THE UTILIZATION OF A THEOLOGY OF HUMAN EMBODIMENT TO ADDRESS BODY IMAGE

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APPROVAL SHEET

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All glory to God whose providential guidance, atoning sacrifice,
and indwelling presence enabled this journey.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*. 9 vols. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe, and Allan Menzies. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885-1897
NPNF[1]	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1. 14 vols. Edited by Philip Schaff. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1886-1889
PCAAC	Presbyterian Church in America Administrative Committee
West. Conf.	*Westminster Confession of Faith*. Presbyterian Church in America Administrative Committee. Accessed April 24, 2021. https://www.pcaac.org/bco/westminster-confession/#:~:text=Westminster%20Confession%20of%20Faith%20When%20the%20Presbyterian%20Church,the%20only%20infallible%20rule%20of%20faith%20and%20practice%29
West. Lg. Cat.	*Westminster Larger Catechism*. Presbyterian Church in America Administrative Committee. Access April 24, 2021. https://www.pcaac.org/bco/westminster-confession/#:~:text=Westminster%20Confession%20of%20Faith%20When%20the%20Presbyterian%20Church,the%20only%20infallible%20rule%20of%20faith%20and%20practice%29

PREFACE

Quite frankly, I never intended to pursue a PhD. Loving theology all of my Christian life, I had the opportunity to get a Master's in Christian Leadership while in ministry in Knoxville, Tennessee. I pursued it for further equipping in ministry and to edify the church. With a background in personal training and nutrition consulting, I found alarming the overlap between the most religious states and the most obese states. These were Bible Belt states. I wrote on this topic in my master's thesis, and while I was passionate about it, I had little knowledge of what to do next. In God's providence, I wound up perusing the systematic theology degree at Southern and was intrigued by the theological anthropology seminar. I was struck upon seeing the syllabus. Dr. Gregg Allison brought in guest lecturers to speak on exercise and nutrition in his theological anthropology course. Here, my passions of theology and the physical body coalesced. I knew God was calling me to take this next step. Writing to help the church comprehend the significance of the body is a privilege and the impetus behind the following work.

Completing this degree would be impossible apart from a strong support system. I am grateful to my family and friends for their constant encouragement, prayer, and wise counsel. I am also appreciative of Dr. Allison whose patient guidance enabled this achievement, and finally, I am grateful to Torey Teer for his editorial assistance. Thank you all for your unwavering support.

Lainey Greer

Knoxville, Tennessee

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

Scripture's mention of the body is vast and varied. God's Word affirms the body as God's wonderful creation yet also refers to it as a body of death (Ps 139:14; Rom 7:24). In 1 Corinthians 15:42, Paul writes that the body is perishable and will decay. At the same time, he proclaims that it will be raised imperishable. Christ likens mortification of sin to cutting off the parts of the body that cause one to stumble (Matt 5:29-30). Paul prohibits Christians from offering members of their body to sin and also commands them to offer their body as a spiritual act of worship (Rom 6:13, 12:2). Solomon explains how wise decisions benefit the body (Prov 4:20-27), while David warns that sin threatens bodily health (Ps 38:1-10). Some advocate that a careful reading of wisdom literature reveals the body as a central theme.[1] It also seems the body is a point of doctrinal importance for the apostle Paul.[2] Even more, as Deborah Beth Creamer asserts, "talking about the body belongs to every discipline."[3] If Scripture addresses physical life, then theological endeavors should reflect that reality, especially for a faith that believes in created bodies, an embodied Savior, and bodily resurrection. Consequently, a right understanding of and resulting respect for the body should characterize the Christian faith.

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[1] Scott Jones, "Corporeal Discourse in the Book of Job," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 4 (2013): 845-63.

[2] John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), 9.

[3] Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 39. I am referring to various doctrines, such as soteriology, Christology, and eschatology.

Despite these realities, some still consider Christianity as hostile to the body.[4] Additionally, while there is occasional discussion on the body, it remains an underrepresented—perhaps even disrespected—topic of systematic theology.[5] It seems an anti-body influence still pervades the church.[6] As a result, immaterial reality gets elevated over material reality. Soul and body are treated as separate concepts, and the splitting of human nature inevitably diminishes bodily existence. Evangelicals must lead the way to reclaim the body's value.

Furthermore, there is scant writing on the body—specifically body image—within the field of biblical counseling. This reality is surprising, particularly when its founder, Jay Adams, argues, "How utterly vital it is for counselors to have a proper theology of the body and the material creation."[7] An accurate conception of the body is imperative for both the counselor and counselee. If the body is misunderstood, disregarded as unimportant, or viewed as the source of evil, then how can a counselor

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[4] Ola Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 2.

[5] Sigurdson laments as much, commenting that working through a proper somatology is far from the *loci communes* of traditional theological work and as such is marginal in some minds. He continues, "'Doctrine' and 'life' are intimately intertwined in the Christian tradition, not least when it comes to the body. It can therefore be productive not only to interpret the doctrines as they would be made concrete in a life, which would hardly be startling, but also to interpret life as though it implied a doctrine." Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, 4. Luke Timothy Johnson also notes the lack of scholarship on the body. He believes that theology begins and finds renewal in the body as we experience God through our human lives, which moves the focus of theology from a deductive science to an inductive art. Johnson says this shift from science to art would "challenge the assumed superiority of the classic disciplines within theological education and give more honor to those who serve as researchers of God's work in the messiness of human experience." Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 5.

[6] I am speaking of the influence of such philosophies as Platonism, Gnosticism, and asceticism, which I discuss at length in chap. 2. Streams of Christianity have long regarded "the body as though it were shameful, worthless, or unimportant." Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 9. Though some would argue that hatred of the body within Christian circles is an extreme characterization, if nothing else, one can conclude that the church has suppressed the meaning of the body. Some hold this suppression to be a detriment to Christian orthopraxy, an assertion I find convincing. John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 26.

[7] Jay Edwards Adams, *More Than Redemption: A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 108.

administer adequate care for disorders that revolve around the body? Moreover, if the counselee lacks respect for the body, it will not be treated properly, as in the case of self-harming behaviors.[8] If the counselee does not value the body, where will motivation to treat the body rightly come from? How, for example, will efforts to fight an eating disorder be maintained if the counselor fails to connect bodily care to glorifying God with the body? If the counselee struggles with negative body image, then the counselor must be equipped to counter a wrong conception of the body with a biblical one. When caring for the body is not understood as a part of Christian faithfulness, altering sinful bodily thoughts and behaviors will be shallow and unsustainable efforts. Treating the body well requires first that one thinks well of the body. Proper consideration of the body is what a God-honoring body image strives toward and what this dissertation seeks to articulate.

Thesis

Scripture presents the definitive basis to properly conceive of the body. Thus, this dissertation will confront a negative body image by establishing it as a phenomenon that could be God-honoring. I aim to construct an objective framework of the body and employ it to form an understanding of the body that applies to all people. Vital to my argument is a biblical and theological construct for body image that generates a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the body. Put simply, body image is an essentially subjective internal appraisal of the body. Though all people possess a mental conception of their physical frame, body image needs greater consideration in the church, specifically in counseling.

A God-honoring body image can correct a negative body image as it is based on biblical truths that reorient how men and women envision their bodies. For believers,

[8] The most common forms of self-harm are cutting and burning. Nearly 30 percent of teenage females have engaged in some form of self-harm. One in four girls and one in ten boys cause intentional harm to themselves. Lindsay Kite and Lexie Kite, *More Than a Body: Your Body Is an Instrument Not an Ornament* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020), 20.

this subjective mental conception must be informed by a Christian worldview and sustained by the Holy Spirit—a body image derived from Scripture and founded upon God's declarations regarding his creation. Utilizing Paul's argument for the body's value in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, this thesis considers body image to be a critical component of embodiment and thus an element within a theology of the body.[9] Therefore, in my dissertation, I propose that a theology of the body, founded on a Trinitarian affirmation of the body, can address body image issues in both men and women of any age.[10]

Methodology

To build a biblical and theological concept of body image, I define and reflect upon a theology of the body (later in this chap.), embodiment (chap. 2), and body image (chap. 3) since I believe it necessary to locate body image within a theology of the body, guided by embodied reality.[11] Therefore, I work from broad categories to specific

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[9] While I examine numerous passages later in this chapter, I highlight 1 Cor 6 in chap. 4, as it is the focal passage that I use to define a theology of the body.

[10] When I speak of the "body," I refer to the physical, material makeup of every human person. By a "theology of the body," I mean a systematized understanding of the body derived from Scripture. By "embodiment," I mean the ontological phenomenon of humans as a unified composition of soul and body, both equally valuable for and necessary to human existence. "Body image" is the mental conception that people have of their embodiment. It must be understood as a cultural and experienced-based occurrence for both men and women. Body image is not exclusively a female issue. When I speak of a "Trinitarian affirmation of the body," I mean the ways in which each person of the Trinity is involved with the embodied experience of humanity. I pattern my argument for this Trinitarian affirmation from the words of Paul in 1 Cor 6:12-20.

[11] While I explain embodiment in detail in chap. 2, for now, Eric L. Johnson's description is most helpful. He defines humans as "dynamic structures of personal agency and communion." He continues,

> The physiological and embodied basis of human life beings with the unique genome of each human person, formed at conception, which regulates all subsequent biological and psychological processes, making possible the phenotypic development of the form of the body (including an individual's physiognomy); organismic motives of hunger, thirst, sexual expression, reproduction, avoidance of pain, and pursuit of simple well-being; sensation and perception; positive and negative emotion systems (including moods and desires); emotion schemes (emotions stored with beliefs and attitudes); more socially constructed desires (e.g., self-regard, curiosity, . . .); gender and sexual identity; memory . . . ; language/discourse, reason, beliefs, theories of mind, judgment, and imagination in all its richness (use of mental imagery, planning ahead, projecting possible futures); goals, intentions, volition, dispositions, and abilities; self-regulation abilities . . . ; *habitus*, a unique configuration of personality traits, competences, and multiple intelligences; relational capacities . . . ; the conscience . . . ; and the *sensus divinitatis* (the module for perceiving, desiring, and loving God). Though most of these dynamic structures are not explicitly mentioned in Scripture, they are part of the infrastructure of God's good human creation, and their proper functioning is part of his design

application. In this chapter on a theology of the body, I consider current efforts to doctrinally define the body. Then, I list several passages that contribute to a robust theology of the body. Throughout chapter 2 on embodiment, I highlight predominant conceptions of human constitution, while primarily arguing for humanity as a holistic dualism against the misconceptions of Gnosticism and Platonism. In chapter 3, I trace the development of the phenomenon of body image in secular psychology to better understand a method of approach for believers. In chapter 4, I articulate a theology of the body drawn from 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and grounded in the appropriated works of the Trinity: the Father as the one who resurrects embodied image-bearers; the incarnate, embodied Son as the atoning sacrifice for embodied image-bearers; and the Holy Spirit as indweller of embodied image-bearers.[12] Employing this foundation in chapter 5, I develop principles of a God-honoring body image and propose applications of those principles to six population groups of diverse ages, genders, and contexts: disabled child, teenage girl, college-age male, postpartum mother, menopausal female, and late-sixties male.[13] Finally, I provide an overall assessment of my work in chapter 6.

Various Theologies of the Body

Locating a single ecumenical definition of a theology of the body is a seeming impossibility. Consequently, this work attempts its own definition. While my theology of the body garners full treatment in chapter 4, this section examines other endeavors to

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plan for human life. (Eric L. Johnson, *God and Soul Care: The Therapeutic Resources of the Christian Faith* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017], 193-94)

[12] Though I highlight the appropriated works of the Trinity, I firmly hold to inseparable operations. My argument centers on the appropriated works of the Trinity because such works appear to be the basis of Paul's case for the body in 1 Cor 6. He locates God's authority over the body and its value in the Trinity, referencing the specific works of resurrection, redemption, and indwelling.

[13] By "gender," I mean male or female, also "synonymous with sex and both terms referring to genetic identity." Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2021), 43.

define this doctrine by Pope John Paul II, Luke Timothy Johnson, Ola Sigurdson, Timothy C. Tennent, John W. Kleinig, and Gregg R. Allison.

Pope John Paul II

A theology of the body, long established in Roman Catholic teaching, considers that "man is the substantial complex of body and soul."[14] It should come as no surprise, then, that Catholicism presents the most comprehensive theology of the body. The scope of this Catholic doctrine goes well beyond the summary in this work, as the reach of Catholic teaching extends to marriage, contraception, abortion, virginity, and celibacy. Pope John Paul II generated a lengthy, ground-breaking work toward a theology of the body in a series of extensive lectures complied in his book *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the* Body. His articulation bases its claims on God's miraculous creation of the human body, symbolizing the great mystery within the Trinity itself. As the Father, Son, and Spirit exchange a perfect love for one another, so also God seeks to share this love with humanity. The body becomes the means by which people experience a knowledge of and resulting love for God.[15]

In his teaching on the theology of the body, John Paul confronts Catholics with two basic questions: (1) How does God want his children to think about their bodies? (2) Since bodies are God's gifts to humanity, how should people treat their bodies? To answer these questions, John Paul lays out his argument for the body, basing it on three of Christ's declarations in the Gospels. He finds these declarations definitive on the origin, history, and destiny of humanity, as they fundamentally provide anthropological and ethical aspects of a theology of the body.[16]

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[14] Cipriano Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation: A Theology of the Human Body* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1969), 11.

[15] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 97.

[16] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 460.

The first aspect of a biblically based theology of the body appeals to creation, human origins. John Paul begins here because of Christ's reference to the creation narrative in Genesis when the Pharisees confronted him concerning divorce (Matt 19:3-9). Christ combatted their challenge on the issue of divorce by appealing to God's intent for marriage from the beginning. Superficially concerned with the legality of divorce, the Pharisees missed the point. Christ shifted their question to a deeper understanding, challenging them to focus on man and woman's creation with a call to marriage and a permanent union. This union is the first institution for man and woman, as the sacrament of marriage becomes the primordial essence of hope for humanity. John Paul explains, "Man's origin in the world is linked with marriage as a sacrament, and his coming to be is inscribed in marriage, not only in the historical but also in the eschatological dimensions."[17] For the Pope, a theology of the body is based in this initial and intentional created sacrament.

The second part of John Paul's theology lies in Christ's prohibition against adultery. Here, the Pope traces the universal history of humanity inclined toward the sin inherent in its own heart (Matt 5:27-28). The historical sinful nature of men and women is evident in Christ's command against adultery, even lust.[18] A Catholic theology of the body includes the belief that the flesh and Spirit are at odds with each other. Victory over sinful nature is impossible until that nature submits to the Spirit.[19] The Pope identifies self-control, a fruit of the Spirit, calling it "self-mastery."[20] Self-mastery is a crucial element to a theology of the body lived out in daily life. As Christ's command comes in the context of sacramental marriage, it holds significance for the body. Furthermore, John

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[17] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 524.

[18] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 519.

[19] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 329.

[20] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 334.

Paul views the prohibition of adultery as establishing a dignity to men and women who must master concupiscence, especially this specific concupiscence of the heart.[21]

Finally, the Pope sees the destiny of humanity in Christ's answer to the Sadducees' question about the resurrected state (Matt 22:23-33).[22] Christ presents a new element to a theology of the body in response to the question on marriage and resurrection. John Paul believes the eternal state will involve a perfected body. This body will fully and comprehensively worship its Creator.[23] Not only will believers receive a new body untainted by sin, but they will also gain a new way of living. While the institution of marriage is unnecessary in the resurrected state, this future hope informs a theology of the body and ties into the marriage sacrament. John Paul explains, "The man who is called to participate in the eschatological future through the resurrection of the body is the same man, male and female, whose origin in the visible temporal world is linked with marriage as the primordial sacrament of the very mystery of creation."[24] Each Matthean text from which the Pope draws humanity's origins (19:8), history (5:28), and destiny (22:30) comprises the basis for his theology of the body that "contains in itself a rich content of an anthropological as well as ethical nature."[25] These elements of bodily life pertain to every aspect of daily embodied living before God.[26]

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[21] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 520. The Catholic Catechism defines concupiscence as "temporal consequences of sin (that) remain in the baptized such as suffering, illnesses, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weaknesses of character, and so on, as well as an inclination to sin." *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994), 1264.

[22] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 524.

[23] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 388.

[24] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 524.

[25] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 460.

[26] While the Pope presents helpful points for theological consideration of the body (that God creates the body, it is marred by sin, and it will be resurrected), in some instances, he overextends these points, becoming convoluted with his focus on love and sexuality. Additionally, he fails to incorporate sins of sloth and gluttony or the physical reality of suffering persecution that—like love and sexuality—find mention in Scripture and occur in the body. Still, his overall inaugural work offers profound, pioneering contributions to theology and the human body.

Luke Timothy Johnson

In *The Revelatory Body*, two convictions drive Luke Timothy Johnson. First, the body is a source of revelation because it serves as the form of the Holy Spirit's manifestation. Second, theology finds expression in bodily experience. Johnson contends that Christians "do theology" too abstractly, when instead theology should be considered through bodily experience because the body is "the essential arena of a never-ceasing process of divine revelation."[27] Johnson believes that theology begins and finds renewal in the body as believers experience God through their human lives. He argues that this realization moves the focus of theology from a deductive science to an inductive art. The body, being the canvas God uses to move in the world, continually expresses the Creator through the phenomenon of embodiment. When one pays attention to the body, body theology is understood as an inductive art form.[28]

Johnson aims to show how the body is the primary location for God's activity by the Spirit. On the inspiration of Scripture, Johnson asserts that the "Old and New Testaments were composed in the first place as witnesses to the experience of God in the world."[29] He means the Spirit, God's revelatory agent, spoke to and carried along men who wrote the Scriptures through their bodily experiences. Because of the Spirit's involvement, Johnson laments when Scripture is primarily used as a "medicine applied to errant human experience as a corrector," when, instead, embodied existence should be "thought of as illuminating or extending the meaning of Scripture."[30] Walking through the metanarrative of the Bible, Johnson argues for the body's connection in the process of revelation. He notes that Abraham and Moses's experience of revelation came through

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[27] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 3.

[28] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 7.

[29] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 7.

[30] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 9.

their bodies; the same is true of other Old Testament saints. He includes the prophets' role to underscore his premise that the human body is an agent of revelation. Reflecting on the New Testament data, Johnson holds, "The entire point of incarnation is that the human body of Jesus was capable of bearing the revealing power and presence of God."[31] His view drives the overall point that the body is God's vessel of revelation because it serves as the continual source of God's mediated presence in the world.[32]

Also informative are Johnson's reflections on the *imago Dei*. He believes the image of God is tied up with the body, saying, "It is clearly as a bodily creature that God declares humans in God's own image."[33] God expresses his image through humanity as they govern the rest of creation. In Johnson's estimation, the body acts as the conduit by which Christians learn and come to know everything about God. Through their somatic experience, believers are "enabled to have God's power and presence revealed in and through each other."[34] Embodied image-bearers serve as God's dynamic representations to reflect him to the rest of the world. Johnson surmises that the body requires greater consideration when doing theology.[35]

Ola Sigurdson

Ola Sigurdson's work *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology* seeks to answer why the Christian faith, which claims

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[31] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 55-57.

[32] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 37.

[33] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 54.

[34] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 55.

[35] On the body, Johnson comments, "Human bodies provide access to God's visitation of all creation." Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 65. This quote demonstrates why Johnson's work suffers because it seems that Johnson shifts authority from Scripture to the body. His hyperbole of the body also requires discernment from his readers as it appears to question the sufficiency of Scripture. Additionally, Johnson's writing suffers at the outset because his basic premise on the body promotes it as a continuing source of revelation, a move that inherently leads him to question the perspicuity of Scripture.

that God became flesh, is ironically inimical toward the body. Friedrich Nietzsche originally brought attention to this contrast. Arguing from Nietzsche, Sigurdson advocates a historical understanding of the body that incorporates philosophy and theology for a robust and informed view. If this "somatology," as he calls it, understood the past misgivings of the body, then it would highlight our current denigration of the body and light the path to reclaiming a right view of the human body.[36] This is an important point upon which I expound in the next chapter.

Sigurdson seeks to accomplish a theology of the body with his "own contemporary contributions to somatology in relation to both historical and contemporary conceptions of the body."[37] When interacting with historical understandings of the body, Sigurdson highlights differences with current somatology. He considers the incarnation, gaze, and embodiment imperative to the foundation of his theology of the body and uses the incarnation to deal with problems of embodiment. Rather than focusing on the person and work of Christ, however, he highlights the incarnational and ontological aspects of Christology that inform human embodiment.[38]

Sigurdson's understanding of gaze is "a manifestation of the relationality and meaning-creation."[39] In other words, he claims that through sight, humans come to understand what it is to exist and be part of the world. His concern is that connecting sight only to intellectual abilities has created a "disembodied embodiment," when instead, seeing is a function of the body that requires one's whole corporeal existence to view an object. He understands, "Our body is in other words intimately involved in our gaze, and

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[36] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, 2.

[37] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, 3.

[38] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, 5-7.

[39] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, 10.

certainly the fact that we do not, like the Cyclops, have a single large eye, serves to underline the fact that our sight is radically incarnated in our body."[40]

Sigurdson focuses on the philosophical body, the liturgical body, the erotic body, and the grotesque body as aspects characterizing embodied reality. Ultimately, Sigurdson's conception of a theology of the body includes the following elements: body and soul separation, denigration of the body within Christianity, the gendered body, how the body is constructed in liturgy, the interplay between the social and physical body, and the connection between the earthly and heavenly body. Therefore, his somatology grounds the body in anthropology, ecclesiology, and eschatology, as he believes the body should be placed in a theological framework. Furthermore, Sigurdson strongly affirms that one cannot rightly comprehend a theology of the body apart from a connection between the social (the church) and individual bodies.[41] Ultimately, he holds that "embodiment is consequently viewed from an eschatological perspective" because God created humanity not only for this age but also the one to come.[42]

Timothy C. Tennent

Protestantism's appreciation of the body lags behind that of Catholicism. However, recognition has grown in recent years. Publications like *For the Body* by Timothy C. Tennent, *Wonderfully Made* by John W. Kleinig, and *Embodied* by Gregg

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[40] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, 13. Though intriguing, the importance of the gaze to Sigurdson's theology of the body is somewhat confounding and fails to cohere with incarnation and embodiment. True, sight is required to make sense of the world, but the brain is also integral to process what is seen. It seems that the brain should be foundational to Sigurdson's theology of embodied reality as not all people can see but all possess a brain that enables basic—if sometimes impaired or otherwise limited—bodily functions.

[41] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, 381.

[42] Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies*, 581. Ultimately, locating a theology of the body in Christ's body, the church, and the believer's body is one of the more sensible articulations of this doctrine. However, certain statements that seem to condone a social gospel and feminist theologies and even hint at Marxism trouble me. Sigurdson's appeal to such ideologies cheapens his overall work.

Allison seek to rectify this omission. What follows are Methodist, Lutheran, and evangelical endeavors to define a theology of the body.

In *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body*, Tennent desires for his theology of the body to instruct believers on how to articulate what Christianity is *for* rather than what it stands *against*.[43] Working through three sections, he first provides a Christian view of physical life founded on seven building blocks, which I discuss in greater detail below. Second, Tennent utilizes his proposed building blocks to confront errant cultural messages about the body. Third, he suggests ways the church can disciple others using his theology of the body, a concept that he rightly states is situated "at the heart of many of the most pressing moral, cultural, and ecclesiastical issues of our day."[44]

Creation, specifically, the goodness of the created body and its inclusion in the *imago Dei*, is the first building block for Tennent's theology of the body. As imagers, humans are tasked with exercising dominion and care over the rest of God's creation. This task involves the body. Also through the body, humans reproduce and physically represent God in the world. Tennent notes that in creation God's declaration of the body's goodness implies its trustworthiness, with the integral incorporation of "moral boundaries inherent to the creation."[45] Modern theories of gender forsake these established moral boundaries, proving that "culture has rewritten God's beautiful story of creation."[46]

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[43] I appreciate the following sentiment by Tennent because it exemplifies the need for orthodoxy to fuel orthopraxy. He comments, "The current emotive nature of our discussion must be replaced by a more theologically informed, positive vision." Timothy C. Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 212.

[44] Tennent, *For the Body*, xxii.

[45] Tennent, *For the Body*, 14.

[46] Tennent, *For the Body*, 21.

For his second building block, Tennent considers how the human body acts as an icon pointing forward to Christ's incarnation and resurrection. God's creation of the human body anticipates the Son of God's becoming embodied, and his bodily resurrection points forward to a bodily resurrection that awaits humanity.[47] Christ appeared as the true image of God, and all of creation can be restored to this image through him. Tennent also surmises the body as participating in redemption. He believes, "God fashioned our bodies to be the perfect means for receiving and extending his grace. God's grace is conveyed in and through our bodies."[48]

Tennent's third and fourth building blocks revolve around marriage, which he believes symbolize the relationship of Christ and the church.[49] Marriage is designed to unite the couple, as Christ unites with his church. In his atoning sacrifice, Christ displays the ultimate form of sacrificial love for his church. In marriage, the husband and wife are to give themselves unconditionally to the other, reflecting the same sacrificial, selfless love.[50] As believers bear fruit and make disciples, so married couples also reproduce, establishing a family unit that reflects the Trinity. On the family, Tennent explains, "This creative and relational process reflects the Trinity, forming a triunity of persons, an intimate unity of father, mother, and child."[51] Essential to Tennent's theology of the body is the command to be fruitful, a command for those who are married and unmarried as he explains in the next building block.

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[47] Tennent, *For the Body*, 25.

[48] Tennent, *For the Body*, 30.

[49] Tennent, *For the Body*, 43. While it is not a focus of my work, I find Tennent's description of the church's confrontation of homosexuality quite helpful. He advocates the "need to admit that an exclusive focus on homosexual practice as the only or primary sign of sexual brokenness in our culture is a form of reductionism" (48). Furthermore, he avers that "fornication and adultery . . . [are] prohibited for Christians—*because sexual activity is a sign or marker of God's covenantal love*, and Christians must not engage in any sexual activity apart from the covenantal boundaries that protect that love" (51; emphasis original).

[50] Tennent, *For the Body*, 56-58.

[51] Tennent, *For the Body*, 65.

The fifth building block is the beauty found in singleness and friendship. Remaining single and thus celibate informs a theology of the body as it anticipates one's future life after the resurrection. In this state, the person is "already embodying the eschatological reality of the marriage supper of the Lamb."[52] Tennent also includes "Spirit-bonded friendships," which are unmarried Christians who represent the gospel through friendships with other believers. These relationships possess strong ties equal to familial relationships and act as another avenue of portraying union with Christ as his bride.[53]

The sixth and seventh building blocks serve as the final elements of Tennent's theology of the body. Concerning these blocks, Tennent explains that the believer's physical presence serves to "embody God's saving purposes and his holy love. Our bodies are 'mobile temples' that sacramentally represent God in the world."[54] The body is integral to the observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper, ordinances that Christ commanded believers to physically take part in. Tennent extends this sixth building block to the seventh by considering everyday activities and chores "as sacramental markers of God's embodied presence."[55] If the body is good, part of the *imago Dei*, and represents God to the world, then it certainly coheres that every aspect of embodied life is important.

John W. Kleinig

In *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body*, Kleinig states at the outset that he offers is a Protestant theology of the body, a welcome addition to the scant

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[52] Tennent, *For the Body*, 81.

[53] Tennent, *For the Body*, 89.

[54] Tennent, *For the Body*, 99.

[55] Tennent, *For the Body*, 107. I find Tennent's work quite timely for the church today. Tennent is correct in proposing a theology of the body that highlights the goodness of embodiment and that focuses on dialogues rather than disputes. While his building blocks are helpful, I am not sure that each one bears the same emphasis on the body, as his chapters on "the related body" (chaps. 3-5) seem to stray from their intended purpose.

examples that currently exist on this topic. After laying the foundation for why the body matters, he moves into his proposal containing six aspects for a theology of the body: the created, redeemed, spiritual, sexual, spousal, and living body. His categories share similarity with those of Tennent and Allison. The crux of Kleinig's work is to answer the question "What are we to make of our bodies?" since "it is a practical matter that determines the course of our lives."[56] Scripture provides the answer to his question, taking a holistic view of the human person and rendering the body just as necessary as the soul. While Scripture explains the body as both corrupted and redeemed, "it would be wrong to give equal weight to both these portrayals."[57] The value of the body comes from its connection to God. Kleinig quips that his work is a "theological rhapsody on the body—a written reflection in praise of the human body, meant to appeal to the imagination and evoke a vision of its divinely given splendor."[58]

Kleinig's theology of the body begins with the created body, which relies on the creation account to formulate a Christian view of the body. The opening chapters of Genesis confirm the goodness of the body; thus, "any disparagement of it as something bad, or contempt for it as unfit for God, is [immediately] ruled out."[59] Humanity is conferred as the image of God, which—according to Kleinig—bears five important implications: (1) humans are designed for embodied life; (2) they are reflections of God; (3) they are designated as male and female; (4) both body and soul represent God's image; and (5) stewardship expresses God's image.[60] Kleinig follows by engaging the second creation account in Genesis 2 and explaining how the naked, exiled bodies of Adam and

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[56] John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 2.

[57] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 14.

[58] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 18.

[59] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 25.

[60] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 27-29.

Eve inform believers' present embodied reality. Based on creation, Kleinig also notes the duty tasked to believers in caring for their bodies. Ultimately, the gift of physical life should manifest in "full-bodied" praise to the Creator.[61]

In terms of the redeemed body, Kleinig explains how people are dissatisfied with their bodies and ultimately themselves. Only through the embodied Son of God can humans be redeemed and remade into a "new self with a new mind and new body."[62] In fact, Christ's remaining embodied after his resurrection and ascension proves that he is able to interact with his disciples who are presently embodied and will be in the resurrection.[63] Kleinig ties Christ's physical body to believers' physical participation in the sacraments, emphasizing Christ's care for Christians through baptism, the Word, and the Lord's Supper. In these sacraments, "Jesus provides body care for us in the church so that he can provide body care to others through us in the church."[64] Cared for in the body, Christ-followers live out an embodied faith in which they understand their role in the world as God's mobile temples, representing him in the body wherever they go.[65]

In Christ, believers are endowed with a new creation, a spiritual body.[66] Kleinig surmises that this spiritual body undergoes a latent transformation, wherein the outward aspect wastes away while the inner aspect is renewed, being made ready for an eternal embodied life. Kleinig envisions this bodily renovation in an interesting way, saying, "God undresses it by putting it to sleep in death. Then he wakes it up from the

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[61] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 53.

[62] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 62.

[63] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 65.

[64] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 78-85.

[65] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 95.

[66] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 111.

sleep of death and clothes it with the robes it needs for life with him in heaven."[67] This resurrection hope encourages various practices (e.g., Easter, surrender, funerals, All Saint's Day, modest dress) that, in Kleinig's estimation, instruct believers about life in the body now.[68]

Kleinig's explanation of the sexual body decries the contemporary cultural view of sexuality and the numerous ways God's good gift of sex has been perverted. The author advocates for chastity "since marriage is meant to be a lifelong process of mutual giving and receiving," and the giving is not to be experienced before marriage.[69] Kleinig explains the goodness of God's design for sex in marriage, and he differentiates wholesome sexual desire from lust, the latter of which he addresses in a section on transforming the sexual imagination. He also includes a discourse on pornography intended to warn his readers of the potential damage it causes the sexual body.[70] Kleinig's chapter on the spousal body is naturally akin to the sexual body. Referring to John Paul II's foundational language, Kleinig explains that the body is spousal in its design for "bodily self-giving love, whether it be in singleness or marriage," ultimately for "a spousal union of self-giving love with Christ as their common bridegroom."[71] The union of marriage reflects the union of Christ as Bridegroom to his bride, the church.

Kleinig contemplates the living body, which entails consideration of how God views the believer's body in Christ, and he concludes with an assessment of how he sees

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[67] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 131. Kleinig seems to affirm soul sleep, a belief that he also attributes to Martin Luther. I believe this belief to be unbiblical (see my discussion of it in chap. 2).

[68] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 136-43.

[69] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 154.

[70] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 172.

[71] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 182; referring to John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 178-181.

his body through different phases of life while awaiting his final embodied home with the Lord.[72]

Gregg R. Allison

In *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World*, Allison works through a biblical understanding of embodiment, which is "the condition of being a body or having a body."[73] To study the phenomenon of embodiment means examining physical bodily life lived out in the world on a daily basis. Thus, Allison addresses the body in terms of creation, sex/gender, particularity, sociality, sexuality, incarnation, sanctification, blessing and discipline, worship, clothing, suffering and healing, death, and the future.[74] Each topic encompasses the importance of humanity's physical reality throughout the Bible, given that embodiment "intersects with other important Christian doctrines" and "addresses numerous contemporary moral and social issues."[75] Allison's first five chapters present the overall framework for proper consideration of the body, with the application of that framework worked out in the rest of the book. The overall goal of his work is to help readers live as whole embodied people in a fractured world.[76]

Created body. The triune God purposed to create men and women in his image. He created Adam and Eve as his embodied imagers, unified body and soul, who were the forebearers of men and women who are likewise embodied. The body is good, yet Allison believes many are often troubled by their bodies, specifically their own body

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[72] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 218-22. As with Tennent, Kleinig's Lutheran theology influences his theology of the body in subtle ways, as evident in his section on liturgical body care. In addition, Kleinig's work could benefit from including a discussion of Gnosticism and why the church requires an articulation of a theology of the body in the first place.

[73] Allison, *Embodied*, 15.

[74] Allison, *Embodied*, 19-22.

[75] Allison, *Embodied*, 17.

[76] Allison, *Embodied*, 18.

image.[77] Given the plague of negative body image, it is necessary to confront that reality with a biblical worldview—which is the reason for this dissertation.

Allison's work opposes the tenets of Gnosticism that "clashed with key [Christian] doctrines," many of which revolved around matters pertaining to physical existence (e.g., creation, the incarnation, and resurrection).[78] Contemporary Gnostic influence, or Neo-Gnosticism, continues to disparage the body in the church today, a problem that Allison seeks to thwart. After all, part of humanity's imaging involves the creation commands to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and exercise dominion over it (Gen 1:26-28). Embodied life serves as the only viable means to carry out these commands. Per Allison, "As beings created in the image of God, we are designed for procreation and vocation and are given the responsibility to build society for human flourishing."[79] David beautifully describes the way God intricately forms the body in the mother's womb; he praises God for the wondrous ways he creates the body (Ps 139:13-16). In sum, Allison begins with a creational understanding of the body.[80]

Gendered body. Not only did God create humans in his image; he also intentionally distinguished them as male and female. Humans are embodied gendered people. Complementary gender differences function as God's designed means of humanity's multiplying and filling the earth. In Allison's words, "Gender is the most fundamental particularity of human embodied existence."[81] God formed Adam from the dust and fashioned a suitable helper, Eve, from Adam's own body (Gen 2:7-22).

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[77] Discussion of body image is vital to understanding human embodiment. Allison includes the categories of perceptual, affective, cognitive, and behavioral body image. Allison, *Embodied*, 24-25.

[78] Allison, *Embodied*, 27.

[79] Allison, *Embodied*, 36.

[80] Allison, *Embodied*, 29-36.

[81] Allison, *Embodied*, 48.

According to Allison, the binary nature of the creation account speaks to God's good design of the male and female genders. For example, God makes light and dark, day and night, land and sea, as well as birds of the air and fish of the sea. This binary, complementary design of humanity serves to instruct gender differences as God's good design.

Gender functions as a critical aspect of embodiment because the body is created to display maleness or femaleness. Humans are inherently male or female due to biological differences. Allison's view rejects gender essentialism, which holds that "men and women are of distinctly different natures."[82] Instead, he believes in "common human capacities and common human properties that are—indeed, will naturally be—expressed in gendered ways."[83]

Particular body. As created and gendered beings, humans are also individually designed with a particular body. For Allison, particularity emphasizes that "each person is an individual . . . in terms of their ethnicity/race, family/kinship, temporality, spatiality, context, and story." Ethnicity and race refer to origin, nationality, and ancestry. Family and kinship describe the relations with those of the same origins and ancestry. The particular body also includes temporality, that is, being "characterized by a particular time and age."[84] Spatiality deals with being in a particular place in the world or taking up a certain space. One's context bears on particularity in that a person is located in a setting that "includes socioeconomic, political, educational, cultural, and religious

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[82] Allison, *Embodied*, 46. However, contemporary U.S. culture has separated these realities. Gender is now considered fluid, not determined by one's sex or biology. The body may *express* one gender, but according to this thought, the mind can *dictate* gender. In other words, gender fluctuates. Some individuals identifying as transgender choose to undergo surgical changes and ingest hormones so that their body matches their mind. From asexual clothing to Hollywood's promotion of transgender causes to the inclusion of transgender studies in school curriculum, Christians must firmly deny this unbiblical understanding of gender.

[83] Allison, *Embodied*, 51.

[84] Allison, *Embodied*, 65.

factors."[85] Story is the narrative of one's life that weaves together every situation, trial, and success. Allison differentiates his understanding of particularity from intersectionality—a necessary inclusion because intersectional thought is not only popular in secular culture but has also infiltrated the church.[86]

Social body. In Allison's estimation, the embodied person is a social being, which is evidenced by the "universal human condition of desiring, expressing, and receiving human relationships."[87] Companionship and community reflect the social aspect of embodiment, a reality that runs throughout the pages of Scripture. Seen in marriages, the propagation of humanity, genealogies, people grouped as nations, and ultimately the gathering of the church, sociality is an intentional design of embodiment. Allison links two aspects to his concept of sociality: (1) the intentional creation "that all embodied people desire, express, and receive relationships" and (2) "the human capacity to desire, express, and receive relationships in either a positive way or a negative way."[88]

Sexual body. Sexuality is the expression of "sociality in the case of marriage."[89] God created men and women as sexual beings, which is evidenced by their inherent gender and by God's command for them to procreate. God's good design behind sexuality and intentional gender differences is ultimately expressed in the marriage

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[85] Allison, *Embodied*, 66.

[86] Allison, *Embodied*, 66. Intersectionality is "about multiple layers of oppression that minorities suffer." Voddie T. Baucham Jr., *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe* (Washington D.C.: Salem Books, 2021), xvii.

[87] Allison, *Embodied*, 75.

[88] Allison, *Embodied*, 78. Allison goes on to address the issue of sociality and siblingship, or relationships between Christian brothers and sisters. While noting the potential problems, he encourages men and women in the church toward developing friendships with the opposite gender, as they can be individually edifying as well as edifying for the church. Without these integral relationships, the church loses out on growth opportunities.

[89] Allison, *Embodied*, 87.

covenant between a man and a woman. Recognizing the fundamentals of sexual embodied existence should inform a Christian worldview of heterosexual and homosexual relationships. God did not create the same genders for each other, nor can same-sex partnerships fulfill the creation command to be fruitful and multiply. These realities must prescribe the believer's understanding of embodiment in a culture that lauds homosexual relationships.

Scripture addresses the sexual body in several places. While God created humans to express their sexuality within the design of the marriage covenant between one man and one woman, such a design is often perverted (1 Cor 6:12-20; 1 Thess 4:3-8).[90] In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul offers instruction for those who are married and single. Singleness is a gift and not the average life experience.[91] Still, it is a special calling that the Lord gives to some who, by the Spirit's help, are able to withstand sexual temptation.

Application. The remaining chapters of Allison's book cover various embodied realities that apply to the framework established in the first five chapters—that the embodied human is a created, gendered, particular, social, and sexual being whose life is informed by the Son's body, participates in sanctification, is blessed and should be disciplined, worships in the body, is clothed, experiences suffering and healing, will die, and has an embodied future.

In the incarnation, the divine Son of God took on a complete human nature and became embodied to live and die as an embodied sacrifice for the redemption of his embodied people. Because of Christ, the believer can experience a sanctified body that grows in holiness through "progressive embodied" efforts that combat the manifestation of bodily sins.[92] Similarly, Allison commends discipline in the pursuit of living as a

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[90] Allison, *Embodied*, 90-95.

[91] Allison, *Embodied*, 95-100.

[92] Allison, *Embodied*, 127.

blessed embodied image-bearer who engages in "regular exercise, good nutrition, fasting, and feasting."[93] In the worshiping body, the believer displays "whole nature submission to God."[94] The clothed body is a necessary addition when pondering the entailments of embodied life.[95] Though not God's original intent, the reality of the suffering and healed body arises from the fall.[96] Given the fall and death as a common experience for all, the dead body also requires consideration. After death and an intermediate state, which is "abnormal for human beings created as embodied image bearers of God," believers await resurrection and the glorified, future body that serves as the final aspect of Allison's theology of the body.[97]

Throughout his work, Allison systematically describes elements of the Christian faith and a believer's embodied life that intersect. In this dissertation, I prefer a different method—one that bases a theology of the body in the doctrine of God by prioritizing the value of the body first in Trinitarian involvement with the body, an argument that unfolds in chapter 4.

Summary

As one reflects on various theologies of human embodiment, an obvious difficultly emerges from the description of these five endeavors into body theology by John Paul, Johnson, Sigurdson, Tennent, Kleinig, and Allison. The diversity in their opinions regarding human embodiment may indicate that no description is fully accurate or inaccurate. There is, however, an omission in most of these works. While thorough,

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[93] Allison, *Embodied*, 149.

[94] Allison, *Embodied*, 172.

[95] Allison, *Embodied*, 202.

[96] Allison, *Embodied*, 212-16.

[97] Allison, *Embodied*, 250.

these diverse efforts to develop a robust theology of the body could expand their efforts to include body image.[98] How can Christians consider Scripture's revelations about the body without those revelations also confronting their own conception of the body? My dissertation seeks to utilize a theology of the body to inform body image. In the next section, therefore, I survey pertinent Scripture passages that contribute to a theology of the body.

Scripture's High Regard for the Body

If Scripture's sufficiency pertains to every part of life, then it follows that believers will submit their whole lives to God's Word and all that it commands. The same holds for physical existence. When biblical truths concern the body, believers should acknowledge and heed these statements and commands. If God respects physical existence, then his followers should as well.

Though reasons to honor and care for the body arise throughout Scripture, the apostle Paul contributes by far the most instruction on this topic. As Eduard Lohse explains,

> The holistic perspective . . . of "spirit," "soul," "body," "flesh," which is taken over from language in the Old Testament and developed further, comes to clearest expression in Pauline theology, especially in Paul's use of the concept "body" . . . . [W]hat one does with, or lets happen to, his or her body, is a matter of personal experience.[99]

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[98] Allison provides a short description of body image; see Allison, *Embodied*, 24-26. Tennent asks, "How should Christians think about the human body?" Tennent, *For the Body*, back cover. He even examines how cultural images of perfect bodies make women despise their own. Despite pondering how Christians should think of their bodies and mentioning that women despise their own bodies, he fails to connect these thoughts to body image. Kleinig speaks of body dissatisfaction, but he locates it mostly in teenagers, linking it to a general dissatisfaction with one's whole self. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 60. I believe these works could edify their readers even more if they were to explicitly link their theologies of the body to body image in a way that explains how a biblical understanding of the body confronts and corrects a negative body image.

[99] Eduard Lohse, *Theological Ethics of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 113-14.

Believers are accountable for this personal experience; therefore, examination of such experience is required. What follows is a survey of passages that speak to the body. For each passage, I explicate an overarching principle relevant to constructing a theology of the body.[100]

Genesis 1:26-28

According to Genesis 1:26-28, God creates man and woman in his image, an informative, introductory truth for a theology of the body. The *imago Dei* visibly sets humans apart from all other creation and "is intended for a unique status and task in the created world ([God's] *dominium*)."[101] Image is not limited to the soul but includes the body because tangibility is an obligatory component in a concrete world, a vital point to this dissertation.[102] Cipriano Vagaggini observes, "God with greatest care forms the body and then the soul with his breath (Gen 2:7). The whole concrete man, body and soul, was made in God's image insofar as the whole man is called to exercise his dominion over all creation as a stewardship (Gen 1:26-28)."[103] To fulfill the creation mandate and express dominion (i.e., to be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth), one requires a body. As such, the creation of the body is integral to human existence and is instructive to the body's value. Allison agrees: "God's creation of embodied image bearers contradicts the idea that the human body is sinful in and of itself."[104] Further, as Vagaggini notes, this

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[100] I engage these passages due to their diverse contributions to an overall theology of the body.

[101] G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 71.

[102] According to Gentry and Wellum, image "frequently refers to an object in the real world that can have size, shape, colour, material composition, and value," which clearly implies a structural element to the image of God. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical and Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 192. Berkouwer explains the tendency to extract corporeity from image: "Theologians in their search for the meaning of the image, often sought various similarities or analogies between God and man, without thereby giving up the difference between God and man. In the search for such analogies, it often happened that man's body was excluded from the image of God." Berkouwer, *Man*, 71.

[103] Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation*, 20.

[104] Allison, *Embodied*, 29.

mandate coinciding with materiality facilitates and propels motivation to steward the body as part of God's creative activity: the "dominion exercised over created things . . . also includes the body."[105] Imaging God sets humankind apart from all else in God's creation and enables humanity to participate in a special kind of relationship with him. The physical body is the vessel by which believers live out God's purposes, a recognition paramount to a theology of the body.

Exodus 20:13

The Sixth Commandment against killing another (Exod 20:13) is instructive for a theology of the body as it implies responsibility over one's own physical life. The *Westminster Larger Catechism* examines the Sixth Commandment's prohibition against killing and argues for its ethical extension to include a person's choices against himself and other people. Essentially, the command encompasses far more than murder. To demonstrate this, the *Catechism* offers both positive and negative renderings of the Sixth Commandment: "duties required" and "sins forbidden."[106] For the purposes of this dissertation, I only highlight the ones that pertain to the body. According to the *Catechism*, the Sixth Commandment "requires [Christians] to preserve the life of ourselves . . . [and to exercise] a sober use of meat, drink, physic [i.e., medicine], sleep, labor, and recreations," while it condemns "the neglecting or withdrawing [of] the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life . . . [as well as the] immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations."[107] In other words, the *Westminster Larger Catechism* recognizes the Sixth Commandment's call to preserve one's life and the life of another as

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[105] Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation*, 20.

[106] *West. Lg. Cat.*, Qs. 135-36.

[107] *West. Lg. Cat.*, Qs. 135-36 (PCAAC, pp. 274-78).

the opposite of taking life. To preserve life means providing proper care for one's physical existence. This command begets the responsibility to steward one's body.[108]

Psalms 119:73; 139:13-14

In Psalms 119:73 and 139:13-14, the psalmist praises the Lord for his body. David proclaims that God fearfully and wonderfully made his body, forming and knitting his inward parts in his mother's womb. Praising God for the intricacies of his physical frame, David instructs believers in a greater recognition of the body. Both the formation of the body and its physicality are significant. God made humans to think, speak, and move. As Helge Brattgard espouses, "An increased understanding of our physical structure, where every minor detail appears as a miracle, inspires songs of praise to the Creator for shaping man as he did."[109] Believers marvel at the body's construction. Moreover, a theology of the body confesses God's intentional and magnificent design of the body, no matter its condition, form, or functional abilities.

Proverbs 4:20-27

Proverbs calls for the display of wisdom in all areas of life, including corporeal actions, a definite reality integral to a theology of the body. Proverbs 4:20-27 unlocks the key to obedience lived out through the body. First, Solomon calls his son to listen to his teaching and the words of wisdom that come from the Lord, for with obedience comes life and healing to the body. Albert Martin describes these verses as indicating "a spillover into the physiology of the godly man in terms of the blessing of refreshment to

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[108] See appendix 1 ("Body Stewardship"). Albert Martin also comments on the rendering of the Sixth Commandment in the *Westminster Larger Catechism*: "I say that the law of God demands that we be concerned about this issue as men of God seeking to live before the face of God with optimum usefulness in the work of God. There must be a concern for our physical and emotional health and vigor." Albert N. Martin, *The Man of God: His Calling and Godly Life*, *Pastoral Theology*, vol. 1 (Montville, NJ: Trinity Pulpit Press, 2018), 307.

[109] Helge Brattgard, *God's Stewards: A Theological Study of the Principles and Practices of Stewardship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1963), 67.

the body."[110] Second, Solomon explains the body's involvement in keeping the commands of Scripture. Using bodily terminology of the heart, mouth, eyes, and feet, Solomon explains how his son can avoid sin and destruction through the wise application of the Word in all areas of life.[111]

Proverbs 26:14-16

In Proverbs 26:14-16, Solomon highlights qualities of a sluggard, where spiritual apathy and tangible acts of bodily disobedience characterize one's life. The sluggard is too lazy to tend to or steward any of his responsibilities, and he is severely contrasted with an upright person. Here lies the heart of the issue. A sluggish and slothful person who lacks discipline and self-control in physical matters is likely ruled by those same qualities in spiritual matters. The whole of his life stands antithetical to an active Christian faith wherein he finds motivation and purpose in imaging God and carrying out the creation mandate.[112] When viewed as complete disregard for effort, sluggishness

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[110] Martin, *The Man of* God, 1:303. Martin explains, "Throughout the Scriptures, we see the health of the soul pumping life into the body. The converse is also true, the non-health of the soul pumping its negative influence into the body." Martin offers Psalms 6, 32, and 51 as examples of this damaging effect (305).

[111] As I show below, Paul echoes this sentiment in his letter to the Romans.

[112] Sloth has obvious connections to self-control as it not only deals with lazy behaviors but also a loss of spiritual fervor. Solomon Schimmel, *The Seven Deadly Sins: Jewish, Christian, and Classical Reflections on Human Nature* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 87. Originating in classic Greek literature, sloth, or *acedia*, means "lack of care" or "apathy." Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 6. Schimmel notes, "The opposite of sloth is zeal and joy in service to God and in the performance of religious and moral duties" (194). Discussed a great deal in monasticism by the likes of John Chrysostom, Athanasius of Alexandria, and Basil of Caesarea, *acedia* was a temptation that countless monks fought to overcome while performing various duties. Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 9-11. Those monks believed that sloth led to many other sins, which Gregory of Nyssa termed "daughters of *acedia*," and Thomas Aquinas even debated whether *acedia* was a mortal sin or the chief vice (50). Though the church fathers primarily focused on sloth as spiritual sin, given modern society, they would likely extend it to bodily sins. Therefore, the fruit of self-control exists as a key tactic to fight fleshly urges of ease, laziness, and apathy toward spiritual and physical matters. Medieval thought found sloth to be the foremost sin amidst the seven that dealt with direct offense against God. Sloth presents as humankind's "resistance to divinely imposed obligations" (198). Throughout church history, several remedies for slothfulness have been proposed, including serving others, singing, dancing, praying, or anything that moves the focus off of self. Instead of indifference, these purposeful practices turn one's eyes from one's dispirited, apathetic life toward worshipping a God who calls men and women to a life of kingdom-building self-forgetfulness, a reality that should inspire work, intentionality, and activity (211-12).

particularly threatens Christians as it directly opposes the kind of life that God ordained for embodied believers, a definite inclusion to a theology of the body.

Matthew 10:28

In Matthew 10:28, Jesus clearly pronounces that humans are body-and-soul beings and subject to the sovereign God. While Scripture "makes a distinction between these two aspects of humanity . . . , it never makes an ultimate division. In biblical terms, there is no such thing as a person who is not both a body and a soul together in one human being."[113] As material-and-immaterial beings, humans are ultimately accountable to their Creator, who retains the right over their physical and spiritual death. Though faced with a painful physical death in the present life, believers should not lose trust in God's sovereignty over temporal and eternal life. This reality is important to a theology of the body because it reminds humans who are prone to live independently from their Creator that even the body—including physical wellbeing—lies within the jurisdiction of the One who made all things. Therefore, the whole of one's life is lived before God in reverent fear.

Romans 6:12-13

Paul aims in Romans 6:12-13 to "depict the transition" from the believer who is ruled by sin and death to the believer who is submitted to righteous living.[114] He confirms sanctification as a bodily event.[115] If the body is a conduit of sinful action, then

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[113] Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 192.

[114] Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2015), 340.

[115] Herman Bavinck explains this very concept, saying, "From now on we offer the members of our body and the self as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13) to God unto sanctification (v. 19) . . . . That is to say: the entire organism of our personality (soul, spirit, body, etc.) must be an instrument of righteousness, governed by the Spirit and not by the flesh." Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics*, vol. 1, *Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*, ed. and trans. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 349.

upon redemption, it can be devoted to God as a conduit of righteous behavior. The command not to let sin reign in the body infers the converse—that sin naturally *does* reign in the fallen body. Equally, Paul's command for believers to not present their body's members to sin indicates that the normal occurrence in a fallen world is the bodily expression of disobedience. The remedy is not disdain for the body—a common Christian error that I address in the next chapter. The command speaks to the depth of sin's depravity that affects every part of the human being. This reality is necessary to a theology of the body as it reveals humanity's need for comprehensive renewal—spiritual and physical, soul and body. Believers are able to not let sin reign in their bodies. The transition from death to life transpires spiritually with physical expression.

Even more, God bids Christians to live an active faith. The commands of holy living pertain to cognitive, perceptual, and behavioral obedience. Each aspect plays out via the body; "though it is not the initiator, the body is certainly not a bystander in the struggle called sanctification."[116] Determination of the body, not only intention of the soul, serves as a critical component in the fight for holiness.[117]

Romans 12:1-2

Owing to God's incredible mercies explained in the preceding eleven chapters, Romans 12 begins with a charge for believers to present themselves to God. Paul explicitly calls for submission of the physical body as he proceeds to summon believers to renew their mind in the following verse. Therefore, Christians must avoid the compartmentalization of faith to merely spiritual matters. Paul specifically links body and soul, stating the surrender of the body as a manifestation of spiritual worship. Here is the instruction for a robust theology of the body—the Lord is glorified in the surrender of

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[116] Edward T. Welch, *Counselor's Guide to the Brain and Its Disorders: Knowing the Difference between Disease and Sin* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 39.

[117] See appendix 2 ("Paul's Concept of Activity").

embodied existence because it involves the deliberate decision to give back to the Lord what he already claims. Surely, in Robert Gundry's words, "Paul singles out the physical body for consecration to God . . . and singles out the mind for divine renewal. Neither term alone comprehends man's being. Together they do."[118] A yielded embodied experience stands in contrast to the world as it is driven by transformed thinking lived out through one's corporeity.[119]

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

A well-informed theology of the body recognizes that believers are continuous embodied examples of Christ. Therefore, the manner in which one runs the race of faith may jeopardize one's testimony before others. Paul likens the Christian life to a race where runners compete for a prize. If the athlete desires to win, she will display self-control in all things for her goal of a temporary, perishable reward. Likewise, Paul argues, the Christian, who has an eternal and imperishable reward, possesses all the more reason to exercise self-control to obtain the prize.[120] Paul lives with intention to obtain the prize, an intent that compels him to beat, buffet, or discipline (*hypōpiazō*) his body. Guesses abound as to what Paul specifically means by *hypōpiazō*, but the point of application is clear. For the progress of sanctification, management of the body becomes imperative. Plainly, holiness advances through self-discipline. Paul removes obstacles of sin by beating his body to render it his slave rather than face enslavement to fleshly passions. To

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[118] Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 36.

[119] Wayne Grudem extends this passage further. Affirming that the Holy Spirit works through the body to minister to others, he claims, "Our physical health is important. So we should take reasonable care of our bodies in order to make them effective instruments for the Holy Spirit to work through in this life. The strength of our bodies is something that we can present to God as an offering to be used in service to him." Wayne Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 657. Therefore, in Grudem's estimation, believers aim to present themselves to the Lord spiritually and physically healthy.

[120] Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 82.

be clear, "This is not asceticism . . . ; rather it is Paul's spiritual preparation to combat the tactics of Satan that prey on the natural weaknesses and desires of the body."[121] Given the race's duration and difficultly, Paul advocates a pattern of participation, one in which the body plays an integral role. Practicing holiness mandates control over the body, not only for one's personal faith but also for one's testimony to others.[122] This reality encompasses another important concept for a theology of the body.

1 Corinthians 10:31

A theology of the body recognizes the command to glorify God in all things (1 Cor 10:31), which even pertains to bodily activities that seem irrelevant and are often done unconsciously. While the context of Paul's statement deals with Christian freedom and food sacrificed to idols, there is a greater principle for application—that "everything must be to the glory of God," even one's "conduct in nonessential matters."[123] Gordon Fee labels this command a "rule" that helps define and "dictate the appropriateness" of every action. Therefore, whatever "is not or, cannot be, for God's glory probably should be excluded from whatever you do."[124] This rule is critical to a robust theology of the body because it shows that nothing is inconsequential. If all behaviors should glorify God,

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[121] Welch, *Counselor's Guide to the Brain and Its Disorders*, 40.

[122] These verses contain a practical point of application for Southern Baptists. The foremost sending agency of evangelical missionaries is the International Mission Board (IMB). In recent years, the IMB has adopted a body mass index (BMI) standard because some applicants who desire to share the gospel internationally are not in a physical state conducive to this international effort. So, out of necessity, the IMB has included this measurement of one's weight compared to one's height in order to evaluate prospective missionaries' physical qualification for service. If those called to the mission field fail to meet this standard, they are declared ineligible, or disqualified, from being sent out as ambassadors for Christ. It would seem safe to assume that Paul's point extends to this issue.

[123] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 488.

[124] Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 488.

specifically menial actions like eating and drinking, then one's entire embodied existence matters. Truly, no area of life remains where God is not zealous for his glory.[125]

1 Corinthians 15

Resurrection pertains to a theology of the body as it confirms an eternal embodied existence for humankind. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul clarifies the body's everlasting existence to establish its present and future worth, as many believers were unconvinced of their own resurrection (15:12). Though believing in Christ's resurrection, they were skeptical of their own resurrection. Influenced by the Gnostic culture around them, the Corinthians found abhorrent and intolerable the conception of an actual physical resurrection. Likely, "the exaggerated spiritualism of the Greeks which saw man's whole perfection and beatitude in the soul and was unable to see the usefulness of the body in this area."[126] Paul, however, let the Corinthians know that it was incongruent to disbelieve their own resurrection while believing in a resurrected Christ, as the doctrine of resurrection assures triumph over death and is thus an emphatic tenet of Christianity (15:14, 55). The Christian faith withers without hope in a bodily resurrection. The spiritual renewal occurring in salvation is a renewal that encompasses, not repudiates, the physical.[127]

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[125] Again, body stewardship is relevant. Protestants bear a negative witness of body stewardship to an unbelieving world, which is largely healthier than the church. The world perceives the way Christians treat their bodies and makes assumptions about the faith based on Christians' body stewardship or lack thereof.

[126] Vagaggini, *The Flesh*, *Instrument of Salvation*, 22. The denial of bodily resurrection "was probably accompanied by an eschatological view that said believers experienced a spiritual resurrection at the moment they believed or were baptized. But in the Corinthians' view, believers were to expect no future bodily resurrection." Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Lion and the Lamb: New Testament Essentials from* The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 197.

[127] According to Fee, "The problem is that the Corinthians believed that they had already assumed the heavenly existence that was to be, an existence in the Spirit that discounted earthly existence both in its physical and in its behavioral expressions. What Paul appears to be doing once again is refuting both notions." Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 795.

2 Corinthians 5:1-9

In 2 Corinthians 5:1-9, speaking of coming resurrection and the body's vulnerability to death and decay, Paul addresses the intermediate state, a concept that receives further treatment in the next chapter. Paul groans in his present body, for he longs to be with Lord in a glorious body. The "clothing event" described in verse 4 is the "complete transformation of what is perishable to what is imperishable."[128] The experience of the indwelling Spirit serves as a promise and guarantee of this total transformation, which begins upon regeneration and progresses while in the body. This transformation fully manifests when glorified believers are further clothed in their resurrection body.[129] Bridging this tension is a temporary time of disembodiment or nakedness—a notion that Paul is wary of but that some Corinthians found desirable.[130] If being clothed refers to bodily existence, then being unclothed must mean "a soul stripped of its body."[131] For a theology of the body, this passage explains the temporal nature of the intermediate state and the condition of disembodiment. These realities ultimately teach that body and soul are two distinct yet unified constituents of humanity, except during the abnormal disembodied intermediate state.

Galatians 5:22-23

The list of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) stands in contrast to the preceding list of the works of the flesh (vv. 16-17, 19). Paul calls on believers to walk by the Spirit and live out his fruit. "The clear teaching is that disobedience is what is intrinsic to sinful people, and obedient righteousness is what is intrinsic to the Spirit.

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[128] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 263.

[129] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 263.

[130] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 259.

[131] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 260.

When we obey, that is the fruit of the work of the Spirit, not due to our own moral effort."[132] God equips believers with the fruit of the Spirit, evidence that he must produce these qualities in them.[133] Of these fruits, one prevails as highly instructive to a discussion of the body—self-control.[134] These verses naturally fit with a theology of the body because Christians are to embody holiness, expressing it through embodied existence. The fruit of self-control serves as the means to do so.[135]

This fruit applies to fighting areas of sin as well as to the expression of control over God's good gifts, which frequently become idols. The employment of self-control inevitably means forcing oneself against a natural inclination. But, by the grace given through the Spirit, Christians possess all of the abilities needed to enact control over any weakness or struggle. Reliance on the Spirit becomes imperative in efforts to steward the body. A theology of the body recognizes the necessity of self-control in the pursuit of holiness to combat all sorts of bodily sins and temptations.

Philippians 3:19

Scripture often characterizes people as gluttonous.[136] Gluttony is best defined as "the immoderate consumption of food arising from the unchecked appetite for

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[132] Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*, 170.

[133] Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 363.

[134] An in-depth discussion of self-control follows in chap. 4.

[135] Some believe the fruit of self-control receives little mention in both Testaments, but I disagree with this assessment. Moo, *Galatians*, 366. Many sins discussed in Proverbs result from a lack of self-control. Though the quality may not be explicitly stated, it lies inherent in the sins condemned. Some proverbs demonstrating the lack of self-control are as follows: the chattering fool that comes to ruin (10:10), the gossip who betrays a friend (11:13), the lazy person who becomes a slave (12:24), the quick-tempered man who is foolish (14:17), the greedy man who brings trouble (15:27), the sluggard who fails to provide for himself (19:24), and the drunkards and gluttons who become poor (23:21). While more examples exist, each of the ones mentioned are the antithesis of wisdom, which is rooted in self-control. Not to mention, in the downfall of Eglon, king of Moab, and Eli, the priest of Israel, the biblical text describes the men by their weight, a typical manifestation of lacking self-control (see Judg 3:17-22; 1 Sam 4:18). I examine Paul's mention of self-control in chap. 4.

[136] King Eglon of Moab is described as having a fat belly, which is precisely where judge Ehud stabbed him and likely not a coincidence (Judg 3:12-20). Eli's evil sons were gluttonous in their

something more than, or other than, what the Lord has provided and is therefore judged a sin by God."[137] Typically associated with drunkenness, the Bible displays gluttony as an undesirable, revolting quality.[138] In Philippians 3:19, the enemies of Christ and those destined to destruction fall prey to their stomachs. Driven by their godless appetites, they glory in their shame. Gluttony goes beyond eating and drinking too much. Instead of finding satisfaction in God alone, a glutton seeks satisfaction in other forms. One's appetite for more exerts control over the will and is certainly not led by the Spirit. The glutton not only lacks self-control but also fails to understand how his choices affect his body.[139] A theology of the body condemns bodily sins like gluttony.

Philippians 3:21

Confident anticipation of the lowly body's transformation into a glorious body like Christ's (Phil 3:21) must be incorporated into a theology of the body. Christ's life and victory over sin and death "will be the power that transforms this same mortal flesh into a glorious body conformed to his image."[140] The power behind the surety of this bodily renovation is the same power that renders all things subject to Christ. David Garland explains, "This body weighed down and wasting away will be transformed, such that those who are in Christ will have their decrepit, decaying outer frames replaced with

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dishonorable desire for meat (1 Sam 2:12-17). Eli himself is even described as a heavy man (1 Sam 4:18). Other associated are Deut 21:20; Prov 23:2, 21; Ezek 16:49; Titus 1:12.

[137] Jeff Olson, "Once a Deadly Sin: A Contemporary Assessment of the Sin of Gluttony" (ThM thesis, Western Seminary, 2000), 22.

[138] See Deut 21:20; Prov 23:21; Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34.

[139] Schimmel provides a good assessment of what Christian's need in this regard. He believes "we need moral guidelines for the consumption of food and strategies for implementing them if we are to assert control over this important area of our lives. Otherwise we succumb to our hedonistic impulses to their manipulation by those interested only in marketing their wares but not in our physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare." Schimmel, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, 140.

[140] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 262. Furthermore, as Gregg Allison and Andreas Köstenberger point out, the Spirit who raised and transformed Christ will also give life to the believer's body. Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 173.

an eternal glory beyond imaging."[141] Resurrection perfects salvation, partial in the present body but possessing the guarantee of a future full alteration into the likeness of Christ.

1 Timothy 4:7-8

In this text, Paul explicitly states that physical training possesses some value but that godliness is valuable in every way, presently and eternally (1 Tim 4:7-8). Towner defines the implications of godliness as, "that holistic life encompassing faith and visible behavior," which clearly portrays the importance of embodiment and godliness.[142] Lea and Griffin explain that Paul believed "genuine godliness involved both right belief and obedient action. Godly habits would not appear without determined human purpose and effort."[143] Accordingly, a theology of the body understands that advancing in godliness requires effort from the whole embodied person. Furthermore, it is biblically unwarranted to suggest this text dismisses exercise.[144] To train for godliness, which is of highest value, does not imply the neglect of physical activity for sole focus on spiritual matters. Paul's mention of physical training is unnecessary to his overall point making its inclusion is noteworthy. A theology of the body recognizes the extremes of an exclusive spiritual pursuit and an idolatrous obsession with physical improvement; therefore, with sober prioritization, believers properly seek the benefits of both spiritual and physical fitness.

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[141] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 262-63.

[142] Philip H. Towner, *The First Letter to Timothy*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 306.

[143] Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 134.

[144] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 134.

Titus

Throughout his letter to Titus, Paul explicitly mentions the quality of self-control five times to overseers, older men and women, younger men, and all believers (1:8, 2:2, 2:5, 2:6, 2:12). In order to lead well and be godly, one must live under control, a characteristic "central to the description of Christian behavior in Titus."[145] To lack self-control means enslavement to all kinds of passions and pleasures (3:3), a lifestyle opposed to the "mastery of mind, emotions, words, and deeds."[146] Thus, Paul expects the congregation in Crete to be self-controlled in direct contradistinction to the Cretans whom he labels lazy gluttons (1:12). Because laziness and gluttony are fruits of unrestrained living, the juxtaposition here is critical. Paul calls on the overseers and all believers to live differently than the brutish Cretans who lack any semblance of self-control and temperance. A theology of the body understands self-control as a quality that visibly differentiates the lives of believers and unbelievers.

Summary

While not meant as an exhaustive commentary on Scripture's reference of the body, this section recognized the body's significance discussed throughout the pages of Scripture. The passages surveyed necessitate a deeper understanding of bodily life, one that recognizes its importance to the Christian faith.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented various constructions of a theology of the body from Pope John Paul II, Luke Timothy Johnson, Ola Sigurdson, Timothy C. Tennent, John W. Kleinig, and Gregg R. Allison. Then, I highlighted several biblical texts, for the formation of a God-honoring body image must consider Scripture's address of the body.

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[145] Philip H. Towner, *The Letter to Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 688.

[146] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 284.

Whether from ignorance or negligence, for the church to deride the body as evil or insignificant is a denial of God's Word. Sadly, devaluing the body has been the tendency since New Testament times, as the next chapter illuminates.

CHAPTER 2

EMBODIMENT

As the natural form of humanity, embodiment involves the constitution of a unified person who is both immaterial soul and material body. More specifically, Justin Smith renders embodiment as "having, being in, or being associated with a body," and this state "is a feature of the existence of many entities, perhaps even of all entities."[1] Embodied reality is God's intent, as the world he created features physical existence. Experiential knowledge depends on the body, for by it, humans see, hear, feel, taste, smell, and touch. Hillary McBride espouses a similar version of embodiment: "Through our body, we can know the world, what it is to feel, to be a self, which ultimately contributes to and is the source of our aliveness."[2] Included in the discussion of embodiment, therefore, is attention to the "lived embodied experience," which is a universal human reality.[3] Corporeality remains one commonality of all people residing all over the world for all time.

Embodiment logically links to a theology of the body because Scripture speaks to both immaterial and material existence. Gregg Allison explains, "The body is the

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[1] Justin E. H. Smith, ed., *Embodiment: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.

[2] Hillary L. McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," in *Embodiment and Eating Disorders: Theory, Research, Prevention, and Treatment*, ed. Hillary L. McBride and Janelle L. Kwee (New York: Routledge, 2019), 10. Other psychologists view embodiment as "the engagement of the body with the world, wherein the mind and body are inextricably linked and reciprocally influence one another." Mihaela Launeanu and Janelle L. Kwee, "Embodiment: A Non-Dualistic and Existential Perspective on Understanding and Treating Disordered Eating," in McBride and Kwee, *Embodiment and Eating Disorders*, 35.

[3] Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2021), 17.

material component of human nature distinct from—but intimately linked with—the immaterial component, commonly called the soul (or spirit)."[4] There is no biblical basis for prizing soul above body, for each aspect relies on the other. A physical body and spiritual soul serve as equal prerequisites for being human, and the embodied person is a distinctive, marvelous creation.[5] As evidenced in the prior chapter, God's Word commends the body's value, detailing the purposes behind embodied life that further inform a theology of the body.

Both intentional design and wondrous purpose lie behind an operational soul's expressing itself through a functional historical body. Benedict Ashley writes, "It is by our bodies we exist in the flow of historical time."[6] This is a fairly obvious statement, but the body still gets underappreciated due to its normality. The body is common; therefore, it is prone to be forgotten, even reviled.[7] Oftentimes, the body receives little attention until it malfunctions from illness or injury.[8] But as seen in chapter 1, Scripture makes

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[4] Gregg R. Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 5.

[5] Albert Martin advises believers "to accept the reality that you have a bodily existence and an emotional constitution. Furthermore, you must have a proper anthropology which looks that reality straight in the face and responsibly seeks to do what must be done to keep this psychosomatic entity in optimum strength, health, and vigor." Albert N. Martin, *The Man of God: His Calling and Godly Life*, *Pastoral Theology*, vol. 1 (Montville, NJ: Trinity Pulpit Press, 2018), 307.

[6] Benedict M. Ashley, *Theologies of the Body: Humanist and Christian* (St. Louis, MO: National Catholic Bioethics Center, 1985), 215.

[7] John Kleinig agrees and bemoans the state of attentiveness to the body: "It seems to be most people do not regard their bodies highly enough. They underrate and despise their bodies. Because they are in thrall to the image of an ideal body, the body beautiful, they do not appreciate how amazing and wonderful they actually are. They belittle their bodies for their idiosyncrasies and supposed imperfections." John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 5. For purposes of this work, I find it interesting how Kleinig ties in the language of negative body image. While I do not place blame on negative body image for not prizing the body highly enough (instead, I place blame on a biblical misunderstanding of the body's value), Kleinig's assertion blends well with my overall goal.

[8] Regarding physical health and acknowledgement of the body, the following assessment connects the two: "For those of us who are able-bodied, it may have been possible for a time for us to remain unconscious of our embodiment or repress it altogether, leading to a dissociated self within the body; it is the sensations of pain or dis-ease which most often require a person to notice their body in a way that they may not have before." McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," 11.

definitive statements about the body that instruct Christians about daily life as embodied beings and show that their physicality matters. John Kleinig articulates the body's value well:

> The body matters much more than we usually imagine it does. It matters because it locates us in time and space here on earth. It matters because we live in it and with it. It matters because through it we interact with the world around us, the people who coexist with us, and the living God who keeps us physically alive in it. It matters even though it is so fragile and so easily damaged. It matters even though we rebel against our Creator and abuse our fellow creatures on earth. It matters even though it is finite and doomed to die. Most of all, it matters to us because it matters so much to God.[9]

Even more, Christianity finds expression through the body; it is an embodied faith.[10] God calls embodied believers to spread the gospel and propagate his kingdom. Regrettably, however, the church has historically elevated the soul and diminished the body, a reality that this chapter treats. As a result, insufficient knowledge of embodied reality continues today.[11] The solution is a well-informed theology of human embodiment. Timothy Tennent exhorts that "a robust theology of the body must necessarily resist the modern encroachments of new gnostic beliefs in the church—namely, anything that pits the feelings of the inner life against the clear message of our embodied material creation,

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[9] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 13.

[10] Wayne Grudem summarizes this belief:

> When we sing praise to God, we use our voices. When we do evangelism, we use our voice to share the good news, our mind to think, and our ears to listen to the other person's responses. When we pray, we use our physical voices, or if we pray silently, we at least use our brain cells. Bible teaching uses a person's voice . . . . Ministries of mercy often involve carrying food to those in need or physically going to a hospital room to visit someone who is sick. Parents use the strength of their physical bodies to care for their children, and people who work in secular jobs use their bodies as they "work heartily as for the Lord and not for men" (Col 3:23). (Wayne Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018], 657)

Kleinig aptly states Christian spirituality as "embodied piety." Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 4.

[11] Gnosticism, which I treat in this chapter, perpetuates today with ill effects on the body. According to Allison, "Neo-Gnosticism . . . continues to infect the church, leading to disregard for, distancing oneself from, or disparagement of the body." Allison, *Embodied*, 28.

a creation God has called good and holy."[12] These are important issues concerning the deliberation of human nature.

Embodiment coheres with a conversation regarding theological anthropology, or the Christian's understanding of human constitution. Put in the form of a question, "What kind of metaphysical entity must a human person *be* in order to be capable of the kinds of things the Bible says about us?"[13] This chapter discusses two philosophical positions on the nature of humankind: monism and dualism. Monism determines human nature in one part (*either* the material part *or* the immaterial part), while dualism determines human nature in two parts (the material body and immaterial soul).[14] Despite being contrasting viewpoints, both claim proponents throughout Christianity because no exact philosophical definition of the human person is found in Scripture, though some anthropological conclusions are embedded.[15]

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[12] Timothy C. Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 28. Naturally, anthropology connects to embodiment, which is an additional weak point in evangelicalism. To this point, Anthony Hoekema notes that Scripture does not provide "an exact, scientific psychology or anthropology." Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (1986; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 204. While true, the lack of a precise anthropology in Scripture does not mean that efforts to distill truths regarding humanity are superfluous. These are important steps to mitigating Christian misunderstanding of the body—and even the Christian faith as a whole. Cipriano Vagaggini speaks to this concern:

> Anthropology is thus a determining factor in Christology, sacramentology, and the liturgy . . . . Thus if we have a poor understanding of man and his way of behaving, we shut ourselves off from an understanding of God's way of acting towards men, and the way in which he requires man to act towards him. This means that we would find ourselves cut off from the means of understanding the economy of salvation willed by God: from the incarnation through Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, the sacraments, moral, asceticism, and mysticism. (Cipriano Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation: A Theology of the Human Body* [Staten Island: Alba House, 1969], 129)

[13] Richard J. Mouw, "The Relevance of Biblical Eschatology," in *The Christian Doctrine of Humanity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 62.

[14] Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5.

[15] John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 180. Hans Madueme maintains, "Jesus and the apostles did not engage in metaphysical speculation. Nowhere does their teaching lay out an explicit philosophical anthropology. But the biblical language has an implicit anthropology." Hans Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," in Crisp and Sanders, *The Christian Doctrine of Humanity*, 84.

In what follows, I first engage and critique monism while also discussing monistic beliefs on the afterlife. Then, I treat dualist constructions of humanity from the teachings of Platonism, Gnosticism, and asceticism, which have infiltrated the church and disparaged the body. Ultimately, I argue for the biblical conception of embodied humanity as a holistic dualism, which reclaims the body's value as equivalent to the soul and proves the need of an intermediate state.[16]

Monism

On human composition, monism presumes there are no distinguishing aspects. Several forms of monism exist (e.g., materialistic, idealistic, neutral), but here I emphasize materialism. Materialists propose that humans are "composed essentially of material parts and that there are no immaterial parts."[17] Understood as the primary belief in the contemporary West, monism "finds dualism implausible given current science and the physical understanding of the world" and specifically highlights "neuroscience and the intimate connection between the mind and the brain."[18] Furthermore, there seems to

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[16] According to Joshua Farris, "John Cooper's work is the most thorough biblical defense of dualism (e.g. substance dualism, Thomist dualism) in the literature to date . . . . By carefully working through Old Testament, intertestamental, New Testament, and ancient writings, Cooper shows quite plainly that the metaphysical implication of the biblical data is dualism, not monism." Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 288.

[17] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 2.

[18] Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," 71; see also Pyne, *Humanity and Sin: Creation, Fall, and Redemption of Humanity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 77. Consider also the following assessment from Brown and Strawn: "Given the current state of knowledge in neurology and neuroscience, it is no longer necessary to attribute rationality, relationality, morality, or even religious life to the presence of a nonmaterial soul, simply because we can't imagine how a physical system would do this." Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*, 47.

Materialists rely on science to claim their view over dualism because they understand the brain as a closed system. As Cooper avers, "There is no toehold for mind or spirit to influence the brain. Furthermore, science can completely explain brain events in terms of other brain events, leaving no role for the mysterious causality of the mind. Because the brain is complete, neither soul nor mind nor exclusively mental events can influence it." Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 208. Further, Cooper contrasts the materialist statements, saying, "The mind could influence brain without actually supplying the physical processes with any new energy or introducing anything foreign on the level of causal physiological examination." He goes on to assure the Christian "who is convinced that Scripture implies dualism need not be double-minded when it comes to the scientific analysis of human constitution" (209).

be a growing push to connect claims of substance dualism strictly to Greek philosophies, denying any dualistic tenor in Scripture.[19] Instead, the soul is understood according the following statement on human distinction:

> Thus, what is inside us that accounts for our distinctiveness as humankind is not an immaterial thing, such as a soul, that is separate from our bodies and needs a particular form of spiritual care and nurture. Rather, inside us are myriad complex physical functions and processes, shaped both by our physical development and by our history of personal experiences. These functions and processes contribute bits and pieces to who we are as rational, social, moral, and religious whole-physical persons capable of interacting with the physical, social, and spiritual world within which we are embedded.[20]

Materialism therefore sees humans as purely material beings, with emotional, spiritual, or mental aspects attributed to biological processes. Behaviors like "thoughts, memories, feelings of love, ethical decisions, value judgments, and even faith in Jesus Christ" are attributed "by recourse to physiological processes in the brain and central nervous system."[21] However, the reductionist nature of materialism is antithetical to Scripture, as it "reduces all components of the human person to atoms and molecules, an approach that accounts for only one-half of the process described in Genesis 2:7," where an immaterial element of humanity is evident.[22] Joshua Farris adds,

> The author of Genesis 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. The 'breath' spoken of can be naturally read in light of the larger canon of Scripture as the soul that God creates and is unique highlighted in contrast to the rest of God's creation, signifying the fact that God is adding something new.[23]

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[19] Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*, 8.

[20] Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*, 47.

[21] Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 322.

[22] James R. Beck and Bruce A. Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology: A Biblical Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 203. See also Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 20.

[23] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 20.

Materialists see these passages as "read into" by their opponents; therefore, they reject that there is something other than the body.[24]

Typically, this belief is also accompanied by a denial of God and the creation of humans in the *imago Dei*. Rather than viewing thoughts or beliefs as the inner working and "essential feature of an immaterial substance," materialists understand them as "the result of the conjunctions . . . of the body's internal motions."[25] Many materialists are atheists who believe the notion of an embodied soul to be archaic, and such a belief either fuels or perpetuates disbelief in God. Perhaps surprisingly, "they are joined by many believing philosophers, theologians, and biblical scholars who urge dualism to die so that a Christian materialism can rise from the ashes."[26]

Additionally, materialism cannot support a biblical eschatology unless it stretches the limits of its perspective. As materialism asserts, one's mind is also understood as the brain; therefore, if the brain dies, the mind dies. If true, then the person ceases to exist at death, which is a complete rejection of the Scriptures that address life after death.[27] Were life discontinuous before experiencing resurrection, then "Christ failed to keep his promise to abide with us always."[28] Consequently, materialism has to deny the biblical teaching on the intermediate state, which requires transitory disembodiment. Speaking of the reasonable, obligatory link between dualism and the intermediate state, Farris comments, "We are not reducible to our bodies or captured by

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[24] Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of the Christian Life*, 17.

[25] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 17.

[26] Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," 70. See Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Maloney, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, Theology and the Sciences (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998); Kevin Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); and Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

[27] Pyne, *Humanity and Sin*, 80.

[28] Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," 89.

the bodies we inhabit and through which we experience the world. We are commonsensically distinct from our bodies."[29] Materialism can make no such claim.

Still, in attempts to retain the biblical belief of resurrection, Christian materialists adopt one of two notions, either immediate resurrection or extinction re-creation.[30] Both concepts, however, contradict the intermediate state and provide unsatisfactory accounts of "personal identity at the resurrection."[31] Still, materialists suggest these as viable after death options. I now treat these alternative resurrection views as well as other postmortem positions regarding the soul rooted in monism.[32]

Immediate Resurrection

The immediate resurrection position postulates that "humans, upon somatic death, are resurrected."[33] As Pyne summarizes, the coming apart of body and soul is avoided.[34] Conjecture on the method and means of this transformation differs. Some believe that Christians enter a new dimension involving a new conception of time. Others surmise a complete transcendence of time for those who have passed away. Either way, "the transition is instantaneous."[35] In order to steer away from a death-mandated dualism, this view spiritualizes the resurrection of believers at the time of Christ's parousia.[36]

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[29] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 25.

[30] Farris classifies immediate resurrection, extinction re-creation, and soul sleep as mere resurrection views, which involves understanding "humans as solely material creations of God and the nature of hope as material resurrection." Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 238.

[31] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 231.

[32] While the following positions are largely based on a monistic philosophy, a few dualists prescribe to some of these views. Based on the Old Testament witness, these advocates "see humans as whole embodied beings, visible and functioning as one unit, which would seem to exclude a disembodied state of creaturely existence." Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 242.

[33] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 2.

[34] Pyne, *Humanity and Sin*, 80.

[35] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 106.

[36] For more on immediate resurrection, see Murray J. Harris, *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 185-230.

Farris explains that supporters of immediate resurrection deal with biblical evidence between death and resurrection by "collapsing the intermediate state into resurrection."[37] Thus, there is no need for a state of disembodied existence.

Extinction Re-Creation

Proponents of the extinction re-creation viewpoint reckon that being somatic creatures, persons cease to exist upon death, which means God must supply a re-created resurrection body.[38] Pyne comments that these proponents even believe a person is fitted with the same memories as the former body/soul unit.[39] This view seems even more extreme than immediate resurrection as its advocates go to great lengths to avoid the separation of soul from body at death. Essentially, "the human being as a whole has been annihilated by death and is extinct . . . , so resurrection really amounts to re-creation after a period of non-existence."[40] Thus, extinction precedes re-creation, which in no way reflects the biblical text.

Other Postmortem Beliefs

Monism is the underlying assumption behind the following views on the soul's destination after death. Were humans a dual substance, none of these arguments would cohere with the basic human makeup and thus would be negated. However, in order to

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[37] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 241.

[38] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 239. Nancey Murphy's view on non-reductive physicalism is one such position that denies an intermediate state and supports resurrection as re-creation. According to non-reductive physicalism, "the person is a physical organism whose complex functioning, both in society and in relation to God, gives rise to 'higher' human capacities such as morality and spirituality." Nancey Murphy, "Human Nature: Historical, Scientific, and Religious Issues," in Brown, Murphy, and Maloney, *Whatever Happened to the Soul?*, 25. According to Murphy, this view should be accepted over holistic dualism because "it is clearly more compatible with developments in science and philosophy."

[39] Pyne, *Humanity and Sin*, 80.

[40] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 107. In Murphy's estimation, "the entire person simply disintegrates at death to be recreated by God at the general resurrection." Murphy, "Human Nature," 23.

maintain its monistic understanding of humanity, each view explicitly denies the biblical intermediate state. Preferring the term "immortality" to "resurrection," some monists believe that "our whole line of thought points to the immortality of the soul and its values rather than to the resurrection of the dead."[41] Similarly, belief in the "persistence of personality through death . . . , not in the resurrection of the flesh," drives these understandings of life after death.

Soul sleep. Soul sleep holds that "persons in the afterlife exist in the mind of God or something similar."[42] According to this view, believers remain unconscious after death until Christ's return, when upon resurrection, they are once again conscious.[43] Proponents embrace this view from a variety of biblical passages that refer to the dead as being asleep (e.g., Jer 51:39; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor 15:18). Wayne Grudem explains that these references to sleep merely communicate that death is not permanent.[44] To avoid occult practices, Seventh-Day Adventists hold to soul sleep, fearing that to believe otherwise may lead some to attempt communication with those who have passed on. As Beck and Demarest note, some supporters of soul sleep even refer to the person as extinct, revealing its clear connection to monism.[45] Farris deems this reflection most accurate given that the soul sleep understanding is "simply affirming that the soul/person ceases to exist."[46] Not to mention, this view is akin to cessation and must be discredited as

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[41] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 47.

[42] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 239.

[43] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Leicester, UK: Zondervan, 2020), 1008. Regarding soul sleep, Stephen T. Davis shrewdly comments that "since sleeping is essentially a bodily activity, it seems incoherent to suggest that a disembodied soul could sleep." Stephen T. Davis, *After We Die: Theology, Philosophy, and the Question of Life after Death* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 61.

[44] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1009.

[45] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 50-51.

[46] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 239.

Scripture describes the believer's soul as enjoying immediate consciousness with God at death (Luke 23:43, Phil 1:23, Rev 6:9-11).[47]

Cessation. Cessationists view this present life as final, which follows monist belief that existence ends in death. At death, the soul terminates and the body decays, "return[ing] to the earth to be recycled by natural processes."[48] Nothing remains. Life is over. Secularization, modernism, and scientific advances champion this belief, considering Christian assertions on life after death antiquated and naïve.[49] Those who profess the faith yet hold to cessation stake their claims on texts such as Genesis 3:19 and Ecclesiastes 3:19-20. Though the "death-ends-all theory sits outside the boundaries of Christian afterlife," these monists are certain that human existence ceases upon death.[50]

Annihilationism. Annihilationists believe in the termination of unbelievers, akin to monist belief that death ends existence. Proponents object to the judgment of hellfire as the eternal display of God's wrath against sinners. Assessing this view as inconsistent with a loving and good God, annihilationists believe that God will simply annihilate unbelievers to spare them from wrath and judgment. Those who go to hell "will be gone, entirely and eternally. For everyone who continued throughout life in opposition to God, 'hell' will have become the 'final word.'"[51] John Stott encourages openness "to the possibility that Scripture points in the direction of annihilation, and that 'eternal conscious torment' is a tradition which has to yield to the supreme authority of

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[47] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1010.

[48] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 47.

[49] Notions like these are seen throughout the *Humanist Manifestos I* (1933), *II* (1973), *III* (2003).

[50] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 235; Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 47-48.

[51] Edward W. Fudge, *Hell: A Final Word* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood, 2012), 17.

Scripture."[52] He bases his claim on three key points. First, he alludes to Scripture's reference of hellfire as consuming instead of as a source of continual pain (Matt 5:22; Rev 20:15). Second, he finds it incongruent that people would face infinite punishment for a finite period of sins. Third, he holds that if God is fully victorious over evil, then there is no need for an eternity of wrath poured out against sinners (Eph 1:10).[53] Given other texts that address an eternal destruction that does not indicate termination, it is clear the annihilationist fails to apply a consistent hermeneutic (Matt 8:12; 25:30; 2 Thess 1:9; Jude 6).

Summary

As evidenced above, Scripture does not support the argument for a monistic constitution of embodied humanity, nor does monism lead to biblical renderings of the afterlife. Instead, a proper anthropological understanding of Scripture indicates some sort of dualistic construction given the reality of the body, soul, and promised resurrection. I am examine this construction in the following section.

Dualism

Generally, dualists believe in a two-part ontological constitution of humanity: body and soul, material and immaterial, physical and spiritual. Farris supplies useful

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[52] John R. W. Stott, "The Gospel for the World: Response," in *Evangelical Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*, ed. David L. Edwards (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 315.

[53] Stott, "The Gospel for the World: Response," 315. Stott represents a slight variation in annihilationism called "conditional immortality." Proponents of this view base "our assertion that the right biblical frame for eschatology is ontological. From Genesis through to Revelation, we see that ongoing human life is a privilege able to be revoked, and that it was revoked when humankind was prevented from living forever (Gen 3:22). . . . The fact that the unsaved will be resurrected to face a final judgment . . . in no way demands that they will live eternally." Peter S. Grice, "Igniting an Evangelical Conversation," in *Rethinking Hell: Readings in Evangelical Conditionalism*, ed. Christopher M. Date, Gregory G. Stump, and Joshua W. Anderson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 8. This viewpoint proposes four "principle arguments: firstly the question of immortality, secondly the biblical vision of eternity, thirdly the theological explanation of the atoning death of Christ as a substitution, and finally the biblical description of the fate of the lost as destruction." Glenn A. Peoples, "Introduction to Evangelical Conditionalism," in Date, Stump, and Anderson, *Rethinking Hell*, 11.

reasoning for this assumption. Reflecting on the unique manner in which humans relate to God, he writes,

> The scriptural creation story highlights not merely this physically visible representation of human beings but also the importance of knowing, hearing, and seeing God (who is immaterial in nature). If the later narrative is correct by accurately representing the scripture story line on humans, then we have some reason to consider a wider or broader understanding of the creaturely story that allows for a telos that is inclusive of both soulish realities and bodily realities. Via this route through creaturely afterlife, we can indirectly come at a picture of humans.[54]

Historically, the church held to substance dualism or Aristotelian hylomorphism. Substance dualism understands the human as a rational soul and physical body, and hylomorphism views "the soul as the form of the body," where the "soul organizes matter to be a living body."[55] Like monism, there are numerous forms of dualism (e.g., axiological, anthropological, functional, religious, social).[56] The two most pertinent to this work are axiological dualism, which elevates soul over body, and anthropological dualism, which treats soul and body equally. This difference is a notable identifier. Anthropological dualism does not devalue the body like axiological dualism.

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[54] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 243. On his approach to affirming a type of dualism, Madueme locates his argument in hamartiology, as it coheres with the reality of sin more than a materialist or physicalist view. He writes, "The most plausible significance of the biblical language is that the volitional, moral core of humanity is not exhausted by the physical . . . . Human sinfulness is a problem that tracks deeper than our physical bodies. This problem inheres in our very souls . . . . Embodiment gives our sins a 'bodilly' character." Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," 85.

[55] Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," 72. Farris echoes dualism as the predominant view: "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." Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 2.

[56] I would be remiss not to include Cooper's warning against religious dualism. This type of dualistic thinking categorizes parts of life as spiritual and non-spiritual. Or perhaps it could be described kingdom work (essential) versus everything else (inconsequential). Cooper describes the faults of religious dualism thus:

> Twin dangers lurk in religious dualism. On one hand, Christians may overlook points at which biblical principles and the transforming power of the gospel can be brought to bear on important human activities. On the other, Christians might be blind to the ways in which these allegedly neutral areas are actually being shaped by un-Christian principles. By relying uncritically on what is historically available in academia, political opinion, economic values, business practices, popular culture, and lifestyle options, Christians may unwittingly surrender to the kingdom of this world, areas which Christ has claimed. Religious dualism would therefore lead to unholy alliances. (Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 182)

As such, the two are not connected. Even more, "there is nothing in the simple belief that persons exist temporarily without bodies which makes bodies less valuable."[57] Scripture demands a form of anthropological dualism, whereas axiological dualism has had devastating effects on the church. I now treat axiological dualism and anthropological dualism in turn.

Axiological Dualism

Axiological dualism unequivocally places a valuation on the soul that far outweighs the significance afforded to the body. Not only is the soul seen as possessing inherent worth, but the body is surmised as the source of evil.[58] Most axiological dualists liken the "difference between soul and body as the difference between good and evil."[59] Thus, immaterial and material are held in contention. According to this view, "matter is the principle of chaos, disharmony, decay, imperfection, and irrationality. The realm of the ideal and spiritual is just the opposite—rational, harmonious, perfect, and eternal."[60] Such a disparity is not alleviated until the soul is set free from the body in death.

While foreign to Scripture, this division between soul and body is commonplace throughout the church history.[61] According to John Cooper, "If there is evidence of Hellenistic religion and Greek philosophy in Christian views of human life, here it is."[62] Perhaps this overlap emanates from two major factors. First, the earliest Christians took the gospel into a world dominated by Hellenistic culture.[63] Second, Greek was the

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[57] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 186.

[58] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 185.

[59] Pyne, *Humanity and Sin*, 79.

[60] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 185.

[61] Mouw, "The Relevance of Biblical Eschatology," 63.

[62] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 185.

[63] Concerning this overlap, Deborah Beth Creamer writes, "The Judeo-Christian tradition(s) developed in a world that already had abundant assumptions and interpretations of the body. Plato

prevailing language for the New Testament writers as well as philosophical leaders; thus, interaction between Christian beliefs and Greek ideologies was inescapable. Charles Sherlock explains the ease by which these anthropological philosophies likely assimilated into Christianity:

> The particular element which stands out in these is the importance of the mind, the intellectual dimension of being human. Sometimes this led to a despising of the body, especially when linked to spiritualized notions of salvation. It is important not to overemphasize this, as if Greek philosophers were uninterested in the realities of daily life; much of their work was concerned with ethics and politics. It was the mind, however, that was generally understood to be the faculty which distinguishes human and animal natures and the means by which contact was made with the divine.[64]

With the mind seen by the ancients as the connection to the divine, it is clear how these thoughts blended with the spiritual focus of Christianity. However, the linkage of non-Christian anthropology with Christian belief caused detrimental effects on the church (as I show below). Pointedly, Cooper charges that "body-soul dualism hampers authentic Christian orthopraxis—proper and effective living."[65] Utilizing Francis Schaeffer's "two-story" framework, Nancy Pearcey echoes this sentiment and explains the resulting harm in the contemporary culture at large.[66] She claims, "This dualism has created a fractured, fragmented view of the human being, in which the body is treated as separate from the authentic self."[67] As she explains, this separation leads to

> a very low view of the human body, which ultimately dehumanizes all of us. For if our bodies do not have inherent value, then a key part of our identity is devalued.

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contributed much of what was further developed by Descartes, the separation of form and matter, body and soul, . . . that set up inescapable groundwork for Christian interpretations of embodiment and difference." Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 41.

[64] Charles Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 77.

[65] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 26.

[66] Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 12.

[67] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 14.

> What we will discover is that this same body/person dichotomy, with its denigration of the body, is the unspoken assumption driving secular views on euthanasia, sexuality, homosexuality, transgenderism, and a host of related ethical issues.[68]

If Cooper and Pearcey are correct regarding dualism and Christian practice, then the church would do well to reconsider human composition. I explore the indiscriminate relationship between Christianity and axiological dualism by focusing on the dominant influences of the church's anthropology, Platonism and Gnosticism, which both spawned the practice of asceticism. After covering these three views on human constitution, I defend the holistic dualism position.

Platonism. Greek philosopher Plato (428-348 BC) held that a person's real nature was located in the intellect.[69] He considered the material aspect of humanity to be an encumbrance to the immaterial aspect, believing that true liberation and salvation of the soul were achieved at death. Though the body dies, the real part of humanity continues, proving the soul a divine element, unlike the body.[70] Additionally, he saw people as possessing a rational and an irrational side. The rational side, located in the mind, suppressed irrational passionate appetites, found in the body. As Richard Mouw states, "The soul, in Platonism, is intrinsically immortal, belonging to the unchanging realm of noncorporeal Forms, while the body is of a lower reality, working to inhibit the soul's focus on the eternal."[71] By this thinking, spiritual virtue lies in physical denial. Given this strict dichotomy, in Anthony Hoekema's estimation, "the idea that the chief moral struggle of man is that between his reason and his appetites has its roots not in the

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[68] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 20.

[69] Plato, *The Timaeus*, 90 C.

[70] Plato, *Phaedo*; Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 2.

[71] Mouw, "The Relevance to Biblical Eschatology," 65.

Scriptures but in Greek thought."[72] Nevertheless, this philosophy was readily adopted by the church.

The acceptance of Platonic thought within the church, sometimes referred to as Christian Platonism, is pervasive, with various church fathers endorsing portions of it.[73] Cooper claims that many church fathers "uncritically adopted" Greek philosophy, and that "although (they) polemicized against Gnosticism, it is not difficult to find passages in their writings which are reminiscent of the anti-corporeal biases of their pagan contemporaries."[74] This approval commonly occurred because "Hellenistic thinkers were converted to Christianity. Scholars like Justin Martyr and even Augustine were Platonists before they became Christians."[75] Believing Plato was correct on certain aspects of human nature, new converts also maintained previously held beliefs on human constitution. Dualist notions of a spiritual soul and physical body persisted and became integrated into the works of many church fathers.[76] Commenting on this integration, Cooper claims,

> Their exegetical and theological works, which became almost canonical in the history of Christian doctrine, systematically read the Greek mind into the Scriptures and elaborated it as theological orthodoxy. Given its authoritative position, the Platonic body-soul distinction was uncritically accepted for more than a millennium.[77]

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[72] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 41.

[73] Craig Carter argues for an understanding of Christian Platonism that "is different from what Plato himself believed, from Neoplatonism and from gnosticism" but is a legitimate rendering of the "theological metaphysics of the Great Tradition." Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 67.

[74] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 185.

[75] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 25.

[76] Cyprian of Carthage represents Plato's influence: "For since we possess the body from the earth and the spirit from heaven, we ourselves are both earth and heaven; and in both—that is, both in body and spirit—we pray that God's will may be done. For between the flesh and the spirit there is a struggle, and there is a daily strife as they disagree with the other." Cyprian of Carthage, *Treatise* 4.16 (*ANF*, 5:451).

[77] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 26.

Augustine, whose Platonic past is evident in his doctrine of humanity, views the person or self as residing in the superior soul, which animated the inferior dependent body.[78] He alters Plato's tripartite view, combining soul and spirit and contrasting them with the body.[79] Seeing the person as a unity of material and immaterial, Augustine nevertheless sets the soul above the body.[80] He does, however, break with Platonic teaching in a couple of areas. First, he believes that souls are created instead of eternally existing. Second, he rejects the body as innately evil, but his overall beliefs still elevate the immortal soul.[81] Third, he holds that the soul is necessary for the mortal body, believing that it alone bore God's image. These notions, along with holding the body as a distraction to the soul, were equally unhelpful in breaking the church's historic practice of undervaluing the body.[82]

Designating the soul as immortal and the location of the "real person" opposes the body. Instead of continuing to accept and perpetuate the influence of non-Christian anthropologies into modern-day understandings of humanity, the church is beginning to question those initial assessments, as evidenced in the forthcoming discussion of holistic dualism that follows after alternative conceptions of human constitution.[83]

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[78] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 76. Calvin could be included here, too. As Farris puts it, there is a "collection of views in the Plato-Augustine-Calvin-Descartes tradition, where there is a distinction between person and body, wherein the person is strictly identical to the soul, or the soul is the core of the person, and the body is contingent." Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 76.

[79] Carter discusses how influential Platonism was in Augustine's conversion: "The Platonic concept of 'spiritual substance' allows Augustine to understand what Scripture means—namely, that God transcends creation precisely in the sense that he is immutable in contrast to the things in the world and that the things in the world depend on him for existence." Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, 71. Overall, "Augustine's attitude to Platonism is hardly naïve or uncritical. He finds things to criticize as well as things to admire in Platonic thought" (76).

[80] Augustine of Hippo, *On Faith and the Creed* 10.23 (*NPNF*[1], 3:331); *On the Soul and Its Origin* 4.3 (*NPNF*[1], 5:355); Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 125.

[81] Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 47.11 (*NPNF*[1], 7:264).

[82] Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis* 1.15.29, cited in Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 10.

[83] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 23.

Trichotomy. Another assessment of the human condition requires address, as it propagated from Platonism. Trichotomy has philosophical roots in Greek thought, which ranked the aspects of humanity from lowest to highest.[84] Because trichotomists begin with the belief that human composition separates at death, material from immaterial, these views lie within a dualistic philosophy.[85] Trichotomists differ from dichotomists and strict dualists on the number of aspects concerning human nature. Trichotomy divides the person into three entities—body, spirit, and soul/mind or one material piece and two immaterial pieces. For trichotomists, the soul exists as the essential connection between the immaterial spirit and material body. The spirit, seen as the real self, relates to God and requires separation from the corrupt body, with the soul mediating between the two.[86]

Proponents of trichotomy emphasize that their division of the person into three categories adheres with Scripture (1 Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12). They delineate each part using biblical arguments such as the "physical body" as the source of passion, "rational soul" as housing reason and emotions, and the "immortal spirit" as the part that communes with God.[87] Irenaeus of Lyon proclaims that unbelievers consist of only body and soul. However, upon repentance and faith, believers receive a spirit from the Holy Spirit.[88] Origen of Alexandria employs allegory to interpret Scripture and to understand human nature. He divides up the person into three senses: physical, spiritual, and soulish.

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[84] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 9. See also Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 127.

[85] Pyne, *Humanity and Sin*, 102.

[86] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 9.

[87] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 127.

[88] Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies* 5.6.1 (*ANF*, 1:531).

Then, he relates each to Scripture—physical as the historical sense, spiritual as the mystical sense, and soulish as the moral sense of God's Word.[89]

The biblical arguments for trichotomy are primarily found in two texts: 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12. Because Paul explicitly labels three parts—body, soul, and spirit—in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, many render this a clear depiction of humankind's tripartite nature. Proponents distinguish between soul and spirit, where the spirit links a person to God and the soul is an internal connection within the person. In passages like Job 7:11 and Luke 1:46-47, trichotomists take Job and Mary as speaking of soul and spirit as two separate substances.[90] Additionally, those who hold to trichotomy point to Hebrews 4:12 as an obvious indicator that soul and spirit are divisible substances, believing that if the Scriptures address this division, then it must be accurate. Another supporting verse is 1 Corinthians 14:14, where Paul says that his spirit prays while his mind is unfruitful. Trichotomists see this verse as indicating a separation between the activities of spirit and soul. They, therefore, locate thinking in the soul instead of in the spirit.[91]

Opponents of trichotomy remain unconvinced, affirming simple explanations for these so-called tripartite verses. Whereas Scripture is filled with instances of using different words to describe the same thing, trichotomists disregard the rich parallelism in Hebrew poetry when it comes to soul and spirit. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul's usage of three terms is to stress personal purity in the last days.[92] He is "simply piling up synonyms for emphasis, as is sometimes done elsewhere in Scripture."[93] Grudem lists

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[89] Origen of Alexandria, *Homilies on Leviticus* 5.5.3, trans. Gary Wayne Barkley, Fathers of the Church 83 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 102.

[90] Pyne, *Humanity and Sin*, 103.

[91] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 606.

[92] Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity*, 218.

[93] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 607.

Matthew 22:37 as an example. Were this verse to be taken as showing the separate parts of humanity, then there may be five to six parts. But certainly this is not Christ's intention; rather, he is merely teaching a complete, holistic love for God.[94] As for Hebrews 4:12, the context of the verse negates any trichotomist assertions. If the author meant that soul and spirit are distinct and separable, then joints and marrow entail the same division. Sherlock writes, "The obvious point is that the gospel of Christ finds its way to the very core of our being, our 'heart.' In order to speak of the gospel's effective work in sinners the vocabulary of division is used."[95] The point here is the power of Scripture, not divisions in human constitution. The tripartite view lacks persuasive, biblical evidence as the true constitution of humanity.[96]

As the tripartite view unduly divides the human person, Gnostics disproportionally value soul over body, rendering their anthropological construction another example of axiological dualism.

Gnosticism. Birthed from Platonism, Gnosticism rose to prominence in the second century AD. At its core, this philosophy deemphasizes and disdains corporeal existence. It believes "spiritual, immaterial realities are inherently good, while physical, material realities are inherently evil."[97] According to Michael A. G. Haykin, Gnosticism was one of the earliest church heresies and was "first and foremost concerned with anthropological matters."[98] The Gnostics believed that God was far removed from

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[94] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 607.

[95] Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity*, 218.

[96] As trichotomy remains unconvincing, the natural conclusion would be to affirm a dichotomy in human constitution.

[97] Allison, *Embodied*, 27.

[98] Michael A. G. Haykin, "This Anthropological Moment," *Eikon: A Journal for Biblical Anthropology* 1, no. 2 (2019): 6.

anything physical, being "too exalted to create a material world."[99] Haykin claims that the denial of any "goodness of the material realm, [led] them to deny the goodness of the human body."[100] This denial of the body labels Gnosticism as an axiological view.

Fleming Rutledge highlights Gnosticism's utter detachment from corporeal existence, summarizing the belief as "an emphasis on spiritual knowledge, a hierarchy of spiritual accomplishment, a devaluation of material/physical life and a corresponding avoidance of ethical struggle in this material world."[101] This spiritual, hidden knowledge was the key to piety. Even more, the Gnostics' anthropological viewpoint negated integral Christian teaching. Allison explains, "Gnosticism clashed with other key doctrines," such as the incarnation and resurrection of the body.[102] When created material is seen as evil and the source of wickedness, the effect is clear. Naturally, Gnostics deny that the Son of God ever assumed a physical human body. In rejecting Christ's incarnation, this philosophy undercut everything the cross achieved, evidenced by the fact that the crucifixion is exempted from the Gnostic Gospels.[103]

Disdain for the material realm came from the Gnostics' conception of creation, which they combined with the fall. Believing "creation as a kind of fall of the soul from the higher spiritual realm into the corrupt material realm," Gnostics thought of themselves as above anything involving physical existence.[104] In fact, they so hated the body that, according to Pearcey, "a popular pun at the time was that the body (Greek:

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[99] John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 294.

[100] Haykin, "This Anthropological Moment," 6.

[101] Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 50.

[102] Allison, *Embodied*, 27.

[103] Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 50.

[104] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 35.

soma) is a tomb (Greek: *sema*)."[105] In this belief system, Gnostics surmised that there were numerous evil gods and ranked them from the most powerful to the least powerful. Creation was a product of a lesser, evil god. Therefore, more powerful gods were uninvolved in created things—hence, the core belief that physical matter was bad, an extreme contrast to the Genesis account of creation. Gnostics also welcomed death as the severing of the soul from the burden of the body. As such, salvation ensued with an escape from matter, whereas in Christianity, salvation brings restoration of matter.[106]

Irenaeus arose as the most notable defender Christianity from the threat of Gnosticism in his *Against Heresies*.[107] Gnosticism spawned a variety of other heretical views, such as docetism, Arianism, Apollinarianism, and Nestorianism, all of which distorted the incarnation. On the incarnation, Pearcey credits Gnostics with teaching that "Christ was an avatar from a higher spiritual plane who entered the physical world temporarily to bring enlightenment and then returned to a higher state of being."[108] Since Gnosticism flourished in a setting where material things were maligned, it should come as no surprise, then, that a similar contempt of the body endures today, one with further-reaching implications.

On modern-day Gnosticism, or Neo-Gnosticism, Warren Brown and Brad Strawn write,

> In the predominant modern view of spirituality, neither one's physical body, nor other persons, nor church communities, are relevant. Spirituality is both disembodied (that is, manifest in the inner state of the soul, which we experience as emotions and feelings) and disembedded (an entirely individual state not directly relevant to any other persons). Spirituality is an inner reality—one that is only distantly related to ourselves as physical/social beings, or to the nature of our

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[105] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 35.

[106] Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes* 4.25 (*ANF*, 7:127); *Letter to Diognetus* 6 (*ANF*, 1:27); Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 36-38; Allison, *Embodied*, 27.

[107] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.10.2 (*ANF*, 1:331); see also 3.24.1 (*ANF*, 1:459).

[108] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 39.

> relationships with other people or communities . . . . Somehow we Christians have come to believe that we *have* bodies, not that we *are* bodies. We act as if the "real me" is not our own body, or even our own behavior, but is something spiritual (not physical) inside—our mind or soul. Thus, it is considered possible to be spiritual inside without being religious in what we do—without participating in a communal religious life. We believe we can be good persons inside, even though we are often inconsiderate, unethical, or even immoral in what we do.[109]

The church must dismantle deleterious effects of Gnosticism and all its surviving, lingering forms. After all, if believers fail to recognize the significance of embodiment, then how can they go on to properly conceive of embodied reality and adequately value it?

As spirituality for the Gnostics is tied into rejecting the material realm, ascetics demonstrate a similar mindset toward the body.

Asceticism. Monasticism was born out of the early church and expanded during the medieval period. Closely akin to the monastic movement was asceticism, "a worldview that insisted on forgoing physical pleasures such as eating tasteful and expensive food, drinking soothing wine, sleeping in comfortable arrangements, and engaging in sexual intercourse."[110] The practice of asceticism naturally flows from axiological dualism, as it rejects material realities to focus on immaterial ones.[111] On this way of life, Allison remarks, "Plato's philosophy exerted a strong impact on the view of sanctification in the early church."[112] Consequently, believers perceived the material body an undesirable hindrance to spiritual pursuits; therefore, when advancing in holiness requires engagement of the soul, restraint of the body becomes an equal necessity.[113]

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[109] Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*, 4. While I do not condone their materialist philosophy, I do agree with Brown and Strawn here.

[110] Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 328.

[111] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 185. See also Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 41; Allison, *Embodied*, 154.

[112] Allison, *Historical Theology*, 524.

[113] Vagaggini explains, "Insofar as the whole man is inclined toward sin and can easily become its slave, Christian life necessarily includes a panoply of bodily mortifications, and is careful not to limit

Resultantly, ascetics sought displacement from the world and its physical entanglements by whatever means necessary.[114] Attaining spiritual growth meant "fasting, poverty, solitude, silence, hard manual labor, drab clothing, the rejection of marriage and family, and other forms of austerity."[115] This type of devotion was deemed more spiritual than living regular lives where bodily pleasures were enjoyed. Robert Pyne believes that "the Christian ascetics who subjected their bodies to rigors in the service of Christ were driven not just by their desire for holiness by also by their anthropology."[116] As such, the ascetic lifestyle was conceived from errant notions of the body.

Paul fervently battles ascetic thinking and commends others to value bodily existence. He contradicts those who argued for the avoidance of marriage and certain foods because they both brought bodily pleasure. Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin believe Paul to be advocating that, "All of God's creation is good for which his followers express gratitude" (1 Tim 4:3-5).[117] In Colossae, some engaged in harsh treatment of the body, which Paul cites as being useless in constraining the flesh. These ascetics even commended harmful physical practices as a way of salvation (Col 2:23). Chiefly, Paul's arguments against the ascetics revolve around the goodness and gratitude that corresponds to God's wondrous creation.[118]

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mortification solely to the interiority of the soul or to the affective sphere alone." Vagaggini, *Flesh, the Instrument of Salvation*, 27.

[114] Regarding this thinking, Robert Gundry comments, "Loss of theological significance in the physicality of *sōma* as a substantival means of responsible action in the material world of men and events slides into mysticism and asceticism (or libertinism we should add) just as surely as does equation of materiality with evil." Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 191.

[115] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 41.

[116] Pyne, *Humanity and Sin*, 87.

[117] Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 129.

[118] Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 130-31.

While at times the New Testament authors speak against bodily sins, it is inappropriate to extend these instances and label the body corrupt. Plainly, "the source of sin lies beyond the physical body and its outward actions."[119] After all, Scripture equally commands bodily submission, meaning that the body can be an avenue of righteousness. Paul, therefore, beckons the Corinthians to remember that their bodies are members of Christ. Rather than condemning the body for sexual sin as an ascetic would, Paul argues against physical sins by stating the body's significance in its membership with Christ (1 Cor 6:15-17). On affirming the body, Pearcey adds,

> If humans were originally and inherently evil, there would be nothing to restore. God would have to destroy humanity and start over. It is only because sin is an alien force in God's good creation that we can be rescued, delivered, freed, and restored. The body can once again become an instrument of godliness, as it was meant to be.[120]

The case for asceticism cannot be made from Scripture. Rather, it is only those who import Greek philosophies into biblical anthropology who commend it.[121]

Still, the overlap of these axiological beliefs with Christianity requires careful attention. Unfortunately, the church continues to function by this valuation mentality. Some even describe the church as "body-denying."[122] Speaking about contemporary Christians, Cooper avers,

> In subtle ways we consider the soul superior and the body inferior. Some people who are morally and spiritually fastidious disdain physical fitness. In some circles, ministers, doctors, and professors are esteemed more than plumbers and farmers simply because they are highly educated and work primarily with their minds rather than with their hands. There are Christians who regard the world not just as secular,

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[119] Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," 83.

[120] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 45.

[121] Per Herman Bavinck, "The body," like every aspect of the embodied human, "is also defiled by sin . . . . [S]in works from the inside out and from the outside in . . . . [T]he body is not the source of sin, because then asceticism would be redemption." Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Ethics*, vol. 1, *Created, Fallen, and Converted Humanity*, ed. and trans. John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 91.

[122] Ola Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 2.

> but "dirty" and not a proper place for the involvement of a truly spiritual person. Examples of axiological dualism in the attitudes and practices of traditional Christians could be multiplied at length. It is undeniable that we have operated in terms of value hierarchies and polarities tied to the body-soul distinction.[123]

Still, the church's spiritual mission lies in a physical world. The efforts of the embodied soul are accomplished through the ensouled body.[124] Elevation of soul and denigration of body undermine the church's message of gospel transformation for the whole person. Irrefutably, Christians must think better of the body.

Continuing this point, Pearcey rightly sees the strand of asceticism as commonplace in many pulpits. She comments,

> There are strains of Christianity that teach a stern, tight-lipped asceticism—as though holiness consists simply in saying no to fun and pleasure. These versions of Christianity speak of the body as though it were shameful, worthless, or unimportant. They treat sexual sin as the most wicked on the scale of sins. They hold an escapist concept of salvation, as though Jesus died to whisk us away to heaven. [125]

Explicitly, a proper body image can never coexist with ascetic aspirations where the body is poorly thought of and treated with contempt. Today, believers are tasked with the same calling—to live by a more biblical anthropology, to forsake a disparaging view of the body, and to move toward an equal embrace of body and soul. Furthermore, it is imperative that Christian thought severes ties with Platonic, Gnostic, or ascetic roots in order to reconceive of corporeal existence so that believers can pursue a God-honoring body image. For Christians, a God-honoring body image will respect both body and soul as integral, unified aspects of embodied existence. To that end, a biblical articulation of human constitution now follows.

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[123] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 185-86.

[124] Marc Cortez, *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies: An Exercise in Christological Anthropology and Its Significance for the Mind/Body Debate* (London: T&T Clark, 2008).

[125] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 41. Pearcy recounts hearing a sermon where the pastor continually referenced going to heaven. Frustrated, she states, "Sermons like this one are more Gnostic than biblical. They give the impression the Bible is concerned only about what happens when we die."

Anthropological Dualism

Without an accurate assessment of embodied reality, right body image is unattainable, for if the body is ignored or even disdained, then body image naturally suffers. As previously examined, a purely monist or dualist view on human constitution rejects scriptural assertions. Monism forsakes the biblical reality of resurrection and re-embodiment as an eschatological promise. As I show below, one of the apostle Paul's arguments for the body proceeds from the promise of physical resurrection. Therefore, monism cannot provide one with a right body image in the present, as it rejects eternal corporeal significance. On the other hand, axiological dualism promotes an elevation of immaterial over material. Because it understands the soul as relating to God, it reckons the body as hindering soul. When physicality is seen as an unwanted obstacle or insignificant matter, body image will suffer. Still, there remains a philosophy that can correct the problems of monism and axiological dualism. It is the anthropological conception of human existence that facilitates an appropriate foundation for body image.

Holistic dualism is the most biblically accurate account of human nature. According to Cooper, the phrase holistic dualism allows for two realities at once: functional holism and anthropological dualism. Functional holism accounts for an individual's union of body and soul, whereas anthropological dualism refers to the soul's ability to exist apart from the body in the intermediate state.[126] Scripture teaches both philosophies; thus, it is necessary to provide overview of each position before investigating the Bible's anthropological assertions.[127]

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[126] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, xxvii.

[127] Cooper is not the first to espouse the concept of holistic dualism. Though his writing seems to be the most comprehensive, others have drawn similar conclusions on the composition of humankind. Writing prior to Cooper, Gundry proposes the phrase "anthropological duality" because "it sounds like a hybrid of 'dual and unity' and poses the possibility of a functional as well as ontological understanding." Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 63. Understanding that the Old Testament portrays humans as unitary, not monadic, he credits Paul with avoiding the Greek philosophy in his day and touting the human person as a unified whole—as did the Hebrew Scriptures. Gundry's expression of anthropological duality reflects much of what Cooper seeks to achieve by the phrase holistic dualism. Gundry explains, "Functionally, man as spirit initiates and receives actions, and as body he mediates those actions as they go and come. Substantivally, man is a duality—i.e., a proper unity of two parts—of spirit and body. The spirit is that part

Functional holism perceives humans as whole beings whose abilities and operations are not to be sectioned out but to be seen as cohesive and fundamental "as a systemic unity."[128] Instead of perceiving people as a composite of parts, holism maintains that a person ceases to exist if the unified entity does not remain intact. Cooper, however, admits that this viewpoint need not mean that if the entity were "broken up, all parts disintegrate into chaos or nothingness. Secondary systems might continue to exist, although without all the properties and capacities they had when integrated within the whole."[129] This reality pertains to the soul, which could "exist without organisms, although [entities] would be deprived by the loss."[130] Functional holism, then, does not adopt a monistic view of human existence and its corollary extinction of the whole person upon death.

Anthropological dualism allows for human existence apart from the body; this position is necessitated by belief in the afterlife. The Christian eschatological hope rests on the affirmation of life after death. Further mention of holistic dualism in this work must be understood in the context of anthropological dualism and the survivability of the person rather than a valuation of soul over body as in axiological dualism. On the fundamental need to employ both holism and dualism, Cooper writes,

> Holism and dualism address different questions. Holism—the functional holism we have discussed—emphasizes that during this life body, mind, and spirit are functionally integrated and constitute an existential unity. Dualism claims that

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which bears his consciousness and cognate features. The body is that part through the instrumentality of which man lives in the material and eventful world" (201). Gundry's analysis is not "a metaphysical dualism according to which the body or flesh is evil, but affirms that man is made up of two substances which belong together though they possess the capability of separation" (83-84). Another notable description of human nature prior to Cooper's holistic dualism comes from Anthony Hoekema, who prefers the phrase "psychosomatic unity" to express human composition. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 217. See also Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 202-12. Grenz's anthropological approach describes a holistic alternative to dichotomist and trichotomist positions.

[128] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 43.

[129] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 45.

[130] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 46.

> persons can survive and function in some ways apart from organisms. Scripture seems to affirm both holism and dualism.[131]

Hence, both holism and dualism are essential to maintain the differences that comprise Cooper's view. Metaphysically speaking, humans are fitted for life in the present age with promises of renewal and restoration for the age to come. Cooper explains, "There must be enough of an ontological difference between the person or soul and the body that they are not only distinct from each other, but also separable at death. Philosophers have typically labeled this view of the human constitution 'anthropological dualism.' Human beings are an ontic duality of body and soul."[132] The human person is created as a whole entity whose body temporarily separates from soul at death. Consequently, sin causes this separation. The capacity for such separation depends on the ontological distinctions between body and soul rather than a hierarchical placement of immaterial over material.[133] However, this created distinction does not interfere with the experience of human embodiment. Humans are unknowable apart from embodied existence. Frankly, it would be inconceivable to think of humans without bodies. On earth, the soul does not express personal qualities except through the body. In death, the body naturally returns to dust, while the soul goes to the Lord and awaits the time of resurrection and re-embodiment. The post-fall world renders this created division sensible, even essential. Only holistic dualism addresses this compulsory tension in humankind—tension of a physical and spiritual unity alongside a necessary temporal division between the two. Holistic dualism alone bestows equal honor on the body as well as the soul and, in doing so, becomes the only true representation of embodied existence as God intended in a fallen world.

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[131] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 188.

[132] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 1.

[133] The ontological distinction of body and soul does not originate in the fall, as some monists argue. While the fall results in death, the creation of men and women who experience life in emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects is by no means incidental. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 198-99.

Cooper's holistic dualism relies on an articulation of the human person from Scripture. The overall tenor of God's Word stands firm on embodiment. Cooper explains, "The biblical view of human nature is both holistic—emphasizing the religious, phenomenological, and functional integration of life—and dualistic—asserting that persons are held in existence without fleshly bodies until the resurrection."[134] Scripture's anthropological conclusions on humanity also reveal that both soul and body are equal constituents of men and women. The Bible's description of human constitution focuses on a "unitary emphasis" in the Old Testament that carries over to the teaching of the New Testament.[135] Sherlock explains,

> We are clearly fleshly, but not only that: heart, kidneys, bowels, and even the liver are spoken of as typifying various facets of human existence. Throughout, the analysis of human nature is eminently practical, and though we are described in many ways, there is no dividing up of the human person into various parts. The concern of the Hebrew Scriptures is that we respond to God with our whole being, a wholehearted allegiance.[136]

Cooper offers three contentions from the Old Testament that teach a holistic—rather than strictly dualistic—constitution of humankind.[137] First, an expansive list of anatomical terms describes human experience, which are utilized in a variety of ways.[138] The varying usage and interchangeable nature of these terms lead one away from dualist conclusions. Second, Hebrew words that dualists use to justify strict immaterial substances, like *ruach* and *nephesh*, are also meant to define "the whole psychophysical

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[134] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 231.

[135] Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity*, 216.

[136] Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity*, 216.

[137] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 43-49. The articulation of Cooper's view is in no way meant to endorse the physicalist or materialist argument. Madueme clarifies, "Scripture presents a holistic picture of human persons. God made us embodied creatures . . . . [A]nthropological holism is true, but that does not entail physicalism." Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," 82.

[138] Cooper lists *nepesh*, *ruach*, *basar*, *qereb*, and *leb*. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 39-43.

person or otherwise to the energizing life-force given by God."[139] Third, the Old Testament frequently utilizes synecdoche to depict human existence. This rhetorical device references a part when communicating a whole. Examples of synecdoche can be seen, for example, in Psalms 42:2, where the psalmist's "soul thirsts for God." The psalmist does not mean that only his soul is desperate for God but that his whole being longs for communion.[140]

Although Cooper asserts the Hebrew anthropological understanding as clearly holistic, he also assures that this "need not entail the denial that wholes contain distinguishable parts."[141] Thus, a unified conception of humanity does not inevitably preclude an ontological demarcation between body and soul. While a full biblical anthropology lies outside the scope of this work, four key terms (soul, spirit, heart, and body) require examination as their usage in the Old Testament informs their meaning in the New Testament. Therefore, the sense behind these terms is important for determining true human nature.

"Soul" (Hebrew: *nepeš*) entails a personal meaning in the Hebrew Scriptures. Frequently translated as "soul" or "life," *nepeš* is the first crucial term for understanding human nature, and it possesses three meanings.[142] Soul indicates a living being (Gen 2:7), most oftentimes used in terms of a synecdoche. The next meaning is the life force within a human (Ps 19:7). Its last usage, seen in a variety of ways, describes an "integration of all interior functions" (Lam 3:20; Job 7:11).[143] Shifting to the New Testament, the Greek

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[139] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 43.

[140] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 44.

[141] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 45.

[142] Farris includes an insightful connection to Eccl 12:7: "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 . . . . 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." Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 20.

[143] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 131.

term *psychē* gets used in three similar ways: as designating the whole person (Rom 13:1), one's core being (Luke 1:46), or the interior life of an embodied person (Eph 6:6).[144]

In the Old Testament, "spirit" (Hebrew: *rûah*) refers to the complete person (Ps 31:5), the life force given by God (Judg 15:19), one's interior life (Exod 28:3), or a person's having an open soul to God (Ps 51:10).[145] The Greek word for spirit is *pneuma*, which finds greatest reference in Paul. Its meaning relates to the person (Gal 6:18) or the immaterial life force (Jas 2:26) or signifies the part of humanity that is God-oriented (1 Cor 14:14).

"Heart" (Hebrew: *lēb*) also frequently appears in the Old Testament and indicates either the entire person (Ps 22:26) or interior being of a person (Jer 17:9). The New Testament uses *kardia* to specify a person's operating center (Rom 6:17) or the core of one's intellect (Matt 9:4). According to Cooper, Scripture reveals the heart as "the hidden control center of the whole human being."[146] It is the wellspring of life, evident in a person's words and actions.[147]

As for "body," nowhere does Scripture teach that the material frame or physical flesh is evil and sinful. In the Old Testament, body is most akin to the Hebrew word for flesh, *bāsār*.[148] This word means the physical body (Gen 2:23), the entire human person (Eccl 4:5), or the weakness or dependency of someone (2 Chr 32:8). Significantly,

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[144] The LXX used *psychē* as well. Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 131.

[145] On spirit as the life force given by God, Gundry explains, "Man is an animated body rather than an incarnated soul. The breath which God breathed into molded clay at the creation represents the principle of life; and the soul that resulted is the human person as a whole." Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 119.

[146] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 42.

[147] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 133-34.

[148] Some claim the Hebrews had no word for "body." But Gundry avers, "It is sometimes stated that the Hebrews were so holistic in their view of man that they lacked even the concept of the physical body as a discrete entity . . . . But the lack of a word in a language would not necessarily imply the lack of a concept . . . . The Hebrews did know and frequently use, then, the same concept as that which is conveyed in the popular meaning of *sōma*." Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 117-18.

there is no reference of *bāsār* as the place of evil or sin.[149] The New Testament uses *sōma* most frequently when it speaks of the material body (Mark 5:29), whole person (Eph 5:28), or the sinful nature (Phil 3:21).[150] Similarly, *sarx* also denotes the body (2 Cor 12:7), human frailty (1 Pet 1:24), and the sinful nature (Rom 8:3-9).[151] To Robert Gundry, *sōma* holds paramount importance for proper consideration of the human person and embodied existence:

> The consistently substantival meaning of the term *sōma* protects the functional element proper to the term. That element consists in the instrumental function of the physical body, a function necessary to human existence. Consequently, soma bars asceticism and mysticism, withdrawn from history and society. Spiritualizing idealism, romanticism, introvertive existentialism—somatic anthropology excludes them. Positively, the physicalness of soma affirms life in a material world and our responsibility for it. We do not escape non-Christian materialism by flight, but through sanctification. By assuring the importance of materiality in the future through physical resurrection, *sōma* insures the importance of materiality in the present. Thus theology retains its this-worldly relevance along with its other-worldly hope.[152]

Scripture's overlapping use of these anthropological terms is noteworthy as it completely upends the Platonic and Gnostic claims so pervasive in Christian understandings of anthropology. Filtering biblical terminology through any philosophy that debases material in favor of immaterial has no basis. Prior discussion of these anti-material philosophies shows that any disparity in anthropological understanding from the Old Testament to the New Testaments came from outside the Scriptures. Cooper echoes this sentiment, saying, "There is little question that traditional exegetes have viewed the

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[149] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 135.

[150] In Rudolf Bultmann's estimation, *sōma* was not simply a referent to the body but to the whole person. Paul's writing is central to Bultmann's anthropology, and *sōma* lies at the center of Paul's anthropology. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951-1955), 1:201. While Bultmann's assertion seems correct at first, I believe Gundry accurately represents Paul's intention behind *sōma*. He explains, "*Sōma* does not *mean* 'whole person', because its use is designed to call attention to the physical object which is the body of the person rather than to the whole personality. Where used of whole people, *sōma* directs attention to their bodies, not to the wholeness of their being." Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 80.

[151] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 135.

[152] Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 202-3.

Old Testament picture of human nature through the lenses of Christian Platonism," which was completely out of line with how the Israelites conceived of human existence.[153] They viewed body and soul as such intertwined, integrated parts of humanity that were one to be stripped away from the other, life not only would be implausible but would cease altogether.[154]

Furthermore, the Jewish view of the body was holistic, examining everything from physical conduct to physical care, as seen in hundreds of laws involving the body. Although some Jewish philosophers believed that soul was superior to body, they still advocated for the body's health.[155] After all, care for the body is care for the soul. Neglect of the body is neglect of the soul. Even if one hates his body, his soul still requires attention.[156] This view is certainly not what the Scriptures advocate, yet it supports the notion that embodied humans are psychosomatic entities. In Hoekema's estimation, "One of the most important aspects of the Christian view of man is that we must see him in his unity, as a whole person," which is precisely what a proper awareness of embodiment champions.[157] The church must return to this biblical understanding of human constitution as embodied beings where soul and body are equally valuable aspects of life. To echo John's hope for the beloved elder Gaius, God's people should tend to

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[153] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 33.

[154] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 35. To Cooper, the intimate link between body and soul is essential, thus reckoning the human being as a psychosomatic unity. On this psychosomatic unity, Jeremy Pierre acknowledges, "God designed the dynamic heart to function within a physical body—the immaterial and the material beautifully woven together so that unseen spiritual activity correlates with observable physiological activity." Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 95.

[155] Bahya, *Duties*, VIII.3, 380. Smith indicates that Bahya's mindset toward the body could possibly "be extended to every medieval Jewish philosopher." Smith, *Embodiment*, 132.

[156] Smith claims Judaism as "fundamentally an embodied religion." Smith, *Embodiment*, 110.

[157] Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 203.

their bodily health as it goes well with their soul (3 John 1:2).[158] I now engage the intermediate state to show the necessity of holistic dualism on other Christian doctrines.

Intermediate state. Intrinsic to holistic dualism is the belief that body and soul temporarily separate at death.[159] It is a time of twin realities, body decomposition and soul consciousness.[160] The believer's material aspect remains in the material world, while the immaterial aspect departs to an immaterial continuation in Christ's presence (Ps 86:13; 2 Cor 5:8). Belief in the intermediate state is mandated, Cooper proclaims, by the survival of death and the promise of future resurrection. He states the conclusion as "unavoidable" and the most compatible with Scripture.[161] The intermediate state, then, is the period of time after death and before the return of Christ. Allison explains the separation of material and immaterial, surmising the detached state of both soul and body. During this intermediate time, "believers are disembodied. True, we are full of joy, worship God as we see him face-to-face, and enjoy rest from our earthly labors and troubles. Still, we exist without out body. It has been sloughed off and laid in a tomb or grave, cremated, buried at sea, or some other means by which it becomes separated from us."[162] While embodiment is normal, humans must be unavoidably disembodied, for "if the soul is distinct from the body as a metaphysically simple thing and does not divide like material entities, then the ontology of souls allows for the possibility and conceivability of persistence."[163] To be temporally disembodied, however, is to await the consummation of the believer's resurrection hope of re-embodiment.

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[158] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 31-32.

[159] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 9.

[160] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 59.

[161] Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 133.

[162] Allison, *Embodied*, 33.

[163] Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 247.

The intermediate state finds definite reference in Scripture, as shown, for example, in the previous chapter's discussion on 2 Corinthians 5:1-9. Numerous additional biblical texts support the intermediate state (e.g., Job 19:25; Ps 49:15; Isa 14:9; Matt 17:3; Luke 16:19-31; Acts 7:59-60; Heb 12:23; Rev 6:9-11).[164] Gundry includes two other texts that support an intermediate state. He believes that Paul firmly denies monistic human existence in 2 Corinthians 12:2-3 while also affirming a possible division between body and soul. Gundry also understands Philippians 1:20 as clear evidence for his argument concerning "the separability of the inner man and the outer man."[165] Keeping with the general teachings of Judaism, these passages show Paul as continuing the assumption of "bodiless bliss for the righteous" in the intermediate state.[166] The hope of resurrection relies upon temporary survival of the soul apart from the body while also proclaiming restoration of the glorified body.

While on earth, embodied believers and unbelievers coexist; however, the intermediate state bears out the difference between the two groups with clear indication of the final, eternal end for each. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* articulates the doctrine of the intermediate state as follows:

> The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption; but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, . . . immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous . . . are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day.[167]

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[164] Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 138.

[165] Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 146-47.

[166] Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 148.

[167] *West. Conf.*, chap. 32, art. 1 (PCAAC, pp. 147-48).

Additionally, the intermediate state is not comparable to the Catholic notion of purgatory.[168] This state will not be a time of restoration to God but a time of continued existence in the Lord's presence until he reunites soul and body. Thus, the intermediate state and the separability of soul from body should be understood as a source of solace for believers facing death. Hans Madueme asks, "Does our anthropological theorizing actually preach? Are we able to minister the consolation of the gospel when someone has died?"[169] If the Christian can say with genuine biblical surety that a person's loved one is with the Lord, then this certainly ensures peace and comfort. But "if the intermediate state doesn't hold, we speak empty platitudes. Christian physicalism seems to lead to pastoral malpractice when followed through consistently."[170]

Importantly, the intermediate state does not debase the body in relation to the soul. As Gundry aptly states,

> Nor does the difference and separability of the corporeal and the incorporeal in man imply any inferiority on the part of the corporeal. For Paul, actions performed through the body count quite as much as contemplation and feeling. The true man is the whole man—corporeal and incorporeal together, the incorporeal acting through the corporeal, each equally deficient without the other. Hence, the true man is not the inner man alone, for although the body is outward, it is not unessential. The body is to be sanctified and will be resurrected.[171]

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[168] The following is not meant to provide thorough teaching on any of these beliefs. It is merely to show the alternative ways in which other belief systems attempt to explain what happens after death. Roman Catholicism teaches that purgatory is a change of purification for those who have not committed mortal sin and are therefore still in a state of grace. According to the *Catechism*, "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death the undergo purification so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven . . . . [T]he Church gives the name of *purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned." *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994), 1030-31.The suffering of purgatory and the works of followers on earth, such as mass and prayer, can shorten the time of purification. Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person in Theology and Psychology*, 53. Among other issues, this doctrine negates the efficacy of Christ's atonement as it requires the synergistic cooperation of the Catholic faithful with divine grace so as to engage in good works for meriting eternal life. Though it adheres to the separability of body and soul, the doctrine of purgatory must be soundly rejected as an unbiblical way to conceive of the intermediate state.

[169] Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," 88.

[170] Madueme, "From Sin to the Soul," 88.

[171] Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, 84.

Even more, implications of the intermediate state bolster arguments for the body's equivalent value with the soul. That the body, though material and decomposing in the transitory state, will be glorified and remade proves Gundry's statement that the incorporeal person is incomplete, remaining so until being reunited with her corporeal aspect. Only holistic dualism, and the compulsory conclusion of an intermediate state, accurately reflects Scripture and thus God's plan for his embodied children.

Summary. In sum, holistic dualism should be understood as the biblical, logical constitution of humankind. In order to account for the value of both body and soul while also recognizing the intermediate state, holistic dualism stands alone as the singular explanation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided the necessary insight into the composition of embodied humanity. After describing the anthropological claims of monism and various axiological dualistic constructions, I considered holistic dualism, which should be understood as the biblical, logical constitution of humankind. In order to account for the value of both body and soul while also recognizing the intermediate state, holistic dualism stands as the singular explanation. These conclusions lead to the next chapter. Body image begins with a mental conception of physical frame. If conception of the body is skewed from an anti-body anthropology, then arriving at a God-honoring body image will be impossible. Another step of working toward this goal involves the following in-depth look at the phenomenon of body image itself.

CHAPTER 3

BODY IMAGE

When asked for a description of physical appearance, one's response provides a telling representation of body image. Put simply, body image is how someone visualizes his or her body. More precisely, body image can be defined as the "mental representation an individual creates of themselves, but it may or may not bear any relation to how one actually appears."[1] Hillary McBride defines body image as "how people . . . conceptualize, perceive, and evaluate their outward appearance or the image of their body."[2] Body image is not only a singular image of one's body but also how that image influences one's thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Whether cognizant of it or not, everyone possesses a view of their body and, consequently, passes judgment on it. Some make confident judgments, while others may be neutral, not caring at all. Overwhelmingly, however, most people hold a negative body image. While a positive body image is possible, I focus on the more common manifestation of negative body image. Incidentally, there seems to be a growing number of ways to discuss what I refer to throughout my work as "negative body image." When I use this phrase, while I may not specify these other descriptors, I intend to encompass their meaning as well. Three such commonly used phrases are "body dissatisfaction," "body image disturbance," and "body dysmorphic disorder." Body dissatisfaction

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[1] Psychology Today, "Body Image," accessed October 14, 2020, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/body-image.

[2] Hillary L. McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," in *Embodiment and Eating Disorders: Theory, Research, Prevention, and Treatment*, ed. Hillary L. McBride and Janelle L. Kwee (New York: Routledge, 2019), 14.

describes "a preference for body characteristics different from how the body is currently perceived by the person and is associated with negative affect."[3] Similarly, body image disturbance (BID) revolves around a preoccupation with and focus "on specific body characteristics, the most commonly studied of which (due to their association with eating disorders) involve body weight and shape dissatisfaction."[4] Finally, body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is essentially a more extreme "preoccupation with an imagined defect in appearance; if a slight physical anomaly is present, the person's concern is markedly excessive."[5] The overall tenor of these phrases is a general disdain for how one views her body expressed in disparaging thoughts and negative emotions that may potentially lead to harmful behaviors against the body.

Generally, four aspects comprise body image. The National Eating Disorder Collaboration specifies these as the perceptual, affective, cognitive, and behavioral features of body image. Perceptual body image involves how someone *views* his body. Because body image is often distorted, this perceptual aspect is usually skewed and biased based on an incorrect bodily assessment. Affective body image describes the way someone *feels* about his body. With a negative view of the body, harmful feelings toward the body arise. Cognitive body image entails one's *thought life* about his body. The final aspect, behavioral body image, explains the way someone *acts* based on his body image.

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[3] Eleanor H. Wertheim and Susan J. Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," in *Body Image: A Handbook of Science, Practice, and Prevention*, ed. Thomas F. Cash and Linda Smolak, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2011), 76.

[4] Wertheim and Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," 76.

[5] Katherine A. Phillips, "Body Image and Body Dysmorphic Disorder," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 305. BDD receives further consideration later in this chapter. It is also important to note that some people think of a negative body image as a positive thing if the person is overweight and unhealthy, as such a negative body image may lead to getting healthy. While there is merit in the recognition of poor health, I do not intend this potential application in my writing, nor do I think this is a valid application of negative body image. I disagree with using a negative body image to address real health concerns of being overweight, obese, or what is called "skinny-fat." In this third case, a person may have a high metabolism that keeps him from appearing overweight, but his internal organs are unhealthy and indicative of bad health habits. Instead, a drive for physical health should motivate different healthy behaviors rather than a disdain for the body. In this way, the consequences of negative body image may worsen and lead to body-abusing behaviors.

Usually, negative body image generates a decrease in social interaction and an increase in behaviors perceived to help accomplish a desirable body.[6]

This dissertation seeks to address a negative body image by establishing it as a phenomenon that could be an accurate, God-honoring assessment that motivates respect for the body. Therefore, a body image framework that confronts and corrects maladaptive perceptions, affections, cognitions, and behaviors is necessary. Scripture provides such a framework, as I detail in the ensuing chapters. In this chapter, however, I begin with a history of body image followed by insight into negative body image. I then assess two prominent models for addressing body image issues, cognitive-behavioral and sociocultural, as both delineate important insight into how these issues develop. Next, I discuss the progression of body image from childhood to adulthood. Then, I offer examples of body image disorders to show that a negative body image can be deleterious. Finally, I end with a secular point of view on how one might reform such a mindset.

History of Body Image

With a few conceptions of body image previously listed, it should come as no surprise that a general consensus definition does not exist.[7] Recognition of body image as a legitimate psychological phenomenon developed relatively recently, which explains the lack of agreement on its definition. Prior to the 1920s, body image garnered little research apart from examining its distortion as a result of brain trauma and investigating phantom limb experience.[8] Paul Schilder became the first to expand its association in human experience, researching it more broadly within the fields of psychology and sociology.

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[6] National Eating Disorders Collaboration, "Body Image," accessed October 14, 2020, https://www.nedc.com.au/eating-disorders/eating-disorders-explained/body-image/.

[7] McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," 14.

[8] Thomas F. Cash and Linda Smolak, "Understanding Body Images: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 4.

Cognitively contextualizing body image and basing it on interaction with others, he defined it as "the picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say, the way in which the body appears to ourselves."[9] According to Sarah Grogan, with his definition, Schilder contributed the following categories to body image: "body size estimations (perceptions), evaluation of body attractiveness (thoughts), and emotions associated with body shape and size (feelings)."[10]

In the early 1990s, Franklin Shontz believed bodily experience was necessary in body image conception. He "endeavored to return the image to body image by articulating cognitive and perceptual dimensions of body experience," extending the meaning into areas of disability and health psychology.[11] Essentially, Shontz understood that one's daily embodied life and everyday embodied experiences bear on body image, which signifies that all people, not just teenage girls, have a body image.[12]

More recently, Thomas Cash and Thomas Pruzinsky note that Schilder's starting point was invaluable but argue that body image is far more complex than he first envisioned. They highlight the complex and multidimensional nature of body image, referring to it in the plural as body images.[13] Cash and Pruzinsky, like Shontz, suggest that a full picture of body image "requires a deep appreciation of the cultural diversity

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[9] Paul Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body: Studies in the Constructive Energies of the Psyche* (New York: Routledge, 1950), 11.

[10] Sarah Grogan, *Body Image*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1.

[11] Cash and Smolak, "Understanding Body Images," 5.

[12] Perhaps unsurprisingly, my work has often received female-emphasized feedback: "Your work is really going to benefit *women* in the church." While I appreciate such positive feedback, sentiments like this further the assumption that men do not deal with body image issues. As the following chapters unfold, it should be clear that negative body image is a male issue as well.

[13] Thomas F. Cash and Thomas Pruzinsky, "Understanding Body Images: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," in *Body Image: A Handbook of Theory, Research, and Clinical Practice*, ed. Thomas F. Cash and Thomas Pruzinsky (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), 7. In fact, Cash and Pruzinsky refer to Thompson and et al., who in 1999 held that there are sixteen differing ways to consider body image. But Pruzinsky and Cash claim there are even more.

and personal context of embodiment."[14] Influenced by a multiplicity of variants—gender, age, socioeconomic status, culture, media, family, friends, traumatic events (all ranging over a lifespan)—a person's body image is quite fluid.[15]

Amidst current body image scholarship, researchers add the inclusion of embodiment that Shontz first postulated. To body image scholars, embodiment "refers to the lived body" that experiences other people and the world, leading to knowledge of "what it is to feel, to be a self, which ultimately contributes to and is the source of our aliveness."[16] Contemporary thought renders any definition of body image insufficient if it fails to include embodiment because doing so would lack the context of human experience. Most recently, Cash explains body image as "your personal relationship with your body—encompassing your perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and actions that pertain to your physical appearance."[17] This definition seems to locate the self *outside* one's body in order to have a relationship with it. Likely, this terminology will continue to shift, while the perception, conception, and evaluation of one's body that bears on image, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors will hold permanent relevance.

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[14] Pruzinsky and Cash, "Understanding Body Images," 7.

[15] Pruzinsky and Cash, "Understanding Body Images," 9-10.

[16] McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," 12. At this point, I need to differentiate between how I explain embodiment versus its conception and relation to body image by secular scholarship. I use embodiment in reference to humans as a holistic duality of body and soul—as articulated in the previous chapter. These researchers use the concept to encompass all of the experiences of life that bear on one's body image, thus allowing for the varying experiences of men, women, homosexuals, transgenders, and perspectives like feminism. Though I do not want this understanding of embodiment to cloud the way I use the term, it is valid to locate body image within the embodied individual whose cultural context, gender, and age all bear on the view of his or her body. This subject receives further clarification in chap. 5. Gregg Allison's view on particularity and is also helpful here. He affirms that "an essential given of human existence is particularity, which is defined as the condition of being an individual. God specifically designs and creates each human being to be a particular gendered embodied individual." Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2021), 61.

[17] Thomas F. Cash, *Body Image Workbook* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2008), 1. Note: I do not prefer this language; instead, I prefer the standard definition of body image without the inclusion of relationship.

Negative Body Image

As this dissertation focuses on an adverse evaluation of one's physical frame, a definition of negative body image is vital. Negative body image is essentially defined as "discontent with some aspect of one's physical appearance," which typically extends to impact emotional wellbeing.[18] Amy Harman explains negative body image in terms of the four types of relationship one may have with the body (avoidant, one-sided, conflictual, and abusive), with each characterizing various levels of bodily discontent. One with an avoidant relationship tries to hide the body, covers it with oversized clothing, and avoids mirrors. A one-sided view entails ignoring natural physical cues of pain and hunger in order to shape and mold the body into a desirable form. Conflictual interaction occurs when one is in conflict with the body; this interaction is displayed by constant negativity and faultfinding. An abusive relationship is one in which someone willingly engages in activities that harm the body, such as starvation, purging, excessive exercise, cutting, and other acts of self-harm.[19]

Most often occurring in women and centering on typical areas where weight collects, a negative body image involves varying levels of preoccupation and obsession. Unfortunately, the state of discontent with one's body image is regarded as "normative" female reality.[20] However, while much of the analysis and expert opinion pertains to the female experience of body image, both genders possess a mental image of their body. It

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[18] Thomas F. Cash, "A Negative Body Image: Evaluating Epidemiological Evidence," in Cash and Pruzinsky, *Body Image*, 273-74. Cash notes the complexity of a negative body image, particularly in assessing and fully defining it. Cash believes that simply posing a body image question can produce a negative image response, which can skew survey results. Cash holds truer determinants of body image to be "affect-laden body image experiences and their psychological ramifications," and to find these would mean a "national, demographically diverse survey that administers standardized, reliable, and valid measures of multiple factors of body image and its impact on the quality of life" (275). Negative body image must also be distinguished from admitting one's behaviors toward food and exercise led to being overweight or obese. Negative body image entails assessing the body as flawed and is differentiated from a realistic assessment of weight issues.

[19] Amy Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect: Compassionate Strategies to Cultivate a Positive Body Image* (Emeryville, CA: Rockridge Press, 2020), 4-5.

[20] Wertheim and Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," 77.

is imperative that Christians base their body image on the truths of Scripture rather than the world's dictates. A scant amount of Christian scholarship has been completed on body image, particularly within biblical counseling.[21] This disparity must be rectified as the mental image one has affects one's bodily reality, a critical truth for a Christian worldview. In what follows, then, I consider how one's visualization of the body forms.

Models of Body Image

Body image is a highly researched topic, and yet secular psychology lacks a singular configuration of it. Many have endeavored to explain the phenomenon. As a result, there is great variance among the definitions of and treatments for body image. While general overlap does exist, it lies outside the scope of this work to examine them all.[22] Instead, I cover the two most popular treatment approaches—cognitive-behavioral model and sociocultural model—as both contain elements that are useful within a biblical worldview. The cognitive-behavioral model seeks to label and modify destructive thoughts that lead to harmful feelings and actions, a process that corresponds to the goal of Scripture application. As the Holy Spirit illumines God's truth, believers recognize

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[21] Martha Peace spoke to body image from the biblical counseling perspective in May 2021. See Martha Peace, "Vanity or Body Image Problem," Association of Certified Biblical Counselors, last modified May 5, 2021, https://biblicalcounseling.com/resource-library/conference-messages/vanity-or-body-image-problem/. While more writing on embodied experiences is necessary in this field, her article fails to sufficiently address the problem of negative body image. She begins with a definition of body image that does not take into account the range of definitions put forward by psychologists, which is important because she conflates body image and body dysmorphic disorder and ends up labeling vanity as the real issue. Nowhere is a negative body image mentioned. Even more, equating a "body image problem" to body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is unhelpful, as BDD is extreme appearance obsession that can consume the sufferer for several hours each day. A greater discussion of BDD follows later in this chapter. Furthermore, not all body image problems are rooted in vanity or a lack of modesty. As I argue in chapter 5, some issues with negative body image arise from a body that fails to function like it once did or from disability. While Peace's advice is biblical and, at times, beneficial in the struggle against vanity, some of her comments are confounding. For instance, when encouraging readers not to be jealous of another who may be "more beautiful," she advises, "it's hard not to hate them, but we have to forgive them for being beautiful." The call to forgive another woman for the way God made her—something over which she has no control—is not mandated in Scripture. Peace's article concludes with useful thoughts on transforming one's mind with Scripture; still, they largely limit struggles with negative body image to vanity in women.

[22] There are a number of perspectives taken on body image, which is why I limit my discussion to the more popular ones. Other perspectives include sociocultural, evolutionary, genetic and neuroscientific, cognitive-behavioral, feminist, and positive psychology.

wrong thinking and feelings. Then, corresponding behaviors can be addressed in obedience to God's Word. The sociocultural model examines the way in which cultural standards are transmitted through relationships. Then, the model considers how one internalizes these messages to understand what is acceptable and satisfactory. Similarly, believers should derive their understanding of self-worth from Scripture, not society. Strengthened by relationships with like-minded believers and informed by the expectations conveyed by God's Word, Christians form their identity and body image. Examining the cognitive-behavioral and sociocultural models of body image will assist in articulating a biblical approach to a God-honoring body image in the following chapter.

Cognitive-Behavioral Model

Discussion of the cognitive-behavioral model (CB) first requires differentiating between historical and proximal factors in body image development, both having their own subset of qualifiers.[23] Each one produces cognitive and social learning outcomes that then generate body image.

Historical factors. Historical factors include the upbringing and experiences people have that weigh on how they "come to think, feel, and act in relation to their body. Salient among these influences are cultural socialization, interpersonal experiences,

[23] Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) seeks to change people's thinking and behaving. I agree with Heath Lambert's estimation that the practice "has many things in common with Scripture, which also emphasizes change at the level of thoughts and behavior. For these reasons, biblical counselors can affirm that many of the observations of CBT are accurate." Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 97. At the same time, biblical counselors are wary of certain aspects of CBT. Because of its materialistic worldview, it rejects all things spiritual; thus, it considers God, his Word, and an overall Christian worldview to be illegitimate. Excluding God results in a method of change that is completely amoral. In Lambert's words, "The CBT system has a completely relativistic morality, with human behavior based on the preferences of the client and the counselor . . . . There is no category for right and wrong. CBT therapy will never address sin before a holy God, but will only be concerned with changing thoughts and behaviors to something more conducive to the counselee's comfort level" (98).

physical characteristics and changes, and personality variables."[24] These factors go on to produce a mindset about the body that creates evaluation and investment strategies.

First, body image evaluation explains basic satisfaction with the body and the resulting beliefs based on the level of satisfaction. Second, body image investment describes the level of importance placed on appearance and the degree it impacts cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning.[25] Integral to body image investment are self-schemas constructed according to "cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of self-related information contained in an individual's social experience."[26] Based on one's previous life situations, certain ways of thinking accrue about the body that may or may not bear on one's present feelings and actions. If one is satisfied with the body, then one's feelings and actions will not focus on overall appearance. Conversely, if one is dissatisfied with the body, then one's feelings and actions will heavily revolve around overall appearance. Core appearance beliefs largely determine one's body image, sense of self, and even quality of life given the amount of control they exert over one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Developmentally, the most prominent influences on historical body image are cultural socialization, interpersonal experiences, physical characteristics and changes, and personality factors.[27] Every culture imparts its own message. Whether they dictate how people should behave, feel, or look, these messages get absorbed daily, importing inherent meaning and becoming the standard by which people compare themselves to those ingrained messages. If there is a perception of not meeting the societal ideal, then

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[24] Thomas F. Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 39.

[25] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 39.

[26] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 43.

[27] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 40-42.

feelings of insufficiency result. Culture communicates an appearance standard by which people assess whether they are acceptable and attractive. In addition to these messages, the culture also prescribes the means of conformity for achievement of societal norms. Measures like extreme exercise, dietary plans, plastic surgery, body-shaping procedures, or weight-loss pills become customary for attaining the culturally accepted body. When cultural messages about the body are so ingrained and adherence so ardently pursued, ongoing bodily dissatisfaction emanates as a natural consequence.[28]

Interpersonal experiences are another historical factor that have definite impact on body image development. Socialization bears heavily on the construction of appearance norms as "expectations, opinions, and verbal and nonverbal communications are conveyed in interactions with family members, friends, and other peers, and even strangers."[29] A parent's extreme standard of weight and appearance, jealousy over a sibling's body, or the ridicule of peers can interweave to create an environment ripe for a person's bodily dissatisfaction. Harman even advocates minimizing time with those who normalize extreme appearance expectations because these relationships magnify negative body image.[30]

Obviously, physical characteristics and aging changes affect body image throughout the course of one's life. Facial features and body type automatically render one desirable or undesirable based on cultural expectations. Sadly, "vast scientific literature confirms that the attractiveness and social acceptability of a person's physical appearance impact how the person is perceived and treated by others."[31] Age alters physical appearance, though it is often overlooked. Cash speculates, "Aging in adulthood

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[28] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 40-41.

[29] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 40-41.

[30] Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 29.

[31] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 42.

may bring physical changes such as weight gain, hair loss, and less elasticity in the skin. Simply stated, the body is a 'moving target,' which entails an ongoing process of adaptation to physical changes, for better or worse."[32] This ongoing process of adaptation brings ever-changing physical realities that influence beliefs about the body. Commonly, body image issues are thought to be limited to teenage girls, but considering the effects of aging, teen girls will certainly not be the only group to experience bodily dissatisfaction.[33]

An individual's personality is the last determining historical factor as certain traits put one at higher risk for developing a skewed body image. Those with perfectionist tendencies commonly find their bodies offensive, lacking, and flawed. An incessant drive for bodily perfection naturally produces negative thoughts when one's expectations of the preferred body go unmet.[34] A heightened sense of self-consciousness, called body surveillance, also arises. When around others, those with intense feelings of self-doubt frequently monitor themselves, looking for feedback and approval from those around them. Engaging in behaviors like pulling at clothing, checking the mirror, or adjusting posture, they seek to conceal whatever flaws appear most disconcerting. Essentially, their behaviors are driven by relentless preoccupation with what others might think about their bodies.[35]

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[32] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 42.

[33] Jeremy Pierre comments, "People's bodies are both a part of who they are as well as the circumstances they have been given. People do not personally determine the most significant characteristics of their body. From hair color to mental capacities, people do not choose the features of their bodies, but their bodies are subject to God's providence and the fall's corruption." Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016), 95. While Pierre does not connect his observation to body image, many of the physical characteristics that largely determine body image are also part of God's providence. Believers struggling with negative body image must temper their thoughts by this truth.

[34] Thomas F. Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 42.

[35] Nita Mary McKinley, "Feminist Perspectives on Body Image," in Cash and Linda, *Body Image*, 49. From the feminist perspective, she connects a woman's need for body surveillance to the internalization of cultural body standards and appearance control beliefs. All three make up McKinley's theory of objectified body consciousness (OBC). McKinley, "Feminist Perspectives on Body Image," 48-50.

Proximal factors. Proximal factors are influences determined by current life events that are also involved in body image development. Core appearance beliefs that often define sense of self also influence proximal factors. As situations involving external or even internal events arise throughout the day, the incoming information gets processed through previously established schematics. Thus, "appearance-schematic individuals place more importance on, pay more attention to, and preferentially process information relevant to their appearance."[36] Occurrences that trigger this process include social interaction (whether positive or negative), getting on a scale, walking in front of a mirror, eating, exercising, dressing, changing emotions, and media exposure. Once the appearance schema is activated, the individual begins internal dialogues, or private body talk, that "involve emotion-laden automatic thoughts, inferences, interpretations, and conclusions about one's looks."[37] Implications of private body talk weigh heavily on body image; therefore, private body talk is important to my framework. According to Cash,

> Among individuals with problematic body image attitudes and self-schemas, these inner dialogues are habitual, faulty, and dysphoric. Thought processes may reflect various errors or distortions, such as dichotomous thinking, emotional reasoning, biased social comparisons, arbitrary inferences, overgeneralization, overpersonalization, magnification of perceived defects, and minimization of assets.[38]

Efforts to manage or cope with these negative thoughts and feelings involve adjustive and self-regulatory processes. The resulting cognitive and behavioral reactions seek to handle whatever external or internal event just transpired. Looking to temporarily alleviate distressing body image thoughts, a person engages in adjustive reactions, or reactive maneuvers, that "include avoidant and body-concealment behaviors, appearance-

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[36] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 44.

[37] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 44.

[38] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 44.

checking . . . , social reassurance seeking, and compensatory strategies."[39] If successful, these tactics grant an individual momentary relief from the onslaught of distorted thinking and harmful emoting.[40]

Cash recognizes this disparity and articulates three behavioral efforts that attempt to deal with maladaptive body image. First, in "experiential avoidance," a person aims to avoid anything that could be potentially distressing. Second, "appearance fixing" occurs when someone engages in behaviors to alter whatever part of her appearance she finds unacceptable. Third, "positive rational acceptance" happens when a person practices rational thinking, positive emotions, and general acceptance of whatever event instigated the negative private body talk. The first two attempts, avoidance and fixing, "are associated with less adaptive body image attitudes (e.g. negative evaluations and excessive investment), more body image dysphoria, and poorer psychosocial functioning (e.g. more eating pathology and lower self-esteem)."[41] Therefore, the third behavior is deemed most effective in facilitating a person's long-term ability to correct a negative body image. For believers who are uniquely equipped with the ability to control negative thinking and focus on truth, these findings inform the development of a God-honoring body image.

While the cognitive-behavioral model is widely used to correct a negative body image, the next section discusses another popular approach.

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[39] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 45.

[40] Interestingly, body-image coping mechanisms have garnered little research compared to other coping processes. Merely recognizing a negative body image is insufficient; one must go on to manage and correct it. Again, this disparity goes to serve my overall assertion that body image is an under-, if not a wholly, unrecognized phenomenon in the church—for if the management of negative body image receives scant research in secular psychology, how much more will this be true for the church that has commonly neglected the body?

[41] Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," 45.

Sociocultural Model

The sociocultural model considers how interpersonal influences (e.g., family, friends, the media) contribute to the formation of appearance norms and unrealistic body image standards. Many variants of this model are accepted, but for purposes of this dissertation, I only assess the primary forms. The sociocultural model claims that every culture has its own "societal ideal of beauty" that gets transmitted through "a variety of societal channels."[42] These ideals become "internalized by individuals" and generate satisfaction or dissatisfaction based on how much their appearance matches the perceived societal ideal.[43] Thinness reigns as the prevailing societal ideal in the West. Known as the tripartite model, "family, friends, and the media" are the sociocultural agents that mostly perpetuate the thinness standard. An individual pursues whatever means necessary to reach the ideal body type, even ones that could harm the body. The sequence is similar in females and males, though for males the standard typically centers on a muscular body rather than on thinness. Like females, males also utilize unhealthy measures to achieve the ideal, typically through steroid or supplement use.[44]

Evidence for sociocultural ideals are threefold. First, thinness is the marker of beauty for Western women. Muscularity is the standard for Western men. Second, these ideals get pushed through the fashion industry—models, magazines, digital images, and advertising. Unattainable image ideals marketed to children communicate standards of beauty, desirability, and worth that potentially enslave them for years. Third, sociocultural standards of appearance have progressed and "become a transnational

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[42] Marika Tiggemann, "Human Appearance and Body Image," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 13.

[43] Tiggemann, "Human Appearance and Body Image," 13.

[44] Tiggemann, "Human Appearance and Body Image," 13.

phenomenon," causing many around the world to desire the Westernized body, all owing to sociocultural influence.[45]

Once these ideals are distilled in a society, the tripartite model comes into play. The model "has been helpful in identifying which sources of information are significant in communicating information about desirable bodies."[46] Whether intentionally or unintentionally, family, friends, and media perpetuate societal standards and greatly impact those around them. McBride explains, "We learn how to evaluate our appearance, and against what to evaluate it, based on what is around us and what is considered ideal."[47] In children, body image is tied to familial influence, which can include "both direct (parental commentary about the child's weight or appearance, of the imposition of particular food rules) and indirect ways (through unintended parental modeling of their own weight concerns and dieting behaviors)."[48]

As for the influence of friends, females—especially teens—tend to build friendships based on similar body image or dietary concerns. Males form friendships in much the same way, and both males and females are highly influenced by others' comments, particularly derision and ridicule. While the opinions of family and friends weigh heavily on body image, the media primarily pushes conformity to societal ideals.[49] Certainly, other means of influence and transmission occur and overlap with the tripartite model. Despite the varying impact and means of sociocultural transmission, the effect is evident. Repeated impressions of unattainable appearance standards will never create an environment conducive to healthy body image. Because of this reality, reframing

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[45] Tiggemann, "Human Appearance and Body Image," 14-15.

[46] McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," 7.

[47] McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," 7.

[48] Tiggemann, "Human Appearance and Body Image," 16.

[49] Tiggemann, "Human Appearance and Body Image," 16.

appearance expectations—from Scripture not society—is highly important to the development of a God-honoring body image.

The cognitive-behavioral and sociocultural approach represent two contemporary, popular models for remedying negative body image. While neither model addresses sin, each shows that altering one's thinking, acting, or negative influences can positively impact body image. In presenting a biblical understanding of body image, both methods provide insightful points for the believer. Body image is important for believers to recognize because it is a common life experience, as the following section shows.

Body Image Development

Cognition and perception of the body progress overtime with age, experience, outside influences, and cultural setting. The way in which someone conceptualizes, perceives, and evaluates the body develops with age. In this section, therefore, I consider how body image progresses from childhood to adolescence to adulthood. Doing so is necessary before I apply a biblical understanding of the body to specific body image issues and settings in a subsequent section.

Body Image in Children

In children under twelve years of age, body image steadily changes, even in infants who are able to distinguish between themselves and other babies in videos. By age two, children begin to refer to themselves in the first person and recognize their personal characteristics in photos or mirrors. Continuing personal bodily awareness, around four to six years, children start comparing their appearance to others. By age six, children become preoccupied with their bodies in ways similar to many adults, and a large number of them experience dissatisfaction with their bodies as well.[50] At age eight,

[50] Smolak, "Body Image Development in Childhood," 68, 74.

there is significant progression in self-evaluation and comparison that occurs in "four areas: academic competence, social competence, physical/athletic skills, and physical appearance. The last two self-evaluation categories are clearly components of body image. Thus, self-development, including burgeoning social comparison skills, is part of the foundation of body image."[51] These findings reveal that the common experience beginning at an early age is for individuals to observe their own body and compare what they see to the bodies of those around them. Many people engage in comparison and feel the resulting displeasure in their earliest years.

Influential body image factors in children are similar to those in adults. One interesting factor shown most determinative to negative body image is body mass index (BMI). While BMI proves problematic, especially in adults,[52] it seems to be "the single most consistent risk factor for body dissatisfaction among children."[53] In elementary school, those with a higher BMI also experience greater levels of adverse thoughts and feelings about their bodies, a phenomenon consistent across cultures. These findings are not altogether surprising because children as early as four label being fat "bad," even expressing an "anti-fat bias."[54] Other risk factors come from sociocultural influence. Little girls, like older females, learn to focus more on appearance concerns and thinness, whereas young boys care more about action than appearance. Children understand body ideals from parents who press them to constantly pose for pictures; marketing efforts to buy certain toys that push a desirable body types; and comments, teasing, or comparisons

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[51] Linda Smolak, "Body Image Development in Childhood," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 68.

[52] BMI is not a good determiner of optimal weight in adults as it does not differentiate between fat mass and muscle mass. Muscle weighs more than fat, so individuals with more muscle mass may have a higher BMI. Thus, the index labels them as overweight or obese even though they are in optimal health. Equally, someone who is thinner may have a normal, healthy BMI, but this reading cannot account for an unhealthy lifestyle that negatively impacts vital internal organs.

[53] Smolak, "Body Image Development in Childhood," 69.

[54] Smolak, "Body Image Development in Childhood," 69.

from their peers.[55] Like adults, children experience comparative sociocultural factors as well as other risk factors, such as low self-esteem and internalizing a thin body type.

Conversely, a protective factor against development of negative body image is termed "autonomy." Autonomy is a child's resistance to the outward influences of sociocultural factors.[56] The notion of a protective factor is important because Christians possess the Holy Spirit who, through indwelling, empowers believers to resist negative thinking, feeling, and acting.

Body Image in Adolescence

Adolescence brings significant physical changes for boys and girls that impact body image and are not limited to puberty. Oftentimes in adolescence, social shifts occur as many adolescents begin to listen more to friends than family. They seek input and opinions from friends that even challenge parental viewpoints.[57] In terms of body image, when these physical, social, and behavioral changes cause significant body dissatisfaction, such dissatisfaction can lead teenagers to take extreme measures in order to achieve a desired ideal.

Eleanor Wertheim and Susan Paxton report that 70 percent of adolescent girls desire to be thinner, thinking that a smaller appearance would make them "happier, healthier, and better looking."[58] Of the girls whom Wertheim and Paxton studied, one third to one half underwent extreme measures like purging, fasting, taking laxatives, and crash dieting to lose weight and thus match their idealized physique. Unsurprisingly,

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[55] Smolak, "Body Image Development in Childhood," 71.

[56] Smolak, "Body Image Development in Childhood," 73.

[57] Wertheim and Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," 80.

[58] Wertheim and Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," 77.

"adolescence is a time of particular risk for girls in that during this time BIDs [body image disorders] can develop into more severe psychological disorders."[59]

For boys with negative body image, there exists a far greater challenge. The phenomenon of negative body image in boys has largely gone unrecognized until recently; it is now seen "as an important aspect of social and emotional development for adolescent boys."[60] Until twenty years ago, body image surveys in adolescent boys posed questions similar to those asked of their female peers. Because body image in adolescent boys was measured according to a thinness standard for adolescent girls, struggles over appearance and physical shape were missed for years.[61] This oversight perpetuated the notion that boys do not struggle with their physical form and appearance ideals. Thus, body image has been commonly labeled a female issue. Misunderstanding body image issues in boys has caused many to silently struggle with body dissatisfaction.

The most common source of negative body image in adolescent boys comes from a desire to be more muscular, taller, or stronger. In more extreme cases, the individual experiences reverse anorexia, where he is fearful of his perceived small stature and resulting weaknesses.[62] More recently, reverse anorexia was renamed "muscle dysmorphia," falling under the BDD category.[63] Additionally, in a time of rampant childhood obesity, a different group of boys undergo harmful practices like purging and taking laxatives to lose weight—similar to girls with distorted body image.

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[59] Wertheim and Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," 81.

[60] Lina A. Ricciardelli and Marita P. McCabe, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Boys," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 85. Ricciardelli and McCabe note, "In the 2001 review by Cohane and Pope, only 17 papers were identified that included preadolescent and adolescent boys ages 18 or younger. In fact, many researchers and clinicians in the 1980s and 1990s were of the view that boys did not have body image concerns or eating problems, and hence boys were often excluded or ignored."

[61] Donald R. McCreary, "Body Image and Muscularity," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 198.

[62] David Powlison, "Is the Adonis Complex in Your Bible?," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 22, no. 2 (2002): 42.

[63] Ricciardelli and McCabe, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Boys," 85.

The developmental stage of adolescence is typified by the experience of puberty in boys ages eleven to fifteen and girls ages nine to fifteen.[64] Bodily changes during puberty can magnify dramatic body image issues, particularly in individuals whose onset of puberty differs from others their age. This effect "has been more fully elaborated as 'the off-time hypothesis,' which predicts that both early- and late-maturing adolescents will manifest more social, emotional, and behavioral problems than their on-time age mates."[65] In boys, this phenomenon may lead late-maturing individuals to take steroids and supplements to match the muscularity of their more-mature peers. Because puberty generally brings about the societal ideal for masculinity, those who experience delay in this process disparage their underdeveloped bodies.[66] For young girls whose bodies deposit fat in new areas, body image concerns develop if their understanding and acceptance of these physical shifts lag behind their changing bodies. If the onset of menstruation occurs sooner than their friends, these girls more often display negative body image as they "find themselves moving farther from societal ideals that indicate that beauty involves thinness."[67] Physical differences experienced by these girls at younger age than others usually result in ridicule.

Like other categories, an adolescent's body image is at risk from physical, psychological, and sociocultural factors. Less prevalent in boys than girls is the effect of physical characteristics and body type on appearance displeasure. Boys tend to express a self-serving bias, that is, the tendency to overestimate oneself as better than average in desirable categories and lower than average in undesirable categories. This inclination

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[64] Rena Goldman, "The Stages of Puberty: Development in Boys and Girls," Healthline, last modified August 23, 2018, https://www.healthline.com/health/parenting/stages-of-puberty#tanner-stage-2.

[65] Ricciardelli and McCabe, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Boys," 87.

[66] Ricciardelli and McCabe, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Boys," 87.

[67] Wertheim and Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," 79.

provides some boys protection against poor body image.[68] Sociocultural influences affect girls and boys toward the development of an ideal body, but they mainly come from two different sources. While all are impacted to some degree by each element in the tripartite model, girls tend to internalize appearance messages from media, whereas familial expectations hold greater sway on the bodily expectations of boys. Psychologically, negative body image arises in boys and girls who express a tendency for low self-esteem, perfectionism, and a despondent temperament.[69] Researchers admit, "To date, there has been very little research that has specifically tried to identify factors that can protect against body image concerns in the presence of risk factors."[70] It is this disparity between the widespread reality of negative body image and the absence of protective factors that I hope to rectify in the following chapter.

Body Image in Adults

Though adult women experience greater levels of body dissatisfaction, it remains a relevant issue in men as well. Body image research in adults mostly targets college-age individuals, but there is growing realization that older adults struggle with body image and, consequently, increasing research efforts among those forty and up. However, there remain no longitudinal studies demonstrating how body image fluctuates over the course of one's life.[71] With age comes significant shifts in one's former body, such as weight variation, hearing and eyesight inefficiency, skin wrinkles, hair loss, and muscle atrophy, along with general aches and pains that limit motion, balance, and

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[68] Ricciardelli and McCabe, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Boys," 86.

[69] Ricciardelli and McCabe, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Boys," 81-87.

[70] Wertheim and Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," 82.

[71] Sarah Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 93.

normal everyday activities. If adults cannot alter appearance and body expectations, then negative body image undoubtedly results.[72]

Similarly, adult women up to their late sixties generally report displeasure with weight and body shape. Overall, the same areas of the body that frustrate young women still trouble older women—areas like the stomach, hips, and thighs. As women age, weight gain is a significant determiner of body image, while appearance concern somewhat lessens. Menopause is a significant contributor to weight gain and thus an important factor in body image. For menopausal women who gain weight despite remaining steady in healthy eating and exercise habits, hormonal changes are largely to blame for the increasing number on the scale. Decreasing estrogen levels cause the body to store weight differently, usually in the stomach, whereas prior to menopause, the hormone promoted weight gain in hips and thighs. This occurrence exemplifies the natural bodily change that leads to negative body image if women do not expect and accept it.

Women over age seventy tend to have body expectations that are more realistic and less culturally defined than their younger counterparts. The personal growth and wisdom that comes with age greatly benefits older women. Grogan explains,

> Body image investment may also diminish with identity development as women's identities become less closely linked with their looks and more with their role in relation to family, career, and community . . . . Appearance investment may decrease as women move into their 60s and beyond—resulting in lowered self-

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[72] Consider the following on the ways in which, according to Grogan, Western culture subliminally communicates appearance expectations in adulthood:

> Since the 1990s, idealized, slender and moderately muscular young men's bodies have been depicted more frequently in advertisements for non-body-related products and in television and on film. Although it is rare to see women in their 40s and 50s in sexual roles, men in their 50s are frequently portrayed on film as attractive and sexual, and as having sexual relationships with much younger women. It is easy to think of examples of Hollywood actors who still play "love interest" roles in their 50s and 60s (e.g., Richard Gere, Harrison Ford, Pierce Brosnan, Bruce Willis, Kevin Costner), and it is not uncommon for men to be presented as lovers of women who are 20 years younger. However, men over 70 years are often portrayed as incapacitated, incompetent, pathetic, and the subject of ridicule. Bodies of men over 70 are rarely seen on film, except in roles where bodies might be expected to be exposed (e.g., as hospital patients). (Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," 93)

> objectification, reduced body monitoring, and less appearance anxiety as women age. As a result, self-esteem may also be less closely linked with body satisfaction as women age.[73]

Were younger adult women to learn from the approach of appearance acceptance exhibited in older women, perhaps the experience of continual negative body image would lessen and lead to a greater quality of life, one where happiness and contentment do not revolve around the daily pursuit of adhering to a physical ideal.

While most men express greater levels of body satisfaction than women, body image in men is more difficult to determine. As men reach middle age, some articulate the ideal body as much slimmer than the current perception of themselves. This admission indicates they have a greater experience of negative body image. Unlike women whose negative body image is influenced by sociocultural appearance ideals, most men report a desire to rewind the clock and look like they did earlier in life.[74] Many men admit their body image worsened by age sixty, as they first began to desire their former, youthful body, perhaps for the first time.[75] Given this tendency, if men cannot alter the expectations of their aging bodies, they will experience negative body image.

Still, negative male body image remains a seldom-researched topic. Grogan comments on issues complicating the study of body image in men saying, "It is unclear which standards for comparison older men tend to use and how important such standards are."[76] That being said, it may be that men experience greater instances of negative body image than they readily admit, which could inhibit their willingness to be involved in body image studies in the first place.[77]

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[73] Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," 96.

[74] Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," 97.

[75] Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," 96.

[76] Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," 98.

[77] I would also add that bodily concern should shift in adulthood to preparing the body for old age and guarding it against the typical physical effects that come with age. Specifically, adults need to work on balance and coordination activities since these skills decrease with age and, as a result, increase the

Summary

Body image is a phenomenological reality for everyone at some point from childhood to adulthood. While many people will suffer from negative body image on occasion, some will be so overwhelmed that their adverse thoughts will lead to deleterious behaviors.

Disorders Involving Negative Body Image

Eating disorders are sadly a common struggle for millions of people, most of the time occurring in women between the ages of twelve and thirty-five.[78] Negative body image, specifically BID, often manifests in an eating disorder. Janis Crowther and Nicole Williams explain, "Individuals with eating disorders rely excessively on their body shape, weight, and eating habits and their ability to control them as the singular domain upon which they base their self-evaluation."[79] For a woman suffering from an eating disorder, her world revolves around a constantly interpreting and assessing her appearance, a mental battle that never relents but merely subsides momentarily. This manifestation consumes the sufferer. Misplaced desires, driven by negative body image, combined with obsession and even trauma, lead to eating disorders.

Anorexia nervosa (AN) and bulimia nervosa (BN) are the two main forms of eating disorders.[80] The major difference between the two lies in the means by which

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likelihood of a significant injurious fall. Also, instead of exercising to achieve the ideal body and desirable appearance, there needs to be a mindset shift to engaging in exercise as a means of improving one's overall health because incidences of diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and other chronic diseases increase with age.

[78] Janis H. Crowther and Nicole M. Williams, "Body Image and Bulimia Nervosa," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 289.

[79] Crowther and Williams, "Body Image and Bulimia Nervosa," 289.

[80] Binge-eating disorder and avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder are other types of eating disorders, though they are less prevalent than anorexia and bulimia. In binge-eating, one consumes an abnormally large amount of food during a certain period of time, usually in secret. Avoidant food intake occurs when a person does not meet minimal nutritional requirements due to lack of eating. In these cases, a disturbed, or negative, body image is one key differentiation. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DCM-5)*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2017), 334.

weight loss is achieved. Anorexics restrict food intake, while bulimics purge their food, mostly by self-induced vomiting.[81] Typically, eating disorders, especially anorexia, arise from efforts to exert control of one's life when all else seems out of control. Other times, the disorder serves to express one's emotions tied to anxiety or depression, generally linked with negative body image.[82]

One in twenty females will develop an eating disorder in her lifetime, making such disorders a critical topic of discussion.[83] Even more, anorexia has the "highest mortality rate of all mental health disorders."[84] The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-5*) gives three qualifiers of an eating disorder. First, the sufferer exhibits an intentional effort to restrict calories, generating weight loss too low for normal health. Next, the sufferer's intense fear of weight gain control her daily thoughts and actions. Lastly, intense body dissatisfaction accompanies the eating disorder and is evidenced by negative body image.[85]

Anyone can be diagnosed with an eating disorder, as numerous contributing factors exist (e.g., biological, cultural, psychological). Biological factors involve being female or certain genetic predispositions. Cultural influences include a desire to be thin, academic pressures, sports expectations, one's family and friends, and even a prior history of dieting. Personality, perfectionism, and depression are psychological

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[81] *DSM-5*, 339.

[82] *DSM-5*, 341.

[83] Academy for Eating Disorders, "Fast Facts on Eating Disorders," accessed on October 14, 2020, https://www.aedweb.org/resources/about-eating-disorders/fast-facts.

[84] Kathleen Peterson and Rebecca Fuller, "Anorexia Nervosa in Adolescents," *Nursing 2020* 49, no. 10 (October 2019): 25.

[85] *DSM-5*, 338.

contributors.[86] Additionally, the incidence of eating disorders heightens whenever significant social and physical shifts occur.[87]

While body displeasure is common across the world, Caucasians battle the highest levels of body dissatisfaction, diet culture, food restraint, and a preoccupation with thinness; their overall perception, or body image, is more likely to be skewed than other ethnicities. African Americans are far less likely to be affected by dietary issues and negative body image than Caucasians.[88] In other parts of the world, exposure to the Westernized standard of desirability and attractiveness increase incidences of negative body image. For example, in countries like China and Japan, girls also desire thinness and diet to achieve it.[89] As Western body expectations expand, the risk factors for developing negative body image include "female gender, adolescence, upward mobility, urban location, and high levels of interaction with global media."[90] Cultural influences that influence negative body image are definite factors in the advance of an eating disorder.

Sociocultural influences, like family, friends, and media, impact eating disorder development, which acts as a coping mechanism in cases of abuse and trauma.[91] Unsurprisingly, there is a significant genetic influence toward eating disorders if a family member previously battled one. If sports or academics are highly prized in one's family, the push for an expected body type or pressure for excellent grades can generate an eating

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[86] Fuller and Peterson, "Anorexia Nervosa in Adolescents," 26.

[87] Hillary L. McBride and Janelle L. Kwee, "Understanding Disordered Eating and (Dis)embodiment through a Feminist Lens," in McBride and Kwee, *Embodiment and Eating Disorders*, 17.

[88] Wertheim and Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," 77.

[89] Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," 94.

[90] Eileen P Anderson-Fye, "Body Images in Non-Western Cultures," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 250.

[91] Academy for Eating Disorders, "Fast Facts on Eating Disorders."

disorder. For example, the sports with higher numbers of anorexics are gymnastics, ballet, swimming, wrestling, and cycling.[92] Harsh comments from friends or significant others may provoke a negative body image and an eventual eating disorder. Body dissatisfaction spreads the more media sources laud an ideal body. Familial and social expectations can encourage specific body types, creating dissatisfaction with the body and a willingness to do whatever necessary to fix one's appearance.[93]

Other factors in eating disorder prevalence vary from person to person, while females are far more likely to develop anorexia or bulimia. Some surmise that being born female is a risk factor, which seems accurate when statistics show negative body image to be a common experience in 70 percent of teens and 80 percent of college-age females.[94] On this heightened prevalence, McBride comments that "body dissatisfaction has become so widespread that it is now understood to be normative."[95] Another factor is whether or not the person holds the deep belief that a certain body type is preferred, even required, for success. Disordered eating, negative body image, and perfectionist tendencies also fuel eating disorders. A perfectionist mindset easily accepts and adapts to the discipline that eating disorders demand. Females with a combination of perfectionism, self-esteem issues, and negative body image are at greater risk for developing an eating disorder.[96] Because eating disorders are directly connected to negative body image, I examine anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and body dysmorphic disorder in greater detail.

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[92] Academy for Eating Disorders, "Fast Facts on Eating Disorders."

[93] Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin House, 2015), 90.

[94] Kenardy, Brown, and Vogt, 2001; Spitzer et al., 1999. In fact, numerous researchers report that "body image has become too widespread that it is now understood to be normative." Cash, 2002; Cash and Henry, 1995; Rodin, Silberstein, and Striegel-Moore, 1985. These studies (as they appear here) were cited in McBride and Kwee, "Disordered Eating and (Dis)embodiment," 18.

[95] McBride and Kwee, "Disordered Eating and (Dis)embodiment," 17.

[96] Crowther and Williams, "Body Image and Bulimia Nervosa," 292.

Anorexia Nervosa

Anorexia nervosa involves severe perception and cognition biases based in irrationality. The anorexic perceives her body other than it actually is, which affects her outlook on the physical space her body takes up and her body's shape, size, and composition. The anorexia sufferer believes her appearance to be an appalling, serious problem. These appearance beliefs are a major function of self-evaluation, where the body and thinness are "overvalued" and lead to "excessive preoccupation."[97] The issue then becomes that these overvalued ideas entail an extreme difficulty to alter, as "an individual with AN who overvalues the importance of weight and shape is likely to base his or her self-worth on achieving, and then maintaining, a very low body weight."[98] Negative thoughts and feelings produce a mechanism that only perpetuates poor body image. The avoidance or checking mechanism is part of the cyclical nature of appearance distress and obsession. These behaviors continue the cycle, squashing any opportunity to confront the ill-conceived thought or feeling. Avoidance involves wearing clothes to conceal one's body and refraining from social situations and other scenarios where others might see the anorexic's thin, frail body. Checking behaviors are neurotic actions to monitor outward appearance, such as "mirror scrutiny, weighing, measuring one's own body parts, pinching, or jiggling."[99] Such activities never assuage the anorexics erroneous body image. Her flawed perceptions and cognitions only continue.

Each thought, affection, and action that plagues the sufferer revolves around the achievement of a desirable body. Reversing this extreme distortion of body image is challenging, as there is denial of the dangers that low weight presents. Even when confronted with arising medical issues, the anorexic continues to reject the seriousness of

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[97] Sherrie Selwyn Delinsky, "Body Image and Anorexia Nervosa," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 280.

[98] Delinsky, "Body Image and Anorexia Nervosa," 280.

[99] Delinsky, "Body Image and Anorexia Nervosa," 284.

her condition.[100] Health problems created by long-term self-starvation pose a variety of alarming threats to the anorexic's physical wellbeing.

Anorexics suffer from a variety of physical maladies, and no part of the body is spared from the disorder's health consequences. In the most extreme cases, 5 percent of sufferers die.[101] In less severe cases, the long-term effects of malnutrition are still significant. Externally, anorexics look malnourished, underweight, bony, pale, and sick. Their skin dries out, becoming bruised and yellow with fine hair growth. They experience greater cold sensitivity due to a decrease in body fat as well as an inability to regulate their body temperature. The hair on their head falls out, and their nails grow brittle.[102]

Internally, more physiological consequences emerge. Muscles and bones weaken, even to the point of breaking. Osteoporosis may occur, which comes from a decrease in bone mass density, a condition nearly impossible to reverse and one that only worsens in time. Those with anorexia experience trouble thinking, mood swings, memory issues, and fainting. Hormonally, the disorder causes many issues. Growth is stunted. Menstruation stops. Females struggle to get pregnant. The risks of miscarriage and postpartum depression increase as well. Kidney stones and failure ensues. Bodily fluids like potassium, magnesium, and sodium decrease. Digestive issues like constipation and bloating occur. Ultimately, the disorder affects the heart. Low blood pressure transpires, causing fainting and dizziness. A lowered heart rate results, then heart palpitations, and eventually heart failure. In summary, anorexia nervosa wreaks havoc on multiple body systems—gastrointestinal, endocrine, respiratory, circulatory, musculoskeletal, neurological, and dermatological.[103] The body is simply not created to withstand the

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[100] Delinsky, "Body Image and Anorexia Nervosa," 280.

[101] *DSM-5*, 342.

[102] Patricia Westmoreland, Mori J. Krantz, and Philip S. Mehler, "Medical Complications of Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa," *American Journal of Medicine* 129, no. 1 (July 2015): 30-37.

[103] Westmoreland, Krantz, and Mehler, "Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia Nervosa."

effects of long-term malnourishment. While the next eating disorder does not have the same problem of malnourishment, sufferers still demonstrate behaviors with food that harm the body.

Bulimia Nervosa

Bulimia nervosa sufferers experience the same distortions in body image, yet their coping method differs. Instead of food deprivation, bulimics cycle between excessive eating and the forcible elimination of the ingested food by self-induced vomiting or laxative use.[104] Classified as an "uncontrolled consumption" of food, the average bulimic binges twice a week, but the diagnosis only requires one binge/purge event once a week for three months.[105] Sometimes, binges happen after eating food considered off limits or eating too many calories for one day. Then, as compensation or even punishment for these "dietary lapses," the cycle of purging takes over to negate the excess calories previously ingested.[106] Like anorexia, bulimia is characterized by negative body image and disdain for one's overall appearance. As they do with anorexia diagnoses, females dominate bulimia diagnoses at 90 percent of cases.[107] While there is a non-purging type of bulimia wherein someone excessively fasts or exercises, the purging type remains more prevalent among sufferers. Because binging and purging events generate shame for the individual, these measures go largely concealed, even from loved ones.

Bulimics, like anorexics, suffer from errant cognitions and perceptions regarding their overall appearance that result in damaging feelings and behaviors. In both

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[104] Crowther and Williams, "Body Image and Bulimia Nervosa," 282.

[105] *DSM-5*, 345.

[106] Crowther and Williams, "Body Image and Bulimia Nervosa," 292.

[107] Crowther and Williams, "Body Image and Bulimia Nervosa," 292.

cases, these disorders lead individuals to extreme conclusions about their own bodies due to sociocultural factors they previously internalized. Interestingly, bulimic individuals experience greater dissatisfaction with their appearance than those with anorexia, though both groups "report negative body-related cognitions at much higher frequencies than women without eating disorders."[108] Avoidance and appearance checking are also typical behaviors of those with bulimia nervosa. These intentional efforts to conceal the body from self and others coupled with obsessive, critical preoccupation over certain areas of the body characterize both bulimics and anorexics, occurring at rates much higher than those without an eating disorder.[109] While body avoidance and checking behaviors seem contradictory, the rationale is clear—intense bodily hatred prompts constant obsession because these behaviors are reinforcing extremes. The cycle goes something as follows. First, in "body checking individuals pay selective attention to the parts of their body that they dislike, which increases their body dissatisfaction. Second, as a result of body avoidance, individuals do not pay attention to information that might challenge or disconfirm their body image concerns."[110] These individuals are nearly incapable of creating the mental space to potentially view their body in alternative, positive ways because the strong feelings of dissatisfaction become so pervasive and unrelenting.

The physical ramifications of bulimia remain largely similar to anorexia, though with a few notable distinctions. Significant health issues arise from the means utilized in purging. For instance, if one chooses to vomit in attempt to offset a binge, the frequent stomach acid advances tooth decay and causes other oral problems. The esophagus even ruptures in severe cases. Odd callouses develop on the fingers used in purging. In the case of laxative use combined with vomiting, low fluid and electrolyte

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[108] Crowther and Williams, "Body Image and Bulimia Nervosa," 290.

[109] Crowther and Williams, "Body Image and Bulimia Nervosa," 290.

[110] Crowther and Williams, "Body Image and Bulimia Nervosa," 291.

levels create serious medical complications. Dehydration occurs, which also comes with serious problems. Repeated laxative use results in rectal prolapse in extreme cases, with recurrent elimination issues in mild cases, even when purging behaviors cease.[111]

Body Dysmorphic Disorder

Body dysmorphic disorder is a consequence of body image issues. However, it goes far deeper than negative thinking and feeling about the body. There are three main criterions for BDD. First, a man fixates on one or more aspects of his body that he deems flawed or deficient, even though these perceived defects seem minute and completely imperceptible to others. Facial features, like the nose, hair, and skin, distress the individual the most.[112] Finding these areas unattractive and repulsive, the sufferer focuses on them for hours every day. Average preoccupation is anywhere from three to eight hours, rendering the man a slave to this disorder. Second, as a result of the fixation, the sufferer obsessively engages in repetitious behaviors to address the initial appearance issue. This criterion involves overwhelming, irresistible, and consuming behaviors. Some activities are appearance comparison, monitoring and examining flaws in the mirror, excessive grooming and camouflaging to conceal the misperceptions, wanting reassurance from others, seeking cosmetic surgery, exercising too much, and frequently touching the despised area. Sufferers may also engage in excessive amounts of tanning, shopping, or changing clothes. Third, these behaviors must be particularly troublesome and interrupt normal functioning in one's social or work life and other areas.[113] Those with BDD receive a diagnosis of delusional disorder as well; however, most cases go unrecognized and without clinical diagnosis or requisite help.[114]

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[111] *DSM-5*, 345.

[112] Phillips, "Body Image and Body Dysmorphic Disorder," 307.

[113] *DSM-5*, 243.

[114] Phillips, "Body Image and Body Dysmorphic Disorder," 305-6.

Classifications of BDD vary in severity—from good insight to poor insight to absent insight. These classifications indicate the degree to which distorted beliefs occur in and/or exert control over the sufferer. Good insight entails a realization that the BDD thoughts are likely untrue. On average, people suffer most from poor insight, which means that they believe the BDD thoughts are likely true. In absent insight, the category expressed by one third of BDD sufferers, the individual is utterly certain of his BDD beliefs. Those classified with absent insight generally suffer from greater levels of comorbidities as a result of more intense symptoms exhibited in the second level of criteria. The disease frequently materializes in those eighteen years or younger. In these instances, chances of suicide and comorbidity increase. Body dysmorphic disorder is a cross-cultural issue, with abused children as well as those with first-degree relation to someone with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) at a higher risk of BDD development.[115]

Other signs of BDD are plentiful though insufficient for diagnosis.[116] These associations range from delusions of believing others to being focused on and critical of others and include anxiety issues, mood swings, neurosis or perfectionism, and low self-esteem. Because most sufferers find their appearance obsession embarrassing, they struggle in silence.[117] Often, those with BDD seek out cosmetic surgery but rarely leave satisfied. In fact, 90 percent of those who undergo cosmetic surgery report either no change in BDD symptoms or worsening symptoms post-surgery. Disappointed with the

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[115] Anderson-Fye, "Body Images in Non-Western Cultures," 244-45.

[116] Examples of diagnostic questions for BDD include the following: "Are you very worried about your appearance in any way? How much time would you estimate you spend each day thinking about your appearance? How much distress do these concerns cause you? Do these concerns interfere with your life or cause problems for you in any way?" Phillips, "Body Image and Body Dysmorphic Disorder," 310.

[117] *DSM-5*, 244.

procedure, individuals even lash out against clinicians, perform surgeries on themselves, or attempt suicide.[118]

Those with BDD clearly experience a skewed body image. Though body image disturbance is "a central feature" of BDD, little research has been done on the overlap between the two. Unlike eating disorders, BDD affects both men and women equally. Biasedly focusing on and analyzing details, BDD sufferers are distressed by facial expressions and neutral situations that they read as adverse and threatening.[119] Some studies reveal a "hyperattentiveness to minor details of physical appearance."[120] While pharmacological treatments exist, cognitive-behavioral therapies (CBT) may be most effective. Studies that took a CBT approach utilized various strategies to combat BDD, such as exposure to previously avoided scenarios, limiting ability to seek reassurance, pinpointing core beliefs, and preventing other BDD coping efforts.[121]

Summary

Ignoring negative body image may have serious consequences as it can lead to the development of anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or body dysmorphic disorder. Both anorexia and bulimia involve harmful behaviors with food, though anorexics mostly restrict, while bulimics binge and purge. Extreme negative body image occurs in body dysmorphic disorder. These outcomes of negative body image reveal why reforming the issue is critical. As the next section shows, psychologist Amy Harman suggests how one might find success in fighting negative body image to achieve a positive one.

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[118] David B. Sarwer, Canice E. Crerand, and Leanne Magee, "Cosmetic Surgery and Changes in Body Image," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 398. Reactions to cosmetic surgeries can be so extreme that "there is growing consensus that cosmetic treatments should be contraindicated for persons with BDD, for the safety of both patients and the surgical team" (396). Interestingly, the reality that a BDD sufferer fails to be satisfied after cosmetic surgery proves that the problem lies in her mind and not with her body.

[119] *DSM-5*, 244.

[120] Phillips, "Body Image and Body Dysmorphic Disorder," 309.

[121] Phillips, "Body Image and Body Dysmorphic Disorder," 311.

Reclaiming Positive Body Image

Rather than "believing your body looks good," someone who has positive body image knows that the "body is good, regardless of how it looks."[122] This definition from Lindsay Kite and Lexie Kite in *More Than a Body* does not arise from a biblical worldview, but it does reveal that modifying one's body image begins with altering one's conception of the body. Kite and Kite advocate growing in body resilience, a concept that encourages pushing through negative thought-producing occasions in order to rise above their usual influence on body image. One who is resilient learns and grows from past experiences to lessen the impact when current body image issues arise. The rest of *More Than a Body* unfolds strategies for developing body resilience to "stop the frustrating cycle of self-objectification, in which women get stuck being evaluated by their appearance and then become their own evaluators, with few practical solutions to interrupt or end that cycle."[123] Each chapter proposes different approaches to achieve positive body image. Kite and Kite detail the impact of social media on body image, describe shifting from self-objectification to self-actualization, advocate for women to unite against ideal body standards, and support reclaiming fitness expectations. In the end, the authors hope that their readers find "the freedom and security that come from not just

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[122] Lindsay Kite and Lexie Kite, *More Than a Body: Your Body Is an Instrument Not an Ornament* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020), 7. While I appreciate much of their book, Kite and Kite discuss body image from a standpoint that is antithetical to a believer's identity in Christ. They base body image perspectives on the lens of intersectionality, a philosophical viewpoint focused on presumed layers of societal oppression. For instance, they admit their "advantages" as a caveat to their work. They describe themselves as

> white, middle class, heterosexual, educated, able-bodied women, and we recognize that despite hating our bodies for many years and falling short of body ideals in our culture, we also enjoy privileges that have protected us from any significant discrimination. . . . Though we've worked to learn from and incorporate a wide variety of perspectives, we acknowledge our privileges in a world that values whiteness, heterosexuality, middle-class status, and able bodies. (9)

This mindset lacks belief in God's sovereignty over ethnicity and the decision of when and where people live (Acts 17:24-28). Furthermore, the gospel of Christ unites, not divides, as intersectional thought does. Christians are joined to Christ, finding their identity and purpose in him. Christians are reconciled to God and commanded to love others, a calling that should not allow secular worldviews to contaminate gospel living and a biblical worldview.

[123] Kite and Kite, *More Than a Body*, 28.

believing that our bodies look good, but knowing that our bodies are *good*, regardless of how they look."[124]

In *Perfectly Imperfect: Compassionate Strategies to Cultivate a Positive Body Image*, Amy Harman counsels those with a negative body image. Though my body image discussion revolves around a biblical worldview and her argument does not, she suggests several points that echo what I seek to accomplish in the following chapter.[125]

For some, swinging from a negative body image to positive body image seems a drastic, unattainable step. While the Holy Spirit is able to renew and restore all things, it is feasible for people to strive first toward body neutrality. In this mindset, the body is seen and accepted as it is, a realization without the accompanying negative body thoughts. As Harman explains, "A body neutral approach means that you can respect your body not because you see how beautiful it is but because it is worthy of respect."[126] Thought to be part of a healthy body image, body neutrality is useful. If body neutrality assesses the body as worthy of respect, this is an undeniable Christian affirmation. Therefore, by the help of the Spirit, if believers who suffer from negative body image respect their bodies as created and valued by God, they can progress from negative body image to body neutrality. This is an important step toward a body image that honors God.

Harman goes on to describe aspects of a positive body image. Once someone is able to move from a negative body image to body neutrality, continuing on to a positive image remains possible.[127] According to Harman, a positive body image includes respect,

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[124] Kite and Kite, *More Than a Body*, 325.

[125] For instance, part of Harman's positive body image schema involves adopting the Body Positivity Movement, which presses for the adoption of LGBTQ, particularly transgender causes. Some implications of this movement are helpful, such as not allowing society to define worth based on the body, but believers must be wary of the underlying messages associated with this movement. Overall, believers should show caution when reading Harman's book, particularly as the Body Positivity Movement is far from the God-honoring body image I propose.

[126] Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 6.

[127] Another description of a positive, healthy body image includes "favorable opinions of the body regardless of actual appearance; acceptance of the body despite weight, body shape and

appreciation, acceptance, trust, and kindness.[128] To respect the body means recognizing its value. Incidentally, Harman references the body's creational design, noting "all the intricate ways our body is built to give us the best possible existence."[129] From there, one can appreciate his body, being grateful for its capabilities. Accepting the body brings freedom from societal dictates regarding what it should look like. In Harman's estimation, once the body is accepted, it can be trusted.[130] Harman phrases trust of the body as believing "it when it tells you it's hungry, full, tired, or aching."[131] Finally, the previous

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imperfections; respect for the body by attending to its needs and engaging in healthy behaviours; and protection of the body by rejecting unrealistic media images." McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," 8.

[128] Harman's theory for a positive body image revolves around respect, appreciation, acceptance, trust, and kindness:

> When you respect your body, you understand that its mere existence is something valuable. It's awe-inspiring to think of all the intricate ways our body is built to give us the best possible existence. Recognizing how amazing our body is fosters respect toward our body, and respect can lead to appreciation. When we appreciate the work that our body has done for us throughout the day, like keeping our heart beating, witnessing a sunset, or transporting us around, we cultivate more positive feelings. Feeling this gratitude toward our bodies is a sign of positive body image. If you truly accept your body, you will be able to perceive your body accurately. You should be able to look in the mirror and appreciate how your body actually looks without relying on societal ideas of what your body "should" look like. Accepting your body means that you allow it to be how it is, right now, without requiring it to change. Trusting your body means that you believe it when it tells you it's hungry, full, tired, or aching. You don't assume that your body is trying to trick you by communicating hunger, and in response, you don't need to trick it by chewing gum or drinking water when it tells you that it wants food. Showing kindness for your body manifests in the way you talk to it and how you treat it. How would you nurture a child or a beloved pet? I hope with kindness and loving correction rather than blame and abuse. Do we speak to our body with kind words? Do we nourish and fuel it? Take care of our body when it's sick or broken? Give it plenty of rest, balanced with enjoyable movement? . . . All the indicators . . . will help you identify whether you have a positive relationship with your body. (Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 6-7) While secular psychology seeks a positive body image, this work seeks a God-honoring body image based on the implementation of my forthcoming body image principles.

[129] Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 6.

[130] Timothy Tennent also writes that the body is trustworthy, particularly on matters on gender identity:

> Christianity has traditionally taught that the heart is deceitful (Jer 17:9), but the body is trustworthy because it was created to be the dwelling place of God himself (1 John 4:2, 1 Cor 6:19, 20) Today, the emerging assumption is precisely the opposite: the heart is considered to be a trustworthy guide, but your body might deceive you. This has led to the growing attitude that the body gives us no clues as to our true identity. The body has no story to tell. In short, matter does not matter. In contrast, a Christian theology of the body points to a tremendous, positive view of the material body. We believe that our bodies have a story to tell. In short, your body matters. (Timothy C. Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020], 18)

[131] Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 7.

aspects foster a kindness toward the body that "manifests in the way you talk to it and how you treat it." Harman's propositions for positive body image are especially advantageous for Christians who believe that God's Word provides all of the evidence necessary for respecting, appreciating, accepting, trusting, and being kind to the body. God distinctly created the body to purposely display the *imago Dei*. In this light, the believer values, is grateful for, approves of, listens to, and knows the goodness of the body.

Harman adds another important point: body image is driven by feelings about the body, not the body itself.[132] Basing worth in bodily appearance sets one up for disappointment and discouragement, which inevitably lead to negative body image. The body did not bring the negativity about; the feelings about the body did. Here, Harman advocates, "Recognizing emotions as they occur is an important step to improving . . . body image."[133] This assertion is incontrovertible. When unable to identify wrong thoughts and harmful emotions, negative body image naturally persists. However, when one perceives these feelings, steps can be taken to address them. Uniquely equipped and empowered by the Spirit, Christians have the ability to recognize wrong thinking and utilize truths in Scripture to rectify bodily thoughts that are contrary to God's Word. Because the mind directs body image, Christians possess the essentials to formulate not only body neutrality but also a positive body image that honors the Lord.

In order to formulate a biblical method of addressing negative body image, this section detailed a secular understanding of it, along with the experience of body image throughout life and disorders that negative body image can create. Harman's theory on forming a positive body image clarifies aspects that believers can utilize when dealing

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[132] Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 12.

[133] Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 13.

with negative body image. Still, her example reveals that without a biblical worldview, secular efforts to achieve a positive body image will eventually fall short.

Conclusion

This chapter established the phenomenon of body image by considering its historical development, two popular models that seek to confront negative body image, the experience of body image from childhood to adulthood, disorders that can arise from destructive body thoughts, and the methods proposed by secular psychology to confront negative body image. In the next chapter, I consider a Trinitarian affirmation of the body from 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, which serves as a foundation for Christian conception of corporeal existence.[134] As Paul confronts a misunderstanding of the body in Corinth, this passage becomes a critical text for those who errantly conceive of the body and go onto mistreat it, as happens with negative body image.

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[134] My affirmations of the body unfold in chaps. 4-5, but Harman echoes the essence of some of them. Though a few of her affirmations are unbiblical, some are instructive:

> I am worthy of love in the body I have today. I am a good person. The number on the scale does not determine my worth. I don't have to have an attractive body to earn my place in the world. I have many talents and abilities beyond what my body looks like. My body is my most faithful companion. I like my [insert physical attribute]. My body contains my magic. Wholeness is more desirable than thinness. (Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 16)

I list these affirmations simply to contrast the foundations of a secular body image with one driven by Scripture.

CHAPTER 4

A THEOLOGY OF THE BODY FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

Respecting the body is an ethical issue. If God calls believers to value the body, then obedience entails transforming thoughts about and treatment of the body. John Frame highlights the principled intent behind God's Word. He believes that "Scripture itself says that Scripture has an ethical purpose. The right way to study Scripture is to apply it to the issues that face us in our own time."[1] This dissertation argues that right application of Scripture involves a body image that adopts biblical truths and thereby honors God.

Consequently, I believe biblical texts regarding the body can confront a skewed, destructive body image. This type of body image fails to please God and heed his Word. Additionally, a believer consumed with negative body image jeopardizes spiritual growth because her thoughts and actions are not rightly focused. Julie Lowe speaks to this eventuality: "Believers have to consider what good gifts they are compromising in the unending pursuit of body perfection. The cultivation of fruits of the Spirit, pursuit of biblical truth, transformation of the mind by the word, and overall growing in Christlikeness are abandoned by the incessant strivings of a self-defined, acceptable body."[2] Believers must turn to Scripture in order to relinquish body image standards that distract from and threaten a vibrant Christian life.

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[1] John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 165.

[2] Julie Lowe, "Chasing Beauty," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 24, no. 1 (2006): 59.

To lay this biblical foundation, I consider Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, which expresses deep theological truths that ground a theology of the body, inform embodied reality, and extend to body image. In this chapter, my argument revolves around Paul's declaration of the body's value and God's authority over it in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. My claims unfold in two major sections. The first broadly addresses the text by surveying Paul's overall emphasis on the body in his writing, providing the context of 1 Corinthians, and explaining Paul's major points in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. In the second section, specifically focusing on 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, I describe the foundations for a theology of the body that are based in Paul's focus of Trinitarian involvement with the body. The apostle highlights resurrection (Father), redemption (Son), and indwelling (Holy Spirit) to validate the body's worth, a move that demonstrates each divine person's participation with the body.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

The body is a frequent reference in Paul's writing, which renders it an important topic for believers, as this section communicates. After a brief description of the historical setting for Paul's letter to the Corinthians, I offer an explanation of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, prior to delineating my foundations for a theology of the body in the next section.

The Body in Paul

The apostle Paul champions the body more than all other biblical writer. After all, he employs the word *sōma* ninety-one times in his New Testament letters to discuss the body, its meaning, and its importance in the Christian life.[3] While "modern people

[3] Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 46. Paul uses *sōma* in the following verses: Rom 1:24; 4:19; 6:6, 12-13; 7:4-5, 23-24; 8:10, 11, 13, 23; 12:1, 4-5; 1 Cor 5:3; 6:13, 15, 16, 18-20; 7:4, 34; 9:27; 10:16-17; 11:24, 27, 29; 12:12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27; 13:3; 15:35, 37-38, 40, 42, 44, 53; 2 Cor 4:10; 5:6, 8, 10; 7:1, 5; 12:2-3; Gal 6:17; Eph 1:23; 2:3, 16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16;

tend to think of 'having' a body; Paul thinks of people being 'bodies.' *Sōma*, for Paul, stands for one's whole self."[4] Paul's "body talk" is most prominent in 1 Corinthians and comes with implications for individual bodies and the larger church body.[5] John A. T. Robinson argues that the body is one of Paul's major concepts, noting that this theme brings together many of his necessary teachings for the church:

> It is from the body of sin and death that we are delivered; it is through the body of Christ on the Cross that we are saved; it is into His body the Church that we are incorporated; it is by His body in the Eucharist that this Community is sustained; it is in our body that its new life has to be manifested; it is to a resurrection of this body to the likeness of His glorious body that we are destined.[6]

Robinson further claims that apart from a doctrine of God, all other major doctrinal truths are seen through Paul's usage of the body. He specifies, "Man, Sin, Incarnation, Atonement, Church, Sacraments, Sanctification, and Eschatology. To trace the subtle links and interaction between the different senses of this word (*soma*) is to grasp the thread that leads through the maze of Pauline thought." Furthermore, Robinson comments that regarding Paul, a "theology of the body is characteristically his own. And with it is bound up most of his peculiar contribution both to the thought and the discipline of the early Church."[7] Because corporeity is an important concept in Paul's writings, his

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5:23, 28, 30; Phil 1:20; 3:21; Col 1:18, 22, 24; 2:5, 11, 19, 23; 3:5, 15; 1 Thess 4:4; 5:23. In some of these verses, *sōma* is repeated two or three times.

[4] J. P. Sampley, *1 Corinthians*, in vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 862.

[5] Just as parents have talks with their kids to educate and instruct them, Paul instructs the Corinthians to help them understand the body's significance. Not only is Paul teaching them the proper treatment of the body, but he is also grounding them in the proper worth of the body. Learning from his example, the responsibility of sharing Paul's sentiment toward the body falls on Christian homes and, most certainly, the church. After all, the overall goal of Paul's writing was "to promote unity in the Corinthian church, the body of Christ." Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), 55.

[6] John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), 9.

[7] Robinson, *The Body*, 10.

words serve as the primary basis for the topics I cover in this dissertation—a theology of the body, the reality of embodiment, and a God-honoring body image.

Echoing Robinson, I believe Paul's use of body terminology fosters distinctiveness in his writing. Paul references the body in a multiplicity of ways in order to solidify his arguments to the Corinthian believers who were inundated with Greek dualism, a philosophy that denigrated the material body and elevated the immaterial soul.[8] Utilizing this method, he "resists the Corinthians' tendency to depreciate the body" throughout his letters.[9]

Equally significant is Paul's metaphorical usage of "body" to describe Christ's church (1 Cor 12:12-31). If the body held no value, then why would Paul have associated it with the bride of Christ at all? Dale Martin holds, "The human body becomes a microcosm for the macrocosm of the social body . . . . What Paul says of the human body, he expects to be applied in the church, the body of Christ."[10] Going further, Martin notes mentions of the body that Paul only makes to the Corinthian Christians. Paul's distinct inclusion of the body "spring from the different assumptions regarding both the individual human body and the social body . . . , the church as the body of Christ."[11] According to Cipriano Vagaggini, the body is Paul's focal point of redemption, a claim that Paul grounds throughout 1 Corinthians.[12] In making this observation, Vagaggini does not mean that Paul's focus on the body excludes the soul. While some may disagree with Vagaggini's assertion, one point is evident. Paul's affirmation of the body starkly

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[8] I detailed this axiological dualism prizing soul over body in chap. 2.

[9] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 156.

[10] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 103.

[11] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, xv.

[12] Cipriano Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation: A Theology of the Human Body* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1969), 21.

contradicts any thinking that discredits the body. One can conclude nothing less than that Paul contended for the body. His respect for the body is undeniable, and the Corinthians were falling far short of that respect.

As believers are embodied imagers called to do everything for the glory of God, a devoted, submitted life is worked out through the body. This reality means Christians value the body—stewarding, preserving, and fighting for it. Albert Martin agrees that "our service to God is to be rendered bodily, and in that service we are to mirror something of God's regard for the body."[13] Even how they conceive of the body matters, as this dissertation addresses. The Christian faith reframes all areas of life, particularly actions performed in and with the body, as Paul speaks to in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. This bodily affirmation is his precise exhortation to the Corinthians believers.

To set up Paul's argument for the body, I examine the context behind his letter to the Corinthians in the following section.[14]

Context of 1 Corinthians

Anthony Thiselton explains, the Christian lifestyle is "more than a private 'inner' state; it manifests itself in 'bodily' action and behavior in the public domain. Christian faith finds there visible, tangible, communicable, observable, recognizable expression. In this respect the Christian remains part of God's created order."[15] In other words, Paul introduces a theology of the body.

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[13] Albert N. Martin, *The Man of God: His Calling and Godly Life*, *Pastoral Theology*, vol. 1 (Montville, NJ: Trinity Pulpit Press, 2018), 308.

[14] To be clear, this is the first letter to the Corinthians recorded in the canon of Scripture. As 1 Cor 5:9 attests, Paul had previous dealings with these believers where he also confronted their toleration of sexual immorality.

[15] Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 94 (original emphasis removed).

Paul writes to a church in the wealthy, influential city of Corinth that was rampant with pagan influences.[16] The location was situated perfectly for widespread trade with other localities and peoples. This diverse atmosphere created an influx and acceptance of an assortment of cultural and religious practices, leaving the believers in that city highly susceptible to accommodating the worldly lifestyles all around them. According to Thiselton, "1 Corinthians stands in a distinctive position of relevance to our own times."[17] Comparing Corinthian culture to contemporary culture shows little has changed in terms of liberality and morality.

The church in Corinth, recently established upon the gospel of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, was "one of the largest and most important early churches."[18] Paul strategically invested in this church as it had a large number of Jews.[19] Likely writing in early AD 54 and having had prior interaction with them, Paul was well aware that the Corinthians needed instruction on many matters.[20] The range of Paul's topics in 1 Corinthians is expansive and thorough. Craig Keener surmises that the church could "learn much from him in matters such as mutual support versus competition; humility and sacrifice versus pursuit of status; marital fidelity; caring for the needy and rejecting materialism; spiritual gifts and their appropriate use for serving others; the value and

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[16] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 1.

[17] Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 17 (original emphasis removed). Thiselton writes of the similarities between the church today and the Corinthian church. Comparing the two, he expounds,

> . . . the self-sufficient, self-congratulatory culture of Corinth coupled with an obsession about peer-group prestige, success in competition, their devaluing of tradition and universals, and near contempt for those without standing in some chosen value system. All this provides an embarrassingly close model of a postmodern context for the gospel in our own times, even given the huge historical differences and distances in so many other respects. (16-17; original emphasis removed)

[18] Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 17.

[19] Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 17-18.

[20] Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 31.

sanctity of the body; and future accountability for present actions."[21] Because Paul wrote a few lengthy letters to these believers, some excluded from the biblical canon, one could speculate that this group required much longsuffering. His letters often come with harsh admonition, which displays an "intimate and sometimes difficult pastoral relationship with the Corinthians."[22] Though Paul gave instruction on a multiplicity of subjects, the cross of Christ was always his focus (1:23-25).

Paul was well educated and familiar with an ancient rhetoric technique that employed a form of argumentation that his Corinthian audience would recognize from public persuasive speeches. It seems Paul refined these strategies, as he was aware that his letters would be read to local congregations.[23] His argument utilized Corinthian slogans throughout his letter (6:12-13, 18; 7:1; 8:1, 4, 5, 6; 10:23; 11:2).[24] Specifically, Paul's ethical method of utilizing "an imaginary interlocutor" built his case for the body so that he could preempt any potential objections he deftly assumed the Corinthians would make.[25]

In chapter 5, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to behave differently from the unbelievers around them, after warning them against tolerating sexual immorality.[26] The believers felt free to do as they pleased with their bodies, evidenced by the shocking acts of sexual immorality they committed.[27] Contrasting their mindset, Paul declares the body

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[21] Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

[22] Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 1.

[23] Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 4.

[24] Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 35.

[25] Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 57.

[26] Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *1 Corinthians*, in *1 & 2 Corinthians*, vol 11. of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 246.

[27] Ironically, Martin argues that a faction within the Corinthian church did not consider the body bad. "They simply imply that it does not matter a great deal." Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 71. I believe this claim to be similar to the recognition of embodied reality within the church. While not

to be the Lord's (6:13) and, as such, not to be used for sinful pleasures.[28] In a culture that viewed the body as disposable and where all manner of physical vice were justified, Paul's words to the Corinthians would have been profound. Keener avers, "In contrast to philosophers who denigrated or ignored the body, Paul emphasizes the body's goodness with an argument that climaxes in the exhortation to 'glorify God in your body.'"[29] Philosophers commonly connected the passions of sexual immorality and gluttony, and evidently the Corinthians did, too. They justified sexual sin because just as food was made for the body, so also was the body made for sex (6:13).[30] Whereas the believers' conduct should contrast the depravity on display in Corinth, it unequivocally did not. Things were not as they ought to be in Corinth; such was the occasion of Paul's letter.

Also of contextual import was the influence of a dualistic, axiological understanding of the body—a view Paul rejects outright.[31] Charles Talbert explains,

> A basic issue between Paul and the Corinthian problem children was the proper understanding of the self. The Corinthians wanted to split the person into two parts, a physical part that was perishable and a spiritual part that was eternal. From their point of view, what happened to the physical part was irrelevant for the destiny of the spiritual part. Paul, however, stands firmly for the unity of the self. What happens to the physical involves the spiritual and vice versa.[32]

Thinking of the body as a mere container for the soul, the Corinthians could live a divided existence where physical matters did not actually matter. This type of division

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intentionally mistreating the body, apathy and inattention to the body communicate that it does not matter. I harken back to the prevalence of the obesity epidemic in the church.

[28] Verbrugge, *1 Corinthians*, 310.

[29] Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 56.

[30] Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 56.

[31] Robert Scott Nash, *1 Corinthians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2009), 175.

[32] Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, rev ed., Reading the New Testament (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003), 52.

occurs when the reality of body and soul as a unified, holistic entity is misunderstood. The immaterial/material connection is important, and Scripture proves it.[33]

With this historical context in place, I move on to explain 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, which shows that Paul sought to contrast the erroneous Corinthian understanding of the body with a proper Christian conception of the body.

Explanation of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Interestingly, some scholars find 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 to be one of the most confounding passages amongst Paul's letters, in part because Paul in it does not condemn a specific instance of sinful behavior—unlike the previous chapter (5:1) or earlier in the present chapter (6:1).[34] This lack of specificity may indicate that Paul's words were more of a generalized bridge between "oral reports (5:1-6:11) and written responses (7:1)."[35] Nevertheless, this transition furthers his denunciation of the immoral choices that characterized the Corinthian church. Rather than merely chastising them for their sins, Paul argues for righteous living on a deeper level. Instead of dishonoring God with the body, he ultimately commands the Corinthians to glorify God with the body, an overarching command for Christian living that he bases in the Trinity. By noting Trinitarian connections to the body, Paul declares God as the body's authoritative owner as well as offers reasons for its value.

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[33] The commands of God throughout Scripture hold sway over the believer's whole life, including its spiritual and physical aspects. Commands like preparing for spiritual warfare (Eph 6:10-18), presenting members to God and not to unrighteousness (Rom 6:13), taking every thought captive (2 Cor 10:5), bridling the tongue (Jas 3:2-10), and presenting the body to God as a spiritual act of worship (Rom 12:1) are a few examples that show a unified spiritual and physical life submitted to the Lord.

[34] Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 245. This section is in no way meant to be an exhaustive, technical exegesis of 1 Cor 6:12-20. Even still, a broad explanation of the text works to support my overall claim that the body and its conception are important concerns for believers.

[35] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 220.

Therefore, this passage is more than a refutation of sexual sin rampant in the Corinthian church. David Garland avers that Paul "confronts the theology on which that behavior was predicated."[36] Thus, Paul seeks to correct the misunderstandings and presumptions of the body that drove the Corinthians' behaviors in addition to condemning the practice of sexual immorality. Yes, Paul does confront issues of improper sexual activity in the Corinthian church. Yes, he vehemently denounces the Corinthians' abhorrent behaviors with prostitutes. Yes, he absolutely corrects their misunderstanding of freedom in Christ. However, it is my point that Paul *chiefly* argues for the value of the body as grounded upon the divine works of the Godhead, specifically the triune acts of resurrection (v. 14), redemption (v. 20), and indwelling (v. 19).

Paul's address was given in the midst of a dualistic culture that elevated spiritual over physical, where a major manifestation of that mindset was people's engagement in sexual immorality. The Corinthian Christians' predominant problem was a misunderstood theology of the body, so they treated the body—and their physical actions—as inconsequential. They failed to live as though God rightfully owned the body and as though it possessed any value. Paul sought to rectify this pervasive delusion. His pointed statements about Trinitarian involvement with the body through the divine works of resurrection, redemption, and indwelling are what I propose as pivotal to the formation of a theology of the body. An explanation of the foundational verses follows.

Verses 12-14. The Corinthians' licentious nature is on full display in verses 12-14. The hypothetical back and forth between Paul and his recipients is meant to

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[36] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 222. Denny Burk agrees, saying,

> The theology that he is attacking is reflected in the slogans that are current among the Corinthian Christians. So Paul's procedure is to quote the slogans and then to refute them . . . . Paul is confronting some variety of Hellenistic dualism and overrealized eschatology. The result of these aberrant points of view in Corinth was the proliferation of slogans that the Corinthians used to justify immoral behavior. (Denny Burk, "Discerning Corinthian Slogans through Paul's Use of the Diatribe in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18, no 1 [2008]: 114)

expose their impious lifestyles. The rhetorical tone behind each question renders his statements of obvious importance.[37]

Paul's point of attack against their mindset and resulting behaviors involves a threefold line of questioning, with the overall aim of "calling the Corinthians to renew their understanding of the body."[38] To the apostle Paul, "the danger of domination that can occur through unconstrained exercising of one's liberty is especially acute in matters pertaining to the body."[39] Paul counters what were presumably three Corinthian assertions (vv. 12a, 12c, 13), where the first two were likely misrepresentations of Paul's previous teaching. The first misunderstanding was the belief that all things were *permissible* (v. 12a), evoking a contrary response from Paul that *not* all things were *helpful* (v. 12b). In this case, discerning what is permissible means a "self-limitation of freedom, self-discipline, and new-found ability to shun sinful behavior."[40] Implicitly, Paul does not mean mere freedom from sin but a freedom to live for the Lord. The Corinthians, then, retort the second misunderstanding that all things are *lawful*, which Paul resists by stating that *nothing* should enslave the Christian (v. 12c).[41] As "embodied humans easily can become hostage to their bodily appetites," Paul stresses a moral principle.[42] This principle, according to Garland, is that "whatever actions respect and reflect the believer's relationship with the Lord are 'beneficial,' and therefore permissible. Whatever actions threaten to exercise control over the believer's life are thereby subversive of this relationship, and therefore not permissible."[43] Sin naturally enslaves,

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[37] Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 166.

[38] Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 162.

[39] Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 164.

[40] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 228.

[41] Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 45.

[42] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 231.

[43] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 231.

but for believers, there is a difference. With the heart and affections changed in salvation, victory over the former domination of sin is possible. Believers ward off not only overt sins but also embedded thoughts that generate enslaving behaviors. This understanding is the correction Paul explains, as that which seeks to control entails broad implications for embodied believers.

The third Corinthian slogan and misunderstanding is more difficult to discern. Consisting of two parts, the first comment includes an ethical component (v. 13a), with the following statement being the Corinthians' reasoning behind it (v. 13b).[44] Essentially, this phrase "could be used to promote the news that it did not matter what Christians did with their 'physical' bodies since these were merely transient houses of the soul."[45] Greek culture apparently reckoned both sexual intercourse and eating as natural aspects of human existence. In both cases, the body gained physical satisfaction through what seemed to be neutral means. The Corinthians understood the body to be temporal, and thinking it served no purpose, they engaged in sexual immorality. Paul directly counters this misunderstanding, championing the body's ultimate purpose for the Lord. Thus, the Corinthians should not dismiss their body, use (or abuse) it at their disposal, or disgrace it by their deliberately sinful lifestyles. Rather, the body is for the Lord—devoted to him in every thought and physical action. With this solitary truth, Paul calls the Corinthians to reevaluate everything they once saw as permissible.

Furthermore, because the Lord is for the body, he will not abandon it at death. Just as Christ was resurrected, Paul clarifies the promise of believers' future bodily resurrection (v. 14). One way God demonstrates his concern for the body is by

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[44] Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 46.

[45] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 94.

resurrecting Christ, a miraculous event that ensures resurrection for his followers. Resurrection validates the body. Richard Hays comments,

> No one who understands the fundamental content of the kerygma can suppose that our bodies are irrelevant. The body is not simply a husk to be cast off in the next life; the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims that we are to be redeemed body, soul, and spirit. Salvation can never be understood as escape from the physical world or as the flight of the soul to heaven. Rather, the resurrection of the body is an integral element of the Christian story. Those who live within that story, then, should understand that what they do with their bodies in the present time is a matter of urgent concern.[46]

Thus, the Lord is for the body. It is disposed to him as his right, both presently in this world and in the age to come. Talbert echoes Hays on the consequence of current bodily choices:

> If the perishable nature of things physical was thought by the Corinthians to prove the moral and religious neutrality of the body, Paul's assertions of the bodily resurrection seal the moral and religious significance of the body. God's act to continue bodily life indicates that what is done in this sphere of human life has ultimate meaning.[47]

Present embodied form foreshadows future re-embodied form.[48] Therefore, present disregard for the body by sexual immorality, sinful indulgence of food, or neglect of stewardship of the body all demonstrate irreverence for God.[49] Each forsakes the fact that the body belongs to and will be resurrected by him. In these first few verses, Paul clarifies God's authority over the body established in the promise of future resurrection.

Verses 15-17. Continuing his argument for the proper use of the body in verses 15-17, Paul employs the analogy of marital faithfulness to the believer's union with

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[46] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 104.

[47] Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 46-47.

[48] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 94.

[49] Martin properly notes that poor nutrition "is tied to a depreciation of the body," which seems to have been a regular occurrence for the Corinthians' food choices. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 70. Verbrugge holds that modern believers can interpret sins against the body to be things such as "addiction to alcohol or drugs, gluttony, and suicide, to name a few." Verbrugge, *1 Corinthians*, 312. I would add self-harming behaviors like cutting or eating disorders, which can be manifestations of negative body image.

Christ. He supplements the analogy by metaphorically contending that the bodies of Christians are in fact the members, or body parts, of Christ himself. In other words, a deep union exists "between the body of the believer and the resurrected Christ, for their bodies share one spirit."[50] Unequivocally, by making this connection, "Paul attaches considerable moral significance to the body," a significance that must have surprised the Corinthians.[51]

The word "joined" or "united" (NIV) can be interpreted as the act of continually clinging to something (v. 16). Using this word, Paul essentially confronts the abhorrent Corinthian behavior of cleaving to prostitutes instead of the Lord.[52] Believers are united to Christ in such a way that to profane the body and "become (members) of a prostitute constitutes a grievous offense to the body of Christ."[53] There is another point inherent in Paul's argument. Based on the rhetorical line of questioning, the implication follows: "Believers share in Christ's body, so they are not to share in a prostitute's body."[54] This intolerable behavior originated from misunderstanding the significance of the body.

Paul's citation of Genesis 2:24 (v. 16) emphasizes his analogy. Christians are wed to Christ; therefore, it is impermissible for them to withdraw their members from him for union with a prostitute. Believers are in a "spiritual marriage" with Christ (v. 17); thus, to snatch one's members away from Christ in order to engage in sexual immorality is to commit a twofold error:[55] it is an affront against one's own body and an adulterous

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[50] Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 168.

[51] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 230.

[52] Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 49.

[53] Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2015), 302.

[54] Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 303.

[55] Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 304.

act that goes directly against the Lord. In these verses, God's authority over the body is established in its status as united to Christ.

Verse 18. Continuing the renunciation of the Corinthians' unholy behaviors in verse 18, Paul issues a strong command for them to "shun immorality."[56] Denny Burk argues that "other" was included to make this verse sensible, whereas without it Paul would be contracting himself.[57] If the second part of verse is seen as another slogan, then it becomes clear that the Corinthians believe "the physical body is morally insignificant and cannot be used as an instrument of sin," which they did.[58] Thus, their slogan contends that sin bears no consequence on the body. In this way of thinking, "sin belongs only to the level of motives, intentions, and human inwardness, according to the Corinthians," not to their tangible, physical actions.[59] Paul passionately repudiates this nonsensical notion, as sin is an affront to the whole embodied person. Hence, to misuse the body in this way lies outside the bounds of God's created order and intent for corporeal living.

Verse. 19. Paul previously referred to the Corinthians as a temple (3:16-17), a reference that carried a corporate meaning. As the church, believers are indwelt by the Spirit and thus holy. Now, in 6:19, Paul declares that individual believers are a temple of

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[56] Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 50. Burk believes 1 Cor 6:18b to include another Corinthian slogan along with the slogans in vv. 12-13. In 1 Cor 6:12-20, Paul utilizes diatribe to form his argument. By doing so, he interacts with an imaginary opponent and includes opposing comments that he expects from the Corinthians. Paul "adapts this usual form" of diatribe "so that he can dialogue with the erroneous Corinthians slogans. In Paul's adaptation of the diatribe, the slogans replace the rhetorical question posed by the imaginary interlocutor in the usual form. Paul then negates the slogan through the use of an adversative particle, which is then followed by a counterassertion." Burk, "Discerning Corinthian Slogans," 110.

[57] In Burk's words, "To insert 'other' is to posit a meaning that falls outside the norms of language for the terms and the syntax of this verse." Burk, "Discerning Corinthian Slogans," 118. Those who insert "other" do so to make sense of the verse and do not render it as another Corinthian slogan. Burk proposes the following construction of v.18b: The Corinthian objection is "Every sin, whatever a person may do, is outside of the body." To this statement, Paul responds with a rejection word "but" followed by the supporting statement "the one who commits immorality sins against his own body." (111)

[58] Burk, "Discerning Corinthian Slogans," 118.

[59] Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 50.

the Spirit in order to "underscor[e] the holiness and purity of God's people."[60] Explaining Paul's usage of body in both instances, Timothy Tennent writes,

> Corporately, this refers to the church as a whole, which stands as an embodied icon of Christ's presence and a living example of the in-breaking new creation (1 Cor 3:16). Individually, it means that our personal, physical bodies are icons of the temple and are the new dwelling place of God (1 Cor 6:19). Both of these reinforce the goodness of the body.[61]

As a temple of the Spirit, the believer's body is significant, for where God's Spirit dwells, there God's presence resides. Likewise, the body should be regarded as good and holy, just the way the Father regards his beloved children.[62]

Housing and thus communicating God's presence through embodied existence should motivate believers in an active, continual pursuit to maintain the purity that identification with the Spirit conveys. Paul's use of rhetoric reminds the Corinthians that they have the Spirit only by God. God has stamped their bodies with his presence. Had the Corinthians really forgotten that fact? Evidenced by Paul's rhetoric, the obvious answer was "No." Their conduct required confrontation, which Paul did in an obvious attempt to shame them back to repentance.

Appropriately, Paul challenges both misuse and contamination of the body. Though united to Christ, to choose to unite oneself to a prostitute is obviously a direct misuse of one's body (v. 15). Perhaps less obvious is the issue of contamination. Given

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[60] Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 290.

[61] Timothy C. Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 121.

[62] John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 92. Kleinig comments,

> The body of the Christian is a mobile shrine that takes the triune God out and about in the world; it discloses God and conveys his blessings to other people. Just as God's hidden glory had filled the tabernacle and the temple, so God's hidden glory now fills the body of each Christian as a shrine; his glory is now manifest in their bodies, just as it had been manifest in the tabernacle (Exod 29:42; 40:34-35; Lev 9:6, 23-24) and the temple (1 Kgs 8:11, 2 Chr 5:11-14; 7:1). (95)

While I am wary of calling the body a "shrine," Kleinig's articulation of how believers' bodies display God's glory is insightful.

the reality of the body as the Spirit's temple, Paul decries defilement. Immoral acts that contaminate the body also contaminate the temple.[63]

In yet another way, God establishes authority over the body by blessing it with the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit (v. 19). With the Spirit's choice to indwell the body, embodied believers have an additional reason to honor God in their actions. Their bodies serve as God's beacon, a light that ought not be darkened by unholy, impure behaviors.[64]

Verse 20. In what Thiselton recounts as a "final master-stroke," Paul in verse 20 labels embodied believers as Christ's property because God bought them from sin's enslavement to "redeem men and women as *his*. Henceforth it is he who has them in his care."[65] Purchased and therefore God's slaves, Christians, including their bodies, are God's property. With this connection to Christ's act of redemption, Paul places value on the body.[66] Keener rightly notes that "in contrast to pagan ideology, Christ's sacrifice and the sanctity of the bodies for which he paid, obligate Christians to 'glorify God' with their bodies."[67] Christ charged them to his care by paying the ultimate price for their embodied lives. Though the cost of redemption was great, it bought a people who would glorify God in every matter of life, spiritual and physical. If corporeity was not considered an essential element to a vibrant Christian faith, then the Corinthians would have been justified in giving their bodies to whatever illicit activities they desired. Certainly, this was not the case, and Paul made no such accommodation for it.

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[63] Nash, *1 Corinthians*, 164.

[64] Tennent writes that believers' "physical bodes are beacons or signs to the world as we embody God's saving purposes and his holy love." Tennent, *For the Body*, 98.

[65] Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 97.

[66] Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 58.

[67] Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 58.

Moreover, the command to "glorify God in your body" conveys the message that the body is an instrument, one that can either honor or dishonor God. While holding to holistic dualism, in this case, Scripture presents the body as a vessel to be stewarded for the glory of God.[68] As such, "the body must not be ruined or weakened through our own fault"; this strong point calls for all decisions that impact the body to be scrutinized.[69] Plainly, any actions done in, by, and with the body demand the application of wisdom. The freedom that Paul reframes for the Corinthians is driven by a wise consideration of all things pertaining to bodily life.

Summary of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. Paul's compendium on the body in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 is one of the most important biblical texts, if not the paramount passage, on physical life. Paul champions the body as he highlights three major works of Trinitarian connection with the body—resurrection, redemption, and indwelling. Additionally, Paul weaves seven explicit truths about corporeal existence throughout these verses: (1) bodies are meant for the Lord; (2) bodies will be raised; (3) bodies are members of Christ; (4) bodies are joined to the Lord; (5) bodies are temples of the Spirit; (6) bodies are owned by God; and (7) bodies are instruments of glorifying God.

Further, Paul lists important assertions for a theology of the body, which also inform embodied reality and influence proper body image: (1) he combats Gnostic notions that dignified the soul and disparaged the body; (2) he argues for God's complete

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[68] Scripture speaks to the body, at times, with instrumental language seemingly to specify the principled physical intent that Christian living demands. Believers are to use their bodies to glorify God (1 Cor 6:20) and to not present their members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness but to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6:12-13). Other passages emphasize the body as part of a holistic dualism. Believers are commanded to present their bodies to God, which is a spiritual act of worship (Rom 12:1). This verse is a physical command that encompasses the spiritual. In 3 John 2, the apostle indicates that spiritual health is connected to physical health. While care must be taken to avoid non-holistic dualism, it is necessary to reflect biblical language and speak of the body as an instrument that the Christian is to steward and surrender for the glory of God.

[69] Helge Brattgard, *God's Stewards: A Theological Study of the Principles and Practices of Stewardship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1963), 68. Brattgard's statement is why I consider body stewardship to be such an integral piece of a theology of the body.

authority over the body; (3) he establishes the body in work of the Trinity; (4) he commands bodily purity; (5) he highlights resurrection, redemption, and indwelling to dignify the physical aspect of Christian life; (6) he shows that bodily conduct ought to set Christians apart from the pagan world; (7) he calls Christians to temper present actions with future embodied hope; (8) he asserts that union with Christ involves spiritual benefits; (9) he promotes the understanding of the body as Christ's members; (10) he gives foundational commands on Christian living; and (11) he reminds believers that the reality of freedom in Christ is driven by the overarching command to submit the body for God's glory.

Summary

Were the body subordinate to the soul or the source of sin, Paul would not have referred to it as often as he did or utilized it in critical analogies to explain various doctrines. His emphasis on the body to the Corinthian church should be understood in the context of a Gnostic, libertine culture—a setting that renders his focus on Trinitarian involvement with the body of special importance. With this context in place, I proceed to articulate a theology of the body based on 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.

Theology of the Body Foundations

Framing a theology of the body from 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 relies on the fundamental observation that Paul highlights the appropriated works of the triune God to bolster his argument for the body's value. His method is important, as it affirms what I understand as his chief argument. Paul grounds the worth of the body in the Godhead by highlighting the Trinitarian works of resurrection, redemption, and indwelling. In doing so, he also demonstrates God's authoritative claim over the body and its consequent value. In essence, Paul highlights three specific ways in which each person of the Trinity is involved with the bodily experience of redeemed humanity: the promised resurrection of embodied believers by the Father, the redemption of embodied believers purchased by

the bodily atonement of the Son, and the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit in embodied believers. Through these works, each person of the Trinity claims possession of the body and affirms human corporeal existence with personhood specificity.[70]

I uphold classical Trinitarian doctrine that the "three persons . . . sharing in the one divine essence . . . are distinguished by different eternal relationships (paternity, generation, procession) and different roles in creation, redemption, and consummation."[71] Inseparable operations and appropriations are critical aspects of classical Trinitarian doctrine. The doctrine of inseparable operations states that "all external works of God are undivided" such that for each divine act, "all the persons work together as one by virtue of their shared nature, will, and power."[72] Adonis Vidu prefers the language of agency in inseparable operations, explaining that "the Trinitarian persons act as a single agent in the economy, such that each Trinitarian person is a co-agent in each other's action tokens [i.e., works; e.g., creation and providence]."[73] The external works of creation, Christ's ministry, and redemption are three examples of the doctrine of inseparable operations.[74] The foundation of inseparable operations is the mutual indwelling, or *perichoresis*, of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in addition to their being of "one will, knowledge, and power."[75]

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[70] While operating inseparably, each person of the Trinity has specific involvement with the human body. These united but differentiated (or appropriated) works—resurrection, redemption, indwelling—are what I refer to as specific personhood interactions that highlight each divine person's role vis-à-vis the body.

[71] Gregg R. Allison, *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2016), s.v. "Trinity."

[72] Torey Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You': The Divine Missions and the Mission of the Church," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 63, no. 3 (September 2020): 537. John Frame describes inseparable operations as "all three persons are involved in all the works of God in and for creation." John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 694.

[73] Adonis Vidu, "Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 4, no. 1 (May 2016): 106. See also Vidu, *The Same God Who Works All Things: Inseparable Operations in Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021). In his monograph, Vidu calls this definition "hard inseparability."

[74] Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 281.

[75] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 278.

The mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit perfectly unites them, as seen, for example, in Christ's high priestly prayer (John 17:21).[76]

Also essential to understanding the Trinity—and critical to my present argument—is the attendant doctrine of appropriations, which holds "that the various operations of the triune God have specific, but not exclusive, reference to one of the three Persons."[77] In other words, certain works, while of course involving the other two persons (per the inseparability principle), can be attributed to one person.[78] Appropriations are in keeping with the eternal relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and include a specific divine work's terminating in a particular person.[79] The works of resurrection, redemption, and indwelling, while performed inseparably, terminate in specific persons (as I demonstrate below), thereby legitimizing my claim that Paul bases the body in the work of the Godhead.

Therefore, my method for a theology of the body is simply borrowed from Paul. His choice to highlight specific divine actions appropriated to specific divine persons is for two central purposes—to demonstrate God's authority over the believer's body and to affirm the value of the body. In this manner, Paul opposes a culture and its behaviors that were, at best, apathetic and, at worst, antagonistic to the human body. The

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[76] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 278.

[77] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 282.

[78] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 228. Teer is helpful here: "According to the attendant doctrine of distinct personal appropriations, a feature common to all three divine persons is attributed to—or appropriated by—one particular person *ad extra* if that feature especially reflects the properties of that person *ad intra*—that is, according to the eternal intratrinitarian order of subsistence." Teer, "'As the Father Has Sent Me, Even So I Am Sending You'," 537.

[79] Allison and Köstenberger explain termination as follows: "A work appropriated to one of the three persons terminates in that person in the sense of reaching the goal or end of that work." Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 228. Vidu explains the interchangeable nature of appropriations and termination: "An action is appropriated to the one divine person if that action terminates in that person. Conversely, an action which is appropriated to a person (in view of an affinity between that person's *propria* and the created effect) is also said to terminate in that person." Vidu, *Same God Who Works All Things*, 115. Examples of appropriated works include the Father's sending the Son, the Son's becoming incarnate, and the Holy Spirit's perfecting work.

Trinitarian works of resurrection, redemption, and indwelling function as the collective underpinning to bolster his argument for the body. Paul's emphasis on these works calls the Corinthians to honor their bodies.

I follow Paul's illustration of highlighting three distinct ways in which the triune God interacts with the body. By connecting resurrection to the Father, redemption to the Son, and indwelling to the Spirit, I do not mean to downplay the activity of the other persons in these works. By highlighting these appropriated works, I merely echo Paul how establishes the body's worth through the Father, Son, and Spirit. Although the major work appropriated to the Father is creation, resurrection can also be appropriated to him, as the one who creates life is also the one able to resurrect life.[80]

Regarding this same passage (1 Cor 6:14), Hays directly connects creation and resurrection. He claims that "Paul insists, both here and in 1 Corinthians 15, that the body is created by God as a good creation and that God will redeem the body through resurrection."[81] Moreover, Hays agrees that Paul's reference is meant to laud the body: "The resurrection reconfirms the Creator's love for the creation. Therefore, *the body*

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[80] Kyle Claunch is also helpful here. He notes,

> Divine unity *ad intra* entails inseparable actions *ad extra*; person distinctions *ad intra* entail distinct personal actions *ad extra*. When one divine person acts in the economy of salvation (e.g. the Son assuming human nature), he acts by the one power of the divine substance, shared equally by the three persons, making the act of the one person an act of all three. The act is appropriated to one person as distinct from the other two *ad extra* because there is a fixed order [*taxis*] of subsistence *ad intra*, which God reveals by his actions in the world. (Kyle Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 4, [December 2013]: 791)

Claunch continues,

> When considered broadly, it is not difficult to see how every divine act is both the undivided work of the one God (per the one divine essence) and distinctly appropriated to each of the three persons (per the order of subsistence). However, as is often the case, a detailed investigation of divine actions makes the case more difficult. Nevertheless, the orthodox doctrines of inseparable operations and distinct personal appropriations—as articulated by Augustine and Owen—can sustain both a broad and a detailed investigation of any divine action. (795)

For my theology of the body to work, I am simply engaging in this detailed investigation of the divine actions of resurrection, redemption, and indwelling.

[81] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 103.

matters. To misuse the body is to hold the creator in contempt."[82] Then, Hays connects this text to proper treatment and consideration of the body. He advises believers to think of corporeal existence as "bodies with a future . . . . This would have important implications not only for sexual morality but also for other issues such as health care and ecological responsibility." Physical life is a principal matter, proven in the association of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In what follows, then, I show how each person of the Trinity affirms the body: the Father's participation in resurrection and creation, the Son's work of redemption and life as an embodied example, and the Spirit's indwelling and fruit of self-control. Each of these Trinitarian connections to humanity's physical existence signifies the body's value and God's authority over it.

Resurrection

The first major Trinitarian work grounding the body in the Godhead is resurrection; this divine act bestows value on the body while also asserting God as its rightful owner. Additionally, the body is esteemed in the promise of future resurrection and everlasting existence. Eschatological embodied existence informs current temporal embodied existence.[83] This notion is Paul's emphasis to believers who misunderstood the body and its future, a delusion that promoted a licentious lifestyle that harmed the body in the present. Though the Father, Son, and Spirit inseparably participate in all divine works, resurrection terminates in the Father and serves as one of Paul's main points of Trinitarian involvement with the body.[84]

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[82] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 108 (emphasis original).

[83] Leon Morris states quite well, "Bodily life enshrines permanent values. The resurrection forbids us to take the body lightly . . . . If it is to be raised it must not be put into the category of things that will be destroyed." Leon L. Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (repr.; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 97.

[84] Scripture speaks to each person of the Trinity as involved in resurrection (John 10:18; Rom 8:11; Gal 1:1), but Paul specifies it to the person of the Father most frequently and explicitly in Acts 2:32;

Belief in the resurrection is pivotal to the Christian faith, for if Christ has not been raised, then believers are still in their sin (1 Cor 15:17). In essence, Christianity would be a farce because apart from Christ's resurrection, hope for the believer is lost (1 Cor 15:19). However, just as the Father raised the Son from the dead, so also will the Father raise Christ's followers from the dead (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 6:14; Gal 1:1). Christ rose as the first fruits, and after being disembodied for a time, the redemption of believers will be completed through their bodily resurrection and glorification (1 Cor 15:23, 42-44).[85] For Paul, it was of paramount importance that the Corinthians knew the resurrection is a real event, not a mere spiritual occurrence (1 Cor 15:12, 35).[86] Because the Corinthians surmised physicality to be "repugnant," such was their conception of a physical resurrection.[87] They thus lacked motivation for moral living because they thought only spiritual things mattered.[88] They hated the body, were quick to misuse it, and completely neglected an integral aspect of Christianity.

To remedy the Corinthians' errant view of the present body, Paul describes it alongside the future body. Though the heavenly body has a glory all its own, the earthly body is not disposable because it has a certain kind of glory as well. Paul provides three analogies to explain the differences between the two bodies: a seed and plant; animal

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Rom 6:4; Gal 1:1. Per Claunch, I believe it is fitting to engage in the detailed investigation of resurrection and attribute it to the Father. Claunch, "What God Hath Done Together," 795.

[85] As discussed in chap. 2, the state of disembodiment will not last. In the intermediate state, the perishable body awaits its resurrection to imperishability, a reuniting of body and soul where this glorified embodiment eternally endures.

[86] It is clear that "Paul's willingness to risk his own life on an hourly basis to proclaim the gospel demonstrates the depth of his own belief in a coming bodily resurrection." Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Lion and the Lamb: New Testament Essentials from* The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown (Nashville: B&H, 2012), 197.

[87] Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 854.

[88] According to Hays, "Paul regards the resurrection of the body as a crucial underpinning of Christian moral teaching . . . . [W]e cannot act as though our actions in the body are of no moral significance." Hays, *First Corinthians*, 108.

flesh and human flesh; and the sun, moon, and stars (1 Cor 15:37-41).[89] John Kleinig helpfully explains one of these analogies:

> Our present bodies are like seeds of wheat or some other kind of grain, seeds with dormant life in them. Our resurrected bodies will be like the living, growing plants of wheat that are produced from them. Both the seed and the plant are the same kind of wheat; they have the same nature, the same genetic code. Yet the "body" of the plant is quite different to the "body" of its seed. So we will be the same persons but with different bodies.[90]

By giving the three comparisons, Paul sets apart the heavenly body from the earthly body, though without diminishing present corporeal existence. He upholds the value of the earthly body in announcing the future eternal condition of embodiment. Therefore, the Corinthians' present conduct was important. Even more, the fact that the body will be transformed, "patterned after the resurrected body of Christ," and bear the image of the man of heaven (1 Cor 15:49) also gives reason to honor Christ in the body now.[91]

Furthermore, in the resurrected body, Christians will experience a "new kind of embodiment."[92] Future embodied existence will be characterized by freedom from sin and its varying manifestations, such as physical deformity, cognitive impairment, and all other bodily abnormalities that disrupt functioning. The body will be dressed in full.[93] While Paul does not provide a complete picture of the body's appearance, he does

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[89] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 127.

[90] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 127.

[91] Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 229.

[92] Eric L. Johnson, *God and Soul Care: The Therapeutic Resources of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 551. Interestingly, Wayne Grudem connects the pursuit of physical health in this age with the lasting state of physical health in the age to come: "God's final intention for us is not that we would live in weakness and sickness forever, but in health and strength, showing that these are inherently better qualities to desire and seek." Future resurrection proves that God is concerned with the present condition of the body. Wayne Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 659.

[93] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 126.

foreshadow some differences between the future and present body in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44. From this text on the resurrected body, Gregg Allison that explains the Christian's future form will be imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. The body will be imperishable and will never again succumb to death and decay—unlike the present perishable body. It will be glorious, no longer characterized by the shamefulness of sin. The body will be powerful, as it will attain the completeness of bearing God's image. Lastly, the future body will be "completely controlled by and submitted to the Spirit of God (1 Cor 15:42-44, 49)."[94]

In addition to 1 Corinthians 15, Romans 8 is important to include in a discussion of the resurrection. After promising that believers will be raised and their mortal bodies given new life (Rom 8:11), Paul connects the restoration of all created things to the redemption of the body (vv. 19-23). In these verses, Paul assures believers that creation will be remade, which is a teleological promise uniting Christ as the first fruits, his redeemed followers, and all of creation over which he holds authority. Paul's mention of bodily renewal reveals his explicit desire for believers to know that this restoration does in fact include the body. Even more, "redemption of our bodies" seems to pose as a subsequent explanation of what "our adoption as sons" (v. 15) will entail. Total, comprehensive adoption is not to be finalized until the resurrected body is attained.[95]

Certainly, resurrection affirms the body, specifically, one's future embodiment, which entails implications for current bodily life. As resurrection involves the raising of life, so it also harkens back to the one who gives life, the Creator God. The act of creation is an explicit expression of authority, as is the act of restoring life to the dead (re-

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[94] Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2021), 256.

[95] Johnson, *God and Soul Care*, 551.

creation).[96] In creation, the Creator-creature distinction is grounded in the power of the Creator over his creation, for in this event "God's lordship attributes" are made known.[97] Attributes of control and authority show God's power that is manifested throughout time and space to order all things as he commands.[98] It is important to note that while creation is appropriated to the Father, the Son and Spirit are also active in this divine work (Gen 1:1-2, Col 1:15-16). Furthermore, "there is in Scripture a parallel between creation and redemption, creation and new creation . . . . Creation establishes God's ownership of the world and of the human race, and therefore his right and power to redeem, to buy back his creation."[99] Taken one step further, as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, creation—along with redemption and indwelling—establishes God's ownership of the body.

As part of a robust theology of the body, the creation of embodied imagers of God must now be examined. Given Paul's mention of Genesis 2 in 1 Corinthians 6:16, it may be that he also had the created body in mind when he spoke of the resurrected body. Attaching the creation of embodied imagers to the resurrection of embodied imagers establishes God's authority over the body while also supporting the body's value.

Created in the *imago Dei*. Resurrection naturally links to creation, as he who resurrects image-bearers must be the one who formerly gave them life. Therefore, the creation of human beings in the *imago Dei* belongs to a theology of the body.

Humans are distinctly created to reflect God. God made living creatures like birds, fish, and livestock according to their kinds (Gen 1:21-25). But when God created

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[96] Frame defines creation as "an act of God alone, by which, for his own glory, he brings into existence everything in the universe, things that have no existence prior to his creative word." Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 291. Space does not permit the explanation of creation *ex nihilo*, but I affirm the truth that "God created the world without any preexisting material or medium. He merely spoke and things appeared, along with the space and time for them to occupy" (299).

[97] Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 292.

[98] Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 293.

[99] Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 295-96.

the first humans, he made them after his likeness so that they may bear his image and fulfill "certain responsibilities."[100] As imagers, men and women are designed by God "for procreation and vocation and are given the responsibility to build society for human flourishing" (vv. 26-28).[101] According to Allison, "At the heart of human life are procreation and vocation. Importantly, this divinely given purpose—the so-called cultural mandate or the duty to build human society—is accomplished by, and only by, embodied imagers."[102] In procreation, the first God-given responsibility, Adam and Eve were fruitful and multiplied to fill the world with God's image-bearers (4:1-2, 25), and their descendants also fulfilled this responsibility (5:1-32). Further, human beings reproduce embodied image-bearers to carry out the second creation responsibility: vocation. In vocation, men and women express dominion and lovingly subdue God's creation. On dominion, Tennent comments, "In placing his image bearers in the garden, God was installing us as living, embodied representatives of his rule and reign."[103] Tennent is also careful to point out that dominion does not mean domination; rather, it is a call to respect the rest of God's creation. This respect means "stewardly dominion over creation as God's representatives [which] provides a wonderful support for the responsibility of creation care. . . . Moreover, because the image of God has been imprinted on every human being, creation care recognizes that we are *part of* the created order," recognition that demands respect of all embodied humans and proper treatment of the body.[104]

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[100] Allison, *Embodied*, 30. Tennent defines image as a "reflection or representation of something else. It is dependent on whatever it reflects." Tennent, *For the Body*, 8.

[101] Allison, *Embodied*, 36. Tennent's three themes of imaging are similar but also nuanced: (1) dominion, (2) fruitfulness and reproducibility, and (3) the physicality of God's presence. Tennent, *For the Body*, 9.

[102] Allison, *Embodied*, 35.

[103] Tennent, *For the Body*, 9.

[104] Tennent, *For the Body*, 10 (emphasis original). For more on the concept of creation care, see Douglas J. Moo and Johnathan A. Moo, *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World*, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).

Pertaining to physical life, Tennent believes that dominion and stewardship form "the foundation for the growing emphasis on the health and wellness of the human body."[105]

Kleinig proposes five implications for God's image-bearers from Genesis 1:26-27. First, intrinsic in God's performative word is the establishment of "human nature and identity," which bears out through embodied life.[106] Second, men and women as imagers "were to resemble the living God by reflecting him in what they were and what they did."[107] The creation of imagers as either male and female is the third implication of the *imago Dei*. In their physical differences, both men and women equally reflect God. Fourth, human imaging involves both body and soul. Kleinig deduces, "The whole human being as a soul, a living person, with a human body and a human mind, was designed by the living God to reveal himself—however partially and imperfectly—in the person's life on earth."[108] Fifth, fulfilling the commands of expressing dominion over created things and subduing the earth is part of humans' being like God. Like Tennent, Kleinig connects dominion to stewardship and caretaking, which includes "actual bodily life."[109]

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[105] Tennent, *For the Body*, 9.

[106] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 27.

[107] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 28.

[108] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 29.

[109] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 30. There are a variety of other opinions on what imaging actually entails. Still, all believers agree that in creating men and women in his image, God "bestowed on us glory and honor by giving us the right to exercise dominion over the world as his vice-regents." Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 219. In another rendering of what the image of God entails, Bruce Waltke surmises, "Fundamental to Genesis and the entirety of Scripture is the creation of humanity in the image of God." Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 65. Waltke proposes six aspects of imaging evidenced in Gen 1. While the rest of creation is made according to their kinds, humanity is elevated and given the prominence of imaging God. The first way imaging gives humanity distinction refers to "a statue in the round, suggesting that a human being is a psychosomatic unity." The human as a psychosomatic union is crucial to human embodiment. Second, imaging is meant to be representative and not taken as a literal rendering of the divine Creator. Rather, it is in the sense of humans being "theomorphic, made like God so that God can communicate himself to people." Waltke adds Ps 94:9 as an example, stating, "He gave people ears to show that he hears the cry of the afflicted and eyes to show that he sees the plight of the pitiful." A third implication of imaging includes "the life of the one being represented." Fourth, redeemed men and women tangibly display God's communicable characteristics—such as love, patience, and kindness—as representatives of God's presence. The expression of rule and dominion is the fifth quality of imaging, which is an intimation of God's authority

Material form, therefore, is integral to the way humans are created to function. As embodied, they carry out God's creation commands in their requisite image-bearing form. Body and soul, equally united and valued, comprise the image of God. Robert Gundry eloquently explains this wonder:

> The biblical touchstone for truly human life is not consciousness of the spirit, let alone the material being of a physical object such as the body. Rather, man is fully himself in the unity of his body and spirit in order that the body may be animated and the spirit may express itself in obedience to God. Both parts of the human constitution share in the dignity of the divine image. That dignity lies in man's service to God as a representative caretaker over the material creation. For such a task, man needs a physical medium of action as much as an incorporeal source for the conscious willing of action. Neither spirit nor body gains precedence over the other. Each gains in unity with the other. Each loses in separation from the other.[110]

If one's corporeal frame was insignificant or wicked, then surely physical form would not be a fundamental component of humanity. Even more, were the body some incidental vessel or shell for the soul, then why involve it as part of the *imago Dei*? Scripture testifies otherwise. As G. C. Berkouwer recognizes,

> Scripture's emphasis on the whole man as the image of God has triumphed time and time again over all objections and opposing principles. Scripture never makes a distinction between man's spiritual and bodily attributes in order to limit the image of God to the spiritual, as furnishing the only possible analogy between man and God.[111]

Irenaeus of Lyon also recognizes the body as integral to the *imago Dei*. Against proponents of Gnosticism, he claims "that the body itself was molded by the two hands of God (the Word and the Spirit) to serve as his image in the world."[112] In Irenaeus's

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and reign over all things. The sixth and final feature of imaging God "refers to the plurality of male and female within the unity of humanity" (65-66).

[110] Robert H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 160.

[111] G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 77.

[112] Irenaeus of Lyon, *Against Heresies* Book 4, preface, para. 4 (*ANF*, 1:462-63).

estimation, "Without the body, there is no image."[113] Together with the soul, the body is sanctioned as bearing the *imago Dei*. Creation then, which is traditionally appropriated to the Father and naturally links with the resurrection, is pertinent to a robust theology of the body.

While every part of God's creation is deemed good, only humankind is bestowed with the title of imager. Here is a position of prestige, a momentous designation for humanity, and one not to be omitted. Commenting on this point, Berkouwer writes, "Once the image is viewed in a general manner, it is impossible to treat man as the image of God, even by way of viewing him as a special illustration of the general principle, without introducing a vagueness into the idea of the image which is bound to lead us into error."[114] Such a generality must not be applied to the human person. Being created in God's image brings both dignity and responsibility to all people, meaning that Genesis 1:26-27 addresses personhood and serves as the basis for human ethics as well (cf. Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). As Nancy Pearcey writes, "In a Christian worldview, everyone who is a human is also a person. The two cannot be separated. This view avoids the radical devaluation of human life. From its earliest stages, the body participates in the human *telos*, and thus shares in the purpose and dignity of the human person."[115] Pearcy continues, "The bible proclaims the profound value and dignity of the material realm—including the human body—as the handiwork of a loving God. That's why biblical morality places great emphasis on the fact of human embodiment. Respect for the person is inseparable from respect for the body."[116]

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[113] Marc Cortez, "Nature, Grace, and the Christological Ground of Humanity," in *The Christian Doctrine of Humanity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 26.

[114] Berkouwer, *Man*, 85.

[115] Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 26.

[116] Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 34.

Naturally, disregard for the *imago Dei* will nullify human dignity, responsibility, personhood, and ethics. Additionally, without this vital connection between the person and his body, Scripture is rejected and all manner of ill treatment is permissible. Thereby, any God-denying act against the body becomes justifiable, including abortion, sexual immorality, homosexuality, and euthanasia. I include self-harming behaviors as well, which are oftentimes a manifestation of negative body image. Christians, then, must not neglect the significance of bearing the *imago Dei*, its extension into the world, and its meaning for a robust theology of the body.[117]

To summarize, in this section, I have considered how the body's future (per 1 Cor 15:35-58) and men and women's creation as embodied imagers (per Gen 1:26-27) reflect God's authority over the body and affirm the body's value. While the Father's confirmation of the body is foundational to a proper God-honoring body image, the Son's involvement in the body is equally consequential.

Redemption

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Paul includes the divine work redemption as an additional Trinitarian proof of God's authority over the body and confirmation of the body's value. Paul discusses various entailments of union with Christ, along with the truth that the Corinthians were bought at a price. Christ's sacrificial payment ensured the purchase of embodied believers, who are subsequently one with the Lord and made

[117] Ultimately, salvation restores God's image partially in this life but fully in the life to come. Though the image was marred by the fall (Gen 3), it was not destroyed (Gen 9:6). In Christ, it can be renewed, for he is the perfect image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). Christ, the perfect image, restores the image of God in redeemed men and women—and this fact contains fundamental importance for the overall meaning of the image. Christ, who is the image of God, secures future fulfillment of the *imago Dei* in his followers. (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). Christ came to the earth to live, die, and live again so that sinful men and women could be restored to the image of God through salvation. As believers, we strive by the Spirit to progress in holiness and put on the new self, which is progressively being conformed into the image of our Creator (Col 3:9-10). For discussion on the image of God and Christ who is the perfect image of God, see Allison, *Embodied*, 124. See also Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2018), 99-130.

members with him (1 Cor 6:13, 15-17, 19).[118] That the Son condescends, suffers, and dies not only for the soul but also for the body verifies the body's value. Furthermore, the fact that the body is included in the scope of redemption solidifies its worth. Corporeal existence must be understood as part of what is redeemed in the act of Christ's redemption.

Purposed before the world was formed, redemption completes God's intentions for creation, particularly his embodied creation (Eph 1:5-11).[119] After all, "in the redemption, the body is no less subject and object than the soul. What is lost, must be saved, and is saved, is not the soul but the whole man."[120] To deny the body as part of that which is redeemed is a denial of Scripture itself, particularly the teachings of Paul. Implicit in this truth is God's authority over the body.

Vagaggini agrees that the body is not an ambiguous object of redemption but a frequent inclusion of Paul throughout 1 Corinthians:

> "You will be temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 3:16), "you are the body of Christ and his members" (1 Cor 12:27), "you belong to Christ" (1 Cor 3:23, 6:19). And he also said: "your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19-20), "your body is a member of Christ" (1 Cor 6:16), "your body belongs to Christ" (1 Cor 6:13). This is preceded by that most vivid expression: "the body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, *and the Lord for the body*." Does this not imply an almost disconcerting concreteness for us?[121]

Paul's emphasis on the concrete material frame should not be surprising, particularly when it is the same form that Christ assumed. Vagaggini confirms, "A consequence of the biblical view of man and the human body had to be to assign, proportionately of course, to the physical body in Christ and in his work of saving the

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[118] Thiselton directly labels v. 20 as a mention of redemption. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 82.

[119] Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 297.

[120] Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation*, 21.

[121] Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation*, 21-22 (emphasis original; Bible citations shortened).

world that same function that it assigned in general to the body in man and in his activity."[122] The Son came humanly to suffer and humanly to die.[123] His embodied form functioned as the means of redeeming sinful embodied humans. Therefore, Christ's physicality was (and still is) essential. Deborah Beth Creamer affirms, "In telling the story of the incarnation of God, the Christian Scriptures would seem to have embodiment at their heart. . . . From the point of view of the Gospels, the Christian message focuses on a particular body, the body of Christ, that takes away the sins of the world and brings redemption to the world and to each believer."[124] Christ's particular body served a particular purpose.

Christ was an embodied sacrifice.[125] He suffered bodily. Physically, he was beaten, pierced, thirsted, sweated, and bled. He died because his body could not outlast cruel, torturous abuse.[126] It is through his broken body that sinners gain atonement.

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[122] Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation*, 32.

[123] According to Athanasius, Christ "takes himself a body capable of death" in the incarnation. Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation*, trans. John Behr, Greek-English ed. (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 9.

[124] Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*, 44. As embodiment is the proper state of human experience, heresy is born from a denial of Christ's embodiment (1 John 1:1; 4:3), which would also result in the rejection that one's individual body is a good creation. Much has been said on this Gnostic understanding and the heresies it spawned. Still, it is imperative to realize that an inaccurate appraisal of Christ's physical existence jeopardizes his atoning work and therefore the gospel, for detrimental results arise from "a misunderstanding of the importance of corporeity either in man or in Christ specifically in the way of salvation willed by God." Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation*, 66. Christ's role as a embodied human is necessary for each part of his work—incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The church must understand the significance of the Son of God's becoming embodied to redeem believers, and in turn, they must value their own bodies as a critical part of their present Christian life while holding to the promised surety of bodily renewal in the eschaton.

[125] I picked up this statement from Gregg Allison (personal correspondence). Further, Christ must be incarnate, that is, embodied, to carry out the following: "(1) rule as God's obedient vice-regent over creation; (2) bring many disobedient sons into the glory of his own obedient vice-regency through sufferings that confirm him for the vocation; (3) suffer the death penalty on behalf of the disobedient, releasing them from the fear of death under divine judgment; (4) represent sinners before God as reconciled to him through the forgiveness of their sins." Wellum *God the Son Incarnate*, 249. Clearly, "both the incarnation and the redemption through the death on the cross are unthinkable with the body of Christ." Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation*, 37.

[126] I would include a deeper issue worthy of further contemplation, namely, the body and suffering. If the cruciform kingdom is typified in Christ's suffering on the cross, then believers' bodily suffering for the kingdom is expected. The cruciform kingdom refers to God's establishing his kingdom, "founded by the cross, entered through the cross, and shaped by the cross." Jeremy R. Treat, *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014),

Vagaggini succinctly states, "This body (this flesh and blood) is the place where the drama of our salvation unfolds."[127] Without the physical presence of Christ to bodily take humanity's place, satisfy divine wrath against sin, and bear sin in his body on the tree, then redemption is incomplete (1 Pet 2:24). If by his wounds we are healed (Isa 53:6), then the incarnation is mandated for our salvation, and his body is a requisite part of the atonement (Gal 4:4-5), which renders Christ's embodied life an example for his followers and important to a theology of the body.[128]

Embodied example. The incarnation refers to the Son of God's taking on a human nature for the purpose of securing the redemption of elected men and women. Scripture teaches that his body was like all human bodies, a truth that does not negate his divinity (John 1:14, Phil 2:6-7, Col 2:9).[129] Certainly, "Jesus spoke of his body, head, hands, feet, and bones, both before and after resurrection . . . . Jesus was born like all human babies, even though his conception was unique; he grew from childhood to

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227. Endurance of torture and persecution, being an occurrence in the body, must be a facet of embodiment. The body matters because by it believers follow Christ's example of enduring persecution, living out the promise that they will be persecuted just as he was persecuted (John 15:20). Or consider Paul, who, through the body, shares in Christ's sufferings, becoming like him in his death (Phil 3:10). In this case, the body is the means of following in Christ's stead.

If one does not understand the connection between Christ's bodily suffering and the Christian's subsequent suffering, then such a lack of understanding is perhaps due to the influence of Gnosticism. Consider the following: "In Gnostic Christianity, *the enlightenment of the mind enables the avoidance of suffering*." Fleming Rutledge, *The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 55 (emphasis original). The avoidance of suffering is very attractive, and many false gospels offer this promise every day. However, holding to Christ as an embodied sacrifice secures the gospel and the believer's part in the cruciform kingdom. If the importance of the body is lost, so is the meaning of the cross.

[127] Vagaggini, *The Flesh, Instrument of Salvation*, 37.

[128] Ivor J. Davidson speaks of the physicality of Christ's fleshy salvation as a fact of history, which sanctifies the human experience of embodiment. He notes that Christ, as the mediator of the redeemed, bears their sins in his body (1 Pet 2:24), sanctifies them by offering his body (Heb 10:10), and cleanses them, making peace as his body bleeds on the cross (Col 1:20; 1 John 1:7). Ivor J. Davidson, "Atonement and Incarnation," in *T&T Clark Companion to Atonement*, ed. Adam J. Johnson (New York: T&T Clark, 2017), 45.

[129] I affirm the hypostatic union as "the joining together (the union) of the two natures—one fully divine, one fully human—in the one person (Gk. *hypostasis*), Jesus Christ. The preexistent Son of God became incarnate by taking on a fully human nature—both a material aspect, or body, and an immaterial aspect, or soul." Allison, *Baker Compact Dictionary*, s.v. "hypostatic union."

adulthood, both physically and mentally; and he suffered in his body and died."[130] He paid the ultimate price, bodily securing redemption for believers by his death and resurrection (Heb 10:5). He ascended in that perfected body and remains embodied still.[131] That the Son of God willingly took up a body affirms the value of the body. The works of incarnation, atonement, resurrection, and ascension portray the body of Christ as a requisite component of his redemptive work. However, the importance of his corporeal existence between the incarnation and atonement can be easily overlooked.[132]

Equally necessary to a theology of the body is Christ's embodied obedience to the Father. As an embodied exemplar to his embodied followers, Christ epitomizes the command to glorify God in the body. In his work of atonement, Christ suffers as sinful humanity's sinless substitute. But the ground of substitution extends from his life as a righteous man who flawlessly kept his Father's commands. Exclusively by this righteous life can righteousness be imputed to men and women. Therefore, Christ's entire existence served as the proven testimony of sinlessness, with his body as the conduit.[133] This reality involves the necessity of recapitulation.[134] Christ had to become a man to recapitulate the

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[130] Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 211.

[131] Resurrection and ascension are equally necessary aspects of Christ's atoning work. These works confirm "that this world and our bodies and history have been raised to the right hand of the Father" by Christ, who is head over all things. Michael Horton, *Justification*, New Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 2:280.

[132] For example, while Heath Lambert's chapter on Christology (chap. 5) is comprehensive in its treatment of Christ's temporal mission, Lambert omits the mention of Christ's body. While noting his flesh and incarnation integral to his person and work, to leave out specific discussion of Christ's body falls short of recognizing its importance for the embodied experience of his followers. In his chapter on humanity (chap. 7), however, Lambert does mention Christ's body and human bodies. Highlighting Christ's assumption of a body in Phil 2:7-8, he holds "it is clear that the Bible assigns very high honor to the physical bodies of human beings." Heath Lambert, *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundations of Counseling Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 194. If it is true that "Jesus Christ is the key to all counseling," then counseling issues involving the body must be acknowledged and more thoroughly connected to Christ (155). The embodied Christ who perfectly lived as a physical example for his embodied followers must guide all those who suffer from negative body image, body dysmorphic disorder, eating disorders, self-harming behaviors, and all other bodily problems that counselors confront. Christ's body is relevant to the human body and all psychological issues that manifest physically through embodied existence.

[133] Treat, *The Crucified King*, 210.

[134] On recapitulation, Irenaeus states that Christ

obedience Adam failed to carry out, and he must be divine to do so (Rom 5:12-21). He represents men and women through his body by actively obeying the law while passively becoming a curse for those who broke the law. The divine Son humbled himself, was born in the likeness of man (Phil 2:7), and came "as the last Adam in willing obedience to his Father. He must undo Adam's disobedience and die for us in order to destroy the power of sin and death. In Christ's life *and* death, what was lost in Adam is now recovered."[135]

During his life on earth, Christ's physical tangibility was essential to every aspect of his ministry. As embodied, Christ obeyed God, served others, and identified with humankind. Jesus performed many miracles simply by speaking, but others were accomplished through physical touch. In these instances, the embodied Christ imparted healing to other embodied beings. For example, Jesus heals Peter's mother by taking her hand and helping her up out of bed with no words spoken (Mark 1:30-31). He also touches a leper, commanding him to be clean (Mark 1:40-42). Matthew reports a centurion begging Christ to touch his dead daughter and bring her back to life. Jesus goes, takes her by the hand, and she gets up (Matt 9:24-26). Later, Jesus heals a blind man by touch (Matt 9:28-30). Mark describes Jesus's act of healing by putting his fingers in a deaf and mute man's ears, spitting, then touching his tongue (Mark 7:32-35). Mark also tells of Jesus's restoring sight to a blind man by putting his hands on the man's eyes (Mark 8:23-25). John reveals another instance of Jesus's healing a blind man by applying

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> summed up all things, both waging war against our enemy, and crushing him who had at the beginning led us away captives in Adam. . . . The enemy would not have been fairly vanquished, unless it had been a man [born] of women who conquered him. . . . And therefore does the Lord profess Himself to be the Son of man, comprising in Himself that original man out of whom the woman was fashioned, in order that, as our species went down to death through a vanquished man, so we may ascend to life again through a victorious one; and as through a man death received the palm [of victory] against us, so again by a man we may receive the palm against death. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.21.1 [*ANF*, 1:548-49])

[135] Stephen J. Wellum, *Christ Alone: The Uniqueness of Jesus as Savior*, Five Sola Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 163.

spit to his eyes (John 9:6-7). In Luke, Jesus heals a crippled woman by declaring her free from infirmity, but then he touches her (Luke 13:11-13). Matthew displays Jesus as again healing two blind men by touching their eyes with his hands (Matt 20:30-34). Luke reports that when Peter cut off the soldier's ear, Christ restores it by touching the man's ear (Luke 22:50-51). Over and over again in the Gospels, people beg for Christ's physical touch to impart the healing they sought.[136] In fact, the disciples' act of touching Christ's physical body serves as the means of assuring them that he truly had been raised from the dead (Luke 24:39).

Additionally, without a body, there would be no wilderness temptation. How would Satan provoke Christ to assuage his physical needs were he not flesh and blood (Matt 4)? For Christ to sympathize with humanity's weakness, he had to endure physical temptations while remaining impeccable (Heb 4:15; 5:8). He experienced hunger and thirst. He wept over his circumstances. Certainly, he must have been tempted to use his members as instruments of wickedness rather than righteousness. However, he remained sinless, both in mind and in body. Even still, complete obedience to the Father meant the endurance of bodily torture—pain so extreme that Christ sweated blood knowing the spiritual and physical anguish he would face.

Moreover, Christ must be fully obedient in his bodily life to represent humans in the faithful, sinless submission God requires. It follows, then, that Jesus physically typifies a life submitted to God and his law. Speaking of the law, Michael Horton notes, "[Christ] was the only human being in history who cherished it . . . in perfect submission . . . . He allowed the law to have the last word even upon his mortal life."[137] Believers, called to emulate Christ's obedience, find his physical existence the

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[136] A few examples are Matt 9:21; 14:36; Mark 3:10; 8:22; 10:13; Luke 6:19.

[137] Horton, *Justification*, 2:242.

consummate example of perfect embodied obedience. Only then, by this ideal pattern, do they take up their own crosses and follow him through corporeal existence. His embodied obedience serves as the exemplary path of embodied Christian living for his people to follow.

Therefore, to overlook the physical nature of Christ's earthly ministry severely neglects its connection to the corporeal significance of the Christian's earthly life. For Christ, becoming man to accomplish his human task involved a fully embodied existence from his incarnation through his life and death to his resurrection and ascension. These events are historical realities that require a body; thus, they mandate respect for the body. That the Son of God chose to take up a body amplifies the importance of Christians' conception of their body and continues to inform a theology of the body. Along with the Father and Son's connections to the body, explaining the Holy Spirit's association with the body is a priority for Paul and necessary to a theology of the body.

Indwelling

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Paul's third and final mention of Trinitarian participation with the body is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through the work of indwelling, the Spirit fills believers "with the presence of the triune God" for comprehension of the Scriptures to "empower the new covenant people's obedience to their covenantal obligations."[138] By the Spirit's indwelling presence, the body is specifically declared to be his temple. In the statement that the Spirit is within believers (1 Cor 6:19), Paul explicitly confirms the discernable value of the body and God's authority over it. God approves of the body, sanctioning its worth with the placement of the Spirit. This placement is also a clear expression of authoritative ownership. The embodied believer is regenerated by the Spirit, claimed with his presence, and labeled as

[138] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 75, 164.

his temple—all of which foster an expectation of Christian purity and holiness. Of believers, Garland explains, "the Holy Spirit stamps their bodies as belonging to God and set aside for God's use, guarantees their common destiny with God (2 Cor 1:22), and makes their bodies a sacred place of God's presence."[139] Sealed by the Spirit, believers are owned by God, body and soul (Eph 1:13-14).

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul plainly speaks of indwelling as appropriated to the Spirit, for the Spirit completes the work began by the Father and the Son.[140] According to Gregg Allison and Andreas Köstenberger, the works appropriated to the Holy Spirit are "speaking, creating, re-creating, perfecting; and filling with presence of the triune God."[141] However, as Graham Cole explains, "The doctrine of appropriations helps explain why . . . so little of the Scripture deals with the Spirit's role in creation and so much of it with the Spirit's role in forming a people for God"[142] Through indwelling, the Spirit unites believers with Christ, affording to them all of the benefits of salvation and growing them in holiness.[143] By mentioning the Spirit's indwelling, Paul seeks to provide the Corinthians with ample evidence of a higher calling on their bodies than mere physical, temporal pleasures. Their bodies were marked out for a much greater purpose. With this statement, Paul expresses "that the indwelling Holy Spirit . . . puts a different valuation on the body (understood literally), with consequences for sexual behavior"—an idea that "is Christian, not Gnostic."[144] The Spirit's presence bestows honor on the body that not only is foreign to Gnosticism but also nullifies excusing sexual immorality.

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[139] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 238.

[140] Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 74.

[141] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 294.

[142] Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 74.

[143] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 375.

[144] Rutledge, *The Crucifixion*, 52. Rutledge goes onto say that "it is therefore not difficult to understand why some variation of the Gnostic view would be very appealing in our permissive society."

Significant to the Spirit's indwelling is Paul's precise mention of the believer's body as the temple of the Spirit. Under the old covenant, God dwelt in the temple (Ex 25:8, 40:34). But in the new covenant, the Spirit indwells believers whose bodies become his holy place (Eze 37:26-28, Rom 8:11, 2 Tim 1:14). Thus, the Spirit's presence differentiates the experience of believers in the old covenant from the new covenant (Ezek 36:25-27). Through the body, the Spirit is the one "who would prompt and empower the new covenant people's obedience to the covenantal obligations, a feature that the old covenant lacked."[145]

Furthermore, likening the believer's body to God's temple indicates the Spirit's continual presence to provide, sustain, and grow spiritual life now in the individual lives of God's children.[146] Leon Morris clarifies, "Because the temple is God's and because the believer is that temple it follows that the believer is God's."[147] But Paul goes further. To avoid confusion and mitigate potential excuses, he pronounces *the body*—the very object of Corinthian abuse—as the Spirit's temple. Apart from this work of the Spirit, no one can please God. God must continually enable this ability in his children. The Spirit is to govern embodied life and produce holiness in believers who cannot be holy on their own. Another work that pertains to the body's involving the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit's work in sanctification, predominantly his enabling Christians to pursue holy living through the fruit of self-control. This extension of the Spirit's work is also informative to a theology of the body.

Sanctification and self-control. Sanctification occurs by the Spirit who indwells embodied believers to impart his fruits for holy living. Wayne Grudem defines

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[145] Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 386.

[146] Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 598.

[147] Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 100.

sanctification as "a progressive work of God and believers that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives."[148] Embodiment is significant in the Spirit's role, as sanctification finds expression through the body. His presence supplied to Christians becomes the enabling power for them to physically live out the command to glorify God. In Eric Johnson's estimation, the Spirit "has brought in an alternative motivational orientation, guiding the believer toward God, consisting of theocentric desires, emotions, thoughts, and action-dispositions."[149] The Spirit's indwelling should motivate believers to the humbling realization that God gives his beloved children everything necessary for living a godly life (2 Pet 1:3), most notably by the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). Through these fruits, God cultivates holiness in the lives of his followers.

To be sanctified, believers require the Spirit's help, but they bear individual responsibility as well. Having regenerated natures that are freed from the dominion of sin and made alive to righteousness (Rom 6:11), they are newly able to pursue right living.[150] Believers now work out their salvation, knowing that the ability and desire for godliness is divinely implanted (Phil 2:12-13). In Galatians 5:16-25, Paul describes the Spirit's role in believers' lives. He presents two distinct realities and ways of living with no ambiguities. One is by the flesh, exhibiting deeds of the sinful nature. The other comes by the Spirit, exemplifying his fruits. Christians walk, are led, and live by the Spirit. His role in sanctification is critical. Believers' role is to yield to the Spirit, which involves a

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[148] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Leicester, UK: Zondervan, 2020), 924. Traditionally, there are different aspects of sanctification described as positional, progressive, and perfected. Positionally, upon faith and repentance, believers are God's holy people. Progressive is the transformation toward holiness that believers are called to pursue. Perfected sanctification "is the final stage of the divine operation in Christians by which they are conformed fully to the image of Christ as his resurrected disciples." Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 411.

[149] Johnson, *God and Soul Care*, 467.

[150] I am speaking of progressive sanctification here, which "refers to the process by which God works to make his children holy in character and not just position. This process is concursive, which is to say that more than one agent is involved." Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 229.

conscious choice that only comes about in regeneration (Eph 5:18-21). Paul couples the commands to walk and be led by the Spirit with a gospel reality, an imperative with an indicative. Believers are commanded to walk, though not by their own strength and in seeking their own way. Their reliance on the Spirit is a "fundamentally secondary" role and part of the "hierarchical relationship between divine and human causation [that] is paramount to Christian maturation."[151]

Moreover, this dual reality concerning the believer's maturation relies on effort, not solely of self but also by the Spirit (Phil 1:6, 2:12-13). This duality of Christian living grounds progressive sanctification, which Bruce Demarest explains as "the means of God actualizing in forgiven sinners his original creative purpose."[152] Through mortification and vivification, the Spirit reinstitutes the purpose of his presence (Eph 4:22-24). In mortification, the negative aspect of sanctification, the Spirit diminishes the old self and its power while the believer fights to slay sin. In vivification, the positive aspect of sanctification, the Spirit brings about the new self while the believer pursues righteous deeds.[153] The new believer, progressing in holiness, submits to and embodies God's commands. Through both the negative and the positive aspects of progressive sanctification, the embodied believer will live a visibly distinct life.

Obeying God occurs bodily, and the Spirit's fruit of self-control is key in fighting sin and living in obedience (1Thess 5:23-24). Because self-control is a specific involvement of the Spirit with the body, it is important to a theology of the body.[154]

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[151] Johnson, *God and Soul Care*, 467. Johnson continues, "As dependent co-agents with the Holy Spirit, believers become increasingly free by directing their energies to the sphere of the Spirit rather than the flesh, a process itself the work of the Spirit. But this passage suggests that believers are truly caught in the middle, as it were, being pushed and pulled by two opposing systems of desire."

[152] Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 385.

[153] Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 403. See also Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 229.

[154] I cannot recall having ever heard a sermon on the fruit of self-control. I imagine it is the same for most believers. One wonders why this topic is so neglected. One likely reason is the intrusion of the obesity epidemic into the church. Another reason could be the church's overall inattention to all of the

According to Hays, "Just as the church should be kept holy through the exercise of community discipline, so the individual body should be kept as a disciplined holy vessel, fit for the indwelling Sprit."[155] The Holy Spirit equips believers with self-control, setting believers apart in an age of unchecked excess and liberality. Self-control is necessary for restraining one's inward thoughts and outward actions. When one has no control over his thought life, he will give into the flesh.[156]

Unfortunately, the practice of self-control may seem undesirable and arduous, as it rails against natural tendencies and demands focus, intentionality, and discipline. But believers should consider the quality in another light—as necessary to restrain sin while allowing other fruits to manifest. Such a reality renders self-control indispensable to maturity.[157] When living uncontrolled lives of sin, the fruits of the flesh are obvious expressions (Gal 5:19-21). But when the Spirit regenerates the believer and overpowers

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fruits of the Spirit. Cole seems to agree, saying that the fruits are "sadly much neglected in evangelical systematic accounts of the Holy Spirit." Cole, *He Who Gives Life*, 227. Perhaps the problem is not only that Christians lack the expression of self-control but also that they are not even aware that they *can* control themselves.

[155] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 106.

[156] Jay Adams appears to limit self-control as only necessary in dealing with emotional sins. Adams comments, "Because of the feeling orientation of our society, discipline and self-control are poorly taught and learned. Anger, sorrow, frustration, sexual desire—all sorts of emotions—must be restrained or directed . . . . The self-controlled man is the one who has a hold or grip on himself. Discipline in practicing the proper biblical outlets for emotion is what is needed." Jay Edwards Adams, *More Than Redemption: A Theology of Christian Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 260. Earlier on, Adams rightly connects sin as a problem for both spiritual and physical aspects of human existence. He avers, "It is the sinful inclination of the heart . . . that causes the aggravating habituation of the material body" (108). In other words, sin damages both body and soul. This being the case, the practice of self-control cannot be limited to one's spiritual, emotional life but also must extend to one's physical, bodily life. Biblical counselors have to understand that the fruit of self-control plays a significant role in gaining victory over sin issues that express themselves bodily.

[157] Solomon Schimmel notes, "The Christian can conquer Self by the power of the Spirit." Solomon Schimmel, *The Seven Deadly Sins: Jewish, Christian, and Classical Reflections on Human Nature* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 140. Further, Robert Rapa understands self-control as a fruit—like faithfulness and gentleness—that applies in matters of conduct. In terms of victory, self-control is direly needed in the fight against sin. Rapa defines self-control as "the quality of mastery over one's impulses and faculties, lending aid in one's struggle in resisting temptation." Robert K. Rapa, *Galatians*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, *Romans-Galatians*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 631. Mastering self entails mastering sin, which is required in efforts of sanctification. Believers will never grow in holiness when sin and its activities run rampant in their life.

self and sin, his other fruits bear out (Gal 5:22-23). Scripture does not command Christians to express self-control by manufacturing it in their strength, for it only comes by the Spirit. Self-control is his work, his fruit bearing in Christians. After all, the Spirit will accomplish the ends for which he was sent by the Father and Son, the work of conforming believers to Christlikeness (2 Thess 2:13).[158] Believers then, empowered with self-control, strive against the power of indwelling sin by the superior power of the indwelling Spirit.

Self-control is a quality with strong—even offensive—implications, the foremost being that one *needs* to be controlled. Obviously, the very fact that God equips believers with fruits of the Spirit shows that he must impart qualities that people do not naturally possess due to their fallen human nature. Believers, though redeemed and possessing the righteous of Christ, still sin and are prone to disobedient, fleshly living. Restored by the Spirit and enabled to express holiness and obedient surrender, Christians require divine aid in crucifying and disciplining self on a daily basis. Scripture speaks to this necessity in both the Old and New Testaments.[159] Writing on self-control, Russell Kelfer notes that Proverbs gives a "panoramic portrait of a life under control."[160] He distills fifteen enemies of self-control throughout Proverbs that are the antithesis of wisdom based in disciplined living: impulsivity, unrestrained anger, jealousy, fear, lust,

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[158] Allison and Köstenberger note that "in his Thessalonian letters Paul presents the Spirit as active in believers' lives both at the initial stage of conversion (1 Thess 1:5-6) and throughout their Christian lives. Particularly pronounced is Paul's emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in believers' sanctification (1 Thess 4:8, 5:23, 2 Thess 2:13)." Allison and Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit*, 120.

[159] Space does not permit me to provide the entire biblical picture on self-control, but it is an extremely important quality in Paul's writing. Commands to display self-control or be self-controlled are frequent from Paul. He instructs believers in this quality fourteen times in five of his letters (1 Cor 7:5, 9; 9:25; Gal 5:23; 1 Tim 2:9, 15; 3:2; 2 Tim 1:7; 3:3; Titus 1:8; 2:2, 5, 6, 12). These references also leave out the command to discipline oneself, which is akin to being self-controlled. Notably, Paul's most frequent reference to self-control is in the context of church leadership. It is clear that the expression of self-control was a quality that the world compromised on but one that Paul expected from those charged with leadership.

[160] Russell Kelfer, *Control: The Book of Proverbs Contains a Blueprint for a Life of Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House), 9.

greed, unbridled tongue, gluttonous behavior, immorality, idolatrous ambition, spirit of retaliation, impure thoughts, drunkenness, and temptations. These "sinful appetites and emotions drive the Christian out of control."[161] Important for body image is Kelfer's inclusion of impure thoughts in contrast to living a life of self-control. Improper thoughts about the body, fueled by tainted messages from the world and inaccurate views of self, form the basis of negative body image. Allowing impure thoughts about one's body to go unchecked and uncontrolled demonstrates a sinful, unrestrained mind out of step with the Spirit. Christians cannot afford to be passive and willfully tolerate negative body image, as self-control perishes with passivity. To forsake the fruit of self-control for faulty thinking about the body is to cave under worldly pressures and to ultimately disdain what God called good.

The Christian pursuit of proper body image involves thinking biblically about the body and viewing it as of equal value to the soul. The application of self-control is extremely instructive for body image. The mind generates body image. Therefore, the Christian has the unique ability, by the Spirit, to have a thought life that is at peace with the body (Rom 8:6). A steady, determined mindset to grow daily in the utilization of self-control, fueled by the Spirit, is the only way to be victorious over besetting sins, particularly such internalized sins like a negative body image. Therefore, the Spirit's indwelling presence and his fruit of self-control should motivate the believer to restrain wrong thinking and pursue a God-honoring body image.

Summary

In this section on Trinitarian involvement with the body, I reflected on Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 concerning how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each associated with embodied humanity. Articulating a theology of the body through the

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[161] Kelfer, *Self-Control*, 14.

appropriated works of the Trinity corresponds to Paul's mention of resurrection, redemption, and indwelling. Additionally, further connections between the Father, Son, and Spirit and the body are embodied persons created in the *imago Dei*, Christ's embodied example for his embodied followers, and the Spirit's fruit of self-control to empower embodied living. When believers recognize each aspect of triune participation with the body, they are motivated to think rightly of the body, valuing it as God does and submitting to his authority over it.

Conclusion

Paul confronts a misinformed Corinthian conception of the body in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, which elucidates a Christian conception of the body that can construct a God-honoring body image. Humanity's physical form is an important subject for Paul, especially evident in his letter to the Corinthians. In line with the doctrine of appropriations, he notes that each person of the Trinity is involved with the material aspect of human existence—from the Father's creation of embodied imagers and his promise of bodily resurrection to the Son's assumption of a human body for the redemption of embodied believers to the Spirit's indwelling of the saints for their embodied holy living. With these foundations, believers can inform and change their feelings about the body on the way to developing a proper, God-honoring body image. In the following chapter, I develop these Trinitarian foundations into body image principles that I then apply to varying contexts, proving that God's Word can sufficiently address all kinds of body image issues.

CHAPTER 5

BODY IMAGE PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATION

Everything I set out to accomplish in this dissertation coalesces in this chapter. A right body image begins with a proper understanding of the body that produces an acceptance of and respect for embodied life. For the believer, this progression comes from God's Word, which shapes a right conception of physical existence that brings acceptance of the body and motivates a proper regard for it. The believer with a God-honoring body image does not acquiesce to societal pressures and worldly stereotypes but strives to please God in all bodily conceptions, feelings, and actions. A God-honoring body image allows Scripture to shape one's thoughts about the body, feelings toward the body, and actions with the body. The forthcoming fifteen body image principles seek to inform each of these aspects. Then, the following application of those principles to six unique settings unfolds in the latter part of this chapter.

Body Image Principles

The implications of 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 discussed in the previous chapter come to bear on body image. Because I conclude that this passage provides the most substantial treatment of the body and its value in all of Scripture, it naturally serves as the critical foundation for defining a biblically based, God-honoring body image. In this section, I propose principles for a proper body image from 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 that build a right conception of the body to bring about acceptance and respect for one's physical form. For each, I discuss the rationale corresponding to that principle and how it specifically relates to body image.

Conception

For believers, the basis for building a God-honoring conception of the body must come from Scripture. The first four principles are meant to provide that foundation.

Principle 1

A God-honoring body image revolves around Scripture's affirmations of the body. True Christian faith accepts God's Word as authoritative and sufficient. Genuine Christianity is not an art project, a self-constructed faith based on individual likes, dislikes, preferences, or tendencies. Were Scripture to speak negatively of the body, then the views of the Gnostics, Platonists, and ascetics would prevail as viable. On the contrary, however, Scripture speaks positively about the body, so believers accept this truth and respond. God confirms the body as his wonderful creation and humans' responsibility to steward, which requires self-control and discipline. The body makes visible the Christian faith and possesses equivalent value with the soul. Properly valuing the body demands both right thinking and right treatment of it.[1] Because of this belief, a negative body image ought not be tolerated when God defines proper consideration of the body in his Word. Consequently, the first principle entails an overall call for the Christian to submit to the Word of God, specifically by accepting and agreeing with God's description of the human body.

Principle 2

A God-honoring body image fights and denies wrong thoughts about the body. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 convey a treatise on the physical body. Paul confronts the Corinthians' flippancy toward the body, set in the context of a Gnostic culture that denigrated anything material and elevated all things spiritual. The apostle's

[1] For a theology of the body and the reality of embodiment to be rightly understood and applied, I believe the application manifests in two primary ways—body image and body stewardship.

argument is based on Trinitarian interaction with the body, amplifying its worth. The involvement of the Father, Son, and Spirit confirms embodiment as a significant part of Christian doctrine. Individual body image, then, is informed by embodied reality and guided by the body's connection to the Godhead. The second principle is an entailment of Paul's opposition of the Gnostic tendency to devalue the body. Infiltrating Corinthian belief, the manifestation of Gnostic thinking was twofold—erroneous thoughts about the body that generated improper treatment of the body. Perceiving the body as defective, lacking, and unattractive will naturally drive negative, noxious thoughts and beliefs about one's corporeity. Choosing to believe inaccuracies about one's physical frame will instigate an adverse body image and support negative feelings, even triggering actions of bodily harm.

Principle 3

A God-honoring body image declares the goodness of the body as created in the imago Dei. The Corinthians denied the goodness of their bodies by their choice to engage in immorality. God created humanity after his likeness, giving his embodied image-bearers specific roles to carry out amongst his creation. As a fundamental facet of embodiment, bearing God's image holds weight for everything, even defining body image. An overlap exists between the image of God and body image. Julie Lowe explains, "You and I are created in the image of the living God. Our purpose is to reflect His image to the world. But since the fall, we let the world inscribe its image on us. It is the very picture of sin and ultimately death. Instead of being transformed to God's image, we conform to the world's image."[2] Lowe's statement is informative to the development of a God-honoring body image; in order to pursue one, Christians must first relinquish a

[2] Julie Lowe, "Chasing Beauty," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* 24, no. 1 (2006): 59.

body image inscribed by the world. Rather than viewing the body by the world's dictates, the body must be viewed through the Bible's definitions of physical life.

Principle 4

A God-honoring body image reflects the body's significance based on its connections with the Godhead. Concluding his argument in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 for the body, Paul crescendos in 6:19-20 with a dramatic emphasis on each divine person's association with the body as a final means of calling the Corinthians to value their bodies just as Father, Son, and Spirit do. So Christians revere the body based on the appropriated works of the Trinity.[3] The Father will bodily resurrect his created embodied image-bearers, the Son came to live and atone bodily for embodied image-bearers, and the Spirit indwells and empowers embodied image-bearers. While a negative body image sees the body as insignificant, forgetting its greater purpose associated with Father, Son, and Spirit, Christians must view their bodies as revolving around these Trinitarian realities.

Acceptance

A God-honoring conception of the body should motivate acceptance for it no matter one's physical form. The following principles encourage an acceptance that can confront a negative body image.

Principle 5

A God-honoring body image recognizes the consuming drive to meet worldly appearance standards and refuses to acquiesce to these enslaving ways. Paul implores the Corinthian believers to recognize that their sense of freedom might lead to slavery instead. Underestimating the power of sin, they naively adopted the practices of

[3] Again, I affirm inseparable operations. I state my argument the way I do because I seek to highlight how each person of the Trinity is uniquely (via appropriations) engaged with the body. The specific mention of Trinitarian involvement is the same method Paul utilizes in these verses.

unbelievers. Though the world and its desires pass away, its values allure, making the desire to accomplish such standards very powerful. Preoccupation with body imperfections coupled with an obsession of achieving the physical ideal can enslave one with a negative body image. Perfectionism also enslaves. Vanity and idolatry, hallmarks of body image issues, are cyclical and serve to reinforce one another. Enslaved to desires of outward perfection, the idolatrous quest for an "acceptable" body never ends, as new problem areas or inabilities constantly arise. The exhausting cycle of negative body image perpetuates because nothing is ever satisfactory.

Principle 6

A God-honoring body image accepts that the Lord is for the body and seeks to affirm the body's value as God's creation. The body is not disposable, to be used at one's discretion as if creation as an embodied imager lacks relevance. The Corinthians lived in such a way, as though their temporal needs could be met however they pleased. Their physical actions were not commendable because they failed to comprehend that the Lord affirms the body. Had they rightly considered their bodies as devoted to and for the Lord alone, upright conduct would have resulted. Instead, the way they used their bodies was meant to please themselves in accord with whatever would suit their momentary desires. Their lifestyle was not commensurate with the principle Paul sought to instill. If the Lord is for the body, then his followers must also be for the body and affirm it as his wonderful creation. This truth means a favorable disposition toward the body no matter its size or shape, for such a posture reflects the Lord's affirmation. It naturally follows, then, that any hostile conceptions, negative affections, and resulting behaviors against the body do not suit believers. Christians, therefore, condemn such activities as directly contradicting the Lord.

Principle 7

A God-honoring body image hopes for the coming restoration of the body while soberly accepting that the body will not reach perfection in this age. Disbelief in the resurrection naturally paralleled the Corinthians' sinful, debauched living; if the body has no future, then dignifying it in the present has no purpose. Part of the Corinthians' problem was a misinformed eschatological belief that held no consequence for the body. They reckoned that the body was simply destroyed upon death, which to them meant it possessed little value. However, the body *does* have a future destination, one that comes with the promise of a glorified resurrection. Christians are promised a perfect body for all eternity; hence, they should not acquiesce to temptations driven by negative body image to seek a perfect body now. The world touts certain body types as preferable, with the implication being that one is lesser and incomplete without certain musculature, makeup, or measurements. Were this insinuation not so, plastic surgeries, body-enhancing medicines, and commercial diets would not be such lucrative industries.[4] Rejecting these secular expectations, believers place their confidence in future sureties and not in present improbabilities that appearance-improving efforts hope to achieve.

Principle 8

A God-honoring body image submits to God's authority over the body. Undoubtedly, the body is God's property.[5] Paul explicitly makes this point to the Corinthians, who believed they were free to do whatever they wanted with their bodies.

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[4] According to Lindsay Kite and Lexie Kite, in America, "plastic surgery is the most profitable industry," and "90 percent of the people who get Botox are women." Botox largely treats wrinkles and is the most requested cosmetic procedure. Lindsay Kite and Lexie Kite, *More Than a Body: Your Body Is an Instrument Not an Ornament* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020), 59.

[5] Thomas Schreiner highlights the significance of the Holy Spirit's presence in the temple under the old covenant and now in the church under the new (1 Cor 3:16): "Since the Spirit indwells believers, they belong entirely to God. Their lives and their bodies are no longer their own . . . . [T]heir bodies are now to be used for the glory of God. They are to use their bodies to bring him praise and honor in every situation." Thomas R. Schreiner, *Handbook on Acts and Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 143.

The first example of authority Paul provides is the Father's authority in raising the body (1 Cor 6:14). Second, the believer's embodied life is purchased through the bodily death of the Son (v. 20). Third, the body is the Spirit's dwelling place (v. 19). It is antithetical to true Christian faith for one not to submit her entire embodied life to God's authority. Thoughts about, feelings of, and actions with the body are surrendered to the Lord. Herein lies deep meaning for one's body image. A wrong body image often propagates sinful thoughts and negative feelings that generate damaging actions against the body, a clear demonstration that an autonomous mindset is driving behavior. Belief that the body is insufficient or lacking usually leads to an acceptance of whatever measures are necessary to achieve the worldly ideal, measures that exhibit an attempt to claim authority of the body. In this way, everything that arises from dissatisfaction with the body surfaces from an independent spirit that is neither humble nor dependent on the Lord.

Principle 9

A God-honoring body image seeks to intentionally glorify God in every aspect of embodied living. Paul's argument for the body in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 reaches its culmination with an imperative to glorify God in the body (v. 20). Namely, every facet of embodied living is meant for the glory of God, even menial bodily actions like eating and drinking (1 Cor 10:31). Conversely, because Paul commands believers to glorify God with their bodies, it shows that this choice is not natural for fallen human beings. The very necessity of a command arises from the reality that what is commanded is not instinctive. Careful thought is required to discern the ways in which one should fulfill this command, even in the daily activities that are typically given little thought. The body belongs to the Lord, so it is the believer's task to steward it accordingly. Conceiving the body in negative ways that fuel depressive emotions and generate bodily harm is far from glorifying God in the body.

Respect

Scripture forms a God-honoring conception of the body, which leads to an acceptance that seeks to respect one's body in a manner that the God of embodied image-bearers.

Principle 10

A God-honoring body image understands that bodily neglect and harm are not permissible or beneficial behaviors. The Corinthians errantly applied Christian liberty in order to pursue lewd, licentious living. For believers, sin is forgiven but not excused. Freedom to live for Christ is not freedom to live for sin, as Paul argues in Romans 6:1-12. Rather than operating by the mantra "I will do as I please," Christians should avoid sinful behavior and its ensuing domination. When controlled by negative body image, a person may engage in activities that, though not inherently sinful, bring about injurious effects and thus are wrong. Exercise, skipping a meal, and overeating are all permissible actions on occasion. However, if these behaviors become habitual and serve as the means of pursuing outward perfection, then they are not only damaging but also sinful. These image-driven behaviors take a physical toll that is far from beneficial and will go on to dictate and dominate thoughts, feelings, and actions.[6]

Principle 11

A God-honoring body image trusts that the body will be resurrected and responds by treating the body in respectable, ethical ways. Another notable element in 1

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[6] Trendy diet methods (e.g., intermittent fasting, keto) should fall into this category of something not really sinful but certainly not helpful for the body. These extreme ways of eating can create short- and long-term health problems. Not to mention, choosing to deprive the body of food for long periods of time or cutting out a whole macronutrient goes against the ways God made the body to operate. This reality is precisely why the body negatively responds to these types of diets. Besides the keto flu, some of the other health problems that result from the keto diet are vitamin and mineral deficiencies, kidney stones, fatty liver, protein in the blood stream, heart disease, and type 2 diabetes. Jenna Fletcher, "Keto Diet Side Effects: What to Expect," *Medical News Today*, last modified June 22, 2020, https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/keto-diet-side-effects#health-risks.

Corinthians 6:12-20 is the connection Paul makes between future bodily resurrection and present bodily submission.[7] In the midst of his argument for the Corinthians to cease immoral activities that dishonored the body, Paul notes that the power by which God raised Christ is the same power by which he will raise believers in the eschaton. Christ's resurrection confirms God's promise to resurrect believers' bodies, thereby honoring the body. Paul argues that this belief naturally progresses to God's powerful claim over the earthly body, which then fuels the believer's desire for pure thoughts about and actions with the body. Likewise, God created the body with the intent that one's embodied life would be yielded to him. Sinful bodily activities not only include sexual immorality but also issues of gluttony, self-harm, sloth, bodily neglect, and eating disorders. Mistreatment of the body results from a negative body image, escalating into embodied sins that dishonor the Lord because they damage the body he created and will one day resurrect.

Principle 12

A God-honoring body image views the body as a member of Christ and treats it as such. The Corinthians' wanton behavior was antithetical to their faith. Paul strongly argues this point in contrast to their rampant seedy lifestyles. His condemnation is twofold. Not only were they wresting their bodies from Christ, but they were also joining their bodies to prostitutes. One struggling with negative body image first disdains the body then excuses all sorts of behaviors to meet whatever subjective physical standard is deemed important. The body is starved by an anorexic, mutilated from self-harm, overworked with extreme exercise, painfully reformed in surgeries, damaged by a bulimic, chemically altered by steroids, and debased with negative thoughts—all because

[7] Verlyn D. Verbrugge, *1 Corinthians*, in *1 & 2 Corinthians*, vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 311.

it is evaluated as deficient and repulsive. The Christian cannot exhibit such careless treatment of the body because it belongs to another.

Principle 13

A God-honoring body image understands union with Christ and the call to emulate his obedient embodied life. Through Christ's atonement, the believer is united to the Lord and exists in a new covenant relationship with him. Christ became embodied to live, die, and rise again so that he could redeem embodied men and women whom he then calls to live for him. In light of Christ's perfect embodied existence, the Christian strives to pattern her embodied life after Jesus's obedience, not to achieve a flawless appearance. When Christ's embodied existence filters how the believer sees the body, she focuses on pleasing God through the body rather than meeting self-defined physical standards. The reality of Christ's embodied life therefore bids the Christian to respect and value the body as part of her embodied life, which means disregarding fictitious feelings about the body. After all, if the Son of God made our flesh his flesh, then disdain for the body by thought or deed is an unwarranted denial of what Christ chose to elevate. In assuming a human body, he highlights the human body, and in so doing, he calls his followers to relinquish a negative body image and live with a new purpose through their bodies.

Principle 14

A God-honoring body image assesses the body as sacred. Paul's likening the individual body to the temple of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:19 communicated something novel to the Corinthians. Previously, Paul made a similar connection to the body of believers, referring to the church as the Spirit's temple (3:10-17), a seemingly more expected and predictable association. However, for the body to be called the Spirit's temple contradicted the Corinthian mindset toward the body. While they felt unrestrained to use and abuse their bodies akin to surrounding cultural practices, God's presence brought purity and holiness that renders sacred wherever he dwells. The

assessment of the body as the temple was certainly instructive for the Corinthians' treatment of their bodies. In similar ways, a Christian cannot simultaneously agree that the body is worthy of respect and honor as the Spirit's temple while also harshly assessing it through a negative body image. Likewise, the body cannot be respected as the place of the Holy Spirit while also undergoing physical mistreatment so that one can attain an ideal image. Comprehending the reality of the Spirit's indwelling should guard Christians against thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that disparage the temple in which the Spirit resides.

Principle 15

A God-honoring body image is grateful for the divine ability to be self-controlled and restrain worldly appearance desires or behaviors. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul writes that the body is the Spirit's temple not only to establish its value but also to remind the Corinthians of the divine power within them to pursue holy living. Paul chastised their flippancy toward the body several times. He commanded them to flee sexual immorality, an imperative requiring the use of self-control (1 Cor 6:18). Through the fruits of the Spirit, believers were equipped with that very ability. Indeed, the Spirit's presence motivates, enables, and empowers holy living, which includes fleeing immorality as well as a host of other embodied sins. The fruit of self-control helps in the fight against a critical appraisal of the body, and it helps those with a negative body image who unreasonably hate the body. Fighting to control profanity while simultaneously allowing profane thoughts about the body is incongruent with the fruit of self-control. The self-controlled individual fights false, distorted, and destructive conceptions about the body, battling them by the power of the Spirit. A steady, determined mindset to utilize self-control, fueled by indwelling Spirit, is the only way to be victorious over such internalized sins as negative body image.

Summary

Using Paul's focus on Trinitarian association with the human body serves as a effective means for developing a God-honoring body image, particularly as Paul was confronting misconceptions and mistreatment of the body in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. The fifteen principles distilled from the text function as a variety of statements to correct a wide range of negative body thoughts. Because this dissertation seeks the formation of a God-honoring body image, it would be a fruitless exercise to construct a right body image without also putting it into practice. Simply combatting a negative body image is insufficient. Subsequently forming a healthy, biblical one becomes vital. To merely reject improper body thoughts without also replacing them with truth will inevitably fall short of enacting real change.

Body Image Application

Scripture provides the means for lasting body image modification. The previous principles are meant to produce a God-honoring body image that addresses one's conception, acceptance, and respect of the body. The principles expand in the following ways. God's Word shapes favorable conceptions of the body, the theme of the first, second, eighth, and fifteenth principles. Acceptance of the body, no matter its actual appearance, is necessary, as rehearsed in the fourth, fifth, seventh, ninth, and fourteenth principles. Then, both the motivation to respect and protect the body arises from the remaining principles—the third, sixth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth. When applied to individual contexts, the framework from 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 strives to remedy problems resulting from negative body image that affects men and women of any age.

Body image varies just as an individual's characteristics, opinions, and experiences vary. While body image differs from person to person, each reflects the way that person sees him or herself, and as the body changes over time, so does this self-assessment. Below, I describe six scenarios where body image struggles predictably

surface for believers despite age and gender: (1) disabled child, (2) teenage girl, (3) college-age male, (4) postpartum mother, (5) menopausal female, and (6) late-sixties male. In each scenario, I elucidate a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the struggles of the individual's context then offer an application narrative of biblical body image to the population group using my fifteen principles derived from 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. The range of life circumstances show my body image principles are applicable in numerous contexts.

Disabled Child

To be limited in ability, activity, and social interaction is to be disabled, which generally results in hindrance or disadvantage.[8] Within the disabled condition, there is great diversity from the type, severity, age of onset, duration, and quality of life, all of which diverge and affect people in every race, gender, age, and cultural setting. The effects of disability differ as well. For some, they render life impossible without assistance. Others require medication or external devices for improved functioning. Many cannot work due to disability, and some face oppression because of it. Numerous experiences arise among those with embodied impairments.[9]

Disability is an embodied condition that impacts body image.[10] Deborah Beth Creamer believes that "to write about disability is to reconsider our understandings of human embodiment."[11] While I agree with her, I take her assertion one step further. If

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[8] Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 14.

[9] Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*, 15.

[10] Interestingly, editors Thomas F. Cash and Linda Smolak's *Body Image: A Handbook of Science, Practice, and Prevention*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2011), the most comprehensive and current work on body image, consists of fifty-three chapters and has nothing on body image among the disabled. While there is a chapter on disfigurement (chap. 46), the book does not include any discussion on disability. This secular work shows that the church has great potential to redeem body image struggles among those with disabilities.

[11] Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*, 3.

disability demands rethinking embodied reality, then it also means that a biblical body image is as imperative for the disabled as it is for the able-bodied. Embodied impairments compel the church's recognition of the struggles of disabled living, with specific address to how an impaired person should think of the body.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that sixty-one million people suffer from some type of disability, meaning that one out of every four people endures a disabling condition every day.[12] From greatest to least, the types of disability that people suffer involve mobility, cognition, independent living, hearing, vision, and self-care.[13] Some examples include learning difficulties, being a wheelchair user, needing a hearing aid, battling mental instability, experiencing chronic pain, or the total inability to care for oneself.[14] Globally, those with disabilities comprise the largest minority group at 10 percent of the world's population. It is a seeming impossibility for one to be unaffected by disability, whether by personally suffering from one or having a loved one who endures it.[15]

Unfortunately, despite the prevalence of disability, it continues as an underdeveloped topic within the church.[16] On this disparity, Michael Beates comments, "I began to realize by simple observation that people with disabilities are almost

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[12] A troubling note is that those in the South suffer the most from disabilities. As I discuss in appendix 1 ("Body Stewardship"), the South also has the highest incidence of obesity, especially in the Bible Belt. There is an overlap between obesity and disability. Those who are disabled are more likely to be obese. The connection is tragic. The greatest numbers of obesity and disability are those who are also the most religious. Disabled World, "U.S. Disability Statistics by State, County, City, Age," last modified February 20, 2020, https://www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/scc.php#state.

[13] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Disability Impacts All of Us," last modified September 16, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html.

[14] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Disability Impacts All of Us."

[15] Disabled World, "U.S. Disability Statistics."

[16] Being disabled herself, Creamer goes further in saying that "religious communities have often been unhelpful, and even harmful, in relation to people with disabilities." Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*, 35.

universally absent from the congregations of most American churches. . . . Christian people generally have an inadequate understanding of God's role in disabilities."[17] Furthermore, Creamer considers this sobering reality thus:

> Because disability is an "open minority" that any of us might join at any time, and which we are much more likely to join as we age, it has been suggested that it makes little sense to try to distinguish between disabled and temporarily able-bodied. It is clear that disability is a common and ever-present experience that is worthy of theoretical and theological reflection. [18]

Christians serve a God who transcends disability; therefore, the church must be able to help others process their own embodied impairments. If adults are not equipped to grapple with the likelihood of future disability, how much more will children struggle with their bodies' being different from their siblings and peers?[19]

A God-honoring body image must address disability, as body image issues are not limited to those who feel fat, hate their long arms, or want more muscle definition. For example, a child born with physical disabilities will experience the world different from others in his family. From a very early age, his parents explained that his physical differences do not need to limit him. However, as he ages and his awareness grows, he cannot help but wonder why he is different. Did he do something wrong? Does God not love him like he does those whose bodies look like everyone else's? Hampered by physical deformity, he wonders why he is unable to run around outside with his siblings. His mom still bathes and dresses him, unlike his siblings. He relies on caretakers to meet

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[17] Michael S. Beates, *Disability and the Gospel: How God Uses Our Brokenness to Display His Grace* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 17-19.

[18] Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*, 16. Disease and disability are ever-looming possibilities. As Warren Brown and Brad Strawn explain, "When we are racked with the aches and pains of the flu, or half delirious with fever, we are pretty sure that we are a body. If, because of an auto accident, a friend is brain damaged, and his or her mental capacities, personality, or behavior is dramatically changed, we realize ever so clearly that we are a body." Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5.

[19] For more information on counseling a disabled child see Joni and Friends, "Counseling Children with a Disability," in *Caring for the Souls of Children: A Biblical Counselor's Manual*, ed. Amy Baker, (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2020), 222.

his needs; his freedom is bound to the availability of another. He simultaneously loves and hates his wheelchair. Without it, he would be immobile, but it also serves as a continual reminder of inability. If he gets left out from playing with others, it is upsetting. His parents struggle with the words to console him. In his most trying moments, they remind him that he is not the reason for his physical impairments. For the disabled child, his body image will shift with age as he realizes more of what he can and cannot do.

Inherent in the child's disability is a heightened ability to grasp the depths of grace in the gospel. While his body remains broken by original sin, he is a child of God who will, one day, transform his body.[20] The disabled child needs to know biblical truths that speak to God's loving care and power over all things, even a body that looks or operates differently.[21] God deems all parts of his creation good. Even more, the little boy should realize that God created his body in his image, calling it very good (Gen 1:26-28). His physical frame was no accident but intricately formed and woven together just as God wanted. The boy understands that God does not want him to think ugly or mean thoughts about his body when it is just the way God chose to make it. He knows that comparing his body to his siblings and friends does not please God. Nor should he assess his worth based on his body's ability or inability. He understands that God made his body differently abled for a reason. Though he rarely sees anyone like him in person or on television, this thought helps him. Knowing that God has the power to change his body now, the boy believes that God knows best and can do whatever he wants with his body. The Gospels help him trust that Jesus can heal disabilities, and he knows that his body will not always be limited. One day, he will run and jump as much as he wants. He

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[20] Beates, *Disability and the Gospel*, 159.

[21] Creamer asserts an interesting point: "Ancient Israel had a variety of notions about bodies, and that a considerable number of disabilities, both physical and mental, are mentioned in the Bible. Illness and disability were everyday realities that needed to be made sense of in a religious context." Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*, 42. Recognizing these realities remains the task for the church today.

recognizes that Christ cared especially for those with disabilities and died for him. He knows Christ also experienced bodily suffering like he endures on a daily basis. His body is part of Christ's body, which means he is incredibly special. He also understands that the Holy Spirit dwells in his body, which makes it holy and set apart as a beloved child of God. Though disabled, in his childlike faith, he determines to tell others how much God loves him and that God desires to love them, too.

Teenage Girl

Most females, particularly in their teenage years, experience some degree of body dissatisfaction.[22] The reason for this discontent is the onset of puberty, when teen girls "begin to objectify themselves, viewing their own bodies from the outside, as if seen from the hypothetical gaze of another."[23] Teenage girls are also regularly confronted with the message that the body is not good enough from peers, social media, and Hollywood. Images on the phone, television, and advertisements reinforce thoughts that their bodies are inadequate and undesirable. Amy Harman explains, "Social media as a whole can be especially harmful to body image because it combines endless scrolls of images of friends and influencers with targeted advertising."[24] Like so many their age, teenage girls base their self-worth in their bodies, believing that no one will accept them until they achieve some arbitrary appearance goal.[25]

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[22] Hillary L. McBride and Janelle L. Kwee, eds., introduction to *Embodiment and Eating Disorders: Theory, Research, Prevention, and Treatment* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1.

[23] Hillary L. McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," in McBride and Kwee, *Embodiment and Eating Disorders*, 12.

[24] Amy Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect: Compassionate Strategies to Cultivate a Positive Body Image* (Emeryville, CA: Rockridge Press, 2020), 32.

[25] Kite and Kite explain how females are objectified from head to toe. They "investigate the media and cultural messages that have shaped the routes on our body image map in invisible but powerful ways." Kite and Kite, *More Than a Body*, 54. These unrelenting messages present detailed depictions of how a girl's hair, eyes, skin, weight, shape, and cellulite ought to be according to societal standards.

Wanting others to find them desirable, teen girls focus on fixing the body parts that they find bothersome and unappealing. Perhaps surprisingly, "a substantial number of adolescent girls reported undergoing liposuction, nose reshaping, breast alterations, facial implants, ear or eyelid surgery, hair removal, and acne treatments."[26] Whatever the surgery, this decision of extreme physical change is driven by a negative body image.

For teenage girls battling negative body image, the critical thoughts can be unrelenting, as the marks of the perfect body frequently shift. Believing that their bodies fail to measure up to another's opinion, worldly influences, or an internal unattainable standard, teenage girls mentally scrutinize and condemn themselves. Comparison fuels jealously of those they consider the right size or shape. They face a constant mental battle. No clothes ever fit right. There are always more calories to burn, and they must never allow a diet to lapse.

Whether it is a specific part of the body that is troublesome, a dress size, or number on the scale, girls' lives frequently revolve around a subjective, perceived disparity. If they fail to get a job, are rejected by a guy, or get ignored in social settings, then they label their inadequate body as the reason. Everything is filtered through their negative body image. So, teenage girls frequently twist outside experiences and combine them with inner feelings of hopelessness and shame. These feelings comingle with self-hatred, as they continue to fall short of inaccessible goals. Such troubling thoughts will likely manifest in over-exercise, an eating disorder, or avoiding meals with family and friends. "Adolescence is a time of particular risk for girl in that during this time BIDs (body image disturbances) can develop into more severe psychological disorders."[27] For

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[26] Eleanor H. Wertheim and Susan J. Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 77.

[27] Wertheim and Paxton, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Girls," 81. In fact, "weight and shape concerns in middle school or early high school-age girls predicted later increases in eating problems such as dieting, drive for thinness, bulimic symptoms, binge eating, [and] compensatory behaviors . . . over periods ranging from 8 months to 4 years."

many teenage girls, misinformed, secularly shaped thoughts about the body rarely remain isolated in the mind. However, for Christian girls, a God-honoring body image is not out of reach. When equipped with strategies for working through negative body talk, these girls need not fall into eating disorders or other self-harming behaviors.

From the outset, Scripture calls the young woman to believe what it says about her body. God's Word describes her body as his wonderful work, lovingly fashioned in her mother's womb (Ps 139:13-16). Beginning with this thought about her body provides her with the correct foundation from which to consider her body. Her body is a gift beautifully constructed by her loving Father and thus should be cherished; it is not a gross, undesirable physical frame to be hated while attaching no significance to her Creator. In this way, she must choose to believe what the Bible affirms about her body, not what she is tempted to believe from the views constructed by society. Knowing her struggles, she admits the temptation to cut calories and regularly purge, as she recognizes that harming her body in this way is not suitable for believers. She confesses the desire to conform to worldly beauty standards and tries to decrease consumption of these influences. She reminds herself that the number of likes on a social media post does not define her worth, and she recognizes the damage that social media can cause.

Growing in humility, the young woman surrenders how she wants her body to look, foregoing the extreme measures that "the perfect body" would require. To help fight negative thoughts, she repeats to herself that her body is for the Lord. Not only should she think rightly about her body, but also she should not seek to modify it for anyone else. The teen trusts that her future (i.e., glorious) body will be far greater than anything she currently envisions, which enables her acceptance of the body as it is now. Because God is the rightful owner of her body, she chooses not to engage in controlling activities in order to achieve what she believes is best for her body. Acknowledging her that body is united to Christ, she vows to fight negative thoughts because she would never think such things about the Lord. The teenage girl is thankful for the ability

afforded her by the indwelling Holy Spirit to control her wrong thoughts. She understands that these thoughts only serve to depress and take her down a path of harmful behavior. Thus, she relies on the Spirit's power to protect her mind and reveal the difference between truths and lies.

The Spirit's presence renders her body sacred, and she knows she ought not think of it otherwise. Though she once turned to over-exercising and starvation to control her emotions, she recognizes that these behaviors harm her body and certainly do not treat it as sacred. Allowing a negative body image and its resulting behaviors to persist make it impossible to glorify God with her body. Body dissatisfaction spurs her toward disdaining her body and expressing anger toward her God rather than viewing her physical frame as the Lord's praiseworthy creation. This mindset is antithetical to honoring God, and she knows it. Amidst her body image struggles, this teen girl reminds herself that God chose her as his child. This truth means she is unconditionally loved despite her appearance, valued with no need of the world's approval, and endowed with a purpose greater than striving for a certain body type. Her call is to please the Lord and not others, which she recalls to mind when driven by negative body image.

College-Age Male

Just as females do, males battle body image issues, too. Some researchers even consider there to be a real, growing world of "male vanity."[28] According to Lynne Luciano, male body image issues appear in the "world of steroid abusers and compulsive runners, anorexics and bulimics, men who are losing their hair and potency, and patients getting face-lifts, buttock lifts, and silicone implants—all in the pursuit of youth, sex appeal, and success."[29] While plastic surgery is more associated with women, men seek it

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[28] Lynne Luciano, *Looking Good: Male Body Image in Modern America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2001), 3.

[29] Luciano, *Looking Good*, 3.

out as well. Like women, men go for liposuction, butt implants, nose jobs, and additional chest, chin, and calf implants; thus, they remain just as susceptible as women to the dangerous game of comparison, with its ill effects on body image.

In 2001, prior to the rise of social media, Luciano wrote of a major upswing in body image obsession among men. But with the invasion of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, body image obsession has skyrocketed.[30] Clearly, Hollywood stars in action movies promulgate the desirable body type. Muscular guys giving online tutorials and writing articles on how to be toned and muscular inundate the newsfeeds of young men. Social media and self-assessment go hand in hand, with self-evaluation being based on something other than what one already possesses. Another's idealized physical characteristics are chief among these covetous desires. Athleticism and muscularity dominate the desired male body type, leaving those without similar physical characteristics wanting what they may never attain.

Additionally, males do not internalize the same pressures of body image that females do. Whereas waist, bust, or hip measurements are indicators of attractiveness in women, chest and bicep muscles are indicators of attractiveness in men; therefore, body image issues in young men generally arise from a drive for muscularity. In fact, these struggles can start in middle school. That this drive can begin in adolescence often generates higher levels of depression among young boys than young girls who seek to be thin. Later in life, this drive leaves many men with "increased levels of general body dissatisfaction, negative affect, and social physique anxiety."[31]

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[30] Luciano, *Looking Good*, 4. Consider what Harman has to say regarding social media: "On any given day, we see far more images of (altered) people than the number of people we see in real life." Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 30.

[31] Donald R. McCreary, "Body Image and Muscularity," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 199.

Other contributors to negative body image in males are baldness and height. Though many men experience baldness, the societal expectation is for a full head of hair. The copious amount of hair loss products communicates that baldness as an unattractive, undesirable common occurrence. Inherent in the existence of these products is the message that male pattern baldness is something to be remedied. Studies associate hair loss with greater prevalence of depression, low self-esteem, stress, and inadequacy.[32] It is not only men with hair but also taller males who express higher levels of confidence and self-esteem than their bald(ing) and shorter counterparts.[33] Many associate height with leadership and career success. Unable to alter their height, shorter guys struggle with negative assessments of their stature.

Contending with body image issues in males is more difficult because they often feel insecure about discussing it, especially as it is an issue commonly associated with females. They reject the vulnerability needed to address negative body image, facing increased shame and embarrassment as a result. Far more research is needed on male body dissatisfaction.[34] Still, much like women, men define themselves according to mental perceptions of their bodies. Efforts to improve body image—the products, programs, and pain—are all geared to meet an underlying motive: a better-looking exterior to please oneself and to satisfy the perceived preferences of others.

A college-age male need not look to society to define his worth but to Scripture. While living in a culture fueled by comparison combined with the added pressure of appealing to girls, he must remember that his physique is an incidental factor to the goodness of his created body. His stature and build do not determine his character,

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[32] Andrew R. Thompson, "Body Image Issues in Dermatology," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 326.

[33] Lina A. Ricciardelli and Marita P. McCabe, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Boys," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 86.

[34] Ricciardelli and McCabe, "Body Image Development in Adolescent Boys," 91.

and the self-improvement efforts that revolve around his physical makeup may produce poor character. While taking care of his body is beneficial, he cannot let the drive for an enhanced physique consume him. Likewise, it is destructive to let these desires push him toward steroid use and plastic surgeries, as these may permanently mar his body. He also remembers that his body is for the Lord, which means it is not to be dedicated to anything else. Excessive workouts at the gym and endless body-enhancing products may threaten this devotion, so he evaluates his heart motivations by this reminder. In so doing, he rejects obsessive attention and idolization of his body, choosing instead to treat his body well with moderate activity and rest.

A college-age male knows that God holds ultimate authority over his body, and he does not try to conform it to societal ideals by spending excess hours in the gym or adhering to extreme nutritional standards. While he wants a fit body, he strives to express the Holy Spirit's fruit of self-control when enticing desires for the ideal body type seem daunting (Gal 5:22-23). The college-age male fights for a disciplined mind and stops defining his worth based on comparison with others. He acknowledges that his body is for more than attracting females, so he strives toward the higher purpose of doing everything he can with his body to glorify God.

Postpartum Mother

Over the course her pregnancy, a mother's body endures many changes as she prepares to support, nourish, and protect another human being. Some of these "physiognomical and psychosocial changes" include "hormonal fluctuations, the experience of pregnancy-related physical symptoms and changes to appearance (e.g., nausea, backache, varicose veins, stretch marks, acne, and swollen ankles and feet), changes to one's interactions and relationships with others, and the adaptation to being a

new mother."[35] Given societal pressures, the physical differences a postpartum mom experiences may be overwhelming and difficult to accept. Certainly, changes such as these, coupled with shifting emotions, likely impact body image in negative ways.

Body image can suffer during pregnancy but particularly afterwards, if one's body does not return quickly to its pre-pregnant form.[36] A changing body requires the new mom to reassess her thoughts and feelings about her physical shape and any remaining pregnancy effects still visible once the baby is born. Pregnancy, possibly more than any other time in her life, confronts the new mom with a "powerful test of the factors leading to body dissatisfaction than at other times in women's lives when body shape remains relatively stable."[37] Research shows that women believe their bodies to be less fit and attractive in the second and third trimesters of their pregnancy than how they assessed their bodies before getting pregnant. It appears that the same factors that bear on negative body image—depressed affect, sociocultural influences, and appearance comparison—remain the same whether or not one is pregnant.[38] When negative body image arises later in pregnancy, it usually indicates that the new mother will exhibit less patience with her physical appearance after giving birth. She unrealistically expects her body to revert back to its pre-pregnant form.[39]

For a woman battling negative body image or an eating disorder prior to getting pregnant, any physical changes accompanying the birth of a baby can be especially challenging. Her greatest fears of weight gain came true. Though this struggle

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[35] Helen Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 342.

[36] Incidentally, "most women spend much of their lives in a post baby body," given the time between having a child and reaching the end of life. Harman, *Perfectly Imperfect*, 50. With this experience being quite common, many women suffer from negative body image for most of their lives.

[37] Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," 343.

[38] Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," 344.

[39] Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," 344.

is common to many women, doctors rarely broach the subject.[40] Even more alarming is that negative body image usually coincides with low self-esteem and depressed mood, which severely affect the new mother and her baby.[41] Thus, the need to discuss body image during and after pregnancy is obvious, and the truths of God's Word can help in this matter.

The new mother struggling with body image must reflect on biblical truth rather than unrealistic lies and worldly expectations about her postpartum body. She chooses to agree with Scripture and assess her body as wonderfully created in the *imago Dei*, praising the Lord for it. She is humbled by the reality that she is specially created and fitted with the capacity to bear children, basing her worth in her body's ability to sustain human life instead of in her outward appearance. After all, she is unconditionally accepted and loved in Christ, and this reality is certainly not based on her body's physical characteristics after giving birth. Rather than viewing her body as flawed, she processes the physical changes of pregnancy with sobering humility, as these changes serve as a reminder of her newborn. The postpartum mom fights to relinquish any unrealistic expectations that cause her to decry new shapes and marks on her body. She realizes that comparing herself to other moms, women on television, friends, and family is not helpful, and she expresses a willingness to subvert opportunities for comparison. Ultimately, she avoids contexts that fuel worries and insecurities (Col 3:2).

While the postpartum mother strives for a healthy body image that accepts the modifications of pregnancy, she prays for the Holy Spirit's enabling power to be self-

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[40] Per Skouteris, "Less than one-third of physicians assessed for body image concerns during routine gynecological and obstetrical care." Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," 343.

[41] Interestingly, some mothers who previously engaged in disordered eating found it easier to set aside these behaviors due to a greater concern for the safety and health of the developing fetus alongside the "increased functionality" of their bodies. Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," 343.

controlled in her thinking. She understands that his divine help is required to keep her emotions under control when she becomes disappointed in her physical appearance. She is grateful that the Spirit is steady, consistent, and faithful even when she falters. Though she is tempted to take extreme measures or follow health fads in order to drop the baby weight, she recognizes that these options are not good for her body and may compromise her overall health. The new mom refuses to allow idolatrous desires to drive eating and exercise habits. She reasonably engages in healthy eating and exercise behaviors while trusting the Lord's authority over her body. Moreover, she rests in the perfecting of her body in the age to come when she will be resurrected with a glorious body like Christ's. With a confident trust in her future perfection, she avoids mistreating her body now just to adhere it to an idealized outer appearance. She knows that believers are called to glorify God in their bodies, and she admits that destructive thoughts about her body do not bring God glory. Negative appearance assessment and fixation on flaws contradict God's declaration of her body as a praiseworthy creation. She recognizes that glorifying God with the body while also hating its form are incongruent realities. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each validate her embodied experience. Plus, she understands the significance of giving birth to another image-bearer. With these reminders, the new mother chooses to focus on the aspects of her body that promote a healthy body image while expressing gratitude for what her physical bodily existence allows.

Menopausal Female

Bodily deterioration is a common reality for both men and women. Age brings significant shifts in their former physical appearance, such as weight fluctuations, a decrease in hearing and eyesight efficiency, skin wrinkles, hair loss, and muscle atrophy, along with general aches and pains that limit motion, balance, and normal, everyday activities. If adults in general do not alter their expectations for their appearance and body, then negative body image naturally results. This readjustment is especially

important for menopausal women, as studies reveal a negative shift in body image from their premenopausal body to postmenopausal body.[42] Still, these studies are scant. The scarcity of research in no way reflects the increased likelihood of body image issues among women entering and ending menopause.

Negative body image, commonplace across the age spectrum for females, typically revolves around the issues of weight and body shape. Women from late teens to late sixties generally express displeasure with both of these areas, with some women even admitting body dissatisfaction into their nineties.[43] Overall, the same areas that frustrate young women are still troublesome to older women, like the stomach, hips, and thighs. Many older women express the hope that younger women will experience a healthier body image than they had—particularly among mothers and daughters—as they do not want them to experience the same feelings of discontentment and dissatisfaction.[44] This hope for younger women is significant because for most women, weight naturally comes on with age. Studies show that later in life, the most significant determiners of body image are weight gain, poor self-esteem, and a decreasing confidence in appearance.[45]

One research study reports that most women associate weight gain with a "lack of self-control and reduced physical activity," both of which factor into body image.[46] The ideal image that women internalize "encompasses various aspects of physical appearance" and shows that "weight is central to the narrative of the problematic and

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[42] Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," 346.

[43] Laura Hurd Clarke, "Older Women and the Embodied Experience of Weight," in McBride and Kwee, *Embodiment and Eating Disorders*, 190.

[44] Hillary L. McBride and Janelle L. Kwee, "Intergenerational Journeys: Mothers Raising Embodied Daughters," in McBride and Kwee, *Embodiment and Eating Disorders*, 164.

[45] Sarah Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 95.

[46] Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," 347.

unattractive older female body."[47] However, menopause and the natural effects that coincide with it must be understood as a significant contributor to weight gain.[48] In this case, extra pounds on the scale are not always within a woman's control. The excess pounds are due to a hormonal shift where abdominal weight is gained more readily than before menopause. In addition to weight, women tend to report their fitness level and perceived attractiveness as negatively impacted by menopause, which also play into body dissatisfaction and a poor outlook on body image.[49] Some women go to extreme measures to compensate for and offset unwanted weight gain. For example, 2-4 percent of women over age sixty suffer from an eating disorder, and menopausal changes only heighten disdain for the body.[50] Not surprisingly, eating disorders are understudied and misunderstood in older populations, and many cases go undiagnosed and therefore untreated.[51] Given these realities, obviously the experience of menopause will likely have an adverse effect on a woman's body image.[52]

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[47] Clarke, "Older Women and the Embodied Experience of Weight," 192.

[48] According to Clarke, "The discrepancy between their preferred and actual bodies might, in part, be explained by the physical changes that occur with age, including the weight gain and increasing total body fat and abdominal fat that are common in later life, particularly after menopause." Clarke, "Older Women and the Embodied Experience of Weight," 193.

[49] Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," 346.

[50] Clarke, "Older Women and the Embodied Experience of Weight," 191

[51] Clarke, "Older Women and the Embodied Experience of Weight," 191.

[52] Interestingly, Grogan reports that women over age seventy who are well past menopause have more appropriate appearance and body expectations, ones that are realistic and less culturally defined than their younger counterparts. An older woman's identity begins to shift from her looks to her family and social activities. It seems that most women become less invested in their outward appearance around age sixty. Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," 95. This shift means that the thoughts an older woman has about her body—the way it looks, how it fails to meet societal ideals, and what she wants to change about it—no longer flood her mind.

Were younger adult women to learn from the approach of appearance acceptance seen in older women, perhaps their experience of a continual negative body image would lessen and they would experience a greater quality of life—one where happiness and contentment do not revolve around the daily pursuit of adhering to a physical ideal. In essence, once women reach a certain age, they relax about their body's misgivings, reckoning that society no longer expects them to be a certain shape or size. Skouteris, "Body Image Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology," 347. This new outlook means that premenopausal women and those experiencing menopause should adopt the type of mindset toward the body that older women express. Doing so at a younger age can protect their thinking and can guard against negative body image, low self-esteem, and depressed mood.

While women of all ages struggle with body dissatisfaction, the added physical and emotional experience of menopause can generate significant mental anguish and stress centered on body image. In the midst of this difficult transition, believers cling to biblical truths as a refuge that produces thoughts to fuel a right body image that glorifies God. The menopausal female must remember that God not only created her body but also designed it to endure the experience of menopause. There is, therefore, no need to be ashamed of this natural occurrence that every woman experiences. She realizes that basing her value on her body's appearance is not only unhelpful but is also a sinful way of conceiving her body. Additionally, judging the value of her body from the change of menopause is harmful and certainly does not honor the Lord. Though she faces temptation to restrict eating and to exercise excessively, she does not allow unwanted and unexpected weight gain to lead her toward destructive behaviors, which she recognizes would harm her body and simultaneously cause her to idolize it. She admits that to buckle under the societal pressures to be a certain size would be to conform to an enslaving, worldly mindset. It would be a compromise of what she knows as right for what the world deems as acceptable. Rather, her temporary bodily changes evoke reminders of the greater hope in eschatological renewal and permanent physical perfection. Present efforts to reach a perfect body will be in vain and forsake the purpose of trusting in future physical restoration.

The woman who seeks to honor the Lord through menopause will submit to God's authority over her body by being patient in this season. Menopause is a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence, which her Father has lovingly intended as part of the embodied female experience. She understands that her body is a member of Christ. Therefore, she refuses to disparage its form in her thinking and speaking, as she knows complaining about unwanted weight will only further discontentment. She is grateful for the Holy Spirit's ability to keep her thoughts under control and concentrates on ways to honor the Lord in this new season of life (Rom 8:5). Her body is sacred exactly as it is because of

the Spirit's presence within her. She strives to filter negative thoughts about her body through this reality. In doing so, she purposes to glorify God in every aspect of her embodied life, even in her menopausal body, through the way she thinks about and treats it. Rather than seeking to achieve worldly standards for her menopausal body, she determines to take refuge in the significant reality that Father, Son, and Spirit affirm her physical form.

Late-Sixties Male

Researchers report an overall lack of writing on the concept of body image in elderly populations. In fact, "no lifespan longitudinal studies of body image exist."[53] While a younger, healthy individual may not pay attention to the body until something goes awry, the universal reality of aging makes body image a worthwhile topic.[54] Even though bodies stop growing, due to aging they continue to change throughout adult life.[55] With changes come disappointment, pain, and limitation, all of which may create mental anguish that undoubtedly influences body image.[56] If "body image represents the cognitive attention on the appearance or image of the body," then someone undergoing

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[53] Grogan, "Body Image Development in Adulthood," 93.

[54] McBride writes,

> Often, we are unaware of ourselves as a body, not stopping to notice what our body is doing or not doing, rather focusing on our motivation and intent . . . . For those who are able-bodied, it may have been possible for a time for us to remain unconscious of our embodiment or repress it altogether . . . , it is the sensations of pain or dis-ease which most often require a person to notice their body in a way that they may not have before. (McBride, "Embodiment and Body Image," 11)

McBride's statement underlies my assertion that body image is a necessary element in the daily lives of men and women alike throughout their lives because everyone, at some point, will have differing body experiences than what they did previously, which will result in a thought life that can impact body image.

[55] Karyn M. Skultety and Susan Krauss Whitbourne, "Body Image Development Adulthood and Aging," in *Body Image: A Handbook of Theory, Research, and Clinical Practice*, ed. Thomas F. Cash and Thomas Pruzinsky (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), 83.

[56] Adams believes that Solomon details the experience of aging in Eccl 12:1-7: "Even the bible has a description of declining years that the world would buy, since it speaks of the effects of aging from the perspective of those who live only for what they can get under the sun." Jay E. Adams, *Wrinkled but Not Ruined: Counsel for the Elderly* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1999), 8.

unwanted physical change would certainly be affected by it in a way that impacts body image.[57]

In his book *The Revelatory Body*, Luke Timothy Johnson references aging as the "gentlest signature of mortality."[58] Detailing his "bodily experience of diminishment," Johnson is quite candid about his personal struggles:

> The decade of my sixties, especially the last half, was the most revealing in terms of physical change. All at once, it seems, the warranty elapses, and everything starts to fall apart. It is, of course, not "all at once," but just another stage in a long process. But now I am alert to my weaknesses more than I am to my strengths . . . . My body now seems to me less a reliable friend than an unpredictable and sometimes resentful companion. My eyes are worse, my hearing is bad . . . , and arthritis stabs me with pain . . . . I have hypertension. My weight insists on staying. My hair is white and thinning . . . . My lower back is in very bad shape. I now need to walk an hour every day, and faithfully do back exercises, simply to remain mobile. I don't even think about picking up the ball and throwing it; the thought of the consequent pain in my shoulder is sufficient to prevent any such fantasy. Indeed I cannot really remember my muscular and athletic body . . . . [M]y aging process is absolutely normal. But I still don't like it.[59]

Despite physical diminishment, Johnson admits that "the emotional entailments of aging are perhaps the most complex and difficult to disentangle."[60] The reality of these emotions is precisely why body image must be recognized as an important part of Christian faithfulness even to old age. For with physical decline come thoughts and emotions about those waning abilities.

Another man Johnson's age likely experiences the same realities. Knowing how his body used to function, the steps he once climbed with ease, and the good hearing or memory he once had, the aging male may become dejected with the state of his failing body and doubt its ability. Questions likely begin to flood his mind: How long will I be

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[57] Skultety and Whitbourne, "Body Image Development Adulthood and Aging," 83.

[58] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 206.

[59] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 210-11.

[60] Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 212.

able to continue working outdoors? If my back limits me now, what will it be like in ten years? Am I eventually going to need a hearing aid or a walker? How will the arthritis in my hands affect the hobbies I love so much? How did I get to this point where my activities are limited because of physical restrictions? Burdened by questions with unknown answers while entertaining negative thoughts, an aging male may begin to hate his body, perhaps for the first time in his life.

For this reason, "evaluating how people react to changes in body shape, appearance, and functioning is central to fully understanding psychological adaptation throughout adulthood."[61] If a man bases his identity in the body, he will be too fragile to handle the alterations that age brings. Karyn Skultety and Susan Whitbourne comment that "aging presents the greatest challenge to the individual's sense of the integrity of the physical self," making body image crucial as part of the physical regression synonymous with age.[62]

The late-sixties believer must ground his identity in Scripture, allowing God to define embodied existence. Rather than bemoaning the alterations of a changing, aging body, he renews his thinking through the Word, remembering that his body is still God's wondrous creation even in its degenerating state. He knows that to tolerate regretful, grievous thoughts about his body's former abilities is impractical and a waste of time. Despite his age, he can exercise to benefit his body while it is maturing. Remaining idle will only move the aging process along more rapidly, whereas physical activity can delay some of the natural deterioration that aging brings. In this way, he can be for his body, as

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[61] Skultety and Whitbourne, "Body Image Development Adulthood and Aging," 83.

[62] Skultety and Whitbourne, "Body Image Development Adulthood and Aging," 83. I agree with Johnson, who notes, "Scripture as a whole, then, does not in any obvious way provide much insight into the mystery of human aging. The New Testament appears to nullify its significance, and the Old Testament offers little sense of how living a long life might actually be a blessing rather than a burden." Johnson, *The Revelatory Body*, 220. Because Scripture barely addresses aging, much less how to think about the aging process, I believe the implications I draw from 1 Cor 6:12-20 are important.

is the Lord. Treating his body favorably is a practical way for him to show that he values his own body. Even more, simply allowing, actively neglecting, or choosing to engage in behaviors that quicken deteriorating physical health should be intolerable. To think so poorly of the body as to disregard it fails to properly consider the body in God-honoring ways.

Despite his body's decline, the maturing believer hopes in the promise of resurrection, longing for the day when his body will be glorified without pain and limitation. When negative body thoughts arise, he refocuses his mind on the assurance of coming restoration, rejoicing in it as an unshakeable truth founded on Christ's resurrection. Using this occasion, he glorifies the Lord in the present while looking toward his eternal future in a body that will never age, weaken, or decay. Likewise, remembering that he has been made in God's image, he rests in God's control over his body. Thus, its decline is in his Father's hands. This faith brings a humble dependence and gratitude, as he trusts that the Lord will not forsake him when his strength is spent. Encroaching physical changes call him to place his identity not in what he can do physically but in who he is because of Christ. United to Christ, he battles destructive thoughts about his body. Aware that he requires divine help, the aging male rests in the Holy Spirit's presence and enabling him to think and act appropriately toward his body. When considering this new phase of life, whether he feels it or not, he reminds himself that his physical frame, fading as it is, is sacred. He feels Paul's words now more than ever—that outwardly he is wasting away yet inwardly he is being renewed day by day (2 Cor 4:16). Therefore, he fully trusts whatever the Lord allows to take place in his body. Finally, he prays for refreshed desires to glorify the Lord even through old age, gray hairs, and possible physical inability (Ps 71:18).

Summary

The preceding scenarios demonstrate likely body image struggles throughout the course of one's life, regardless of gender or age. The principles are designed to apply to any body image issue; therefore, they need not be limited in their application to a disabled child, teenage girl, college-age male, postpartum mother, menopausal female, or late sixties male. The fifteen principles are intended to have widespread application.

Conclusion

The Corinthians held an inaccurate view of the body, believed it to be invaluable and, resultantly, disrespected it. In the same way, believers with negative body image fail to see the body as God does, viewing it poorly and treating it contemptuously. This chapter sought to prove a right body image is possible for believers. By applying my fifteen principles from 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, believers can work toward a God-honoring body image, the end goal of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION OF THE BODY IMAGE FRAMEWORK

Body image is a critical component of human embodiment and thus an element within a theology of the body. Having established a framework for developing a God-honoring body image applicable to all people, I now review the claims of each chapter this dissertation.

The purpose of this dissertation was to utilize a theology of the body that springs from Trinitarian involvement with the body to address body image problems in both men and women at any age. I achieved this goal by reviewing various theologies of the body and pertinent passages that supplement a biblical conception of the body (chap. 1). Then, I analyzed several anthropological assumptions and ultimately concluded that the embodied person is best understood as a holistic dualism (chap. 2). Next, I presented an explanation of body image, including the disorders negative body image can produce (chap. 3). Afterwards, I developed a theology of the body from 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 based on the appropriated works of the Trinity and Paul's argument for the value of the body and God's authority over it (chap. 4). Finally, I defined fifteen body image principles drawn from Trinitarian affirmations of the body from 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and then applied these principles to a variety of potential contexts where negative body image might result (chap. 5).

Theology of the Body

As discussed in chapter 1, in recent years, increasing attempts have been made to articulate a theology of the body. Pope John Paul II explains the body's significance in *Man and Woman He Created Them* by beginning with a focus on the Trinity. As the

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit experience perfect love within themselves, the body serves as the means by which that love is known and shared with humanity.[1] Luke Timothy Johnson, in *The Revelatory Body*, surmises an alternate understanding of a theology of the body, viewing the body as the main source of revelation for the Holy Spirit. In essence, he believes humans experience God through bodily living.[2] In *Heavenly Bodies*, Ola Sigurdson offers a theology of the body that revolves around the incarnation, gaze, and embodiment as integral parts of conveying what he defines as "somatology."[3]

Even more recent are evangelical efforts to doctrinally define the body. In *For the Body*, Timothy C. Tennent proposes several building blocks that establish the body's goodness in creation, how it points forward to the Son's embodiment, its symbolic meaning in marriage and singleness, and how the believer's physical presence represents God.[4] John W. Kleinig, in *Wonderfully Made*, sets out to describe what the believer is to make of his body. To accomplish this goal, Kleinig surveys the created, redeemed, spiritual, sexual, spousal, and living body.[5] In *Embodied*, Gregg R. Allison lays out a biblical understanding of embodiment to encourage readers to live as whole people in a fractured world. In examining a variety of categories that involve physical life, he describes his theology of the body by addressing creation, sex/gender, particularity,

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[1] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 97.

[2] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 7.

[3] Ola Sigurdson, *Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 2.

[4] Timothy C. Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), xxii.

[5] John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 2.

sociality, sexuality, incarnation, sanctification, blessing and discipline, worship, clothing, suffering and healing, death, and the future.[6]

Rather than leaving his people without reference to understand physical existence, God has provided the means by which they should form their thoughts and beliefs about the body. God's Word presents a unique assessment of the body, one that a Christian worldview readily adopts. Against a secularized cultural evaluation of the body, Christians possess truth regarding God's intention for his created material beings. Chapter 1 thus presented a brief biblical understanding of the body.

A survey of Scripture provides the entailments of a theology of the body, beginning with the assertion that men and women are created in God's image. This remarkable designation includes the body, which means that God fashioned humans to reflect him through both body and soul (Gen 1:26-28). To carry out God's creation commands and to represent him in the world, humans must be physical embodied beings. Inherent in the creation commands and the reality of embodiment is the necessity of stewarding the body, which entails caring for it. Treating the body well begins with thinking well of the body. This concept is on display, for example, in the Psalms, where David praises God for the wondrous design of his body (Ps 139:13-14). Further, inherent in the wisdom literature is the expectation for God's children to act wisely. Wisdom plays out through the body. Whether one is wise or a fool will be made manifest in his actions (Prov 4:20-27). Even more, God's Word condemns bodily sins like sloth and gluttony (Prov 24:14-16).

One's whole life—body and soul—is lived before God, who possesses authority over both its physical and its spiritual aspects (Matt 10:28). Believers are able to live out their faith by spiritual intentions of holiness expressed through the physical

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[6] Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2021), 19-22.

body (Rom 6:12-13). Likewise, through the body, Christians sacrificially present themselves to God as an act of worship (Rom 12:1-2). Physical life before others also bears witness to Christ, a realization with far-reaching implications for keeping the body under control (1 Cor 9:24-27). Furthermore, a theology of the body recognizes that believers are called to glorify God even in mundane daily activities, such as taking care of the body's eating and drinking needs (1 Cor 10:31). Believers find hope in the resurrection of a renewed body to an eternal embodied existence despite temporal disembodiment (1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 5:1-9).[7] The Holy Spirit equips Christians with self-control, a necessary quality to restrain bodily sins and resist temptations that manifest in harmful and sinful physical behaviors, such as gluttony (Gal 5:22-23; Phil 3:19). When rightly prioritized, physical training is valuable, as it benefits the body in many ways (1 Tim 4:7-8). Scripture's varied address of corporeal existence should generate a respect for the body that is displayed in thoughts and behaviors and thus is a necessary aspect of a God-honoring body image.

Embodiment

I discussed the major philosophical ideas on human constitution in chapter 2. The church has favored dualism against a monistic conception of humanity. Scripture clearly indicates the dual composition of humankind, one that can spiritually commune with God and also physically live on the earth. Belief in both body and soul as equally constitutive realities of human existence is integral to the biblical teaching of human embodiment.[8]

However, Greek philosophy influenced New Testament understanding of the body. Because of this impact, the church reflected some Gnostic and Platonic teachings

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[7] Allison, *Embodied*, 250.

[8] Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 20.

that elevated the soul and denigrated the body. Ascetic practices were born out of this mindset. Though Scripture emphasizes the goodness of physical creation and the importance of bodily living, the church has perpetuated this misconception of human embodiment, which has had consequential negative effects on regard for the body.

The church can reclaim the body's value by viewing embodied reality as a holistic dualism, as Scripture speaks to both holism and dualism.[9] The Old Testament discusses life and the human condition as whole and unified. The New Testament discusses death and highlights a temporal separation of soul and body, where the promise of being with the Lord coincides with the hope of bodily resurrection. Additionally, when the strangeness of the intermediate state and its compulsory disembodied reality is considered, the conclusion of holistic dualism is supported. Embodiment is the natural, normal state in the present and for all eternity.

If the body is mistakenly disdained due to an inaccurate philosophical conception, it will never be respected or seen as valuable. The notion of embodiment carries significance for a proper consideration of the body, one that contributes to a God-honoring body image.

Body Image

As shown in chapter 3, body image fits naturally within a theology of the body. Scripture's teaching about physical life prescribes how believers should think about the body. Body image also coincides with how corporeal existence is viewed, whether as an essential or loathsome part of life. If the body is seen as inconsequential, even wicked, then a God-honoring body image will be impossible. Accepting a biblical reflection of embodied reality is also important for body image.

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[9] John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 188.

Being embodied, individuals form beliefs about the body based on relationships, cultural context, and life circumstances. Interaction with family and friends can impact thoughts and feelings about the body. The surrounding culture—with its expectations and inherent communication about what is or is not acceptable—weighs heavily on the formation of body image. Life circumstances also affect body image formation. If abuse, tragedy, unexpected change, or other disrupting events occur, then an individual may focus on things that can be controlled.[10] Negative body image and fixation on physical flaws can be a type of coping mechanism so as to avoid dealing with any of the factors that led to harmful thoughts about the body.

Negative body thoughts usually generate behaviors geared toward altering whatever physical parts are found to be problematic. Eating disorders like anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa can develop. A severe body image disorder may even arise like body dysmorphia (or body dysmorphic disorder), which is an extreme fixation on what is likely a minor, even imperceptible, flaw.[11] Oftentimes, these disorders may become an overwhelming obsession that progress to threaten physical health. It is sinful for believers to allow negative thoughts about the body, particularly ones that manifest in damaging actions against the body. Regardless of the outward behaviors that arise, the inward instigating factors shed light on a particular hope for believers suffering from negative body image.

The mind directs body image. Scripture teaches that believers are equipped with the mind of Christ and are to set their minds on things of the Spirit (Rom 8:5; 1 Cor 2:16). By employing the fruit of self-control, believers are able to restrain and discipline

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[10] Thomas F. Cash, "Cognitive-Behavioral Perspectives on Body Image," in *Body Image: A Handbook of Theory, Research, and Clinical Practice*, ed. Thomas F. Cash and Linda Smolak, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2011), 40-42; Marika Tiggemann, "Sociocultural Perspectives on Human Appearance and Body Image," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 13.

[11] Katherine A. Phillips, "Body Image and Body Dysmorphic Disorder," in Cash and Smolak, *Body Image*, 305-6.

their thinking to fight negative thoughts (Gal 5:23). Even more, Christians are commanded to take thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). Harmful, contradictory thinking about corporeal existence is certainly disobedient. In Philippians 4:8, Paul explicitly tells believers what to think. He commends only thoughts that are true, right, admirable, and praiseworthy—certainly not the type of thinking that characterizes a negative body image. Plainly, Christians are uniquely equipped and commanded to have a thought life that glorifies God. This divine ability is precisely why believers can fight for a God-honoring body image and what the last two chapters of this dissertation proposed.

Trinitarian Affirmation of the Body

In chapter 4, I argued that in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Paul advocates founding a theology of the body in the Godhead. He writes to correct the Corinthians' errant conception of the body, one that was influenced by Gnosticism.[12] They mistreated the body because they did not believe the body was valuable and because they failed to see God's authority over it. Paul highlights each divine person's involvement with the body in order to rectify this misunderstanding and show that God interacts with physical life. The examples that Paul provides of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit's specific interactions with the human frame are resurrection, redemption, and indwelling, respectively. This Trinitarian involvement with the body demonstrates God's authority over the body and affirms the body's value.

Believers await an eternal embodied existence with the Lord. The hope of resurrection entails a renewed and restored body. Though it will decay in death, the body will be transformed and made like Christ's glorious body upon his return. Paul speaks of

[12] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 156.

the resurrection by the Father to assure the Corinthians that their bodies have a future. Therefore, they should no longer engage in body-degrading behaviors that treated their physical frame as irrelevant material. The way the Corinthians presently lived as embodied followers of Christ was a matter of Christian faithfulness.

The body is also confirmed in Christ's redemption. One reason for Paul's appeal to glorify God with the body was the price that had been paid for it. In the atonement, Christ redeemed embodied believers to not only to dwell with him eternally but also to represent him physically on earth. By his redemption, believers are united to him in a spiritual union that has implications for bodily living.[13] As members with Christ, the Corinthians were to respect and treat their bodies accordingly. It was antithetical to their faith and dishonoring to Christ for them to engage in anything that corrupts the body.

The final Trinitarian piece of Paul's argument for the body was in signifying its worth as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. As the temple denotes the place of God's presence, so Paul claims the body to be a temple.[14] The temple was a place of righteousness because the Spirit's presence renders it holy. Just as God did not tolerate the defiling of his temple, so also believers must not participate in body-defiling activities.[15] For the Corinthians to indulge their bodies in sinful desire was incongruent with the Spirit's presence and activity in their embodied lives.

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[13] Anthony C. Thiselton, *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 97.

[14] Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 95.

[15] Robert Scott Nash, *1 Corinthians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2009), 164.

Body Image Principles and Application

As discussed in chapter 5, the principles for a God-honoring body image naturally follow the foundations previously established for a theology of the body. As God speaks positively about the body and affirms bodily existence, so a right body image revolves around Scripture's affirmations of the body. Having a proper body image also means fighting and denying wrong thoughts about that the body that contradict its value. Likewise, a God-honoring body image entails the understanding that bodily neglect and harm are not permissible behaviors but are sinful, image-obsessed actions that take advantage of freedom in Christ.

Instead of striving to meet cultural expectations, a right body image recognizes the consuming drive to meet worldly appearance standards and refuses to acquiesce to these enslaving ways. As the Lord is for the body, so a God-honoring body image accepts this reality and seeks to affirm it as well. Another aspect of proper body image requires trusting that the body will be resurrected and demands the response of treating the body in respectable, ethical ways. The next body image principle hopes for the coming restoration of the body, while soberly accepting that the body will not reach perfection in this age.

Possessing a right body image also involves submitting to God's authority over the body. Acknowledging God's authority over the body compels a surrender of the thoughts of, feelings about, and actions with the body. Additionally, honoring God in the body image demands the realization that the that the embodied believer is joined to Christ, meaning that thinking of the body as deficient and repulsive is akin to thinking the same of Christ. A right body image is also fueled by the divine ability to keep worldly appearance desires under control. The Holy Spirit empowers this mindset through his fruit of self-control. Similarly, a proper body image assesses the body as sacred, indwelt by the Spirit.

Christians are commanded to glorify God in every aspect of embodied life; this imperative certainly applies to body image. While a negative body image holds the body as insignificant and forgets the greater purpose in its association with the Father, Son, and Spirit, a God-honoring body image will reflect the body's significance based on its connection to the Godhead.

The conclusions from Paul's treatise on the body in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 inform whatever setting believers find themselves in. A body image based on God's Word corrects a negative conception through truths that reform the way men and women envision their bodies. Therefore, a theology of the body founded on a Trinitarian affirmation of the body can address body image problems in both men and women of any age, as evidenced by the six body image scenarios.

Conclusion

Having a God-honoring body image requires certain affirmations, as the progression of this work has demonstrated. First, if Scripture promotes the goodness of the body, then Christians must agree. Second, believers affirm that the body is equally necessary to human life and, as such, possesses equivalent value to the soul. So, they do not dismiss the physical for the spiritual but recognize the unity of body and soul as fundamental to embodied existence. Third, body image issues eventually confront most people, but Christians do not have to battle the same negative thinking because they possess the unique God-given ability to discipline their thought life. As a result, they can fight destructive, false conceptions of their bodies. Fourth, the Father, Son, and Spirit are each involved with the body. Consequently, this Trinitarian affirmation of the body proves that the body is valuable, and God alone holds authority over it. Fifth and finally, equipped with these truths, Christians are able to pursue a body image that honors God.

APPENDIX 1

BODY STEWARDSHIP

As argued in this dissertation, the church has neglected the body and thus the task of body stewardship.[1] I define body stewardship as accepting responsibility for the body by appropriately caring for its needs. The role of body stewardship requires viewing all physical activities as ones that either maintain life or neglect the necessary means of life preservation. The *Westminster Larger Catechism* commends properly engaging in eating, drinking, taking medicine, sleeping, working, and exercising; therefore, anything that neglects or withdraws life should be avoided. The *Catechism* helpfully lists some of these behaviors as immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations.[2] In the modern day, Christians connect these prohibited behaviors to their own lives. Immoderate use of food and drink equates to eating too much and being driven by the idol of food, a gluttonous mindset, and its resultant behavior.[3] Arguably, the types of food and drink one consumes matter as well. Frequent consumption of foods containing high amounts of

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[1] In a recent publication, Paul David Tripp articulates a clear recognition of the need for body stewardship in the church:

> As I listen to the conversations of the church and ministry leadership community, I hear a lot about spiritual health but little about physical health. By God's plan, you and I have limited energy, and not stewarding our physical selves will seriously sap whatever natural energies we do have. Physical health must be part of the conversation and the shared responsibility of every member of the leadership community. Just as we care about one another's spiritual health, we should have concern for and care for one another's physical health. . . . You see, the stewardship of our physical body is not an addition to our gospel ministry calling; it is a significant part of it. (Paul David Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020], 80-83)

[2] *West. Lg. Cat*., Qs. 135-36.

[3] Jeff Olson defines gluttony as "the immoderate consumption of food arising from the unchecked appetite for something more than, or other than, what the Lord has provided and is therefore judged a sin by God." Jeff Olson, "Once a Deadly Sin: A Contemporary Assessment of the Sin of Gluttony" (ThM thesis, Western Seminary, 2000), 22.

sugar, saturated fats, and sodium—which provide little nutrient content—can be considered contradictory to the preservation of life. After all, these foods lead to disease and physical impairment, damage the body, and do nothing to preserve life. However, unhealthy foods such as these are not biblically prohibited; moderation, reasonable consumption, and self-control are the goal. Nevertheless, the frequent, habitual intake of unhealthy foods or the gluttonous, mindless consumption of any food classifies as immoderate use. According to the *Westminster Catechism*, Scripture condemns these practices.[4]

I include the following because it bolsters my argument that the church misunderstands the body's significance. In *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, John Frame incorporates an important section on the Ten Commandments with its moral extensions for believers. The pertinent chapter is entitled "The Sixth Commandment: Respecting Life."[5] Having previously affirmed the "expansiveness" of the *Westminster Catechism*'s entailments with the commandment six, Frame delineates other areas that preserving life covers.[6] He notes the significance of Christians' caring for their bodies, which acts as a protection that enables participation in the care of others.[7] Frame reports

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[4] An essential piece to human embodiment is the expression of self-control through body stewardship. Gregg Allison agrees and advocates for "wrestling with and overcoming" the bodily sins of gluttony and sloth, which entails disciplining one's physical life. Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2021), 130. Similarly, Nancy Pearcey avers, "Christians engage in diet and exercise as well, but their actions should be motivated by a conviction that the body is a gift. We have a stewardship responsibility before God to treat it with care and respect." Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018), 33.

My dissertation proposes that body stewardship involves getting balanced nutrition, sufficient exercise, proper rest, and limiting stress. These are all aspects of embodied discipline. Paul even writes to Timothy that while godliness is proper for all things, physical training is still of some value (1 Tim 4:8). This verse ought not be used in a way to condone a lack of physical activity, as this is not Paul's point. His point that godliness holds value in all things could be made without the mention of physical activity. The additional mention of physical activity shows that the neglect of physical discipline among Christians is unmerited and biblically inaccurate.

[5] John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 684.

[6] Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 686.

[7] Albert Martin places great emphasis on the need of ministers to care for their bodies. He advocates that ministers "seek to attain and maintain an accurate understanding of your present physical

the difference "between right and wrong concerns for our personal well-being."[8] He briefly mentions that right concerns mandate attention to physical health. Frame includes a positive preliminary remark on physical health, noting that we possess greater development, knowledge, and understanding of health than previous generations. He observes that owing to these advances, some "put large effort into crafting proper diets and patterns of exercise."[9] Frame deems this approach fine "up to a point," acknowledging that these "practices contribute to our witness for Christ." He proceeds to warn (though only briefly) against placing too much significance on the physical body because only the heavenly body continues.

Frame notes various vices against the body, such as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, and yet in the food, drink, and exercise section, he writes nothing of gluttony or sloth though Scripture condemns both practices. Furthermore, the dangers of poor food and drink choices are not discussed in this section, whereas tobacco receives nearly a full page of treatment. With tobacco, Frame lists the potential health hazards, such as heart disease and cancer. The omission from the food, drink, and exercise section is glaring. Should not the same treatment be given to this section when the list of chronic diseases relating to poor food, drink, and exercise choices are equally as extensive?

Then, in an unexpected shift, Frame mentions the suffering life of Paul, who "undertook dangerous existence to ministry the gospel."[10] He points out that Paul cared

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and emotional constitution, and engage in a regular but flexible discipline aimed at keeping these two aspects of your redeemed humanity in optimum health and vigor." Albert N. Martin, *The Man of God: His Calling and Godly Life*, *Pastoral Theology*, vol. 1 (Montville, NJ: Trinity Pulpit Press, 2018), 303. He goes on to say, "I say that the biblical doctrine of man demands that we consider the place of the physical and emotional health of the man of God in the ministry. This principle of the interplay between the body and the soul is even more serious for the man who has been called and equipped for the work of the ministry" (306).

[8] Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 739.

[9] Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 743.

[10] Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 743.

less for his physical wellbeing than for his desire to escape suffering (2 Cor 11:16-33). Frame adds the example of Christ, who endured immense suffering in obedience to God so that his followers would expect a life of suffering for his name's sake. I agree with the occasion of suffering as a possibility for the believers. However, Frame misses the issue. Despite mentioning physical health, he switches the assertion, essentially turning any attempt at an explanation of body stewardship into a call for endurance of suffering.

Suffering for the gospel has little to do with whether one's behaviors with food and exercise led to chronic health diseases, potentially limiting and jeopardizing the ability to minister.[11] However, the point is not made, and its exclusion is unmistakable.[12] Is suffering from self-inflicted, chronic disease the type of suffering Christ meant? Certainly not, and while this suffering is not Frame's inference, his approach falls short, lacking any real relevance for the body.[13] The treatment given to food, drink, and exercise comes across as limited given the current state of the obesity epidemic within the Bible Belt, particularly among Southern Baptists.[14] Though Frame attempts to connect

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[11] I acknowledge that poor eating and exercise choices are not always the cause of excess weight or related health problems. However, even in these instances, the same aspects of body stewardship are just as necessary.

[12] Wayne Grudem, however, *does* address these pressing issues in his *Christian Ethics*. Two sections in his chapter on health are "Physical Weakness or Illness Reduces the Amount of Time and Energy That We Are Able to Give to Any Ministry" and "It Is Better to Be Healthy Than Not Healthy." Wayne Grudem, *Christian Ethics: An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018). Furthermore, Grudem recognizes body stewardship, labeling much of what I include in my definition as "common sense health habits, such as getting regular exercise, eating a proper diet, getting enough sleep" (659). He continues, "The fact is that most people, at most stages of life, have the ability to make a significant difference in their own health and physical well-being. By their choices of lifestyle and health habits, they can affect the number of years they are able to live and carry out effective work in God's kingdom."

[13] Frame, *Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 743.

[14] I argue that the church's neglect of the body is evident by observing the statistical overlap between the most obese states and most religious states, specifically among Southern Baptists. According to the latest statistics, the top eight overlapping most religious and obese states are Arkansas, West Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and South Carolina—with Georgia and North Carolina placing just outside the top ten most obese states. The obesity list is based on a body mass index of 30 or higher. Morbid obesity begins at a body mass index of 40 or greater. The religiosity list is based on frequency of church attendance and prayer, belief in God, and individual importance of religion. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Adult Obesity Prevalence Maps," last modified March 31, 2021, https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/prevalence-maps.html; World Population Review, "Most Religious States 2021," accessed November, 12, 2020, https://worldpopulationreview.com/en/state-rankings/most-

the sixth commandment to all aspects of life, he downplays a real issue in the church and seemingly perpetuates the problem.

religious-states. Certainly, various reasons exist for high levels of obesity like cultural factors, family history, and food insecurity. Also, just because one's BMI may classify him as obese does not always accurately reflect health. Muscle mass can affect BMI, and obesity is not always the result of poor eating choices and lack of exercise. If nothing else, these statistics reveal that our Christian faith does not seem to make a difference to our physical health.

More proof of my claim is found in a study performed at Purdue over ten years ago that concluded Southern Baptists have the highest levels of obesity. As the obesity epidemic has worsened since then, those numbers in the church will have only increased since the initial study. Ironically, the lowest incidence of obesity is among non-Christians. Krista Cline and Kenneth Ferraro, "Does Religion Increase the Prevalence and Incidence of Obesity in Adulthood?," National Institute of Health, May 18, 2006, http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3358928/.

APPENDIX 2

PAUL'S CONCEPT OF ACTIVITY

Interestingly, it seems a concept of activity weaves throughout Paul's writing that complements his championing of the body.[1] Throughout his epistles, his word choice describing Christian responsibility is intriguing, as it connotes physical activity. The decision to employ action words like train, discipline, fight, battle, beat, present, run, offer, stand, and practice all seem to indicate qualities of initiative, self-control, and activity to obey God's commands and foster personal faith. He utilizes analogies of a runner, athlete, soldier, and farmer—each entailing a physical, active vocation (1 Cor 9:24-27; 2 Tim 2). He also promotes the believer's intentional, dynamic role in sanctification (Phil 2:12-13). If Christians remain passive regarding aspects of faith, they will likely falter in being obedient, walking by the Spirit, producing fruit, and glorifying God. Fallen nature and fleshly habits rule when believers do not engage their minds and bodies in the progress of holiness. Thus, the need for commands and imperatives throughout Scripture is obvious. Obedient Christianity is an active, participatory calling extending to all areas of life, including the physical body. Activity is an inherent concept in Paul's writing, calling for intent and self-control in both spiritual and physical matters.

[1] I do not mean to exclude the contemplative aspect of the Christian life in making this observation. Certainly, God commands the believer's thought life to be pleasing to him (Phil 4:6-8), to take thoughts captive to obey Christ (2 Cor 10:5), exhibit the mind of the Spirit (Rom 8:5), and to have the mind ready for action (1 Pet 1:13). I simply point out the concept of activity as it compliments Paul's emphasis on the body.

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ABSTRACT

THE UTILIZATION OF A THEOLOGY OF HUMAN EMBODIMENT TO ADDRESS BODY IMAGE

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021
Chair: Dr. Gregg R. Allison

Despite the reality that spiritual aspects of the Christian faith are lived through the physical body, Christians historically neglected the body and elevated the soul. Old Testament believers valued body and soul, while New Testament believers fell prey to philosophical teachings that denigrated the material realm. Platonic and Gnostic philosophies influenced many Christological heresies that denied the fleshy existence of Christ. These ideologies sparked immoral living as believers reckoned that present physical actions were of no consequence. This dissertation deduces a theology of the body from Paul's confrontation of this errant thinking in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. In this passage, Paul argues for the value of the body based in Trinitarian involvement with the body—through the bodily resurrection of embodied believers by the Father, the bodily atonement offered for embodied believers by the Son, and the bodily indwelling of believers as embodied representatives of God by the Holy Spirit. These truths begin to form the way in which Christians think about their bodies—because Father, Son, and Spirit each affirm the body in united yet specific ways, the body is worthy of respect and honor.

From this theology of the body, my work seeks to form a proper, God-honoring body image, wherein the body is affirmed by God and therefore good. A right body image must begin with a Christian worldview—not the fleeting worldly standards of physical appearance—and revolve around God's declarations about the body. From

Paul's treatise on the body in the midst of a Gnostic, body-abusing culture, I derive fifteen principles about corporeal existence that lay the groundwork for proper body image. Equipped with these fifteen principles, anyone can construct and maintain a God-honoring body image, no matter one's gender, age, or physical condition.

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EDUCATION

BA, University of Tennessee, 2006
MACL, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2014
ThM, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019

PUBLICATIONS

"How to Make Good on That New Year's Resolution." *Southern Equip* 16, no. 5 (2017). https://equip.sbts.edu/publications/towers/towers-issue/2017/dec-jan-2017/make-good-new-years-resolution/.
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Guest Lecturer, "Nutrition," for Dr. Gregg R. Allison, Theology of the Body (MDiv; 84920), Spring 2017.

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