenants of the Old Testament into the New Testament. In the New Testament all of the Old Testament promises to humans are not replaced, undermined, or subverted but rather fulfilled and, arguably, transfigured in the person and work of Christ.[16]

Fourth, the study of the anthropos ought to be situated in the habits of the wider church, such as prayer, the study of and meditation on Scripture, and fasting. As the object shapes and informs our understanding of the human, so our modes of thinking and practices—reflecting those of the saints and theologians who precede us—affect the study of theological anthropology.[17] Traditionally, systematic theology was seen as a discipline that has God as the focus of study, but God is not simply a focus of intellectual study but also the focus of one's dispositions rightly ordered. The purpose, then, is not simply to organize doctrinal topics but to simultaneously perceive, experience, and see God and his actions in creation and redemption.

Fifth, the study of the anthropos should be informed by other disciplines relevant to the physical and social aspects of humans. Reflecting theologically on the physical and social sciences has shaped and continues to shape our thinking about the human and the contingent questions it raises for a vision of the human.[18] Throughout the course of this book, I draw from disciplines beyond theology as they impinge on the study of human nature.

All that said, the present method is concerned with truth—truth about the human—rather than merely facts, such as the biological data suggesting that humans have been around several million years or what the Bible says about human beings. The present method is motivated by the desire to acquire knowledge of what the Bible means and not just what it says.

16. For a helpful treatment, see Maston and Reynolds, *Anthropology and New Testament Theology*.

17. Ryan Peterson has rightly highlighted this important aspect of theology when commenting on the movement of analytic theology. While he is somewhat sympathetic to the movement and consequentially the fruit it has and will bear, he is concerned that the practitioners of the movement have drunk more deeply from analytic philosophy of religion than from traditional catholic Christian sources as well as the practices characterizing the life of the church. He develops his argument in the broad context of thinking about theology in light of the beatific vision. The whole process of theology should, according to Peterson, point us to the divine and help us gain a clearer vision of God. See R. Peterson, "Theological Predication."

18. This is reflected in a host of contemporary theological works. Several organizations are devoted to this kind of exploration (e.g., the John Templeton Foundation; BioLogos; the Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute). It is also reflected heavily in several journals (e.g., the *Journal of Theology and Science*; *Zygon*; *European Journal of Science and Theology*; *Perspectives on Science and Christian Belief*).

Necessarily, the search for truth does not settle for what one discipline says but rather seeks after coherent meaning informed by all the disciplines. Without situating all the facts about the human in a wider theological framework, the study of the human is cut short. Theological knowledge situates and gives meaning to all the facts of human existence. The study of the human, then, is a meaningful interdisciplinary exercise guided by theology and directed to theology.

Biology has a place in our theological anthropology. If we take it that humans are evolutionarily generated beings, at least with respect to their physical parts, then biology will have a role in shaping the story that we put forward concerning humans. I will touch on these issues (e.g., Adam, the origin of souls, original sin) to some degree in several chapters. Undoubtedly, some will see biology as having a more fundamental role in shaping our understanding of the human.[19]

Cognitive science or the brain sciences also inform our anthropology. Particularly, cognitive science plays an important role in raising questions about human constitution and the mind-body relation.[20] That relation is one of the key themes of this volume, and I will touch on some of the findings in the brain sciences as we consider that key facet of what it means to be human.

The social sciences, too, have a meaningful role to play when interrogating the human story. What we are in the larger human story has something to do with what we create. Despite what Jürgen Moltmann has argued, we are not solely historical products or products of a narrative waiting to be revealed.[21] Neither are we products of the social class controversies, as is often advanced by Marxists. Instead, I am assuming that we are substantial beings (i.e., substances), with essences, created by God, who has granted us capacities (at creation) that affect the social and historical processes of human history. Understanding the human has to do not only with inquiring about human ontology and reviewing the findings of biblical studies but also with accounting for the creation of culture. I will draw from the social sciences, specifically anthropological studies, where appropriate, but, once again, a detailed study is beyond the scope of the present work.

19. See Lilley and Pedersen, *Human Origins and the Image of God*.

20. A well-regarded example is Graves, *Mind, Brain and the Elusive Soul*.

21. Moltmann raises these sorts of questions by using the social sciences in several places. See Moltmann, *Man*, x. See Moltmann's monumentally important work *Theology of Hope*; also Moltmann, "Man and the Son of Man." Moltmann's anthropology is influenced by literary critical theory, socialism, and Christian Marxism. Hegelian dialectical philosophy is crucial to an understanding of Moltmann's theological anthropology. For a useful exposition of Moltmann's theological anthropology, see G. Chapman, "On Being Human."

Reformed Emphases in Anthropology

As the present volume approaches the anthropos from a catholic Christian perspective (i.e., the Nicene tradition), it also leans heavily on the Reformed divines and distinctives. These will season the discussion here. As I read and digest Reformed divines (e.g., Calvin, Turretin, Owen, Edwards, Hodge, Arminius),[22] five emphases or distinctives of theological anthropology are worth noting. Some of these are shared with the broader catholic church but have, arguably, received more attention or greater emphasis in the Reformed tradition.

The first emphasis is that the whole human narrative is characterized by divine gift giving.[23] This is in contrast to what we find in the ancient world, where the emphasis is on transaction. You give me what I deserve. If I do something for you, then the natural response is that you will repay the favor; and so it goes in a constant exchange. The New Testament advances a vision that is in stark contrast. The world is set up with a divine gift-giver giving to his creatures. God is described as the one who gives life and blesses that life, and this is characteristic of God's actions toward his covenantal children in the Old Testament.

Another distinctive that is broadly shared in the catholic church but may receive more attention in the Reformed tradition is that God and humans are described according to the distinction between Creator and creature. God is the Creator of the world and all that is in it. As such, God sets the laws. God is not a creature and thus is not subject to anything but his own nature. We, along with the rest of the created animal kingdom, are creatures, dependent on our Creator and subject to him and what he commands. Though we are free creatures, we are not permitted to do whatever we wish to do. Instead, we are created with boundaries that serve to govern and help us achieve our potential according to divine design. We are created with obligations. We have not achieved the full potential of God's design; instead, we have violated those obligations.

Original sin is also emphasized in the Reformed tradition. This is not to say that Roman and Eastern traditions do not have a place for original sin, or sin more generally. With much of the broader catholicity, the Reformed tradition sees original sin, and sin more generally, as emphatically a violation

22. Jacob Arminius is a Reformed theologian despite the fact that his soteriological commitments were not Calvinistic in the modernist sense. I take it that Reformed theology is a reference to a sociological and ecclesiological tradition that is broader than Calvinistic soteriology.

23. Divine gift giving is a feature of both Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. See Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*; Marion, *The Reason of the Gift*.

of divine law. Finally, we have some of the strongest versions of original sin carried along in the Reformed tradition, particularly following Augustine's lead on sin (i.e., original guilt). This is an emphasis certainly distinct from the East following the patristic writers (e.g., Gregory of Nazianzus) but also, to a lesser extent, distinct from the Roman Catholic tradition following Aquinas.[24]

In keeping with divine gift giving and a strong version of original sin, the Reformed tradition highlights the human response of faith to the call from God's word. The response of faith is important because, rather than a works righteousness, the Reformed tradition highlights a response to God's ultimate gift of salvation. The condition for receiving and retaining salvation is not a repayment to God or obedience to laws but rather a response of faith. By this, I am not suggesting that the Latin and Eastern traditions do not have a place for gift giving, nor that they understand salvation as including works righteousness or merit, but I am suggesting that the emphasis on a response to God's call is highlighted in the Reformed tradition, which is an emphasis common to evangelicalism. This is closely related to another theme or metaphor common to the Reformed tradition.

The sense of hearing takes logical priority in the Reformed tradition. Logically preceding a response of faith to the divine call to receive divine grace is the matter of human hearing—hearing the call of the Holy Spirit's instigation and internal work in human beings. Upon hearing, humans respond in faith. The metaphor of hearing is not in contrast to the metaphor of seeing (common to the catholic tradition, broadly speaking) but could be construed as a kind of seeing.[25]

Souls, Bodies, Seeing, and Hearing

Traditionally, the final end of humanity has been the vision of God. Thus, the study of God serves this end, as by it we seek to see God and to see our world in light of God.[26]

24. I do not want to simplify the distinct options available in the Latin tradition (or in Roman Catholicism). There are many on offer. I also must say that, in large measure, Aquinas follows Augustine, and Augustine's commitment to one version over another is not clear, but still the strongest versions of original sin (i.e., original guilt) originally found in Augustine are often adhered to in the Reformed tradition—but there are finer distinctions that I will address in chap. 4.

25. For a model of Reformed or Reformational theological reading of Scripture that highlights many of the aspects listed here, see Allen and Swain, *Reformed Catholicity*.

26. For a helpful exposition of this classical understanding of theological prolegomena, which presumes the actualization of human capacities, see Oden, *Classic Christianity*, 55, 780–85, 794–95. For Oden, in keeping with ancient understandings of theological prolegomena in relation to theological anthropology, not only is knowing God important as an intellectual

Embodied souls live and move because God gives life. Embodied souls are creaturely beings not to be confused with the divine being. However, as we will see, embodied souls have a divine purpose. But because of the stain of (original) sin that extends to every human being, all humans are incapable of achieving their divinely intended goal, let alone relative human goals, hence our creaturely reality is plain to our experience. Thankfully, God does not leave humans in this predicament; instead, he sends his Son. In sending his Son, God gives himself in an act through which he invades human life, and it is here that all humans find blessing in life in the fullest measure. Christ, no doubt with the application of the Holy Spirit, enables our hearing God, our seeing God, and our union with God.

We have capacities for seeing God in creation and redemption. Undoubtedly, we see God in creation in that his attributes are clearly perceived, as Paul declares in Romans 1. For it is in creation that we, as humans, enter into a covenantal relationship with God and that the basic parameters for relating to God and to the rest of his creation are laid out. Our redeemed souls enable us to see the world aright, according to God's perspective. In the context of discussing pain and suffering, Kelly Kapic hints at an understanding of beatific vision with the use of the metaphor of lenses. With our redemptive eyes, properly adjusted, we are able to see rightly the nature of our creaturely existence, particularly our sin-affected existence (both in body and in soul). He says, "When our responses to people are informed more by marketing images than theological reflection, we see ourselves and others through distorting lenses and mistreat each other. We give undue preference to youth and strength, and we ignore those who do not fit the culture's ideals."[27]

Important to personal and narrative identity, seeing and hearing are not only prominent themes in the biblical story line regarding humans but also prominent metaphors and themes in catholic Reformed constructions of what it means to be a human in reference to capacities and powers. Personal identity (which we will explore more deeply in chapter 1) touches on what we are as human beings. Identity is a relation that a thing has to itself. Ancillary to this question are the questions of what kind of thing we as humans are, what capacities we have, and for what purpose those capacities are designed. The metaphors of seeing and hearing correspond to specific faculties of embodied souls. Narrative identity (which we will also explore more deeply later, starting in chapter 1) builds on personal identity and is

discipline but also knowing the character and attributes of God corresponds to a sufficiently developed interior life. Oden places the beatific vision in the context of the resurrected body of the saints, but this is a debated position in the Reformed tradition.

27. Kapic, *Embodied Hope*, 49.

not, strictly speaking, identical (no pun intended) to it. Narrative identity is the second-order or contingent identity. Think of it like an added layer of clothes. Better still, you might think of it like the clothes or the masks we put on in the various roles we play in life as parents, teachers, police officers, and so on. However, our narrative identity touches us more deeply than do individual roles we play in life. It touches the heart of what matters to us most and often is integrated more deeply with our personalities, character traits, and behaviors.

Seeing is an activity that occurs as a result of a faculty that we humans have by virtue of the kind of beings we are. As a capacity (i.e., a power like thinking and volition) of the soul, vision or sight can function by way of achieving an end, or it can fail to achieve that end. Those who are unable to see and are blind (or largely so), we would say, are disabled in terms of their vision. More than that, there is a sense in which vision can be optimal or functioning to the highest degree possible. Beatific vision is like this. It is a capacity not of the eyes but of the immaterial soul. It is a capacity for perceiving and experiencing the divine goal of human beings.

Hearing is similar and might be construed as a capacity that falls under beatific vision. When we hear the divine, we do so as human beings who respond to the gospel story (hence it is logically prior in some sense to the beatific vision in the redemptive economy or it is simultaneous with it), where the divine displays life and blessing in their fullest extent.

These two aspects are part and parcel of the narrative identity that shapes and forms human beings in their respective redemptive identities and gives us some idea of what it means to be human. Soul/body considerations also fit with our narrative identity. As human beings, we are, arguably, souls that endure through time. We are also embodied beings that function normally and properly with our bodies. Our souls and bodies function as the metaphysical ground for seeing and hearing, and when they are functioning properly in union, we call this *theosis* (union with the divine, sharing in the divine life, or, as the East states it, we participate in God's energies but not his essence).

Unfortunately, contemporary Reformed theologians are often critical of the doctrine of beatific vision (with its intimate doctrinal relationship to theosis), along with the doctrine of the soul. Michael Horton, in his recent useful introduction to systematic theology, represents a common tendency in contemporary (particularly Reformed) theology to regard anything related to or associated with Platonism with contempt. He is quite critical of Platonic variations of the beatific vision, believing that they exalt humanity to a status that is never intended by God. By understanding beatific vision in this context,

Horton is concerned that they violate the Reformed impulse that the knowledge of God is dependent on God's revelation of himself to us.[28] However, it is precisely here that I think Horton would be right to point out the necessity of hearing and responding to God's revelation as undergirding our vision of God. In one important passage, Horton expresses his displeasure for some understandings of beatific vision:

> In continuity more with the East, Reformed theology identifies theosis-glorification with our sharing in Christ's bodily resurrection on the last day rather than with the ascent of mind. In other words, the focus is on our being united to Christ's historical and eschatological career rather than on returning to a supposedly primordial union with God prior to embodiment. Reformed theology is even willing to speak of glorification in terms of beatific vision, but here again it is closer to an Eastern (Irenaean) emphasis on the resurrection of the body than it is to the preoccupation of much of Western reflection on beholding and ascending into the divine essence. In fact, Reformed theology can be said to affirm the beatific vision only in a form radically revised from its pedigree in Christian Platonism.[29]

As the reader can see, Horton is quite critical of Platonism and the Western tradition concerning anthropology and the beatific vision. There is something bequeathed from Plato through Augustine and others that is important in the development of ancient and medieval theology and as well influences Reformed theology, and that is participatory realist ontology. This is the view that all of reality somehow participates in the life of God, his energies (not to be confused with his essence, according to theologians in Eastern Orthodoxy), or his accidents (as seen in the Western tradition) through divinely created ideas. And God has structured the world in such a way where humans are "microcosms" that mediate this reality to the rest of creation,

28. Horton, *Pilgrim Theology*, 30–50. See esp. his comment on p. 30.

29. Horton, *Pilgrim Theology*, 333. Horton's comments seem to miss the importance of vision in the Reformed tradition not as something separate from other eschatological categories but as distinct in an important sense. It also seems odd to me when he states that the Reformed theological tradition follows the East more than the West, when the Reformed theological tradition is largely Western. As with many of the philosophical categories relevant to anthropology and soteriology, the Reformed theological tradition is influenced by Thomas Aquinas. This is also true of the beatific vision. Many of the most recognized Reformed theologians follow Aquinas in their understanding of the beatific vision. In fact, as I will show in a later chapter, Francis Turretin follows nearly verbatim what Aquinas states. In chap. 10 I will show that Aquinas's view of anthropology and personal eschatology has influenced the Reformed theological tradition quite significantly. This is not to say that the Reformed theologians don't also follow Irenaeus, but neither does Irenaeus represent the diversity of views in the Eastern tradition. In fact, many Eastern theologians are Christian Platonists.

and they themselves have a parallel structure to that reality that makes them fitting participants in it.[30]

While it seems accurate to say that the emphasis of the Reformed tradition in personal eschatology is not on a disembodied mental ascent or the return to a primordial union with God, the Reformed tradition does give some weight to the capacities of the soul, including the mind, as primary for the beatific vision.[31] As we will see below, the Reformed tradition carries along what is often considered the "catholic" soteriology of human "transformation" in the doctrines of beatific vision and deification in addition to the Reformed distinctives of faith and justification.[32] In fact, as I show below, the Reformed theological tradition has a place for the vision where the disembodied mind has an intellectual vision of God. This emphasis, if nothing else, has some affinity to aspects of Platonism. In other words, the Reformed theological tradition on the beatific vision is more nuanced and complicated than what we find stated in the quotation from Horton above. Yet it seems important to state that the Reformed theological tradition places a premium on the immaterial nature of humanity and the intellectual nature of the vision. Thankfully, some contemporary theologians have reignited the discussion about the beatific vision as an important theological item to retrieve from the past. The importance of the beatific vision is felt when we consider the theocentric focus of it in contrast to the contemporary model that highlights the physical resurrection alone apart from the vision.[33] Having a theocentric focus is important for our anthropology because our anthropology is teleologically directed to God and made sense of in light of divine action. Contrastively, a model of physical resurrection (i.e., new creation) apart from the vision

30. There are other metaphors used that fit with this participatory realist ontology. See Balthasar, "Eschatology in Outline," 441. Balthasar sees "vision" as implying distance between our reality and God's reality shared. Balthasar's concerns with beatific vision are debatable takes on the vision as it was developed throughout the tradition. Vision, closely connected with a participatory ontology and deification, is the means by which union with God obtains. This participatory notion of humans in divine reality appears to be in line with many Reformed theologians, including Calvin. See Vorster, *The Brightest Mirror of God's Works*, 59–99; Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 164.

31. For what one important symbol of the Reformed theological tradition has to say, see the Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 32.

32. A significant article defending that both beatific vision and deification were central to the development of soteriology exemplified in several important Reformed theological divines is Mosser, "Recovering the Reformation's Ecumenical Vision of Redemption." Mosser argues, quite persuasively in my opinion, that both the beatific vision and deification are essential to the dogmatic core of catholic soteriology, which the Reformed tradition does not, arguably, give up.

33. Three resources deserve a mention: Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*; Boersma, *Seeing God*; Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death*, 109–26. Boersma is working within the Reformed tradition. Levering is not, but his work has relevance to the Reformed tradition.

has shaped contemporary evangelical discussions and is, arguably, characterized by an excessive anthropocentrism.[34] In other words, the former model is focused not solely on the most obvious immanent activity of humans but rather on the transcendent activities of the divine as that which grounds human activity and points humans beyond the earthy processes to God's life as a trinitarian being.[35]

With all introductions, there is a need for ground clearing. We have accomplished that by looking at some of the basic terms for theological anthropology, canvassing some of the basic categories, laying out some of the distinctives to the approach taken throughout the book, and, finally, touching on some of the highlights and themes that will surface as we progress. What I offer in *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology* is a way forward by looking back in order that we may look forward. As evangelicals continue to wrestle with the historical contingencies of their own time, taking a look back with present considerations in mind so that we might move forward is, I suggest, necessary. Evangelicalism as a movement or a tradition is downstream from the Reformed tradition, as I see it, and as a movement it cannot afford to neglect its heritage and the categories that have shaped it and will continue to do so.[36]

34. See, for example, Wright, *Surprised by Hope*.

35. Michael Allen helpfully connects this notion of God's invisibility and transcendence to the beatific vision in a recently published article. See M. Allen, "Visibility of the Invisible God"; also M. Allen, *Grounded in Heaven*.

36. The Reformed tradition is not the only tradition that has richly informed evangelicalism. Evangelicalism has also been informed by the pietistic tradition, the fundamentalist tradition, and variations of the social justice traditions. See Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*. He describes four distinctives of evangelicalism: conversionism, biblicism, activism, and cruciformity. Each one of these distinctives finds some footing in the richness of the Reformed theological tradition and is aided by the metaphors of "seeing" and "hearing" that shape and form a theology of the human being, as "seeing" and "hearing" are the orienting metaphors for what it means to be human and the ground for human behavior.

1

What Am I?

Creaturely and Redemptive Identity

What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?
Psalm 8:4

We can't conceive of half a soul.
René Descartes,
Discourse on Method and
Meditations on First Philosophy

Humans live and die by stories. This much we seem to know from experience. As we have seen in the introductory chapter, humans exist within a narrative structure. Humans identify with some narrative that gives them an explanation of origins, meaning, morality, and destiny. However, narrative identity requires some metaphysical or ontological commitments. Narratives themselves are not reducible to biology and not capturable in biological terms. In fact, human language, rationality, and consciousness presuppose an immaterial being—or so I will argue in the present chapter.

Scriptural Starting Point

In Psalm 8 David reflects on human nature. Set in the broader context of God's glory in the creation of the world, the psalm summarizes in poetic form the

nature of humans as the centerpiece of God's creation. David's reflection reveals something about God through his human creation. David raises the profound question, "What is mankind that you are mindful of them?" (Ps. 8:4). His answer is not intended to be a complete and satisfying answer to the question, but it stirs the imagination. David answers by defining several attributes and characteristics of the human. Most immediate, he claims that God made humans a little lower than the heavenly beings. Humans are the crowning achievement of God's glory, signified in David's statement that God "crowned them with glory and honor" (Ps. 8:5). Humans are rulers over all creation (Ps. 8:6). In all of this, humans are created with dignity and with the purpose of taking dominion over the earth.

It is true that David fails to give a direct answer to the question he poses, but his view seems to presuppose some answer to what humans are by nature. In other places of Scripture, that presupposition does seem to be of an immaterial substance. Solomon's reflection on human purpose in relation to the creation story of humans in Genesis 2, arguably, presupposes this understanding that humans are soul-body compounds. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit [*ruah*] returns to God who gave it." The notion that one's body returns to the ground and one's soul goes to be with God seems to restate what we find in Genesis 2:7. The author of Genesis 2 describes humans as composed in some way of the dust of the ground and indicates that the life that is given is given to the body to make it alive. This "breath" spoken of can be naturally read in light of the larger canon of Scripture as the soul that God creates and is uniquely highlighted in contrast to the rest of God's creation, signifying the fact that God is adding something new. Gregory of Nazianzus, in the fourth century, reflecting a common theological appropriation of Genesis 2:7, comments on this passage, "The soul is the breath of God, a substance of heaven mixed with the lowest earth."[1] In fact, according to some Old Testament scholarship, what is naturally read here as referring to the soul or spirit of the person can be legitimately translated as "soul" or "spirit." In this context, the important words used are *ruah* and *nephesh*, where *neshamah* is the divine action of breathing and *ruah* and *nephesh* are the results that highlight different aspects (in a merism), but both refer to the "soul." A parallel passage bears out this appropriate usage: "Thus says God, the Lord, who created [*bara'*] the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath [*neshamah*] to the people on it and spirit [*ruah*] to those who

1. Louth, *Genesis 1–11*, 51.

walk in it" (Isa. 42:5). The distinction made between breath as mere breath and spirit is present in this passage.[2]

A commonsense understanding of humans buttresses this understanding of humans as souls. By "commonsense" I intend to convey the idea that certain beliefs are natural to believe and become knowledge when our cognitive faculties are functioning properly, where souls (or immaterial spirits) seem to be the common belief not just in theistic traditions but also among the ancients.[3]

There is good reason to begin with common sense, and that is because we already begin there in our daily lives. When I wake up in the morning, I take it for granted that I exist and that I have several options before me: I can go for a jog first or drink coffee first. Implicit therein, I take it for granted that I am thinking and that I can deliberate and have a choice between two options. My experience suggests to me that I am free. When I begin, I do so with natural intuition and conscious experience, because there are givens in our experience that are basic to all the operations we confront in life. We begin there because it grants us knowledge of the actual world around us and because the possibilities before us are somehow rooted in what is actual. Naturally, we are inclined to believe that we are distinct from our bodies, which is buttressed by the fact that we are inclined to believe in something like a soul prior to any *tutoring*, and this has been the case throughout most of history for most people in most parts of the world.[4]

2. For a concise theological anthropology from an Old Testament perspective, see Hoffmeier and Siefert, "What Are Human Beings?" Old Testament scholar James K. Hoffmeier is convinced that Gen. 2:7 yields a distinction between the dust referencing the body and *ruah* referring to the distinct part of human beings, namely, a soul or a spirit. For Hoffmeier, the commonly assumed thesis that Old Testament conception rules out a soul or dualism is not substantiated from these and many other texts. The traditional reading of the Old Testament, particularly with *ruah* and *nepesh*, actually make some latitude for translating and interpreting them, in some cases, for the soul or spirit.

3. See Bloom, *Descartes' Baby*. Bloom argues for the naturalness, intuitiveness, and commonsense belief that we are dualist. He is certainly not the only psychologist or scientist who defends the natural belief in a soul, and there are others who defend a robust dualism of soul and body. For a treatment of Reformed or commonsense epistemology, see also Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*. My arguments for a soul, and specific versions of the soul, are not merely dependent on "intuition," but intuition and common sense are the starting points. They are further buttressed by deeper reflections on our experience of the first-person, and the soul becomes necessary for grounding some empirical data. Plantinga's epistemology begins with the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid. And while there are complicated ways of taking Reid or establishing his commonsense epistemology, there is a shared understanding among commonsense "foundationalist" (i.e., the foundations of knowledge) epistemologies that we begin in common sense and in that which is actual for developing knowledge about what is possible. See Nichols and Yaffe, "Thomas Reid."

4. While some would eschew starting with common sense and natural beliefs that we are disposed toward, there is no good reason, in principle, for not adopting this philosophical

Let's take an example that will serve to motivate this claim. When a person reflects on his or her hands or feet, the person naturally distinguishes the self from his or her hands and feet. Hands and feet are distinct objects of consciousness that are nonidentifiable with me, nor do they essentially constitute who I am. Who I am is made up of something else fundamentally and essentially. I am a mind or a soul, for I could lose my feet and hands and still I would remain the same person. In fact, I could lose several parts of my body and remain the selfsame person. Taking this in mind with the fact that there is no physical object with which I identify, I have reason to consider the possibility that I am something other than my body. And, through repeated attention given to the question, I either come to form the belief that I am distinct from my body as attested to by the feature of "frequency" that my mind is inclined to think that I am not my body or I come to develop a deeper appreciation for the intuitiveness of the belief based on the fact that I learn more through conscious attention given to the features of my body in contrast to my personhood.[5]

Other Scripture passages reflect this same understanding that we *seem* to have of ourselves. When Mary in the New Testament says, "My soul [*psychē*] doth magnify the Lord" (Luke 1:46 KJV), she is referring to the whole self (in the sense of a merism: by referring to the whole self through its parts), yet she seems to be referring to the subject of her own actions not reducible

starting point. Some object that such a starting point is philosophically naïve, but we all begin here. And there is good reason to begin here because all of knowledge, as it is rooted in experience, begins with the initial deliverances of experience. Our question is, What is it that we learn from our shared experiences? And this requires careful, clear articulation and attention to the details of the basicality of our experience. The only time that we should doubt or reject the deliverances of our basic experience is when we have an overriding reason to deny some item within our conscious experience.

5. See McNabb, *Religious Epistemology*, esp. 25–37. McNabb advances a criterion for determining the warrant of a belief using "frequency." His development of a commonsense account for arriving at beliefs about persons as minds is called "proper functionalism" Reformed epistemology, which is consistent with the deliverances of cognitive science. There are other forms of Reformed epistemology that give more credence to greater or deeper forms of justification for a belief based on attentiveness to one's own internal items of the mind through a comparison and contrast of features or properties that "seem" to be present. This is called an internalist approach to epistemology that gives greater credence to the internal contents of the mind that individuals have access to in contrast to the "proper functionalism" as reliabilism above. Frequency, as a criterion, functions then in different ways on both systems. On reliabilism it functions to show that beliefs are more likely warranted beliefs in light of the frequency criterion, and on internalism it provides additional justification and surety that certain beliefs are accessed and representations of the world. Both ways are viable approaches to arriving at the belief that I am my soul or mind and not, strictly speaking, my body. For an approachable work that uses a similar rational framework as McNabb and that spells out some of the conclusions of cognitive science, see Clark, *God and the Brain*.

to the parts therein and not captured by the whole of the parts that she has. Instead, she is referring to some subject that has desires, emotions, thoughts, inclinations, volitional states, and the like. She is neither her body nor the parts of her body. She is, arguably, something other than her body, or at least something higher than the body she inhabits.

In Psalm 42:11 the psalmist presupposes this commonsense dualism when he enters into a conversation with his soul. He raises the question, "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." The psalmist is assuming some distinction between self or soul and body. The psalmist does not reflect on or speak directly to the body or the parts of the body, as if they can respond. Rather, he communicates with his soul or self in an attempt to bring about some causal change in the emotional states he is experiencing.

The New Testament picks up on the Old Testament theme of our soul or spirit going back to God once we die somatically. Consider the example of Luke 23:46, Christ's death on the cross, where he exclaims, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit [*pneuma*]." Similarly, Stephen in Acts 7:59 says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit [*pneuma*]." Conceptually, these and other New Testament passages point us in the direction of personal persistence after somatic death. *Pneuma* and *psychē* are common parallel terms to the Old Testament words *ruah* and *nepesh*, and while these may be translated as "wind," "breath," or "life" more generally, there are, arguably, cases where they can be translated as "soul" or "spirit" and should be interpreted as such.

Beyond the reasons given above, there is a growing consensus in much of the contemporary theological literature that humans are not souls or composed of souls. In fact, there is a tendency among many recent theologians to think that the Old Testament yields a conception of the human person that is quite at odds with a belief in the soul as an immaterial substance, because, in their view, the Old Testament authors present a picture of human beings that is necessarily holistic, even monistic (i.e., individual human beings are one kind of thing). Alister McGrath represents this opinion when he states,

> Yet it is widely agreed that this is not how the writers of the Bible understood these ideas. The notion of an immaterial soul was a secular Greek concept, not a biblical notion. The Old Testament conceives of humanity "as an animated body and not as an incarnate soul." The biblical vision of humanity was that of a single entity, an inseparable psychosomatic unit with many facets or aspects. "Soul" is an Anglo-Saxon term used to translate a variety

> of biblical terms, often having the general sense of "life." Thus the Hebrew word *nephesh*, translated as "soul" in some older English Bibles, really means a "living being."[6]

McGrath is certainly not the only theologian who has made these claims. In fact, this is fairly common in much of the contemporary theological anthropology literature, and while it sounds like sophisticated biblical scholarship, it is actually a debatable thesis.[7] To suggest that there is an Old Testament consensus regarding the nature and constitution of persons is debatable.

While the thesis that holism is at odds with the view that persons have or are souls can and has been challenged primarily based on the Scripture's teaching of a temporary disembodied intermediate state found in New Testament eschatology, it can also be challenged from the perspective of the Old Testament. Challenging the "holism as monism" thesis of anthropology as the consensus of Old Testament scholarship, Richard Steiner has recently argued that there are several cases in the Old Testament that presume that humans are composed of souls or are souls that can, potentially, exist disembodied. In fact, he even challenges the view that *nepesh* and *ruah* exclusively mean "breath" or "wind." He argues that there is at least one definitive case where *nepesh* means "soul" as an immaterial substance that can exist disembodied, as found in Ezekiel 13:18, 20, and there are several other cases where it either could

6. McGrath, *The Big Question*, 137–38. McGrath quotes the Old Testament scholar H. Wheeler Robinson.

7. For a representative sampling, see Jeeves and Brown, *Neuroscience, Psychology, and Religion*; Murphy, *Bodies and Souls*; Brown, Murphy, and Malony, *Whatever Happened to the Soul?*; Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*; Murphy and Knight, *Human Identity*; Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature*; Jeeves, *The Emergence of Personhood*; Jeeves, *Rethinking Human Nature*. For theologians proper, see Vorster, *The Brightest Mirror of God's Works*, 28–32; van der Kooi and van den Brink, *Christian Dogmatics*, 267–68. Van der Kooi and van den Brink suggest that the "immortal soul" doctrine is indebted to Greek philosophical thinking rather than the holism of Scripture. Here, as in much of contemporary theology, there is a tendency to read the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, as entailing holism and not substance dualism. The authors in these works often assume holism as monism, and they assume that dualism is either explicitly or implicitly given over to Greek philosophy, but these charges neither reflect accurately on the doctrines entailed by various combined scriptural passages, nor do they give sufficient credence to the wider catholic tradition as an authority, nor do they often give credence to sophisticated philosophical arguments. John Cooper, in *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, has challenged the view that "holism" as a thesis is inconsistent with substance dualism. James Hoffmeier and Richard Averbeck have also stated to me in conversation that they are unsure how monism has become a "consensus" view within contemporary theology and why theologians suppose that there is such a consensus report in Old Testament scholarship. In fact, this sort of claim made by Murphy, among others, is similar to another claim that "monism" is the consensus view among neuroscientists.

be translated as soul or it is likely referring to a soul and not mere "breath," "life," or "wind." He further shows that this is common to the ancient Near Eastern understanding of human beings rather than its being a "Greek" idea that was imposed by early Christianity on the passages of Scripture.[8] The reason why the Ezekiel 13 passage can and must be translated and interpreted as presenting a soul or spirit follows from a common cultural ancient Near Eastern understanding that witches could cast a spell on clothes that were then able to capture the disembodied souls. This understanding that there is a distinction between the person, as soul, and the person's body is reflected in another Old Testament passage, 1 Samuel 28, where, at the request of Saul, the witch of Endor conjures the dead soul of Samuel, who is actually present and communicating with Saul.

These and other examples motivate the claim that we are not simply our bodies. We are not reducible to our bodies or captured by the bodies we inhabit and through which we experience the world. We are commonsensically distinct from our bodies. We are something else or something higher than our bodies. However, another view of the world is distinct from the biblical view of the world and understands humans in a different way.

Secular Naturalism as a Starting Point

Secular naturalism is the view that nature is a self-contained system that explains itself without any interference from the outside. Nonphysical entities are often dismissed with the wave of a hand by those defending secular naturalism. Angels and deities are considered spooky entities that are out of place in an intellectually sophisticated view of the world that is explained solely by natural processes. The physical world is explained physically, not nonphysically. Spirits, souls, minds, angels, and gods are left out of the metaphysical explanation of the world's history. Human persons, too, are explained by the physical events within the world. They are not souls, spirits, or minds that derive some explanation from beyond the physical domain but rather are situated securely within a physical explanation of causes and effects.

In my view, the evidence shows that secular naturalism is a nonstarter when it comes to human beings, especially for Christians, who affirm that beings like God and angels exist and are largely unaffected by the natural order of physical causes and effects or, at a minimum, exist prior to the natural world and are not causally determined in their natures or actions

8. Steiner, *Disembodied Souls*.

by natural causes and effects. Human beings, as well, arguably, are not the kinds of beings that can be explained solely by the history of the physical world, which the reader will see as the chapters unfold here (especially chapter 2). Both physics and biology are inadequate to explain all that we know about human beings. Particularly, when we seek to describe values, purposes, and intentions, we are left bereft of resources from the natural physical world, assuming values, purposes, and intentions are taken as real (i.e., mind-independent realities), because these aspects of reality depend on beings with consciousness and the properties that follow from consciousness (e.g., free will, moral conscience, rationality).[9] The fact of humans existing as morally dignified beings in the world, too, lacks support from secular naturalism. In fact, if we assume that human persons are real and that the ideas they have in and about the world are real, then we have at least one fundamental fact from every single human being that contributes to the history and nature of the world, and these are left unexplained in secular naturalism, where all that is found in humans is brains and blood and guts.

Secular naturalism is closely related with, even presumed in, two other common views of humanity: evolutionary humanism and secular humanism. Evolutionary humanism is the view that humans are the most complex products of biological evolution through a long history of genetic mutation and adaptation of species versus the belief in a soul created by some deity that places us in a unique relation to the rest of the world. On secular humanism, humans are metaphysically, ethically, and axiologically central to the naturalistic evolutionary story and are the most important arbiters of value, given that they are the latest and most developed products in evolution.

It is this story of secular naturalism and evolutionary and secular humanism that continues to hold the imagination of many people throughout the world today. And it departs from traditional theistic imaginations of the world in that it denies the transcendent nature of reality as found in a personal being and creator of the world, divine intervention, the role of miracles, the soul, and the afterlife. And it rejects various sources of knowledge as ways

9. Several thought experiments from philosophy help bring out this intuition. We could, for example, look at a dissected brain and see the various physical parts that go into making that brain, but even cutting up the brain into little pieces will not deliver these desires, concepts; instead, it shows us neurons. The point is that we can look at all the various parts of the brain and find that there is no garden-variety object that satisfies what it means to be me. There is no fact that adequately, and certainly not sufficiently, satisfies who I am. There is something other than the brain and its parts that I seem to be identified with. For a useful work that develops an argument against secular naturalism as a viable ontological frame for explaining consciousness, see Moreland, *Consciousness and the Existence of God*.

of arriving at truth recognized throughout much of human history, including religious experiences, the priority of first-person conscious experience, tradition, and revelation.[10] As the competing anthropological narrative to theistic, even Christian anthropology, secular humanism will come up in every chapter as an alternative way of explaining some datum central to the anthropological story, and it begins with the kinds of beings humans are by nature; hence, the question of human constitution is relevant to both a Christian anthropology and a secular anthropology.

Strict Identity and Personal Identity[11]

What is identity? Identity is that relation a thing or substance has to itself, and this is fundamental to yet distinct from one's narrative identity (i.e., the story of an individual) and one's self-concept (which includes how I see myself in relation to other people). Personal identity is more specific in that it is the relation that one has to oneself. In other words, I am identical to self. I, as a person, am no one else, and I have this unique relationship to myself that is shared with no one other than myself. The same is true for others. They, too, have this relationship to themselves in such a way that they do not share the same relationship with any other.

Having established that we, human beings, are primarily individual persons (even if we are persons of a particular biological kind), we can press on to argue for the metaphysical conditions and characteristics of personhood. Persons are characterized as beings that have consciousness, experience the world in a first-person manner, contribute something to the world by way of their own subjectivity, bear dignity, and are moral in nature. When we consider the characteristics of persons, what are those characteristics, and are they compatible with the products generated in the natural world? Further, are they explicable in terms of underlying physical causes and effects in a closed system? This order opens the door to alternative ontologies. I will briefly lay out some common personal ontologies for consideration.

10. See "Humanism and Its Aspirations: Humanist Manifesto III, a Successor to the Humanist Manifesto of 1933," American Humanist Association, https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto3/. For a fascinating contemporary exploration of secular humanism, see Harari, *Homo Deus*. Yuval Noah Harari builds his narrative for how we address the questions of the future in his secular humanistic frame, and it shows how it is that humanistic philosophy gave rise to Western individualism, pragmatism, Marxism, feminism, transhumanism, and futurism.

11. For the most important collection that includes historical and more recent readings, see Martin and Barresi, *Personal Identity*.

Reductive physicalism: the view that all of the world can be reduced to its component fundamental physical parts; that is, physics explains everything. Human persons are identified with their physical parts and are explained by those physical parts. This seems to amount to the elimination of persons as psychological beings that experience value and life as real entities.[12]

Nonreductive physicalism: the view that the world is made up of physical parts, so physics provides some explanation for the goings on in the world. However, physics does not explain all of the world in its entirety, and there are other facts that persons, particularly, contribute to the world. Human persons are nonreducible to their component parts. They are psychological beings that bear properties that are nonreducible to the physical parts, but they are composed of physical parts that give rise to these properties. The properties themselves contribute something to the body of the person.[13]

Constitution physicalism: a view that is similar to nonreductive physicalism in maintaining that "humans" are nonreducible to their component parts or the parts interacting together but further holds that humans are composed of higher-order emergent properties of the material parts interacting together. Consider, for example, a wooden desk: the desk is not the wood, but it is constituted by the wood and is more than the wood that constitutes it. Emergent psychological properties are constituted by the body but not reducible to the body.

Hylomorphism/Thomism: a view common to the medieval period and much of the Reformed tradition that holds that humans are composed of two features or ingredients: matter and form. These component parts are nonreducible to their respective parts and are somehow fitted to each other in a matter-form arrangement, which produces something distinct: a new substance. This view can be worked out as a version of monism or a version of dualism, where there are two discrete and modally distinct parts: matter and soul. Recent ways of working out hylomorphism give credence not to a classic Aristotelian and Thomist framework of matter and form but rather to a powers ontology that is nonreducible to the underlying parts.[14]

12. For a clear treatment of reductive physicalism (or some position close to it), see Kim, *Physicalism*.

13. O'Connor, *Persons and Causes*.

14. For one of the clearest expositions of the varieties of Thomism, see Brower, *Aquinas's Ontology*, esp. 273.

Substance dualism: the view that persons are identical not to the material body but to the immaterial part (e.g., the soul, the spirit, the mind) or some compound configuration of both body and soul. On most versions of substance dualism the carrier of personal identity is the soul.[15]

In what follows, I address some of the philosophical evidence corresponding to the scriptural and theological data.[16] I do this for two reasons. First, coming from the epistemic standpoint of phenomenal conservatism, I take it that we have prima facie evidence for human beings being a particular kind of thing. In such a view, there are specified conditions that make sense of our conscious experience and are necessary if we are to experience possibility and contingency in life. Furthermore, these actualities provide us with the tools for considering "possibilities" in our world and, potentially, outside of our world. And such a view cannot be easily dismissed at the wave of a hand because of science or some predetermined grid that is brought to the experiential table, for even these begin in experience.[17] Second, I take it that

15. See Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology*; Swinburne, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*.

16. A large portion of what follows on the philosophical literature on personal identity relating to theology is drawn from Farris, "The Soul-Concept." See also my distinct theological argument in Farris, "Substance Dualism."

17. For a treatment of "conceivability" or "imagination" as the starting point for thinking about the world, see Taliaferro and Evans, *The Image in Mind*, 11–37. This approach has its critics, but it is impossible not to begin here in one's philosophical reflections. Within such a philosophical method, it is not as if a mere appeal to intuition is satisfactory but that an appeal to an actual intuition where some mental item is intuited as "clear" and "coherent" given one's experience of the world. It is a place to start for determining what is actual and what is possible. Hence, it is appropriate to begin here, which I do, but there are deeper kinds of justification. There is an interesting alternative approach in modernity that takes it that our basic experiences of the human should recognize that common sense, rationalism, experience, and most of the philosophical approaches throughout history have led to despair in our personal existential point of view and that this is the starting point of all humans (see Hegel and Heidegger). Instead of beginning with our common experiences and what they tell us about humanity, the argument is that that leads to despair and that despair must be subverted through another process that comes from the outside—this is a philosophical vantage point called "idealist existentialism" for Hegel and "topology" for Heidegger. For a sophisticated treatment of philosophical humanity that begins here and points us in the direction of a theology of humanity, see Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*. On this view, not only did the ancients, like Plato and Aristotle, get it wrong, but so too did the medievals (Augustine, Aquinas), in addition to the early moderns like Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, Leibniz, and Reid. All of the latter thinkers give some role to common conscious experience as a starting point for knowledge of humans. The notion of common sense, itself, flowers when we come to Thomas Reid in the history of modern philosophy. Since his time, it has been developed and refined in complicated ways, which we will not explore here. For Lacoste, commonsense knowledge or knowledge arrived at through some other human means (e.g., through the rational a priori or through empiricism) gives us only contingent truth (i.e., the givens or "facticity") but not definitive knowledge, which is only given to human creatures in