



CHRISTIAN FORMATION

INTEGRATING THEOLOGY &
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



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EDITORS

Christian Formation: An Integrative Approach

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INTRODUCTION

Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" (1949) poses the dilemma of a traveler confronted with two paths – one frequently traveled and the other less but more "longing for wear." He pens, "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both, and be one traveler, long I stood." The only resolution Frost provides is: "I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference." Christian educators, as well as many others in the practical ministries field, face the same dilemma.

The Christian educator is caught between two roads: the theological and the theoretical. The theology road is traveled frequently by theologians and by all those professing Christian faith, while the theory road is congested with those participating in the scientific community, in this instance, those who engage in the social sciences. But must we choose? Is there not a new path, a third way, to travel through the woods?

Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development deals with the interrelationship of theology and psychology by making available an integrated framework of spiritual formation to be used in both academic and church contexts. It explores how the interpretation of development theories intersects with the theology of anthropology and sanctification. The purpose of the book is threefold: first, to survey pertinent biblical data and theological perspectives of the Christian doctrine of humanity as they relate to Christian formation; second, to explore the major theories of human development and learning from a biblical perspec-

The *social sciences* are those sciences in which humans are the subject of study. Most relevant to the Christian educator are those that address human development, the growth and maturing of humans over their lifespan, and learning theories, which are frequently tied to the development of cognition or intellect in humans.

tive; and third, to offer a comprehensive overview of Christian spiritual formation and development.

Like the authors of Scripture, we too ask the question, “What is man . . .”¹ and we respond as did the Psalmist:

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be” (Psalm 139:14-16).

Christian formation is the central tenet of Christian education. As Paul wrote to the church in Colossae, “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me” (Colossians 1:28-29). Facilitating the process of Christian formation within the believer is the ultimate aim to which Christian educators likewise commit themselves. The Christian educator must travel both roads simultaneously. The integration of theology of the church with the findings of the social sciences into a distinctively Christian perspective on human development theories as it relates to Christian formation is the task of this book.

Assumptions

Having already affirmed the purpose of the text, the reader should be aware of three fundamental assumptions that guide the direction of this book. These assumptions are somewhat self-evident as one reads the book and, on occasion, will be explained or even defended as a necessary and legitimate approach toward Christian formation. *First*, Christian formation is, in part, human. This is, by no means, diminishing the place and involvement of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer but acknowledging that humanity was created to have a relationship with God and part of that creation is the human development process. For example, spirituality is not a disembodied experience – as the many Eastern religions or New Age groups – but an embodied experience, affirming the reality of human existence.

Second, our understanding of Christian formation is informed by both theology and the social sciences – with primary voice typically going to theology. For spiritual formation to be distinctively Christian, theology is an indispensable and irreplaceable element. However, the social sciences can provide equally valuable insights into the process of Christian formation over the lifespan. For example, when one acknowledges that children, adolescents, and adults (younger through older) throughout the decades of life change, grow, mature, then explaining and facilitating Christian formation must take into account the developmental level of the individual, necessitating the inclusion of social science insights.

Third, Christian formation can be influenced by the ministry of the church and glean valuable insights from the social sciences. Christian education is a very broad and diverse ministry. For example, ministering to children not only requires a theology of childhood but also an appreciation for how children think, socialize, learn, etc. The social sciences enable us to do ministry more effectively since we better understand those to whom we are ministering.

About This Book

Comprised of nine chapters, *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* essentially has three sections. Chapters 1-2 provide insights on a Christian rationale for the integration of theology and the social sciences. They remind the Christian educator of the essential nature of humanity as the *imago dei* and theoretical framework for integrating the insights of the social sciences. Chapters 3-6 address the classical dimensions of human development. The development of intellect, personality, morality, and faith are addressed in these chapters. Each one of these identifies chief voices and theories in their respective fields as well as provides biblical-theological insights and an integration of ideas into a distinctively Christian perspective on the developmental dimension. Likewise, each one concludes with practical insights for ministry. Chapters 7-9 address development from three additional specialized dimensions: adult, spiritual, and cultural. These are more specialized and of interest to the Christian educator.

The contributors are all evangelicals and represent the rich diversity of those comprising modern-day evangelicalism. The two contributing editors of this book are Jonathan Kim, Associate Professor of Christian Education at Talbot School of Theology (LaMirada, California), and James Estep, Professor of Christian Education in the Seminary at Lincoln Christian University (Lincoln, Illinois). They were, in fact, classmates in the Ph.D. in Educational Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, Illinois), both graduating in the class of 1999.

The chapter on faith development and Christian formation was penned by Timothy Jones and Michael Wilder, both of whom serve at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Kentucky). Timothy is Associate Professor of Leadership and Church Ministry, and Michael is the Director of the Doctor of Educational Ministry Program and Assistant Professor of Leadership and Church Ministry. With offices down the hall from one another, the task of jointly penning a chapter was most amenable.

Greg Carlson serves as Chair and Professor of Christian Ministries

at Trinity International University (Deerfield, Illinois) and wrote the chapter on adult development and Christian formation. Mark Maddix, Dean of the School of Theology at Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, Idaho), provided the chapter on spiritual formation and Christian formation. He likewise was a Trinity classmate of James Estep and Jonathan Kim.

Perhaps the hidden agenda of this book is that Christian educators and other Christian leaders would no longer regard the theologies of the Church and the theories of the social sciences as independent from one another or even adversaries but as interdependent in regard to Christian formation, mutually endeavoring to understand the process and product of growth in Christ.

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ⁱ On several occasions, Scripture poses the question, “What is man . . .” Sometimes it is raised in relation to divine awe (Job 7:17, Psalm 114:3-4), expressing amazement at the attention God bestows upon them. In other contexts, it is a phrase used to introduce criticism (Job 15:14) or in Messianic-Christological contexts. (Psalm 8:4-5, Hebrews 2:6-8)



CHAPTER 1

CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY: HUMANITY AS THE *IMAGO DEI*

by

James Riley Estep, Jr.

“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?
You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet: . . .”

Psalm 8:3-6 (NIV)

What does it mean to be *human*? What is it that makes us human? In the televised documentary “Ape to Man,” the theory of evolution’s history is unveiled over the last two centuries. It chronicles the scientific “quest to find the origins of the human race.”¹ It surveys the search for the proverbial *missing link*, begging the question, “How much ape and how much man would he be?” While modern evolutionary theory no longer regards human evolution as a single line of progression over millions of years but rather a line with multiple deviations and deadends, it still continues the search for the common “root of the human family tree,” which marks the origin of humanity. *But what makes us human?* What could they look for? What is the definitive mark that makes us human? Is our humanity a matter of brain size, cranial capacity? Was it signaled by the development and use of tools, “stone technology,” or the use of fire? Did the development of language or our ability to walk upright on two legs signal the birth of humanity?² Evolution is a theory in search of the elusive quintessential question in life: What makes us human?

For the Christian, the question is not as elusive. For us, the answer is not found in evolutionary theories but in Scripture. We are human because we are made in the image of God. We are the bearers of God’s image, the *imago dei*. This is the quintessential distinction of humanity within God’s creation. It is perhaps best illustrated by the difference between humanity as portrayed in an evolutionary chart versus the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The *imago dei* is the divinitive mark of our Maker.

The Christian educator must remember that, while social science theories about learning, development, and lifespan changes describe the processes of growth in all of their dimensions, our humanity is more than the social sciences can discover; it is the *imago dei*. While the biblical teaching on humanity includes more than the *imago dei*, humanity, as God’s image-bearers, remains central to the Christian understanding of anthropology. This chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the doctrine of humanity. Rather, it is a reminder to the Christian educator that our understanding of humanity is not only based on the social sciences but more so on theology – what Scripture teaches about humanity. It will first describe the biblical sketch of humanity as the *imago dei*, identifying

passages and providing a summation of Scripture's teaching. It will then turn to the portrait provided by theology as to the meaning and nature of the *imago dei*. From this, an assessment of the human condition will be rendered, evaluating the impact of sin (Adam's and our own) on humanity. The chapter will conclude not only with integrative observations about the *imago dei* but also with developmental theories in Christian education.

Biblical Sketch of Humanity as the *Imago Dei*

We are introduced to humanity's unique and special distinction "in the beginning." Genesis 1:26-28 reads (emphasis added):

Then God said, "Let us make man in *our image [tselem]*, in *our likeness [demūth]*, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created man in *his own image [tselem]*,

in the image [tselem] of God he created him;

male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Much has been made over the choice of these two interactive terms, *image* and *likeness*. *Tselem*, most often translated *image*, signifies something cut or carved, a physical representation; whereas *demūth*, *likeness*, conveys the idea of being similar, bearing a similarity to the original.³ It is generally agreed that the first term is typically related to the physical representation of something, in this instance, its Creator; while the second is in reference to representations that are not necessarily physical in nature. However, the specific relationship of image/likeness is widely debated.⁴ For example, the Western Christian tradition has historically viewed these two terms as

synonymous or interchangeable; whereas the Eastern Christian tradition (beginning with Irenaeus c. AD 180) has viewed the terms as parallel, not merely synonymous, with each one designating a particular dimension to the image of God in humanity. Regardless, it is obvious that “the two words together tell us that man is a representation of God who is like god in certain aspects.”⁵

By using these two words, Moses indicates we are wholly God’s representation; we are His image-bearers. This would be consistent with similar phrases used in the ancient Near East. For example, in Egypt, Pharaoh was regarded as being the image-bearer of Ra (chief deity of the Egyptian pantheon), meaning he was Ra’s representative on earth^{vi} – a status typically reserved for royalty in ancient Egypt. The Old Testament openly ascribes to every human, male and female, that we are all God’s image-bearers – tasked with being His representatives in His creation. We are the Creator’s temporal representation within His Creation.

The language and sentiments of Genesis 1 are echoed throughout the Old Testament in regard to the uniqueness of humanity. The next occurrence of image/likeness language in the Old Testament is Genesis 5:1-2, which reaffirms the uniqueness of the creation of humanity and their special place in Creation. This is further expressed in Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.” We cannot treat human life as of relative importance – on the same level – as that of animals. That we are made in God’s image “explains why human life is specially protected, but animal life is not.”⁷ Human life is sacred, requiring a capital penalty for a capital offense. Ethical implications accompany the *imago dei*.

While the Psalmist did not use the phrase “image of God,” he certainly echoed it in Psalm 8’s affirmation of the uniqueness, significance, and place of humanity in Creation. While the psalm starts and concludes with the affirmation “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (vv. 1a, 9), its contents focus on the place of humanity within the Lord’s creation.

“What is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet” (Psalm 8:4-6).

Once again, Scripture affirms the uniqueness of humanity and its distinctive place in the Creation. The Psalmist continues with the theme of “everything under his feet” by listing those pieces of creation over which humans have dominion: “all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas” (8:7-8). In comparison with the opinions of ancient Mesopotamia, such as those reflected in the Babylonian creation epic, “the status of the human race in Israelite thinking was very high,” wherein humanity was created in the image of God, rather than regarded as mere servants of deities tired of work, and wherein human dignity was achieved through service, rather than innate within humanity as the *imago dei*.⁸ The Old Testament affirms the value and innate worth of every human as being God’s image-bearer.

Imago Dei in the New Testament

The *imago dei* concept and language are not limited to the Old Testament. Many of the references to humanity as God’s image-bearer in the New Testament are parallel to those made in the Old Testament. As in the Old Testament, the New Testament authors seem to use two terms that are almost synonymous. They favor *eikōn*, which is the Greek term parallel to Hebrew *tselem*, translated image, and *homoïōsin* to parallel the Hebrew *demūth*, translated likeness. For example, 1 Corinthians 11:7 describes man, specifically the male gender,⁹ as being “made in the image [*eikōn*] and glory of God.” Likewise, James warns his readers of the inconsistency of using the tongue to “praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have

been made in God's likeness [*homoioōsin*]” (3:9-10). Notice that, in this last passage, the image of God is identified as the grounds for moral implications – as did Genesis 9. Because we are God's image-bearers, our relationship with our fellow image-bearer must be consistent with our relationship with God.

However, unique to the New Testament is the Christological element ascribed to the *imago dei*. As a part of its introduction, Paul incorporates what is perhaps a familiar hymn or early creedal statement into his letter to the Colossian congregation.¹⁰ In it, he affirms of Christ, “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Colossians 1:15). Paul returns the image-bearer idea with a more soteriological focus in 3:9b-10, “since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new (*neos*) self, which is being renewed (*anakainoumen*) in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” This is clearly a reference back to the Genesis Creation narrative but with a new context. The basic thrust of the passage is that, as Christians, we are in a new (*neos*) state; we are new creations; and we are in the process (*anakainoumen*) of reimagining ourselves, according to the Creator's image. Paul uses the perfect participle, signifying a completed action with ongoing implications, i.e., we are new and continue to become new. This is consistent with what Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” In the New Testament, the image of God is not only anthropological but adds a new dimension to the concept with one's identity in Christ.

General Biblical Observations

Humanity's existence and identity are dependent on God. Scripture depicts our creation as the direct intent of the Triune God who determined, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). Our origins are dependent on God, and we would not exist without Him. Additionally, our identity as humans, and individuals, is tied to our being created in His image.

Humanity was created unique and distinctive from the rest of creation. While humanity is a part of God's creation, it cannot be considered just another part of it. Genesis 1-2 affirm that the creation of humanity was indeed different than any other part of creation. Nothing else in creation can claim to bear the distinctive mark of the Creator's image. As a part of creation, we are finite and temporal; but we are different than other parts of God's creation in that we bear His image, which in part enables us to know our imposed limitations.

Humanity was placed over creation. Humanity was the culminating act of creation and hence was given the unique purpose to "be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. (Part of the human distinction is our place within the creation.) Rule over [it]" (Genesis 1:26). While God's creation was pronounced "good" on every day of creation (1:4, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25), after the creation of humanity, the man and the woman (1:26-30), He "saw all that he had made, and it was *very good*" (1:31a, emphasis added) – as echoed by the psalmist in Psalm 8. Humanity is the culmination of God's creative work.

All humanity, whether man or woman, is equally His image-bearer. Regardless of any perceived difference of familial or social roles of men and women, both the Old and New Testament affirm that the image of God is equally present within men and women – without distinction. We all share in a common humanity – one that reflects God's image. Gender is not a part of the Fall but a part of the created order – His intentional design within humanity. The *imago dei* is not 50 percent male or 50 percent female but something the genders equally share 100 percent. It is not until after the Fall that the differences between male and female are accentuated.¹¹

The terms image and likeness are parallel, not totally synonymous; but both convey the notion that we are a representation of Him. Rather than trying to identify what particular element or dimension of human existence reflects the image of God in humanity, the language of both testaments (*tselem/demūth and eikōn/homoiōsin*) signifies a more holistic representation. The *imago dei* is a holistic image – one which takes humanity in whole. We cannot separate our physical, material existence from our mental or spiritual

life nor can we regard one as being more “real” than the other.

In spite of sin and the Fall, the image of God is still with humanity. Following the Creation and Fall narrative, the biblical authors continue to affirm humanity’s worth and dignity as those who are bearers of God’s image. Whatever was lost to sin in the Fall of Adam and Eve, the *imago dei* seems to have been left intact. Though humanity itself was broken and reflects that brokenness, God’s image is still with us. Ronald Habermas identifies three “practical dimensions” of the *imago dei*: (1) It facilitates a “transformed attitude” toward others; (2) it requires “transformed behaviors” as to how we treat others; and (3) it engenders a “greater appreciation for diversity” among all of humanity.¹²

The imago dei is the basis for human dignity with accompanying ethical implications. Humans are to be afforded special consideration, ranging from proper affirmation in how we address one another, as noted in James, to capital punishment for the murder of another human being, one made in God’s image, as first indicated in Genesis 9. Humans are not to be treated as animals – as if they were simply another part of God’s creation. Humanity demands a base-line level of mutual respect and ethical treatment – regardless of social class, status, or stature – simply because we are God’s image-bearers.

The imago dei in the New Testament is not only anthropological but Christological and soteriological. The Scriptures affirm the core essence of humanity is the *imago dei*. It is the centerpiece of a biblical anthropology. However, the imagery also is applied to the person of Christ Jesus and to those who follow Him as new creations, those who continue to pattern themselves after the image of their Creator – as depicted in Colossians.

From these biblical passages and themes, we now will turn to a more theological treatment of the subject. If the biblical passages provide the basic sketch of Christian anthropology, theology will provide us with a more complete portrait so as to gain a more thorough understanding of humanness from a Christian perspective.

Theological Portrait of Humanity as the Imago Dei

Scripture clearly affirms we are God's image-bearers, but what exactly is the *imago dei*? Theologians have made an effort to identify the *imago dei* in a variety of ways. Is it a part of what we are as humans, what we do, or something else?

Four general views have tried to capture the idea of the *imago dei*. The most frequently articulated view is the *substantive*. It maintains that the *imago dei* can be defined by one or more of its component parts such as the physical, psychological, ethical, or spiritual characteristics within humans. This is perhaps the most common means utilized for identifying the *imago dei* within humanity. For example, the Hebrew term *tselem* ("image") in Genesis 1:26-27 generally denotes a physical representation—as would the phrase "the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground . . ." in Genesis 2:7. Similarly, the rational or intellectual uniqueness of humanity is seen in Adam's ability to name the animals (Genesis 2:19-20) and the woman Eve. (Genesis 2:22-24) Or the ethical-moral capacity of humanity—as demonstrated by the receiving of moral command (Genesis 2:7), expression of moral rectitude (Genesis 2:25), or demonstration of guilt after their transgression. (Genesis 3:7) These characteristics do indeed make humanity distinct from the rest of God's creation. However, of all these characteristics, perhaps the one most readily identifiable and distinguishable as being distinctively human would be our *spiritual capacity*. Our spirituality does indeed influence and interact with all of the other characteristics already identified. The substantive view seizes on one or all of these factors as defining the *imago dei*. Humanity would be reflective of God's image in that we are a representation of Him in a temporal form—physical and otherwise.

Others have suggested a more *functional view*, identifying the *imago dei* as the God-ordained purpose and work specified to humans, e.g., "let them rule over . . . Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over . . ." (Genesis 1:26-28). This view emphasizes the idea of God installing an innate purposefulness to humanity. "The God of the Bible is a working God. Though he completed his work of creation and

rested, he is still working today in providence and governance (John 5:17, 9:3-4). The creativity, energy, and authority we exert in working reflect something of God's character in us."¹³ The functional view sees our rule and oversight of God's creation as a reflection of the divine aspect of God as Ruler.

The *relational view* asserts that the *imago dei* is seen in humanity's social or relational capacity. The *imago dei* means the relational capacity between humans, e.g., male and female as a collective reflection of God's image. Adam and Eve were created together in His image (Genesis 1:26-28), they are conversant with one another. (Genesis 2:18, 23; 3:6-8; 4:1). Ultimately, it is expressed throughout the pages of Scripture in our relationship with God. In this view, we reflect His image by being in relationship with one another and Him.

Still others present a *teleological view* of the *imago dei*, suggesting it is reflective of the ultimate objective of human existence. We are indeed God's image-bearers today, but this will not be fully realized until eternity. Hence, the *imago dei* is both a current reality and an eschatological, future reality. This view may best be understood as a post-Fall idea of the *imago dei* since death, redemption, and eternity would pertain only to those who, in fact, were facing the deadly results of sin, need of redemption, and eternal destination – one who embraces the soteriological and Christological dimensions of the New Testament.

However, all of these separate approaches share a common fault – as assessed by Gregg R. Allison of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary:

The problem is that all of these ideas tend to reduce the image of God to one particular part or aspect of our humanness; thus, they miss a key point: we human beings are not made in a piecemeal way and put together, like the many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Rather, in our humanness, we are constructed holistically with a wholeness and completeness that does not allow us to be divided into this part or that part. We are human beings in our entirety . . . are created in the image of God.¹⁴

Perhaps it is in this criticism that an answer is revealed. The *imago dei* is not defined by its components, functionality, relational capabilities, or its teleological dimension. Perhaps all of these views are, in fact, pieces of the whole portrait of God’s image in humanity with our spiritual capacity serving as the common denominator of them all. Could the *imago dei*, in effect all of the above, reflect humanity’s special inclusion into Creation? We are God’s image-bearer because, in our very essence, we were and are simply made distinctive from the rest of creation – what Stanley Grenz calls our “special standing” within creation.¹⁵ It is an innate quality, which only human beings possess. God’s image within humanity is what we are and, in turn, is reflected in the components of our existence, relational capacity with one another and God, in our function to fulfill God’s expressed purpose for humanity, and even in the eschatological reality that awaits us. (Figure 1.1)

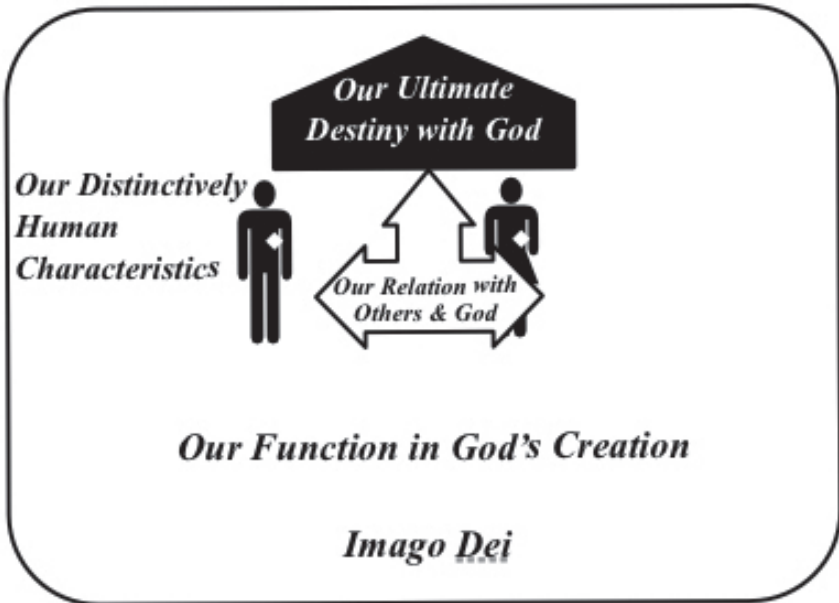


Figure 1.1: *Imago Dei* as Humanity’s Special Standing

Because we possess a distinctive character, we are able to relate to one another and God, as well as fulfill the purpose for which God created us, and ultimately share an eternity with Him. If one element of human existence had to be identified as the *imago dei*, perhaps the spiritual capacity of humanity, which directly influences all of the other dimensions of our existence, is indeed unique and innate to all people. Just as a mirror reflects our physical image, we serve as a mirror reflecting God’s image, not merely in a physical sense but in our innate capabilities and capacities as humans, our sense of purposeful design, interrelatedness to one another, and the desire for ultimate spiritual wholeness. God’s image in us is seen in who we are as humans, our connectedness to each other as humans, what we are designed to do, and what we are destined to ultimately become. We are all bearers of God’s image – stamped by our Creator as made *imago dei*.

Humanity as the Imago Dei: Created, Broken, and Redeemed

What happened? Watching cable news, listening to the radio, reading a newspaper, or even sharing over the fence with our neighbors is enough evidence to realize that humanity is *not* what it was created to be. The idyllic portrait of humanity as created in sinless perfection in God’s image . . . where is it today? The biblical portrait of man is drawn, in fact, on three canvases. (Figure 1.2)

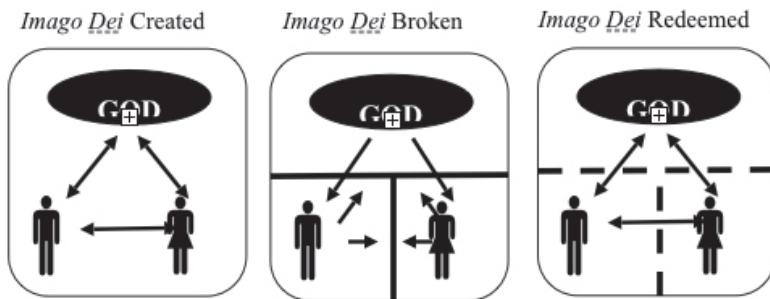


Figure 1.2: *Imago Dei* -- Creation, Broken, Redemption

Figure 1.2: *Imago Dei* -- Creation, Broken, Redemption

The first canvas is our *created* state. Adam and Eve were created in God's image; and in the absence of sin, their reflection of our Creator is uneffected – readily evident within humanity. They possess an intellect that is clear and unclouded. They are morally innocent, possessing an original righteousness (Genesis 1:31, Ecclesiastes 7:29), lacking even the knowledge of good or evil. (Genesis 2:9, 17; 3:5, 22) Man and woman exist in harmony – different from one another – but equals before God as His image-bearers. They have a clear sense of God-given purpose and direction. In short, the *imago dei* is fully reflecting God who created us.

Sin is an unfortunate and inescapable reality. Genesis 3 describes the instance of sin's entry into Creation, including humanity. After this point, humanity is not what God intended it to be. Several observations can be made about sin's impact on us from Genesis 3:

- *Sin was not God's invention or intention* – as evident in His conversation with Adam and Eve (3:9-13) and condemnation of Satan. (3:14-15)
- *We knew better.* Eve knew what Satan was asking of her was wrong (3:2); and she, with Adam, hid from God after partaking of the fruit. (3:8)
- Despite the deceptive enticement, *we are responsible for our sin* – as not only seen in the dialog with Adam and Eve (3:9-13) but the pronouncement to both Eve (3:16) and Adam. (3:17-19)
- *Sin's effects were devastating.* We were physically (3:7, 10-11, 16), intellectually (3:6, 13), emotionally (3:10), and morally (3:7, 12-13) compromised. Our relationship with one another (3:12, 16, 20) and God was broken. (3:8-9, 11, 13) Humanity's God-given rule of the earth was made significantly difficult in the presence of sin (3:17-19), and we became moral –
subject to death just as God had warned. (3:22-24)

It seems every possible dimension or aspect of humanity was not spared the impact of sin's entrance into creation. Romans 1:18-23, 3:9-18, and 5:1-21 describe the effects of sin – not only upon the individual but all of Creation. However, in spite of all this, humanity still possesses the *imago dei*. Even after the advent of sin into creation, Scripture still presents humanity as God's image-bearers. Genesis 5:12, Genesis 9:6, 1 Corinthians 11:7, and James 3:9-10 all attest to the presence of the *imago dei* in humanity – even after the Fall. However, much like a broken mirror can still reflect an image, humanity still possesses the *imago dei* but as a poor reflection of the One whose image we bear. Whatever sin's effect on humanity, it did not discount our special standing or remove God's image from us. For example, Mark Mangano, Professor of Old Testament at Lincoln Christian University, maintains that because of the presence of the *imago dei*, "Old Testament legislation" does indeed reflect a "high regard of personhood" – even in matters of male-female, slave-free, parent-child, and Israelite-Gentile relations.¹⁶ The theological debate is not over the total loss of the *imago dei* but the *degree to which* Adam and Eve's sin affects humanity and the individual even today.

Genesis 3 does not leave us without hope. Genesis 3:15 is regarded as a Gospel prototype, giving the promise of a Redeemer and redemption from Satan's deceptions and sin's devastation. "And I [God] will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he [the woman's offspring] will crush your [serpent's] head, and you will strike his [offspring's] heel." Humanity is not destined to exist hopelessly in its fallen state. God has provided the opportunity for redemption through Jesus Christ who "is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15a). In this regard, Jesus represents the perfect prototype and the archetype of humanity. What was marred in the Fall of humanity is now reclaimed by Christ who came as "the image of the invisible God" to restore us to our Creator in whose image we were created.

As previously noted, the New Testament adds new dimensions to the anthropological portrait of humanity made in the image of God. Christ in Colossians 1:15 is said to be "the image of the invisible God."¹⁷ Perhaps this was the idea behind the author of Hebrews when he wrote, "The Son

is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. . . ." (1:3a). George Carey contends that Jesus is the "paradigm man . . . the revelation of what man should be."¹⁸ However, the *imago dei* imagery also is employed to describe the process of salvation, particularly sanctification, in the life of the new believer. Whatever was lost in the Fall of humanity, in whatever way the *imago dei* was tarnished by sin, it is redeemable in Christ Jesus. Once again, returning to Colossians 3, following a list depicting the old life in sin, Paul writes to the Colossian Christians, "you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:9b-10). The verbs "have taken off" (*apekdusamenoî*) and "have put on" (*endusamenoî*) are both aorist tense, signifying completed actions. Yet the verb "being renewed" (*anakainoumenon*) is, in fact, a perfect participle, connecting the two points of the past and present status of humanity.¹⁹ We are continually being renewed because we already have removed the old and accepted the new.

This parallels other sentiments expressed by Paul such as "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). Salvation is, in part, a process of restoring the *imago dei* in its fullest expression of God's reflection. This process is expressed throughout the New Testament. (cf. Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 2:5-11) This restoration is not a return to the garden – a return to Adam, Eve, and Eden; rather, it is "a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:16-17). Paul expresses this transformation

toward redemption in Ephesians 2:1-10, paralleling our fallen state with our redeemed one. (Figure 1.3)

Ephesians 2:1-3	Ephesians 2:4-7
“you were dead” (2:1a)	God “made us alive with Christ” (2:5a)
“transgressions and sins” (2:1b)	“by grace you have been saved” (2:5b)
“followed the ways of the world . . .” (2:2)	“raised us up with Christ” (2:6a)
“sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts” (2:3a)	“seated us with him in the heavenly realms” (2:6b)
“by nature objects of wrath” (2:3b)	“shows the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (2:7)

Figure 1.3: Humanity in Sin and in Christ

Because of this restoration, we are found “in Christ,” which essentially changes our nature and spiritual status. Because we are now in Christ, believers view humanity beyond the dimensions that typically separate us, e.g., ethnicity, culture, social, or gender divisions. (Colossians 3:11, Galatians 3:23) Ultimately, this new creation and new community will be realized only from an eschatological perspective.²⁰

The Human Condition: Just How Broken Are We?

Adam sinned, Eve sinned, and we have all sinned . . . but how broken is humanity due to sin? The degree of sin’s contamination is not just a theological matter but one that has enamored philosophers as well. English philosopher and scholar John Locke (1632-1704) spoke of humanity as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, innocent, morally neutral. Borrowing his metaphor of a slateboard, the human condition has been conceived in three ways (Figure 1.4):



Figure 1.4: The Human Conditions

Locke's *tabula rasa* is in the center – represented by a blank slate and by two other “slates” flanking it. On the left would be those who maintain that humanity is not only born innocent but actually born with a predisposition toward moral goodness such as described by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) in *Emile*. To the right of Locke are those who believe sin's impact is inescapable, leaving an innate mark on all humanity, making us to some extent born depraved.

However, in light of this, just how broke are we? This is a matter for centuries-long theological debate. For Augustine vs. Pelagius (5th Century AD), Calvin vs. Arminius (16th Century AD), and even today, the question remains of how much Adam's sin has impacted the human condition. Pelagius would maintain that Adam's sin had little direct affect upon humanity, that we are born innocent or unmarred by sin. In so doing, we denied such ideas as original sin and the necessity of grace and predestination; and we affirmed the totality of human freedom. Opposing this idea, Augustine, and later John Calvin, would advocate the opposite – that humanity is totally depraved, inescapably marred by Adam's sin, guilty from birth, partakers of a fallen humanity, and in absolute need of the unconditional election of God. James Arminius held a moderating view. Often called semi-Pelagianism, Arminius maintained that Adam's sin, in fact, did impact humanity and that, from birth, humans are partakers of a fallen humanity but not guilty of Adam's sin. The original sin of Adam does impact us, biasing us toward evil, but not in itself condemning us.

Appropriation of Original Sin?

How would Adam's sin still impact humanity today? How does his sin become imputed to us? And to what effect? Perhaps the main passage in this regard is Romans 5:12-21, but it is still open to the question of the actual mechanism by which Adam's sin is appropriated by the human race.

One response is to view Adam's sin as an *example* of our own sin, maintaining that Romans 5:12 refers to the sins which each individual commits, which are reflective of Adam's original sin. We *like him* have all

sinned, and we like him are guilty.

A more commonly held view is that of *solidarity*. This view maintains that humanity is somehow connected to the sin of Adam – either through a biological or genetic connection between Adam and humanity (seminalism) or because Adam is regarded as the representative head of the human race (federalism).

In either of these two solidarity variants, humanity appropriates Adam's sin, and his sin becomes our sin. In any case, whether by example or solidarity, humanity cannot escape the effects of original sin. As humans, we are indeed unable to escape the ramifications of Adam's act of rebellion against his Creator.

Once again borrowing from Locke's tablet illustration, perhaps the depiction of the human condition could be made of a clean, but broken, tablet. Humanity, in one sense, is born in innocence; the slate is clean. Yet the slate itself is broken, having been tainted by original sin that permeates all of humanity. We are born broken but still blank. We bear the marks of humanity's brokenness, but we are innocent of our sinfulness. As humans, we are not directly guilty of the original sin; but we are indeed directly impacted by it. As individuals, we are a *tabula rasa*; but as humans, the slate itself is broken.

The Human Constitution

Of what are we composed? What constitutes a human being? This simple question evokes some theological debate within Christian circles and also distinguishes the Christian faith from other world religions and even Christian cults. For example, Christian theologians recognize we are more than physical, more than flesh; but what else is there to us? Dichotomists believe we are body and soul, meaning we are twofold beings, regarding the soul and spirit mentioned in Scripture to be merely synonymous terms – even used interchangeably. On the other hand, trichotomists affirm the threefold constitution of humans as body, soul, and spirit, regarding the

soul and spirit to be distinguishable from one another. Additionally, while Christian theology affirms the physical, bodily reality of humanity – that flesh is a real, tangible part of our existence, this fact would be denied by many eastern religions such as Hinduism, which denies the reality of physical existence, regarding it to be an illusion. Similarly, the Christian Science cult rejects the reality of bodily or physical existence, regarding the affirmation of it to be a sin. So of what are we made?

Both dichotomists and trichotomists affirm the reality of physical existence, i.e., humans have bodies. The debate is over the nature of humanity's *nonmaterial components*. This debate itself is, in part, a matter of scant passages, semantics, and very dependent on scriptural inference since we are asking a question that the Bible itself does not claim to be directly answering. Paul wrote, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole *spirit* (*pneuma*), *soul* (*psychē*) and *body* (*sōma*) be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23, emphasis added). In this passage, Paul would seem to affirm a three-fold constitution – body-soul-spirit. Similarly, the author of Hebrews, who may well have been Paul, contended, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing *soul* (*psychē*) and *spirit* (*pneuma*), joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12, emphasis added). The distinction between the dichotomists and trichotomists is the distinction between the soul and spirit. Dichotomists believe there is no distinction – that, in effect, the terms are interchangeable; whereas trichotomists affirm the distinction of soul and spirit.

It is difficult to conceive of Paul simply being redundant in his use of terminology, and the author of Hebrews simply speaking of dissecting something that does not require separation (if, in fact, the soul and spirit are synonymous). Perhaps it is in the notion of viewing humans as twofold vs. threefold in their existence. In some respects, we are a dichotomy, material and immaterial; but the question remains, is the immaterial divided? Scripture would seem to indicate that our immaterial component is indeed divided into soul and spirit. The soul is the dominant element; and hence, in some respect, we are body and soul – as Jesus once said, “Rather, be afraid

of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28b). However, the spirit is not a wholly separate component but one within the soul, which would explain the seemingly interchangeable terminology in the Scriptures – as illustrated in Figure 1.5.

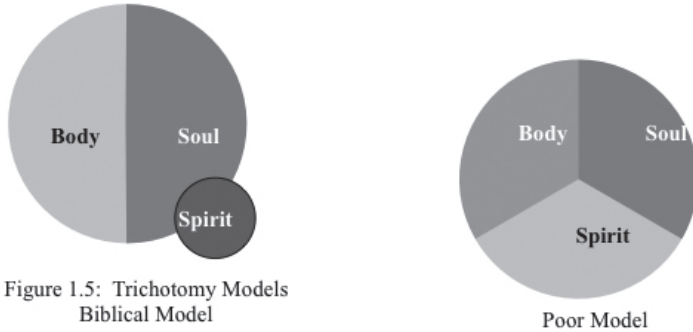


Figure 1.5: Trichotomy Models

Representing the human constitution as having three distinctive pieces, as shown on the right, is a Poor Model since we would be physical (body), nonphysical (soul), and . . . what? The model on the right affirms we are physical and nonphysical but that the nonphysical is partitioned into soul and spirit. This seems more consistent with the biblical witness. Robert L. Saucy notes the idea of soul is “broader than that of spirit” since its use typically refers to “the total person,” explaining “the spirit is thus a metaphysical entity, namely, the principle of life which empowers, while the soul is the individual subject or bearer of that life.”²¹ Hence, the language and idea of the soul and spirit are compatible and complementary but not simply synonymous. The human constitution is one of body and soul-spirit.

The *Imago Dei*, Human Development, and Christian Formation

What makes us human? The biblical portrait of humanity, and

especially the *imago dei*, reminds us the root of our humanity is found in our Creator in whose image we were created. We are human because we are God's image-bearers. Christian anthropology provides a theological context in which the social sciences (especially those most relevant to Christian educators such as learning theories and human development) can be effectively utilized in the service of ministry. In this section, we will itemize some of the insights provided by theology for the use of the social sciences by Christian educators so as to demonstrate that theology can provide the essential grounds for constructively using developmental and learning theories in Christian education.

First, we cannot substitute the *imago dei* with any number of developmental theories. As humans, we develop throughout our lifespan and in various areas of measurable progress such as cognitive, social, moral, or personality – as reflected by numerous theories. Yet innate to our humanity is that we are God's image-bearers. We do not *develop* into the *imago dei*; we *are* the *imago dei*. However, developmental theories do provide a lens through which to see growth of many distinctly human dimensions within individuals – from infancy to elderly. For example, a better understanding of how humans develop cognitively would provide insight for a children's minister to express theological truths to young minds or help struggling adolescents find their identities in light of personality development theories while always affirming their innate value to God as His image-bearers.

Second, Christian anthropology affirms that humanity's constitution is both physical and nonphysical, not one *or* the other. Humans cannot be reduced to either physical or nonphysical; we are inseparably both. Though distinguishably different, we cannot be separated in our thinking.²² Monism, affirming the existence of *either* the physical *or* the nonphysical, and dualism, arguing for the absolute independence of the physical *and* nonphysical, are simply insufficient. Hence, Christian theology views humanity holistically as material and immaterial, body and soul-spirit, not one or the other. Developmental theories likewise explain human development as a part of our physical makeup and yet moving beyond the physical. For example, Piaget advanced structuralism, wherein cognitive development was attributed to the actual development of the brain's net of neurons; but

Vygotsky understood cognition or intellectual development to move beyond the mere physical “wiring” of the brain.

Third, males and females share in a common humanity, both having been made in God’s image; yet they are distinctly different from one another. Developmental theories reflect this common-core humanity but affirm distinctive, yet parallel, developmental processes. For example, the development of moral reasoning has been studied by Lawrence Kohlberg in male subjects and in females by Carol Gilligan. While their results are similar – with males and females equally capable of all levels of moral reasoning, the developmental process itself is different, resulting in an ethic of justice in men and one of care in women. However, realizing the common element between justice and care, both place the needs of another individual first – before self interest, showing a common moral center with two equally valid expressions.²³

Fourth, Christian anthropology understand the limitations of developmental theories in regard to our Christian formation. While developmental theories can aid in understanding the human aspect of spiritual formation, they cannot address the Divine aspect of it. For example, developmental theories are very helpful when used to explain the difference between an individual’s understanding of God at ages five, ten and fifteen – in part due to differences in their achieved stages of cognitive development. However, developmental theories cannot explain the work of the Spirit in the life of a believer. (e.g., Romans 8) The innate developmental processes within humanity cannot overcome sin’s effect. Salvation is not a mere matter of cognition or moral reasoning since Adam’s problem was not simply one of ignorance.²⁴ No Gnostic approach to Christian formation would be acceptable when compared to the biblical teaching on human nature.

Fifth, Christian anthropology understands the *imago dei* to be both innate to the individual. Hence, we do not develop into the image of God; we are the image of God. The developmental processes are innate to our humanity, part of the Creator’s design within the human genome. Therefore, it is no surprise to learn that many developmental theories parallel

those dimensions of humanity that are associated with the *imago dei*. (Figure 1.6)

<i>Imago Dei</i> as . . .	Scriptures	Developmental Theories
Physical	Luke 2:52; terms in Matthew and Luke's birth narrative of Jesus	Most commonly identified developmental feature of humanity
Intellectual	Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 8:4-9	Cognitive Development, e.g., <u>Piaget</u> and <u>Vygotsky</u>
Moral	Gen. 1:31; 2:17, 25; 3:7; <u>Eccl. 7:29</u>	Moral Development, e.g., <u>Piaget</u> , <u>Kohlberg</u> , <u>Gilligan</u>
Social/Personality	Gen. 2:18, 23; 3:8; 4:1	Psychological Development, e.g., <u>Erikson</u> , <u>Marcia</u> , and <u>Kegan</u>
Purposeful	Gen. 1:26, 28	Psychological Development, e.g., <u>Erikson</u> , or Lifespan Development, e.g., <u>Levinson</u>
Spiritual	Gen. 3:8-10	Spiritual Formation or Faith Development, e.g., <u>Fowler</u>

Figure 1.6: The *Imago Dei* and Developmental Theories

The centerpiece of Christian anthropology is humanity as the *imago dei*, God's image-bearers. Developmental theories recognize the uniqueness of humanity, which Christians attribute to being God's image-bearers. For the Christian educator, the better understanding of human development can provide keen insights into the process of Christian formation. When placed alongside the insights from theology, they provide a more accurate picture of humanity. We can say with the psalmist, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalm 139:14).

Reflection Questions

- How would you define the *imago dei* in your own words?

- How did the chapter challenge your thinking about theology and education? More specifically, how does your belief in the *imago dei* shape your approach to education?
- While we have used the *imago dei* in an educational context, what might its implications be for social ministry, outreach/evangelism, or missions work?
- How might you communicate this biblical principle to those who teach in your congregation?

ENDNOTES

- 1 “Ape to Man,” History Channel documentary (Arts & Entertainment Television Network, 2005). www.historychannel.com
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 Cf. Francis Brown, S. K. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 198, 854; *PC Study Bible V5 Beta* (2008) edition.
- 4 Cf. Gordon J. Wendham, *Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary*, Volume 1 (Waco, Texas: Word Books), pp. 29-33; Edward M. Curtis, “Image of God (OT),” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume 3, p. 389.
- 5 Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 13. See Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 58-59 for a discussion on the physicality of the image of God.
- 6 Curtis, pp. 390-391; Von Rad, p. 58.
- 7 Wenham, p. 194.
- 8 *IVP Bible Background OT*, Psalm 8:4-6 in *PC Study Bible V5 Beta* (2005).
- 9 Some commentators regard this statement to be a reflection of the Corinthians’ attitude or position, a Corinthian slogan, or a reflection of Jewish rabbinical tradition but not necessarily the opinion of the apostle Paul, especially in light of 11:11-15, which is described by Paul as being the more Christlike approach to gender relations in the church. See Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), pp. 491-512 and David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians: Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2003), pp. 505-523 in regard to the exegetical difficulties of this passage.
- 10 Cf. Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 194-195; Curtis Vaughan, “Colossians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians-Philemon, Volume 11* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), p. 181.
- 11 Cf. Allan F. Johnson and Robert E. Webber, *What Christians Believe: A Biblical and Historical Summary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1989), pp. 191-192.
- 12 Ronald T. Habermas (1993), “Practical Dimensions of the Imago Dei,” *Christian Education Journal*, 13 (2): 90-91.
- 13 John S. Hammett, “Human Nature,” *A Theology for the Church*. Daniel L. Akin ed. (Nashville: Broadman-Holman, 2007), p. 362.

14 Gregg R. Allison, "Humanity, Sin, and Christian Education," *A Theology for Christian Education*, Eds. James Riley Estep, Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison (Nashville: Broadman-Holman, 2008), p. 180.

15 Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), pp. 171, 177-180.

16 Mark J. Mangano, *The Image of God* (New York: University Press of America, 2008), pp. 44-47.

17 Cf. Kurt Anders Richardson, "Imago Dei: Anthropological and Christological Modes of Divine Self-Imaging," *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*, 4.2 (2004), pp. 1-11; <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/journals>

18 George Carey, *I Believe in Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 63, 67.

19 Hoekema, p. 25.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 30; Grenz, p. 180.

21 Robert L. Saucy, "Theology of Human Nature," *Christian Perspectives on Being Human*, edited by J. P. Moreland and David M. Ciochi (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 33. Saucy likewise would affirm that the idea of the soul is so all encompassing that it also may include the body, making soul the life which is comprised of body and spirit within the context of the soul. Hence, soul refers to the whole person, not simply a part.

22 Cf. J. P. Moreland, "A Defense of a Substance Dualist View of the Soul," *Christian Perspectives on Being Human*, J. P. Moreland and David M. Ciochi eds. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), pp. 55-79.

23 Cf. James Riley Estep, "Education and Moral Development," *Christian Ethics: The Issues of Life and Death*, Larry Choinard, David Fiensy, and George Pickens eds. (Joplin, Missouri: Parma Press, 2004), pp. 33-37; James Riley Estep and Alvin W. Kuest, "Moral Development," *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the 21st Century*. Michael Anthony ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), pp. 75-77.

24 Cf. Calvin Linton, "Man's Difficulty – Ignorance or Evil?" in Millard J. Erickson ed. *Readings in Christian Theology, Volume 2: Man's Need and God's Gift* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 125-130.