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ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR  
FEMALE-GENDERED EMBODIMENT  
IN A REDEMPTIVE CONTEXT

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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by  
Gracilynn Joy Hanson  
May 2022

**APPROVAL SHEET**

**ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR  
FEMALE-GENDERED EMBODIMENT  
IN A REDEMPTIVE CONTEXT**

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For the glory of God  
and the value of women,  
the latter as a means of achieving the former

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:26-27 (NASB)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
PREFACE .....	x
 Chapter	
1. RESEARCH CONCERN .....	1
Introduction to Research Problem.....	1
Research Assumptions .....	4
Theological Assumptions .....	4
Biological Assumptions .....	5
Sociological Assumptions .....	6
Scope of Embodiment .....	7
Biblical Priority: A Theological Anthropology .....	8
Research Purpose .....	10
Research Question.....	10
Research Significance .....	10
Research Necessity .....	13
Definition of Research Population .....	15
Delimitations of Proposed Research .....	16
Limitations of Generalization of Findings .....	17
Terminology and Definitions .....	17
Methodological Design .....	21
Research Competencies .....	22
Conclusion .....	23

Chapter	Page
2. PRECEDENT LITERATURE .....	25
Overview of Field of Anthropology of Women.....	25
Psychology of Women.....	26
Feminist Anthropology .....	27
Ethnographies of Women .....	28
Physiology of Women .....	29
Precedent Literature for Ontological Model in Christian Theology .....	29
Women as Defined by Roles .....	30
Embodied Beings.....	33
Theological Anthropology of Women.....	35
Conclusion .....	38
3. BIBLICAL AFFIRMATIONS OF ONTOLOGICAL GENDER DISTINCTION.....	40
Scriptural Evidence for Gendered Embodiment .....	40
Proposed Evidence for Distinction in Gendered Embodiment .....	41
Created State .....	42
Temporal State.....	49
Restored State .....	63
Theological Considerations for Female-Gendered Embodiment.....	66
The <i>Imago Dei</i> .....	66
Purpose of Biblical Roles .....	70
Proposed Theological Paradigm for Female-Gendered Embodiment .....	72
Conclusion .....	73
4. ENGAGING PAUL EVDOKIMOV’S MODEL .....	76
Introduction .....	76
Review of Evdokimov’s Model .....	77
Selection of Evdokimov’s Model .....	77

Chapter	Page
Background of <i>Woman and the Salvation of the World</i> .....	78
Book Thesis and Key Supporting Arguments .....	79
Evaluation of Evdokimov's Model .....	88
Means of Evaluation .....	89
Charitable Interaction .....	91
Critical Interaction .....	96
Appropriative Interaction.....	100
Conclusion .....	102
5. ESTABLISHING A DEFINITIONAL FRAMEWORK.....	104
Introducing the Framework.....	104
Taxonomy for Gendered Embodiment .....	105
1. Embodiment .....	109
Divine Design for Embodiment.....	109
Human Capacity for Embodiment .....	110
Embodiment in Created State .....	111
Embodiment in Temporal State .....	112
Embodiment in Restored State .....	112
Uniquely Female Aspects of Embodiment .....	113
Potential Perversions of Embodiment .....	114
Conclusion .....	115
2. Gendered Embodiment .....	116
Divine Design for Gendered Embodiment .....	117
Human Capacity for Gendered Embodiment.....	130
Gendered Embodiment in Created State.....	130
Gendered Embodiment in Temporal State.....	131
Gendered Embodiment in Restored State .....	131

	Page
Uniquely Female Aspects of Gendered Embodiment.....	132
Potential Perversions of Gendered Embodiment .....	133
Conclusion .....	135
3. Dependent, Gendered Embodiment .....	135
Divine Design for Dependence.....	135
Human Capacity for Dependence .....	137
Dependence in Created State .....	137
Dependence in Temporal State .....	138
Dependence in Restored State .....	138
Uniquely Female Aspects of Dependence .....	139
Potential Perversions of Dependence .....	139
Conclusion .....	140
4. Social, Dependent, Gendered Embodiment .....	141
Divine Design for Sociality .....	141
Human Capacity for Sociality .....	145
Sociality in Created State.....	146
Sociality in Temporal State .....	146
Sociality in Restored State .....	147
Uniquely Female Aspects of Sociality .....	148
Potential Perversions of Sociality .....	149
Conclusion .....	150
5. Particular, Social, Dependent, Gendered Embodiment.....	151
Divine Design for Particularity .....	151
Human Capacity for Particularity .....	153
Particularity in Created State .....	153
Particularity in Temporal State .....	153



Chapter	Page
Particularity in Restored State .....	154
Uniquely Female Aspects of Particularity .....	155
Potential Perversions of Particularity .....	156
Conclusion .....	158
Framework Summary .....	158
6. ASSESSING THE DEFINITIONAL FRAMEWORK .....	161
Framework Achievements .....	161
Framework Limitations .....	165
Framework Implications .....	170
Conclusion .....	175
Appendix	
1. GLOSSARY OF TERMS .....	176
2. DISTINCTION OF GENDER AND SEX .....	183
Defining the Terms .....	184
Gender as Ontological .....	188
1. Biblical Perspective .....	189
2. Theological Perspective .....	196
3. Historical and Sociological Perspective .....	202
4. Christian Ethical Perspective .....	206
Conclusion .....	211
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	213

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Gender uniformities and distinctions in created state.....	47
2. Gender uniformities and distinctions in temporal state .....	62
3. Gender uniformity in restored state .....	65
4. Gender uniformities and distinctions in scriptural survey .....	73
5. Trentham’s four-step hermeneutical protocol .....	89
6. Proposed taxonomy for gendered embodiment .....	107
7. Gender uniformities in scriptural survey .....	118
8. Gender distinctions in scriptural survey .....	124
A1. Gender uniformities and distinctions in scriptural survey .....	189

## PREFACE

My doctoral journey has been a long walk down a hidden pathway. My decision to pursue a terminal doctoral degree was not premeditated as part of a well-constructed career strategy. Though I have been much in the dark, each step forward has been carefully God-led. I had no intent or desire toward further academia during my undergraduate degree in Finance. After working in the corporate world for a number of years, I began applying for MBA programs. Through this process I decided instead to pursue a degree from Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). For several years, I worked in business and studied on nights and weekends. Formal theological study had become a joyful pursuit, more akin to a hobby than a career. Nearing my graduation from DTS, I began to recognize a pattern in evangelicalism and started asking questions “Why are there so few women with theological education and academic credentials? And why is there such disparity between the theological training available for women and the training provided to men in non-academic settings?” This train of thought led me to conclude that more women should pursue rigorous theological education, for the enrichment of their own faith, for the development of their mentees and children, and for the betterment of the local churches. I realized that I was both willing and able to pursue theological scholarship and that I had been supported at DTS to do so. Eventually, I felt convicted to move toward the goal of a terminal doctoral degree.

At the time of my graduation from DTS, my husband, Burton, and I were living in Louisville, Kentucky, for his Master of Divinity from SBTS. As an exercise of faith and at the urging of Burton, I approached the Research Doctoral Office at SBTS to ask about the various doctoral programs. It was there that I met my first advocate, Dr. Michael Wilder. I knew nothing of the programs and nothing of the institution’s

receptivity of female scholars. Dr. Wilder kindly and graciously discussed the program opportunities and my desired fields of study, affirming my concern for the theological education of women.

During my application process, I met another advocate, Dr. John David Trentham. Like Dr. Wilder, Dr. Trentham was thrilled with the increasing number of women entering the doctoral programs at SBTS. My interactions with Dr. Trentham have been a steady stream of wise counsel, intellectual stimulation, and personal encouragement.

In my study of theological anthropology, I encountered yet a third advocate, Dr. Gregg Allison. This study is nearly as much his as it is mine. In the instances when my research is not directly building from Dr. Allison's insights, I am still beholden to his discernment and generous endorsement. I am beyond grateful for his willingness to direct, support, and believe in me, as I pursue this research.

Additionally, my continuation in higher education has been a burden readily shared by my family. The same week I began the SBTS EdD program, we learned I was pregnant with our first child. My husband has been an instrumental aid, partner, and support in this tiring and beautiful season. My son audited the first two rounds of seminars in utero, and he was born five days after the January 2019 seminars. I survived the long days of class through the kindness of my cohort, the comfort of my yoga ball, and a steady stream of snacks. When I began the PhD bridge program, I was pregnant with my second son. With the help of the RDS office, I was able to work my course schedule around his delivery in May 2021. As my sons have grown, many of the practical issues of studying with a toddler and an infant have been graciously relieved by my mom. A faithful believer and a seminary graduate herself, my mom has been my highest inspiration and proponent in all things. This study was made possible by my husband's and my mom's willingness to provide me the margin in motherhood for formal theological study. I pray that our young sons will one day understand my whole-hearted

dedication to them and my dogged pursuit to understand God more deeply as complementary endeavors.

Finally, I am humbled by God's steady hand and unwavering goodness to me. None of my earthly pursuits bear any significance apart from his gracious and unending work in me. This study is just another step in the direction of the unknown, directed by God and faithfully aided by his saints—only some of whom I have recognized here by name. I am deeply grateful for their individual and collective contributions towards God's purposes in my life throughout my time at SBTS. While I do not presume to anticipate the destination of the coming decades on this path, the journey has been strenuous and rewarding. This research on the theological anthropology of women has been for me a long-time coming and will be a long-time on-going.

Gracilynn Hanson

Austin, Texas

May 2022

## CHAPTER 1

### RESEARCH CONCERN

The crowning feature of God’s earthly creation, humanity was handcrafted by God. In the Genesis creation account, Scripture is explicitly clear on several points: humanity is embodied, gendered male and female, and designed in God’s image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27; 2:7-23).<sup>1</sup> However, as this study demonstrates, the ontological meaning of gendered embodiment has been largely miscategorized or unexplored. God intentionally designed both male and female embodied beings as his image-bearers (Gen 1:27). God is a God of order and purpose. Therefore, there must be an ontological purpose for gendered embodiment, more fundamental than any functional differentiation. This study seeks to define the ontological meaning of women as gendered embodied beings.

#### **Introduction to Research Problem**

This study reveals that theological literature has a deep chasm in the development of anthropology, particularly an anthropology of women from a confessional evangelical perspective. A theological anthropology of women has not been adequately defined or, therefore, applied.<sup>2</sup> In his sovereign design, God made humanity—male and female—as gendered beings, choosing to have the full person, both the material and immaterial aspects, gendered as either male or female. The temptation in existing

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the NASB.

<sup>2</sup> This claim will be substantiated in chap. 2.

research has been to define genders according to roles and generalized activities.<sup>3</sup> However, this simplification is a misplaced assumption of ontological meaning and a misclassification of gender. Determining the ontology, or metaphysical nature, of a gender is a distinct issue from the functionality or behavioral patterns of a gender. The philosophical considerations for ontology are distinct from epistemological or axiological deliberations. To determine ontology according to what is deemed good and right behavior is to erect an ontological definition on the pillars of axiological judgments.

Furthermore, the functions of women do not define the ontological meaning of women. Within particular defined relationships or circumstances, a person may be described by a role. This role is descriptive of the function of the person and may be informative of qualities of the person, but the role is never definitive of the person's meaning or purpose. To presume that role implies identity is to misapply the principle of causation. Function does not *cause* ontology. In fact, performance of suitable function is the *effect* of ontological constitution; therefore, functions ought to be fitting for

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<sup>3</sup> Many current examples of the definition of gender according to roles in broadly circulated, conservative literature can be found in the resources of the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), *Desiring God*, and 9Marks. These ministries are not the only examples, but they represent a clear overview of the typical presentation of gender identity. Of course, many of the prominent ministries in conservative evangelicalism have significant overlap in both content and contributors. (1) CBMW articles, such as Alyssa Poblete, "Does Gender Distinction Really Matter?," CBMW, February 4, 2015, <https://cbmw.org/topics/complementarianism/does-gender-distinction-really-matter/>; Poblete's article directly associates man and woman's purposes to those of husband and wife; (2) the 2014 *Desiring God* publication that equates gender with complementarian roles of leadership and followership: Jonathan Parnell and Owen Strachan, eds., *Good: The Joy of Christian Manhood and Womanhood* (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2014); (3) a 9Marks article that uses the terms *gender*, *biblical gender roles*, and *complementarianism* interchangeably: Owen Strachan, "The Genesis of Gender and Ecclesial Womanhood," 9Marks, July 1, 2010, <https://www.9marks.org/article/genesis-gender-and-ecclesial-womanhood/>. In conservative evangelical circles, the majority view of gender has been developed from the consummate works of John Piper and Wayne Grudem: Wayne A. Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, Foundations for the Family Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002); John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006); Wayne A. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (repr., Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012). *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* has been published in various forms and editions, the latest being the 2012 edition. Overwhelming emphasis in Piper and Grudem's works, in combat against rising evangelical feminism, has been placed on preserving the concept of male headship in the home and the church. As a result, much of the downstream scholarship and mainstream literature also emphasized gender roles as essential to identity. E.g., Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church: An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016); Courtney Reissig, *The Accidental Feminist: Restoring Our Delight in God's Good Design* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015); Denny Burk, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013). The emphasis on gender defined by gender roles is also present in liberal theological literature, as will be explicated in the coming study.

ontology.<sup>4</sup> For instance, discernible paradigmatic qualities of women, such as emotional expression or maternal instinct, may be viewed as manifestations of who a woman innately is.<sup>5</sup> A woman does not have maternal instinct because she is supposed to be mother.<sup>6</sup> Rather, a woman has the potential to be a nurturing mother, because most women generally have a maternal instinct. In God's predetermined, intentional design, a woman is well-suited for the functions that she may assume. Furthermore, as the forthcoming research attempts to clarify, the instinct to nurture is not exclusively relegated to women. Men also have the potential for nurturing instinct, though the expression of this quality typically differs significantly from a female expression of the same quality. Moreover, biblical roles are intended to point toward a reality greater than the person carrying out the role. Not only is it erroneous to define a person by her function, it is inappropriate to determine the theological meaning of a role by the individual person.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Functions and attributes may serve to describe ontology. Just as God's nature is made evident in his works, function will be fitting to innate nature. Though this research does not assign gender-specific attributes to ontological gender, the distinction of *essential* (necessary to maintain nature), *contingent* (congruent with nature but not required by it), and *accidental* (mutable without changing the nature) attributes could be further explored. Wellum, Stephen J., *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 261). See upcoming notes regarding the nature versus person distinction, 19n54.

<sup>5</sup> Scientific research now substantiates some of the gender-specific assumptions previously made by society, such as the higher emotional intelligence of women. As communicated by Louann Brizendine, "The principal hub of both emotion and memory formation—the hippocampus—is larger in the female brain, as is the brain circuitry for language and observing emotions in others. This means that women are, on average, better at expressing emotions and remembering the details of emotional events." Louann Brizendine, *The Female Brain* (New York: Broadway Books, 2006), 5. Importantly, this dissertation will not engage the vast amounts of scientific research and significant debates regarding precisely how gendered specific aspects of the human body may be (e.g., sexed brains) and to what extent those aspects reflect a social conditioning toward gender rather than a biological script (e.g., brain plasticity).

<sup>6</sup> Such a claim has been made by many gender essentialists. One overt example is demonstrated by J. Budziszewski, who defines men and woman directly according to reproductive roles: "a woman is a human being of that sex whose members are potentially mothers." J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2012) 54. The converse definition for men is also purported as "the potentiality for fatherhood" (58-59). Budziszewski views these biological realities as demonstrative of the callings toward physical and/or spiritual parenthood placed on all men and women because of their distinct ontologies.

<sup>7</sup> This claim regarding the theological meaning of biblical roles will be further vetted in chap. 3.



This study is not an assessment of gender roles. In lieu of another role evaluation, a robust theological anthropology is explored and assessed to define the ontological reality of women, according to God's design, to his own image, and to his redemptive intentions for humanity.

### **Research Assumptions**

This study is conducted with the following assumptions, presented in three categories: theological, biological, and sociological. This work directly advances the paradigm of human embodiment as articulated by Gregg Allison.<sup>8</sup> This study engages with each of Allison's four theses but focuses primarily on the second thesis: "*The gendered/sexed body thesis*: The second thesis is that a fundamental given of human existence is maleness or femaleness. Indeed, human sex/gender maps almost completely onto (correlates with) human embodiment."<sup>9</sup> Appendix II directly addresses the relationship between sex and gender.

### **Theological Assumptions**

This thesis includes several theological assumptions to this study, stemming from an evangelical theology.

1. All Scripture is inerrant, God-breathed, and profitable for teaching (2 Tim 3:16-17).
2. God had an intended purpose for creating gendered beings as his image-bearers (Gen 1:26-31; Isa 43:7; Rev 4:11).

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<sup>8</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021). Prior to the publication of his book, Allison presented a Faculty Address at Southern Baptist Theological on "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," which was delivered on September 4, 2019, and was heartily received by faculty and administration. See Gregg R. Allison, "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 157-80. Existing evidence of support of Allison's Faculty Address includes Albert Mohler's tweet endorsing Allison's address: "Another great moment of the week: Professor Gregg Allison presents a brilliant Faculty Address on a biblical theology of embodiment." Albert Mohler (@AlbertMohler), Twitter, September 6, 2019, <https://twitter.com/albertmohler/status/1170075162034810880>. Allison's recent book *Embodied* elaborates on the four theses presented in his Faculty Address.

<sup>9</sup> Allison, "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," 163 (emphasis original).

3. Gendered embodiment was part of God's intentional plan for reflecting his own image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-2).
4. God created two genders: male and female (Gen 1:27; 5:1-2).<sup>10</sup>
5. God's purposes for humanity, and specifically for the gendered embodiment of women, can be reasonably determined from Scripture and from the implications of creation in the divine image and common grace.<sup>11</sup>
6. Biblical roles for genders do exist, but ontology is not equivalent to, or determined by, role.<sup>12</sup>

### **Biological Assumptions**

Additionally, this research assumes men and women display biological differences both physiologically and psychologically. Beyond anatomical differentiation, significant research has been performed to examine the physiological distinctions between genders. Empirical research repeatedly indicates differences in men and women's hormones, muscle mass, physical construct, physical development, and brain activity.<sup>13</sup> Though ninety-nine percent of genetic coding is identical between men and women, the mere one percent of variation "influences every single cell in our bodies—from the nerves that register pleasure and pain to the neurons that transmit perception,

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<sup>10</sup> My personal conviction for theology of gender falls within the overarching category of complementarianism. As is articulated throughout the study, the concern of defining gender according to role is equally relevant to both complementarianism and egalitarianism.

<sup>11</sup> Scientific and secular sources can be helpfully engaged and appropriated on the basis of the divine image and common grace. See John David Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Parts 1-2): Engaging and Appropriating Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (October 2019): 458-94.

<sup>12</sup> While I subscribe to the existence of biblical roles for genders as relates to particular relationships, the details of biblical gender roles are not defined as part of this study.

<sup>13</sup> Gender-specific research on physiology, neuroanatomy, and psychology was largely unexplored until the 1990s. The significant biological differences, beyond reproductive organs, have become more widely researched and understood in modern science and medicine. See Brizendine, *The Female Brain*; Brizendine, *The Male Brain* (New York: Broadway Books, 2010). Additionally, some Christian resources have asserted that the gender differences in anatomy, biology, and the resulting behaviors "correspond very well to the different roles given to men and women in Scripture." Gregg Johnson, "The Biological Basis for Gender-Specific Behavior," in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 346. Johnson's essay was included in the larger publication as one of many essays supporting the distinctness of maleness and femaleness. This research will not attempt to support biblical roles from the physiological distinctions of the genders. However, it is critical to note the reality of the various physiological distinctions, supported scientifically and affirmed biblically.

thoughts, feelings, and emotions.”<sup>14</sup> According to such biological research, men and women have significantly distinct experiences in physical and psychological activity. Biological differences helpfully distinguish between male and female.

### **Sociological Assumptions**

Furthermore, this research builds from several sociological assumptions. The study treats gender as binary, assuming every human being is either male or female.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of culture, ethnicity, family of origin, health, or personality, each individual is either a man or a woman. This assumption has been the historical traditional position of the Christian church. In recent Western culture, this assumption has been catapulted to a civil rights issue, claiming the binary assumption discriminates against those who would not categorize themselves as either male or female. In this revolution of sexual identity confusion, many churches and denominations are shifting with culture in their definitions of gender.<sup>16</sup> This thesis holds to, and substantiates, the traditional understanding of gender as strictly male or female.

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<sup>14</sup> Brizendine, *The Female Brain*, 1. Additional research indicates that 6,500 genes of approximately 20,000 genes differ between men and women. The differences manifest primarily in sexual organs but also include the composition of fat, skeletal muscle, skin, and heart tissues. Medically, these differences express themselves in male-prevalent and female-prevalent diseases (e.g., the prevalence of Parkinson’s disease in men) and male-prevalent and female-prevalent reactions to certain drugs. Moran Gershoni and Shmuel Pietrokovski, “The Landscape of Sex-Differential Transcriptome and Its Consequent Selection in Human Adults,” *BMC Biology* 15, no. 7 (February 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12915-017-0352-z>. Again, this research does not venture into the scientific debates which seek to distinguish biological markers (e.g., sexed brains, physical construct) from socially-developed traits (e.g., brain plasticity, muscle mass).

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix II for a thorough treatment on the distinction between sex and gender, including a section on the historical and sociological treatment of the concepts of sex and gender.

<sup>16</sup> As an illustration of the inclusion of a gender spectrum within the church, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the largest national LGBTQ civil rights organization, has promoted a “Christian Conversation Guide” in effort to create “safe and inclusive spaces for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender” within the church. The HRC provides definitions and justifications for LGBTQ lifestyles as well as facilitator and clergy guides for church discussions, training sessions, and sermon series. Human Rights Campaign, “A Christian Conversation Guide,” accessed February 3, 2020, [https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Christian\\_Conversation\\_Guide.pdf?\\_ga=2.19305329.853899155.1580746250-903975281.1580746250](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Christian_Conversation_Guide.pdf?_ga=2.19305329.853899155.1580746250-903975281.1580746250).

## Scope of Embodiment

Theology of the body has been a concept considered by the church since its inception. The apostle Paul writes to the church in Corinth of humanity's groaning in the bodily tent: "being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed" (2 Cor 5:4-10). Though humanity waits for relief from mortality, restoration comes with the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 15; 1 John 3:2). In this study, human embodiment is understood as the designed and eternal state of human beings whose material and immaterial aspects are inseparably joined.<sup>17</sup> By God's design, each human being is comprised of an immaterial component intertwined with a physical body, both of which will exist in some form for eternity. The purpose of the research is not to pursue a somatology but rather a theological anthropology, treating the entire gendered embodied person holistically.<sup>18</sup> The study does not elevate the material or immaterial aspects of embodiment over one another, as though the two realms could be fully disentangled.

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<sup>17</sup> Allison, "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," 158. See also James R. Estep Jr., "Christian Anthropology: Humanity as the *Imago Dei*," in *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development*, ed. James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 30. More will be discussed on the intended inseparability between the material and immaterial aspects of embodiment in upcoming sections.

<sup>18</sup> *Theological anthropology* will be defined as the practice of "theological reflection on the human person" because "the human person can be fully understood only from a theological perspective." Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 5. The subject of theological anthropology is differentiated from somatology, body theology, and theology of the body as follows: (1) *somatology* limits the study of the body within the field of anthropology, disjointed from a theological perspective of embodiment; (2) *body theology* affirms personal experience as equivalent with special revelation, insisting "that we take our body experiences seriously as occasions of revelation" (James B. Nelson, *Body Theology* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992], 9); (3) *theology of the body* can be understood as a reflection of theological anthropology, though largely focused on the material realities and implications of human embodiment (e.g., suffering, sexuality, marriage; see Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* [Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997]).

## **Biblical Priority: A Theological Anthropology<sup>19</sup>**

Scriptural evidence abounds for the gendered embodiment of humanity. In both the first Adam and the perfect Adam, physical gendered embodiment is displayed as an essential aspect of humanity. Furthermore, as New Testament (NT) scholar Luke Timothy Johnson expresses, “the human body is the preeminent arena for God’s revelation in the world.”<sup>20</sup> Embodiment is not only intrinsic to the nature of humanity but also central to God’s self-revelation in the world.<sup>21</sup>

God’s design of the first humans in Genesis 1-2 included two distinctly gendered human beings. The reason offered for God’s design of humanity can be found in Genesis 1:26-27: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . ; male and female he created them.” Humanity was created in the image of God. God then blesses the man and woman and mandates them to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (1:28). God’s design of male and female human beings enabled their ability to accomplish his blessing and mandate. Though Scripture explicitly demonstrates that gendered embodied humanity is the image and likeness of God, the Genesis creation account does not exhaustively define *how* man and woman jointly or individually image God. To posit gender-specific characteristics of image-bearing from Genesis 1-2 would not be supported by the creation account. The structure and sequence of Genesis 1:26-27 warrants both a corporate and an individual

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<sup>19</sup> A more robust theological anthropology of women will be pursued in chap. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy affirms that across the metanarrative of Scripture, the understanding of “man as the object of God’s covenant love and redemption confirms the central significance given to man in Genesis 1-2.” Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 96.

representation of the divine image. All humanity, both male and female, equally bears God's image.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, Scripture is clear that the Son incarnate was the perfect human, unaffected by sin nature and in perfect communion with God (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:20-22, 45-49; Heb 4:15).<sup>23</sup> David Wells asserts, "In Christ we see all that Adam was intended to be, but never was, all that we are not but which we will become through resurrection."<sup>24</sup> When the Son took on flesh and became human, he became a gendered embodied being. His incarnation confirms the value of and promises restoration for the human state of embodiment.<sup>25</sup> The perfect human being was not genderless (asexual), nor was Jesus both male and female simultaneously.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, God in the flesh was a male-gendered embodied person. In keeping with the metanarrative of Scripture, it would be errant to conclude that God's complete image requires both male and female together

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<sup>22</sup> As Estep writes, "Both the Old and New Testament affirm the image of God is equally present within men and women—without distinction. . . . Gender is not a part of the fall but a part of the created order—His intentional design within humanity." Estep, "Christian Anthropology," 15-16. Estep goes on to claim that men and women equally represent 100 percent of the divine image, rather than each gender representing only partial aspects of the *imago Dei*.

<sup>23</sup> Cortez contends, "Theological anthropology, then, should begin its understanding of the human person by looking first to see how Jesus Christ manifests true humanity." Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 5-6.

<sup>24</sup> David F. Wells, *The Person of Christ: A Biblical and Historical Analysis of the Incarnation* (Westchester, NY: Crossway Books, 1984), 175. Scripture trumpets the truth of Jesus as the perfect man. Wells elaborates on the hypostatic union of Christ as a logical union of two seemingly incompatible natures, stating, "Human nature as created is the echo of which the Creator is sound. He is original, and we are derivative . . . . A perfect humanity, one unspoiled by sin would not only coalesce naturally with the divine but would, in fact, find its perfection in the divine from which it was derived." For further development on Christ as not only perfect humanity but also undiminished deity, see Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> The theological concept of embodiment "recalls the distinctive feature of Christianity, that God became body and in so doing has confirmed and healed all our bodily nature. This was a scandal in the religions of the ancient world—and is an unresolved challenge in the present world." Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 103-4. God's act of redemption on humanity's behalf provided the means of reconciliation and restoration between fallen humanity and perfect God. Thus, this study agrees with Moltmann-Wendel that Christ's incarnation validates the significance of humanity's embodiment and ultimately restores humanity into unbroken communion with God. However, Christ's incarnation did not eradicate sin's presence or sin nature in the temporal state of existence. Christians eagerly await Christ's return and final victory.

<sup>26</sup> Some theologians suggest that both male and female must be present to fully image God. While God does intend for humanity to reflect his image in community, it is significant that Jesus Christ embodied a single gender, yet he was the exact representation of God (Heb 1:1-4; John 14:6-10).

or that only one of the genders in isolation accurately images God. Instead, the incarnation of Jesus as an embodied being, alongside the creation account of male and female image-bearers, confirms God's intention for both male and female, jointly *and* independently, to relate to God uniquely and to represent God to the world.<sup>27</sup>

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this text-based study is to describe the ontological reality of women according to a well-developed theological anthropology in order to propose a definitional framework for female-gendered embodiment.

### **Research Question**

To begin to define a theological anthropology of women, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is a theological paradigm to articulate an ontological definition of female-gendered embodiment?
2. What is a theological framework for defining female-gendered embodiment, ontologically?
3. What are the achievements and deficiencies of the proposed definitional framework of female-gendered embodiment?

### **Research Significance**

From a person's understanding of self-existence and position in the scheme of eternity, a man or woman generates his or her worldview and decision-making. Until the ontological question of meaning is sufficiently answered, the epistemological realities are

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<sup>27</sup> The biblical terms for *image* and *likeness* in Gen 1:26 imply different dimensions of the *imago Dei*. *Likeness* indicates a vertical aspect in which humanity, designed in God's likeness, relates to God as a son. This relationship to God is unique for humanity. *Image* indicates a horizontal aspect by which humanity represents God to the rest of creation, operating as a servant king on behalf of the Creator. This role is unique for humanity as well. Both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the *imago Dei* are included in the term *image-bearing*. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 194. The authors have also released a second edition of their book: Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018).

inadequately understood. Likewise, ontological understanding is ultimately critical for meaningful application of biblical realities in both interpersonal relationships and human relationships with God.<sup>28</sup> If a woman does not know who or why she is, she may perform duties and responsibilities, but the richness of her living within her God-given design will be diminished—to the detriment of the individual, the family, the church, and society as a whole. Likewise, if women are communicated, whether directly or nonverbally, an inaccurate definition of their ontological meaning, the damage to personhood and community is catastrophic.

Though gender is the central topic of much present-day discussion, the dialogue participants often do not have a shared working definition of the term. Western society widely treats gender as one part of a trifold schematic: sex, gender, and sexual orientation.<sup>29</sup> However, the sex-gender-sexuality schema has come under intensifying scrutiny within academia and society at large.<sup>30</sup> While many scholars hold to a biological essentialism with distinction between the sexes, some within the social sciences regard sex and gender as effectively indistinguishable having each been constructed socially.<sup>31</sup> Even within evangelicalism, the definitional variations likewise abound.<sup>32</sup> The Christian

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<sup>28</sup> Nelson asserts, “The way we feel about our embodiedness significantly conditions the way we feel about the world.” Nelson, *Body Theology*, 43. Although Nelson goes so far as to equate experience with biblical truth and Christian tradition, his assertion that a robust anthropology is critical for a healthy and fulfilling life is absolutely accurate. In contrast to Nelson’s body theology, this thesis is pursuing a theological anthropology, firmly grounded in biblical truth and deeply informed by history and experience.

<sup>29</sup> James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds., *Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 14.

<sup>30</sup> Douglas Gentile argues that “nothing has been gained by the use of the term gender except confusion” in the social sciences. Douglas Gentile, “Just What Are Sex and Gender, Anyway? A Call for a New Terminological Standard,” *Psychological Science* 4, no. 2 (March 1993): 120.

<sup>31</sup> For example: “If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.” Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 7.

<sup>32</sup> To illustrate, consider Baker Academic’s 2019 publication of *Understanding Transgender Identities*. The book intends to promote a targeted and respectful dialogue on the issue of transgender identities. While the contributing authors were specifically selected for their “differing perspectives on such questions as whether sex is binary; whether gender is binary; whether there are stable, transcultural, or divinely ordained gender expressions/roles,” the book, about gender, does not share a working definition of



debates on gender center on differences in biblical interpretation and theology. With such debated and fundamentally distinct interpretations of gender, contributors who engage across denominational and tribal lines seemingly argue past one another rather than addressing a targeted topic.<sup>33</sup>

The necessity for a theological definition of the ontology of women has been noted—though not answered—by several theologians. In his book *Man as Male and Female*, Paul K. Jewett bemoans the dead end of Christianity’s traditional approach to the ontology of gender. Christian theology has largely articulated woman’s meaning in terms of man, failing to define an adequate ontology of humanity in general or by gender. Jewett goes on to state “contemporary theologians are not so sure that they know what it means to *be* a man in distinction to a woman or a woman in distinction to a man.”<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, in John Piper and Wayne Grudem’s *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Piper laments that though sexuality is perceived as essential to human nature, manhood and womanhood are treated as undefinable.<sup>35</sup> Piper then asserts that true

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the term *gender*. Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*, 53. Each contributor holds to a different, sometimes fluid, definition of gender. Each of the four contributors’ definitions of gender are expressed as follows: Owen Strachan equates gender to biblical gender roles, determining a divinely created order for male/female as protector/helpmate, respectively. Owen Strachan, “Transition or Transformation? A Moral-Theological Exploration of Christianity and Gender Dysphoria,” in Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*, 59. Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky separate sex and gender, identifying gender in terms of gender identity, or “one’s psychological and emotional experience of oneself as a male or female,” or a nonbinary gender identity. Mark A. Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky, “The Complexities of Gender Identity: Toward a More Nuanced Response to the Transgender Experience,” in Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*, 102. Megan DeFranza likewise distinguishes between sex and gender, though she vacillates in her operational definition of gender, alternating her interpretation of gender across gender behavior (152), gender identity (153), sexual identity (164), gender roles (164), and social masculinity/femininity ideals (174). Megan K. DeFranza, “Good News for Gender Minorities,” in Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*, 147-78. Finally, Justin Sabia-Tanis clearly defines gender according to gender identity, interpreting gender as a continuum of naturally occurring identities. Justin Sabia-Tanis, “Holy Creation, Wholly Creative: God’s Intention for Gender Diversity,” in Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*, 195.

<sup>33</sup> As illustrated above from *Understanding Transgender Identities*, no ontological definition of gender is determined. Furthermore, the diverse working definitions of gender across axiological considerations (functionality or behavioral patterns of a gender) arguably generates more confusion than clarity.

<sup>34</sup> Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 178.

<sup>35</sup> John Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible,” in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 36.

understanding of biblical partnership cannot be understood until the nature of the individual partners is first defined. Ironically, he goes on to define manhood and womanhood according to the roles outlined across various biblical passages (including Gen 3; Eph 5:23-29, 6:1; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1-7). Though the book clearly expresses the concern not only for roles to be defined but also for the ontological nature of men and women to be addressed, it does not produce a mature model of ontological meaning separate from role.<sup>36</sup>

### **Research Necessity**

Theological ontological research on gendered embodiment is critical for the current state of personal identity, families, churches, and society as a whole. Not only does the research warrant theological significance, but the study also holds the potential to positively impact orthopraxis. A definitional framework detailing the ontological meaning of female-gendered embodiment can greatly influence the lives of women—and men—across all areas of life. A theological model of gendered embodiment provides much needed clarity, standardization, and simplification.<sup>37</sup> In Graeme Goldsworthy's comparison of theology to a map, he asserts that theology "reduces an area that is too big for us to see at a glance to a model that is small enough for us to see all at once."<sup>38</sup> Though this study proposes only a first step toward defining female-gendered embodiment, a well-vetted theological model of gendered embodiment would manifest in interpersonal relationships, family dynamics, church communities, and society at large.

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<sup>36</sup> Piper, "A Vision of Biblical Complementarity," in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 37, 38, 51.

<sup>37</sup> This study proposes a definitional framework of female-gendered embodiment. However, the next step in the research, to be performed in a collective effort across evangelicalism, will be to develop a formal theological model of female-gendered embodiment. Such a model is essential for a theological understanding of human embodiment and is timely for present-day gender and personhood issues.

<sup>38</sup> Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 23.

For the individual woman, her personal identity must be understood in relationship to God and then to others.<sup>39</sup> Conceptualizing her intrinsic nature according to God's design provides the basis on which a woman can engage both with herself and with other people. A theological model of female-gendered embodiment addresses both aspects of her identity as an individual image-bearer and as a member to a corporate community; both are foundational to her self-conceptualization. Such a theological model provides the parameters from which a woman can understand herself—as an individual and within community. An accurate self-conceptualization could generate the assurance and confidence to engage with others in theologically healthy ways.<sup>40</sup>

Within the family, providing a definition of women that probes deeper than functionality can provide wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters with dignity, value, and stand-alone (though never isolated) contribution. As this study substantiates, the existence of women must be defined ontologically rather than functionally, allowing for women to be understood as more than the counterpart to men.<sup>41</sup>

Within church communities, emphasis of teaching and programing can be directed toward the contribution of women in ministry and toward the biblical model of partnership across gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, and socioeconomic standing.

In society, the church can have a defensible stance against the onslaught of attacks against a binary, biblical view of gender. Whereas a functional definition of gender emphasizes works and performance of roles, an ontological definition of gender promotes appropriate expression of an inherent reality. If ontology of gender is

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<sup>39</sup> As Cortez writes, "True knowledge of the human person begins with the relationship between God and humans." Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 5.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., engaging with children (Deut 6:7; Titus 2:4), other women (Titus 2:3-5), other believers (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:19-22), and authority figures (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 2:13).

<sup>41</sup> This claim is not to contradict an understanding of the complementarian nature of male and female. Rather, an ontological definition will certainly illuminate more truth to humanity's existence than a functional definition. The case for female existence cannot be formed from the need of men (Gen 2:18). In other words, Gen 2 must be read in light of Gen 1. Ontology precedes function.

immutable, sexual orientation, sexual expression, and gender bias can be helpfully understood, explained, and rectified as necessary.<sup>42</sup> Not only is gender applicable to all people across all cultures and all time, the issue of gender identity is centerstage on the platform of present-day Western civilization. Individuals, families, churches, and societies have never been in more desperate need for a theological understanding of female-gendered embodiment.

### **Definition of Research Population**

In this study, the research population consists of three elements. First, the study engages scriptural references to the ontology of women. Then, the study addresses the only known text that explicitly formulates a model for the ontological reality of women, separate from roles. Namely, the study interacts extensively with Paul Evdokimov's theological anthropology of women, as his work is one of the only scholarly sources that engages the theological anthropology of women ontologically.<sup>43</sup> This study is the first substantive academic effort from the evangelical confession to interact with Evdokimov's work on the ontology of women.<sup>44</sup> In addition to scriptural truth and Evdokimov's model of theological anthropology, the research also relies on significant works of theological

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<sup>42</sup> The immutability of gendered embodiment asserts that sexual orientation cannot be discordant with embodied realities. Sexual expression would be understood within the context of ontology rather than role. And gender biases are validated because it is ontologically impossible for a male-gendered embodied person to think of himself as a female-gendered embodied person. Gender is core to material and immaterial existence. Many practical implications for individual experience and for community dynamics will be more thoroughly discussed in chap. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Evdokimov, an Eastern Orthodox theologian, attempted a theological anthropology of women in the 1950s. The result, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, was translated into English in 1994. His self-proclaimed intention of documenting a model for defining the ontology of women was to bring about a worldwide effort to collaborate toward a biblical theology of women. Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World: A Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Women*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994), 28. More details on Evdokimov's life and work will be provided in chap. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Evdokimov's work has been engaged within the Orthodox and Catholic traditions. Though Evdokimov's work is reasonably well-known in Europe, his theology is lesser known in the English-speaking world. See Peter C. Phan's American Catholic engagement with Evdokimov in "Gender Roles in the History of Salvation: Man and Woman in the Thought of Paul Evdokimov," *Heythrop Journal* 31, no. 1 (January 1990): 53-66. To my knowledge, this study is the first to interact with Evdokimov's ontological model from the evangelical tradition.

anthropology that engage female embodiment, building from Gregg Allison's theological work on human embodiment.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, the assessment of the model is supplemented by other relevant theological studies that define gendered embodiment either directly or indirectly, regardless of the theological environment of the study. Thus, studies performed by theologians in the Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and evangelical traditions are acknowledged or directly addressed.<sup>46</sup> Through the engagement of these three elements, the study seeks to affirm and envision redemptive truth.<sup>47</sup>

### **Delimitations of Proposed Research**

A comprehensive evaluation of all human identity theories pertaining to gender is outside of the scope of this study. Likewise, this study does not attempt a thorough review of all material and immaterial philosophies of human constitution. Furthermore, this study does not pretend to have an in-depth handling of all Scripture pertinent to anthropology. Finally, detailed discussion of biblical gender roles is not attempted, though the completed study may prompt various implications for the accomplishment of such roles.

As little previous work has been done to define the ontological constitution of women within theological anthropology, this study is limited in texts to study and evaluate. This study interacts significantly with the theological anthropology of women proposed by Paul Evdokimov, the assessment of which is informed by conservative evangelical biblical interpretation, theological anthropological assertions of various theologians, and relevant secular disciplines.

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<sup>45</sup> Allison, *Embodied*.

<sup>46</sup> Specifically, this research will address aspects of the following works: the Catholic works of Pope John Paul II and Mary Timothy Prokes; the Eastern Orthodox work of Paul Evdokimov; and the evangelical works of Marc Cortez, Stanley Grenz, Paul King Jewett, Gregg Allison, James B. Nelson, Timothy Tennent, and John Kleinig. The specific works pertinent to this study are cited and introduced in chap. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Borrowing the language from Trentham "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Parts 1-2)," 484.

### **Limitations of Generalization of Findings**

As the goal of this research is to identify an ontological definition of female embodiment, any proposed definitional framework must adequately represent all women of all cultures across all time. However, the implications of the proposed framework in this study are directed toward evangelical Christian women, primarily in Western contexts in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, the theological assumptions and suggested implications of this study cannot be presumed to be shared by every American evangelical Christian.

### **Terminology and Definitions**

Terminology is directly defined and consistently employed throughout this study in effort to promote clarity of argument and a foundation for continued discussion. While a more thorough list of definitions can be found in the glossary, the following terms are used extensively throughout this study and should be introduced directly:

*Ontological* in this study is used to describe the metaphysical nature of being.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the ontological meaning of women would intend to define a woman's intrinsic nature, as designed at creation, as preserved in the temporal state, and as redeemed in the eschaton.

*Identity* will be used as an ontological descriptor of the innate nature and condition of a human being. While many other facets and nuances of the term exist, in this study identity could be defined formally as "the relation each thing bears just to

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<sup>48</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, IVP Pocket Reference Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 87.

itself” and is considered persistent.<sup>49</sup> Each person is an individual with a first-person perspective irrevocably associated with their particular embodiment.<sup>50</sup>

*Human embodiment* refers comprehensively to the constitution of all humanity. Each human is comprised of immaterial and material aspects, according to God’s perfect design in his own image (*imago Dei*). Both the material and immaterial are required to constitute a human being; no human does or can exist without being embodied.<sup>51</sup> Embodiment is the original design, the normative state, and the promised eternal state of all humanity.<sup>52</sup>

*Material* is used to describe the physical aspect of the human being, that which is visible, tangible, and biologically gendered. The material aspect of being human is commonly referred to as the body.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Formal definition of *identity* as provided by Robert Audi in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 415. Though much more could be said about the term *identity*, particularly regarding *personal identity*, this study intends to employ the simplified concept of identity which “has a richness and ambiguity that escapes formal characterization” (416). This definition of identity is also shared by Joshua R. Farris in *Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 27.

<sup>50</sup> Without engaging the various philosophies of identity within theological anthropology—including the variations of substance dualism presented by Farris—we can adapt Farris’s metaphysical approach to identity that describes “I am identified with the first-person perspective I have that is constituted by my body, yet my perspective is nonreducible to the parts of my body. . . . Rather, it is a novel higher-order property that makes me *me*.” Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 39 (emphasis original).

<sup>51</sup> Gregg R. Allison, “Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (2009): 5. See also Allison, *Embodied*, 27.

<sup>52</sup> For a thorough exploration of the theology of human embodiment, see Alexandra Ford, “The Implications of an Evangelical Theology of the Body for Christocentric Spiritual Formation” (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018). This doctoral work appropriately elevates the human body in tandem with human spirit. However, Ford’s thesis does not significantly address the gendered aspect of embodiment.

<sup>53</sup> Allison, “Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment,” 5.

*Immaterial* refers to the soul or spirit of a human being, or any aspect of the person that is not visible or tangible.<sup>54</sup> Both the material and immaterial aspects of a human are eternal and gendered.<sup>55</sup>

*Gender* is the embodied state of being either male or female.<sup>56</sup> God's design of humanity in his image included the creation of male and female. Gender is not only sociological but also biological and theological. Gender cannot be splintered into physicality and personhood.<sup>57</sup> Rather, gender pervades every aspect of human existence.

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<sup>54</sup> Regarding the term *person*, a trinitarian approach must be considered. In this sense, *person* refers to the "active or personal subject who subsists in a nature who lives, thinks, wills, and acts in and through the nature." Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 264. Thus, while God just is his nature and just is the three persons, the divine nature (*ousia*) and the divine persons (*hypostases*), who are really distinguished among themselves by an incommunicable property (i.e., paternity of the Father, eternal generation of the Son, eternal procession of the Holy Spirit), are formally but not really distinct. See Amandus Polanus, *18 Axioms on the Trinity*, Axiom 11, available at <https://scriptoriumdaily.com/polanus-axioms-10-and-11-on-the-trinity/>. In a similar manner, every human is a *person* distinguished from, but intrinsically related to, their *nature* as an embodied being. See Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Because of the interwoven reality of person and nature, the two aspects cannot be relegated into material and immaterial components. On the basis of Christology, we can, however, be assured that the person persists even when their nature changes. Thus, though disembodiment is a temporary reality for human beings in the intermediate state, the person is persistent. The relationship between anthropology and Christology as relates to gendered embodiment bears additional research, particularly in regards to the nature versus person distinction.

<sup>55</sup> Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," 5. Contemporary literature may refer to the immaterial aspects as the "inner self," "true self," or "gender identity" of a person.

<sup>56</sup> As Allison notes, "The lone exception to this point is the genetic [mis]condition of intersex, which affects a certain percentage of human beings—statistics range from .04% to 1.7%—and will not be part of our discussion." Allison, "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," 163. See also Allison, *Embodied*, 52.

<sup>57</sup> I consent that there is, scientifically and culturally, a distinction between the terms *gender* and *sex*. This distinction is addressed extensively in appendix 2 ("Distinction of Gender and Sex"). A person's *sex* generally refers exclusively to the material aspects of embodiment that demonstrate the gender physically. Thus, *sex* is recognized (assigned) at birth, based on a person's chromosomes, hormones, and anatomical structure. By contrast, *gender* encompasses both the material and immaterial aspects of being an embodied person and is both innate to the individual and demonstrated in the person's physicality. In simple terms, *sex* is bodily, but *gender* is holistic. Because the material and immaterial aspects of embodiment are inseparable, a person's *sex* and *gender* cannot be disentangled or contradictory. The intersex condition is not directly addressed in this study. In twenty-first-century Western culture, one's biological sex is considered separate from one's gender. This disjointed concept of gender considers gender a self-determined characteristic of one's personhood. When gender is severed from biological sex, gender becomes strictly sociological, an immaterial characteristic of one's true inner self. Thus, for example, an individual born in a male body may determine himself to actually be a she, based on an understanding of his (her) inner self. Scripture offers no support of this disjointed view of gender. For more insight on the sex versus gender discussion, see Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018). See also Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*.



This study treats gender as binary—either male or female—as indicated in Scripture (Gen 1:26-27).<sup>58</sup>

*Male* is the gendered embodied state of being a man. Male embodiment means both the material and immaterial aspects of a man are gendered by God’s design both in life and for eternity.<sup>59</sup>

*Female* is the gendered embodied state of being a woman. Female embodiment means both the material and immaterial aspects of a woman are gendered by God’s design both in life and for eternity.<sup>60</sup>

*Sociality* is the relational or attractional aspect of gender. Sociality is the design and capacity for gendered beings to desire and receive relationship with other human beings.<sup>61</sup> The design of sociality is perfect, ordained by God, and untainted by sin. However, the human capacity of sociality has been affected by the fall and can be perverted in its motivation and expression. Social capacity has both conscious and unconscious components.

*Particularity* is the collection of characteristics that make every human’s experience unique. These particularities include ethnicity, family/kinship, temporality,

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<sup>58</sup> This aspect of binarity in gender as revealed in the Genesis creation account will be revisited and expounded upon in chap. 3.

<sup>59</sup> Allison, “Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment,” 6.

<sup>60</sup> Allison, “Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment,” 6.

<sup>61</sup> In keeping with Gregg Allison’s embodiment research, this study employs the term *sociality*. However, the language of this term has been problematic for many scholars. Like Allison, I previously used the term *sexuality* but found it to be confusing for others; the connection of sexuality with sexual identity and sexual activity was distracting from the term’s intended meaning. Other terms used by scholars to describe sociality include *sexuality*, *relationality*, and *alterity*. Stanley Grenz describes sexuality as the “the dynamic that forms the basis of the uniquely human drive toward bonding.” Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, Matrix of Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 278. See also Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 32. Furthermore, according to James Nelson, human “sexuality . . . is both the physiological and psychological grounding for our capacity to love.” James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), 8. For further understanding of the development of the term *sociality*, see Allison’s “Chapter 4: The Social Body” in *Embodied*, 73-84.

spatiality, context, and story. Particularities are what make a person uniquely individual.<sup>62</sup>

*Sexual activity* refers to the expression of one's sociality that is appropriate only within the covenant of marriage. God's design of marriage includes the sexual manifestation of sociality for enjoyment, edification, and procreation.<sup>63</sup> A person may pervert this expression of sociality due to a perversion of his or her social capacity—whether conscious, unconscious, or a combination of both.

### Methodological Design

This section serves as an outline for the intended procession of the study.

In chapter 2, the study begins by addressing the completed research on female-gendered embodiment.<sup>64</sup>

In chapter 3, the study then provides robust biblical foundations and compelling theological considerations for the study of female-gendered embodiment toward an ontological definition.

In chapter 4, the study interacts with Evdokimov's anthropology of women according to three standpoints for assessment:<sup>65</sup> (1) *Charitable*—the research assesses Evdokimov's model from a charitable perspective to identify the beneficial aspects of his

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<sup>62</sup> Gender is not a particularity, as gender is more fundamental to human nature than particularities. Gendered embodiment is universal and essential for all persons. Particularities are essential characteristics of individual persons, but they are dependent on the parameter of sociality. Critically, particularities here must be understood distinctly from intersectionality. See Allison, *Embodied*, 60-61.

<sup>63</sup> A *theology of sex*, e.g., sexual activity, is not covered in this study. For a thorough treatment of the theological considerations of sexual activity, see Burk, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?*. To further clarify, a *theology of sex* would begin with Scripture to inform what sexuality is and how sexuality ought to be expressed. In contrast, a *sexual theology* begins with human experience as sexual beings in order to inform the interpretation and application of Scripture. Nelson, *Body Theology*, 21. This study affirms a *theology of sex* as the appropriate complement to this study's theology of gendered embodiment.

<sup>64</sup> It would be impossible for this study to cover all of the published literature on "womanhood" and embodiment. However, this thesis does provide a general overview of previous research and will interact with specific works on female-gendered embodiment.

<sup>65</sup> The methodology of *charitable*, *critical*, and *appropriative* is an adaption of John David Trentham's "Inverse Consistency Protocol"; see Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Parts 1-2)," 458-94.

conclusions. (2) *Critical*—the research develops a critical assessment of the Evdokimov model to identify any unbiblical and unhelpful aspects. (2) *Appropriative*—the study takes a constructive perspective to define the appropriate means of adopting, accepting, and applying various factors of the model.

In chapter 5, following the comprehensive interaction with the theological anthropology of women proposed by Evdokimov, the study proposes an alternative framework for defining the ontological meaning of women according to theological anthropology. The definitional parameters of the proposed framework seek to answer the question “What does it mean to be a female-gendered embodied person?”

The proposed definitional framework is categorized according to three key realities: (1) *Created state*—What was God’s original design for women in the Garden of Eden before the fall? (2) *Temporal state*—What is the post-fall reality for women? What can be determined of the intermediate state of disembodiment after death but before the new heavens and new earth? (3) *Restored state*—What can be identified of the eternal state of embodiment when women are restored to a reunited material and immaterial state?

Finally, in chapter 6, the study concludes with a review and assessment of the proposed framework: (1) A summary of the accomplishments of the proposed framework and definitional parameters are provided. (2) The shortcomings and gaps within the framework are identified, and a call for further research with a significant number of prompts for future studies are proposed. Finally, (3) the potential implications of the definitional framework for women, families, churches, communities, and American society are determined.

### **Research Competencies**

This study requires careful theological awareness and fidelity to ensure loyalty to the biblical metanarrative, revealed character of God, and unfolding story of

redemption. Without this theological training, discernment, and continual re-alignment to Scripture, inappropriate conclusions could be developed about the ontological meaning of women, and damaging implications may be drawn from an inaccurate study.

Furthermore, my female-genderedness is both relevant and irreplaceable for the success of the study. Of course, women can be studied by men and vice versa, but no man can ultimately manufacture the experience of being a woman. Thus, my gender bias as a female is pertinent and helpful for the study. I lean heavily on my male readers to balance my female bias with their own male biases. As God intended, the complementarity of the genders has been thoughtfully considered and practically employed in the development of this study.

## Conclusion

By underscoring the need for an ontological definition in evangelical Christianity, this research intends to encourage productive theological dialogue. Recent studies and publications on women's identity wisely articulate a distinction in gender, a difference between men and women. Unfortunately, the conversation in conservative evangelical Christianity overwhelmingly centers on roles, equating biblical roles with gender.<sup>66</sup> The issue of defining gender according to role is not limited to the

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<sup>66</sup> For example, a book published by Desiring God in 2014 (Parnell and Strachan, eds., *Good: The Joy of Christian Manhood and Womanhood*) affirms the goodness in God's design of male and female. However, the book clearly communicates the elemental identity of gender to be derived from complementarian gender roles. Here is one single example, which is pervasive throughout the publication: "Lead, protect, and provide—masculinity is more than this, but not less. . . . As we seek to understand these enigmatic realities of masculinity and femininity, there is great help for us in the complementary relationship we were made for as husbands and wives." David Mathis, "The Happy Call to Holistic Provision," in Parnell and Strachan, *Good*, 27. Published by Desiring God and produced in partnership with the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), the views presented in the book represent many of the leading voices in conservative evangelical Christianity. Despite the assertions in the book's introduction, the ideas presented throughout the book are not new but heavily reiterate earlier publications' derivation of gender from biblical gender roles. Strachan claims radical originality in the book, stating, "We're coming at this [sexuality] from a new, fresh perspective. You can almost hear the can cracking as you read these words." Strachan, "Introduction: How Does the Gospel Shape Gender?," in Parnell and Strachan, *Good*, xi. Commendably, the book's contributors seek to anchor any definition of gender identity in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Regrettably, the contributing authors ultimately define ontological meaning of male and female according to complementarian gender roles within marriage. Undergirding this publication, and countless others in the gender conversation of conservative evangelicals, are decades of theological works asserting that functionality equates to ontology.

complementarian perspective. Rather, the misplaced assumption of functionality preceding ontology lies at the foundation of the egalitarian view as well. Two pillars of asserting biblical equality between men and women are generated from claims of functionality: equal dominion and equal giftings.<sup>67</sup>

The goal of this research is to progress toward articulating a theological definition of the ontology of women. This research proposes a definitional framework for the ontological meaning of women separate from role, but the discussion must continue beyond the study to develop a mature model of ontological meaning of men and women. Such a model would be transformative for theological discussion and application in both academia and the church. The church and its members must be intentional to develop biblical understanding, beliefs, and attitudes toward one another for the edification and witness of the church.

The forthcoming definitional framework attempts to thoughtfully and adequately describe the ontological meaning of women according to a well-developed theological anthropology. The definitional framework is then assessed to determine its practicality, benefits, and potential implications for women as individuals and as members of the body of Christ—for the glory of God and the value of women.

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<sup>67</sup> *Discovering Biblical Equality* is the self-proclaimed “first multiauthored volume to comprehensively, systematically and consistently articulate an egalitarian position based on the tenets of biblical teaching.” Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Ronald W. Pierce, introduction to *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 16. Throughout the various arguments proposed in the publication, the evidence of functionality as determining ontology is clearly present. In arguing for shared dominion as the essential aspect of the *imago Dei*, Richard Hess asserts that stewardship was given equally to male and female and that the image of God does not include gender distinction. Richard S. Hess, “Equality with and without Innocence: Genesis 1-3,” in Pierce, Groothuis, and Fee, *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 66. Furthermore, Gordon Fee contends that the Holy Spirit does not gift according to gender in the New Testament church. Gordon D. Fee, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” in Pierce, Groothuis, and Fee, *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 186. Fee’s argument for the essential equality of women in ministry stems from his understanding that “the Holy Spirit is gender inclusive, gifting both men and women, and thus potentially setting the whole body free for all the many parts to minister in various ways to give leadership to the others” (196). For additional examples, see also John G. Stackhouse, *Partners in Christ: A Conservative Case for Egalitarianism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

## CHAPTER 2

### PRECEDENT LITERATURE

A significant gap in literature exists around defining the ontological meaning of women, particularly in theology. Before progressing toward an ontological definition of women, this study must first survey existing relevant research in the categories of anthropology of women and theological anthropology. Within the field of the anthropology of women, women are typically defined according to a societal construct of gender, epistemological development of women, and/or ethnographies of particular women. Within Christian theology, a slew of content has been written to define the role of women as well as the value of women within complementarian relationships. However, almost no studies exist to answer the metaphysical question “What is a woman?” A robust model of the ontological reality of women is fundamentally missing from the research.

From the following survey of precedent research, this chapter concludes that it is erroneous to relegate gender to a socially constructed category or to define the ontology of women from particular roles.

#### **Overview of Field of Anthropology of Women**

Substantial studies have been completed in the field of the anthropology of women in the last fifty years. The studies can be organized in the following categories: psychology or epistemological development of women, feminist anthropologies, and ethnographies of women. Recent work has also been completed toward defining the physiological constitution of women. Because God is the originator and sustainer of all reality, these secular studies are useful for identifying wise and insightful truths about

aspects of humanity and women. However, an anthropological study of women isolated from its theological roots will prove incomplete.<sup>1</sup>

## Psychology of Women

The psychology of women has been given quite a bit of attention throughout the feminist movement and in theological responses to feminist conclusions. Much of this research has been presented within the genre of the epistemological development of women. Of particular note are Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* and Mary Field Belenky et al.'s *Women's Ways of Knowing*.<sup>2</sup> One of the early adopters to include a uniquely female perspective in her developmental studies, Gilligan performed three different studies to determine moral reasoning patterns in males and females. From the studies, Gilligan proposed three stages of moral reasoning—preconventional, conventional, and postconventional—with two periods of transition. Of various differences she identifies between male and female development, Gilligan notes the woman's emphasis on intimacy as intertwined with identity in contrast to the male's focus on personal identity separate from intimacy.<sup>3</sup>

In their work *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky et al. build from Gilligan's *Voice* to identify five viewpoints utilized by women throughout cognitive development.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While theological anthropology is the only adequate means of developing an understanding of humanity, the discipline cannot comprehensively address every aspect of humanity. Psychology, sociology, biology, and other disciplines are necessary to provide critical insight toward defining a holistic ontology of humanity. Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986). For a detailed review of Gilligan's and Belenky et al.'s work in female development, see Erin Shaw, "She Knows Truth: Toward a Redemptive Model of Women's Epistemological Development" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, 159-63.

<sup>4</sup> Belenky et al. also relied heavily on William Perry for her theoretical framework and methodology. Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing*, 14-16. See W. G. J. Perry, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), and William G. Perry Jr., "Cognitive and Ethical Growth: The Making of Meaning," in *The Modern*

In brief, the developmental model moves from silence to constructed knowledge. The silence perspective is characterized by an “extreme denial of self and a dependence on external authority for direction.”<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the fifth perspective, constructed knowing, established truth as “contextual” and knowledge as “tentative, not absolute.”<sup>6</sup> The strategies of women’s cognitive understanding move from passive to active and from deferential to self-assured. Various reasons are suggested for the different strategies adopted by women in different cultures and across generations.

### **Feminist Anthropology**

Though feminist views appear frequently in each category of the anthropology of women, a separate section is required to discuss some key conclusions of feminism toward the nature of woman. Many resources could be cited, but Rayna Reiter’s *Toward an Anthropology of Women* provides sufficient insight to the key concepts. Reiter’s compilation seeks to identify and describe the equality and inequality between the genders through a feminist approach to anthropology. In the introduction, she claims, “The subjugation of women is a fact of our daily existence, yet it neither began with modern capitalism or disappears in socialist societies . . . . We must find its roots and trace them in their many permutations and transformations.”<sup>7</sup> The book focuses on understanding the development of sexism through cross-cultural data and the evaluations of societies over time. Contributing authors assert the common feminist claim that “anatomy is not destiny,” meaning roles and capabilities are derived culturally rather than

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*American College: Responding to the New Realities of Diverse Students and a Changing Society*, ed. Arthur W. Chickering and Associates (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981): 76-116.

<sup>5</sup> Belenky et al., *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, 24.

<sup>6</sup> Nancy Goldberger, “Introduction: Looking Backward, Looking Forward,” in *Knowledge, Difference, and Power: Essays Inspired by Women’s Ways of Knowing*, ed. Nancy Rule Goldberger et al. (New York: BasicBooks, 1996), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Rayna R. Reiter, *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 11.



biologically.<sup>8</sup> Cross-cultural field data and evolutionary justification are used to affirm non-biological gender differences as a social construct. In addition to several chapters geared toward societal and political evaluations, the book includes various ethnographic studies to substantiate the claims of equality and inequity. There is no attempt to define the intrinsic nature of women, but rather the emphasis is toward addressing the evolution of a misogynistic society.

Significant ontological anthropology has also been performed by various feminist scholars. In particular, the ontology of gender in feminist anthropology seeks to define humanity as a single nature rather than a dual nature. Carrie Bates's article "Gender Ontology and Women in Ministry in the Early Church" argues for a single nature of male and female on the basis of historical and exegetical reflections.<sup>9</sup> In her *Women and Religion in the First Christian Centuries*, Sawyer identifies the Christian gender roles as derived from gender essentialism, beginning with Aristotle.<sup>10</sup> Feminist historians and theologians, such as Karen Jo Torjesen and Elaine Pagels, affirm that Christianity celebrated an egalitarian view in its earliest expression during the apostolic era.<sup>11</sup>

### **Ethnographies of Women**

Becoming a popular genre of research in the 1970s, countless ethnographical studies of women have been completed in various cultures and sub-cultures. This work has been exceptionally helpful toward testing universal claims about being a woman and

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<sup>8</sup> Reiter, *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, 21. This feminist staple of gender as a socially constructed category is repeated across feminist literature.

<sup>9</sup> Carrie L. Bates, "Gender Ontology and Women in Ministry in the Early Church," *Priscilla Papers* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 6-15.

<sup>10</sup> See Deborah F. Sawyer, *Women and Religion in the First Christian Centuries*, Religion in the First Christian Centuries (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> See Elaine H. Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989). See also Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).

in revealing both the variations and correlations in female experiences around the globe. However, the ethnographical studies do not, and were not intended to, define a model for the ontological meaning of woman. Even ethnographic studies focused on female identity and gender roles fall short of defining an ontological model of women, as an ethnographic study is necessarily focused on a narrow population.<sup>12</sup>

### **Physiology of Women**

Recent research has been completed from a medical perspective to define universal biological differences between male and female bodies. One notable essay from conservative evangelical sources includes Gregg Johnson's "The Biological Basis for Gender-Specific Behavior," in which Johnson compiles scientific research to affirm and explain many of the physiological differences in anatomy, biology, and resulting behaviors.<sup>13</sup> Johnson concludes that the physiological and neural differences of men and women affirmed in science "correspond very well to the different roles given to men and women in Scripture."<sup>14</sup> Regardless of a divine intent or a day-to-day application of the physiological differences, it is critical to note the reality of the various physiological distinctions supported by medical science.

### **Precedent Literature for Ontological Model in Christian Theology**

Little existing research has been performed to define an ontological model of woman. However, ample literature has been produced to define manhood and

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<sup>12</sup> Two examples of the innumerable ethnographic studies completed to-date include the following: Emily Hunter McGowin, "As for Me and My House: The Theology of the Family in the American Quiverfull Movement" (PhD diss., University of Dayton, 2015); Christine J. Hong, "Who Do They Say I Am: Korean American Adolescent Women's Formation in the Korean American Church; a Feminist Ethnography" (PhD diss., Claremont School of Theology, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Gregg Johnson, "The Biological Basis for Gender-Specific Behavior," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 330-47. Johnson's essay was included in the larger publication as one of many essays supporting the distinctness of maleness and femaleness.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, "The Biological Basis for Gender-Specific Behavior," 347.

womanhood according to biblical roles. Additionally, a few academic works have addressed humanity holistically as gendered embodied beings.

### **Women as Defined by Roles**

Mountains of literature have been composed in effort to identify gender roles and/or the definition of manhood and womanhood according to the Bible. Though no one—or very few people—would directly argue that all women are to relate to all men as wives, the categorization of women according to particular biblical roles ratifies such a claim.<sup>15</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem’s *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* could be considered a consummate publication on the topic of gender roles from a conservative complementarian view. The goal of the book was to respond to evangelical feminism, to define manhood and womanhood according to the Bible, and to affirm the biblical roles of complementarianism. In the first chapter, Piper laments that though sexuality is perceived as essential to human nature, manhood and womanhood are treated as undefinable.<sup>16</sup> Piper then asserts that true understanding of biblical partnership cannot be understood until the nature of the individual partners is first defined. Ironically, he goes on to define manhood and womanhood according to the roles outlined across various biblical passages (Gen 3; Prov 1:8; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 22:26; Eph 5:23-29, 6:1; Col 3:18-19; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1-7; 6:20, 31:1, 10-31). Though both Piper and Grudem, and many of the other contributing authors, clearly express the concern not only for roles

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<sup>15</sup> The appropriation of roles toward ontological meaning is treated differently not only across egalitarian and complementarian camps but also within complementarianism itself. Broad complementarianism develops a theological definition of manhood and womanhood from the roles between a husband and a wife. By contrast, narrow complementarianism affirms the biblical roles within marriage and limits the roles to the marriage covenant and church leadership. For more discussion on complementarian views, see Jonathan Leeman, “A Word of Empathy, Warning, and Counsel for ‘Narrow’ Complementarians,” 9Marks, February 8, 2018, <https://www.9marks.org/article/a-word-of-empathy-warning-and-counsel-for-narrow-complementarians/>. For discussion on egalitarian views, see John G. Stackhouse, *Partners in Christ: A Conservative Case for Egalitarianism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> John Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity,” in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 36.

to be defined but also for the ontological nature of men and women to be addressed, no mature model of ontological meaning separate from roles is defined in the book.<sup>17</sup>

The authors make many assertions to the distinction between role and worth, and both man and woman's worth are affirmed as equal image-bearers.<sup>18</sup> Male-female equality is defined as follows: "Man and woman are equal in the sense that they bear God's image equally."<sup>19</sup> Thus, the sameness of male and female can be found in their shared *imago Dei*. According to the authors, male and female differences can be best described by the deduction of meaning from roles. In other words, male and female are equal in personal worth and different in their roles.<sup>20</sup> Some authors attribute the differentness to physiological differences and distinct giftings, along with roles.<sup>21</sup>

Piper and Grudem conclude the extensive work with an explanation of the then newly formed organization of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), founded in 1987 to pursue biblical faithfulness with charity and unapologetic clarity.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) was formed in effort to communicate and to advocate for conservative, evangelical feminism.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Piper, "A Vision of Biblical Complementarity," 37, 38, 51.

<sup>18</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3," in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 110.

<sup>19</sup> Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," 108.

<sup>20</sup> Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," 112.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson, "The Biological Basis for Gender-Specific Behavior," 331. According to Elisabeth Elliot, "Femininity receives. It says, 'May it be to me as you have said.'" Elisabeth Elliot, "The Essence of Femininity: A Personal Perspective," in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 473 (emphasis original). Elliot quotes Mary from Luke 1:38. In this view of women, Elliot reflects Pope John Paul II's views of the complementarity of feminine receiving and self-giving. In defense of integral gender complementarity, he describes the woman's reception of life and man's protection/provision for life. Pope John Paul II's (Karol Wojtyla) philosophy as summarized by Sister Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, vol. 3, *The Search for Communion of Persons, 1500-2015* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 508. See also Pope John Paul II, "The Dignity and Vocation of Women," *Mulieris dignitatem*, 1988, accessed August 13, 2020, <http://www.vatican.va>. An ontological perspective of female-receiving and male-doing is also considered in Evdokimov's model, discussed in chap. 4.

<sup>22</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "Charity, Clarity, and Hope: The Controversy and the Cause of Christ," in Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 476.

<sup>23</sup> Piper and Grudem, "Charity, Clarity, and Hope," 480.

Extensive space is given to commentary on the “Men, Women and Biblical Equality” declaration produced by CBE.<sup>24</sup> Overall, the book is a decisive pillar of defense for complementarianism, but it falls short of producing an ontological definition of the meaning of women.<sup>25</sup>

In his recent work, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body*, Timothy Tennent rightly acknowledges many of the disastrous effects of the sexual revolution on contemporary culture, gender, marriage, and family. Noting the issue as being essentially ontological, Tennent proposes “a positive Christian understanding of the body.”<sup>26</sup> He posits seven key building blocks of a redemptive theology of the body. Unfortunately, Tennent’s approach to the seven building blocks is largely axiological, articulating what is good (moral) and beautiful (aesthetic). For example, his approaches to *imago Dei* and gender are particularly function-based. Image-bearing is defined as dominion, fruitfulness, and physicality.<sup>27</sup> Male and female are defined according to marriage and reproduction—though he takes great pains to articulate the temporality of both marriage and celibacy as illustrations of fuller realities afforded through Christ.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Piper and Grudem, “Charity, Clarity, and Hope,” 480-91.

<sup>25</sup> As communicated in chap. 1 (see 5n10), the issue of defining ontology according to role is not relegated to complementarianism (see also 30n15). The egalitarian view also demonstrates the misplaced assumption of function as definitive of ontology by determining gender equality on the basis of shared function and equal giftings. See Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). See also 24n67.

<sup>26</sup> Timothy Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2020), xxiv.

<sup>27</sup> See Tennent’s section ““In the Image of God”” in *For the Body*, 9-12.

<sup>28</sup> Tennent’s treatment of gender center on fruitfulness and reproducibility. For some examples, see Tennent, *For the Body*, 10, 19, 63, 74, 138. However, the question of gender within celibacy is notably absent. Both marriage and celibacy are illustrations of the resurrection life, church as bride of Christ, and eschatological celibacy. See the “temporary reality” of marriage and the “eschatological reality” of eternal celibacy emphasized in Tennent’s section “Celibacy Points to our Future Union with God” (80-83).

## Embodied Beings

While there is a massive gap in directly relatable literature, some research has been presented to define a theological anthropology of man and woman, particularly in the Catholic Church. In addition to the published works of Gregg Allison on human embodiment, this study considers the following works.

John Paul II published *The Theology of the Body* in 1997 as a consolidation of catecheses he delivered between September 1979 and November 1984, covering the biblical topics of human personhood in embodiment, sexuality, and marriage. Through his unique and extensive biblical analysis, Pope John Paul II affirms men and women as God's unique image-bearers, intentionally different and yet visibly, physiologically homogenous. He asserts that the study of the human body is not only anthropological but necessarily theological, as humanity is the image of God. Furthermore, the study of man and woman must also address the theology of sex because of the gendered embodiment of all humanity in God's eternal design.<sup>29</sup>

Mary Timothy Prokes has also written several books for a theology of the body.<sup>30</sup> Her publication *Toward a Theology of the Body* serves to define the meaning of embodiment and humanity's material reality. As Pope John Paul II concluded, Prokes reiterates that the purpose of sexuality is the expression of self-giving. As sexual beings, humans have the power to share of themselves in interpersonal relationship.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Jesus Christ provided the ultimate expression of sexuality with his unmatched gift of self. Just as with Pope John Paul II, Prokes articulates insightful foundations of human gendered

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<sup>29</sup> Pope John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997), 47.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993); Mary Timothy Prokes, *Mutuality: The Human Image of Trinitarian Love* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body*, 95. This is the same conclusion drawn by Pope John Paul II in *The Theology of the Body*, 71.

embodiment from biblical interpretation, but she does not develop a model for an ontological definition of women.

From a Protestant perspective, Stanley Grenz likewise defines human sexuality as “the sense of incompleteness, together with the quest for wholeness.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, sexuality equates to the human need to relate not only through marriage but in all aspects of community. As such, sexuality is intrinsic to human identity.<sup>33</sup> Grenz claims the ultimate destiny of humanity to be the reflection of the *imago Dei* to the rest of creation, demonstrating God’s triune character in human community.<sup>34</sup>

In his book *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Marc Cortez also presents a Protestant ontological definition of humanity, recognizing that “our ‘abstract’ understanding of human nature is enfleshed in the everyday decisions that we make as we live out our humanity.”<sup>35</sup> A theological, particularly Christological, study is required to understand humanity’s meaning, function, and place in the world today. Cortez centers his theological anthropology around four critical issues: the *imago Dei*, sexuality, human constitution, and free will. Regarding the focus of gender, Cortez suggests that sexuality is best understood as the foundation of human relationality, a reflection of humanity’s image-bearing nature of a relational God.<sup>36</sup>

Most recently, John Kleinig produced *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body*, providing a markedly Lutheran perspective on the value and

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<sup>32</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, Matrix of Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 19. Many aspects of Grenz’s view of sexuality as relationality will be adapted in the “Sociality” section in chap. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 301.

<sup>34</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 303.

<sup>35</sup> Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 3.

<sup>36</sup> Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 12. See also Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

beauty of the human body.<sup>37</sup> Kleinig praises God's design of and intent for the human body as good. He desires to communicate a Christian Protestant view of the positive and "attractive vision of what is right and good and true" in order to combat the pervasive confusion about the body in both secular and Christian society.<sup>38</sup> The result is essentially a moral and aesthetic argument for the goodness of human embodiment. Regarding gendered embodiment, Kleinig perpetuates the view of ontology of male and female as derived from roles of husband and wife, citing the purposes of male and female as procreation and "community in marriage."<sup>39</sup>

The mentioned authors, as well as some other evangelical authors, speak to the embodied nature of humanity. On the whole, they argue against the separation of the material and immaterial and elevate the intended complementarity of the genders.<sup>40</sup> Each, however, has fallen short of constructing a model of the ontological meaning of woman according to theological anthropology.<sup>41</sup>

### **Theological Anthropology of Women**

A significant amount of research has been conducted in the field of the anthropology of women, but almost no research exists to define a theological anthropology of women. Particular characteristics of the female reality can be derived from the "embodied beings" works previously described. Likewise, a handful of

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<sup>37</sup> John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021).

<sup>38</sup> Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 16.

<sup>39</sup> Affirming "sexual polarity," Kleinig argues that "God created each human being as male or female for the purpose of procreation." Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 192. He goes on to indicate "They [male and female] were created for sexual community and companionship in marriage."

<sup>40</sup> Additional evangelical authors who have also written on embodiment include, but are not limited to, Wayne Grudem, Gregg R. Allison, Dallas Willard, Nancy R. Pearcey, Evan B. Howard, Luke Timothy Johnson, and Preston Sprinkle.

<sup>41</sup> For more information on embodiment as part of human reality and divine design, see Alexandria Ford, "The Implications of an Evangelical Theology of the Body for Christocentric Spiritual Formation" (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).



dissertations reveal some other theological students interested in gender and female identity, but no robust model exists.<sup>42</sup> One Eastern Orthodox theologian, Paul Evdokimov, attempted a theological anthropology of women in the 1950s. His book *Woman and the Salvation of the World* was translated to English in 1994. In this work, Evdokimov calls for a worldwide effort to define the ontological meaning of women according to biblical theology. In the prologue, Evdokimov claims, “Our essay will be justified if it prompts an ecumenical dialogue, a confrontation of anthropologies. Parallel studies each one corroborated by its own tradition, will provide a richer vision of all the possible aspects. ‘For dissensions are necessary, if only to show which of your members are sound’ (1 Cor 11:19).”<sup>43</sup>

The theological anthropological model of woman proposed by Evdokimov centers on the charisms of woman and distinctly reflects his Eastern Orthodox theology. Evdokimov begins his anthropology on the premise that the man-woman was the first archetype of humanity. In his theological anthropology, the perfect human is inseparably male and female, a reciprocal existence of human communion to reflect the divine communion.<sup>44</sup> Following the assertion of the man-woman archetype in creation, Evdokimov describes the state of humanity after the fall, as the communion is broken, and masculine and feminine become un-intertwined and polarized.<sup>45</sup> Following an in-depth review and commentary on matriarchy and patriarchy, in which he praises the epoch of matriarchy and various gynecocracies for instructing scholars in the value of

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<sup>42</sup> Some pertinent dissertations would include, but not be limited to, the following: Katherine Abetz, “What Does It Mean for a Woman to be Created in God’s Image?” (ThD diss., Melbourne College of Divinity, 2012); Johann Marie Vento, “Violence against Women: A Problem for Theological Anthropology” (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1999); Jill Ellen Wamsley, “The Benefits of Understanding Our Identity and Gender” (master’s thesis, The Master’s College, 2012).

<sup>43</sup> Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World: A Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Women*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994), 28.

<sup>44</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 141.

<sup>45</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 146.

women, Evdokimov introduces the archetypes of feminine and masculine. He defines the *Theotokos* as the archetype of the feminine and classifies various attributes and charisms of women according to his Mariology.<sup>46</sup> The archetype of the masculine is identified as St. John the Baptist.<sup>47</sup>

In conclusion, Evdokimov expounds upon the charisms of both man and woman, illustrating the necessity of “a complete mutual *convergence* in an entirely *new* reality.”<sup>48</sup> Though maleness and femaleness are wholly incompatible in their fallen state, under the law of grace and according to the image of Christ, the masculine and feminine will reveal their pure complementarity. According to Evdokimov, maleness and femaleness, in God’s design, neither reduce one another nor overlap in anyway. Rather, they are to be seen as perfect counterparts that will one day be returned to their intended identity, in which “one *includes* the other, without eliminating or mutilating anything.”<sup>49</sup> Evdokimov proposes that the sexes benefit one another as they seek to enrich their understanding of their own sex within archetypal reciprocity. In reference to his selected title of the book, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, Evdokimov calls for saints to deepen their understanding of the mystery of woman according to her charismatic ministry. Finally, Evdokimov boldly implies that it is woman who will save the world, as evidenced in the ministry of her gifts.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 211.

<sup>47</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 227.

<sup>48</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 250 (emphasis original).

<sup>49</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 250.

<sup>50</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 268. Evdokimov goes on to clarify that “the world is saved only in Christ” (Acts 4:14). Though believers are saved through Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross, Evdokimov affirms the Orthodox Church’s liturgical texts that celebrate Mary as “the Gate of the world’s salvation.” Christ alone can save, but Mary gave her son the flesh to accomplish his crucifixion. While Christ is “*the only one . . .*,” the Virgin is *the first*; she walks ahead of humanity, and all follow her. She gives birth to the Way” (212-13; emphasis original).

Evdokimov's Eastern Orthodox theology is clearly imprinted across his presented anthropology and resulting interpretations of being a man and woman. Though his conclusions cannot be directly translated to confessional evangelicalism, his articulation of the meaning of women and the complementarity of the genders must not be ignored. Evdokimov's work must be critically assessed and recognized as a contribution toward a theological anthropological definition of woman and a movement toward affirming complementarity as a facet of female reality. Furthermore, his presentation of archetypal reciprocity provides advancing strides in identifying both the sameness and differentness in the nature of the two genders. Evdokimov's model as presented in *Woman and the Salvation of the World* is robustly engaged in chapter 4 of this study. This study answers Evdokimov's invitation for "an ecumenical dialogue, a confrontation of anthropologies" from the evangelical tradition.<sup>51</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Having identified the significant gap in literature around defining the theological anthropology of women, this chapter concludes that a robust biblical model of the ontological meaning of women is effectively nonexistent. Regarding an ontological meaning of women, the characteristically feminist claim of gender as a socially constructed category is inadequate. Equally insufficient is the historical conservative evangelical approach of defining the ontology of women from particular biblical roles. In an effort toward articulating an ontological definition of women in evangelical Christianity, this thesis hopes to stimulate productive "ecumenical dialogue," responding to Evdokimov's appeal. The goal of this research is to progress toward articulating a theological definition of the ontology of women, a definition that serves to positively

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<sup>51</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 28.

impact the church's theological anthropology and to appropriately direct the church's orthopraxy.

### CHAPTER 3

#### BIBLICAL AFFIRMATIONS OF ONTOLOGICAL GENDER DISTINCTION

A significant gap in literature exists around defining the intrinsic nature of woman, particularly in theology. This study seeks to provide robust scriptural foundations for the study of female-gendered embodiment toward an ontological definition. This chapter of the study introduces biblical observations and theological considerations that are revisited and extensively engaged in chapter 4.

#### **Scriptural Evidence for Gendered Embodiment**

The purpose of this study is not to pursue a somatology but rather a theological anthropology, treating the entire gendered embodied person. Scriptural and scholarly evidence for gendered embodiment abounds. Most notably, Gregg Allison's "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment" and his recent monograph on embodiment will provide a thorough treatment on the scriptural view of human embodiment.<sup>1</sup> Like Allison, I do not wish to elevate the material or immaterial aspects of embodiment over one another, as though the two realms could be fully disentangled. Rather, this study focuses on the gendered aspect of embodiment, presenting gender as permeating the entire embodied person—both material and immaterial aspects.

The most unequivocal evidence of gendered embodiment appears in the Genesis account of the creation of humanity. Humanity, both male and female, were

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<sup>1</sup> See Gregg Allison's "Four Theses on Human Embodiment," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 157-80. This publication provides a compelling treatment of embodiment. Likewise, his recent publication on theological anthropology presents an in-depth presentation of human embodiment, geared for lay Christians; see Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021).

created in the image of God. While this study does not venture to demarcate which attributes of God are revealed in the individual genders, the creation account affirms that both genders reflect and represent God in significant ways. What is also self-evident in Genesis 1:26-27 is that God created two gendered embodied people; he created them male and female. Given God's distinction of humanity into male and female from the onset of creation, the issue of human embodiment as a gendered existence must be given significant consideration.

### **Proposed Evidence for Distinction in Gendered Embodiment**

In effort to address the research questions, the study must first seek to affirm and envision the redemptive truth of female-gendered embodiment.<sup>2</sup> This chapter constructs a scriptural survey of female-gendered embodiment from an ontological perspective by answering the question "Does the Bible address female-gendered embodiment ontologically?" The categories and scriptural observations are introduced in this section and further advanced toward an ontological framework in chapter 5. The scriptural observations are organized according to the categories of created state, temporal state, and restored state.<sup>3</sup> This methodical approach demonstrates that though the Bible asserts the ontological equality of men and women, Scripture does not affirm the sameness of men and women. Rather, Scripture clearly articulates both uniformity and distinction in God's treatment of men and women. As substantiated in the

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<sup>2</sup> The research questions of this study were defined in chap. 1, sect. "Research Questions." Chapter 3 is concerned with addressing the first research question: "What is a theological paradigm to articulate an ontological definition of female-gendered embodiment?"

<sup>3</sup> These categories (created, temporal, and restored states) are also utilized in the proposed definitional framework. The three categories of human existence are timeframes referring to the periods of time (1) before the fall, (2) after the fall and before Christ's second coming, and (3) after the final resurrection into the eschaton, respectively. Notably, the temporal state includes humanity in both the fallen and the redeemed states, as all humanity—both believers and unbelievers—await the second coming of Christ and their own final resurrections.

forthcoming survey, there is scriptural evidence for the ontological distinction in women, though such evidence is typically descriptive rather than prescriptive.

### **Created State**

Focusing on aspects of ontological significance, the Genesis creation account (Gen 1-2) offers several evidences of the value of gendered embodiment according to God's original design.

**Uniformity in purpose.** The first aspect apparent of the different genders is that both male and female were created as the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26-27). Thus, the purpose of both the man and the woman was derived from the reality of their image-bearing nature. Additionally, the divine deliberation (v. 26) includes God's intended purpose for humanity. With trinitarian language, God determines to create humanity in order for them to have dominion over all the earth and over all creation in it. The actualization of God's plan (v. 27) reveals his intention for humanity to be gendered as male and female. From these two verses (vv. 26-27), two incredibly significant aspects of the *imago Dei* are revealed. First, the terms *image* and *likeness* are connected (v. 26). Thus, the vertical (likeness) and horizontal (image) aspects of being image-bearers are linked inseparably. Relating to God as an heir (i.e., a son) and relating to creation as a servant king are two aspects of the same image-bearing design.<sup>4</sup> Second, the terms *image* and *likeness* are linked with both male and female (v. 27).<sup>5</sup> Both genders bear God's

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<sup>4</sup> The hermeneutical study of Gen 1:26-27 completed by Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum can be referenced for a thorough treatment of the *imago Dei* concept, according to the cultural and linguistic context in the Old Testament and ancient Near Eastern world. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 181-202.

<sup>5</sup> Gentry and Wellum argue that the presence of two genders in creation is the basis of multiplication, stating, "The divine image is correlated with the command to rule as God's viceroy . . . . The divine image is *not* to be explained or located in terms of duality of gender in humanity." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 189 (emphasis original).

image and likeness and are thus given the same responsibility and privilege.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the divine image innate to the man and woman affirms humanity's distinction from all other creatures and aspects of God's creation.<sup>7</sup> As Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum conclude, "Man[kind] is the divine image. As servant king and son of God mankind will mediate God's rule to the creation in the context of a covenant relationship with God on the one hand and the earth on the other."<sup>8</sup> More detail on the theology of *imago Dei* is addressed in the forthcoming section titled "Theological Considerations for Female-Gendered Embodiment."

**Uniformity in constitution.** Both male and female were physically created from tangible material and animated with life by God.<sup>9</sup> The physical and God-crafted origination of the man and woman are undeniable.<sup>10</sup> The creation of the woman from the man's materiality emphasizes her constitutional sameness. She was not created in the same way from the same dirt. More poignantly, God fashioned her from the man's own body. She is thus irrefutably "of the same stuff." This sameness of constitution is further

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce Waltke asserts, "Each individual man and woman bears the image of God apart from his or her counterpart." Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 217.

<sup>7</sup> James R. Estep Jr., "Christian Anthropology: Humanity as the *Imago Dei*," in *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development*, ed. James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 201.

<sup>9</sup> When God formed the man from the dust, the language used denotes "shaping" as the work of a potter. As Gordon Wenham writes, "Preeminently, God's shaping skill is seen in the creation of man, whether it be from dust as here or in the womb (Isa 44:2, 24)." Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 59.

<sup>10</sup> Though the man and the woman were shaped and made alive by God, these features of their constitution do not set them apart from the other created things. Rather, humanity's design in, and purpose for, the *imago Dei* exalts them over the rest of God's creation (Gen 1:26-28). Wenham confirms, "Animals are described in exactly the same terms. Gen 1:26-28 affirms the uniqueness of man by stating that man alone is made in God's image and by giving man authority over the animals." Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 61. Note: the terms "man" and "woman" used in the section titled "Created State" are intended to indicate particularity, referring strictly to Adam and Eve (though Eve had not yet received her name until Gen 3:20). These terms are not intended to apply directly to all men and women across history. Though some universal conclusions can be drawn from the creation of Adam and Eve, it would be superficial (and dangerous) to presume a direct, universal application indiscriminately.



emphasized by the creation of both man and woman on the same day of creation (Gen 1:31).

**Uniformity in kind.**<sup>11</sup> In Genesis 1:26-27, God created humankind as both male and female.<sup>12</sup> The categorizations of living things within their kind is consistent with the pattern of creation demonstrated in Genesis 1. God created the vegetation after its kind (v. 12), the water creatures after their kind (v. 21), the birds after their kind (v. 21), and the land beasts after their kind (v. 25). After the completion of the rest of creation, God discusses the creation of a new kind of creature, one unique and set apart from the rest of creation (v. 26). The Genesis 2 account of the naming of the animals reiterates this understanding of man and woman's being of the same kind. As God parades the living creatures in front of the man for him to examine and name, the man becomes increasingly aware that "there was not found a helper suitable for him" (2:19, 20).<sup>13</sup> When God brings the newly formed woman to the man, the man declares her to be of his own substance, bone and flesh (v. 23). Male and female are of the same kind, humanity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The term *kind* is used in a biblical sense, as substantiated in the coming section, rather than in a philosophical sense of the term (e.g., natural kinds, social kinds).

<sup>12</sup> The term *'ādām* is used generically for male and female throughout Gen 1-5. The intended meaning of the term fluidly vacillates among man, Adam, and all of humanity. Though Gentry and Wellum use the term *Man* in their biblical exposition, the authors "would argue in the strongest terms that the image of God applies generically to all humans, both male and female." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 184.

<sup>13</sup> Victor Hamilton suggests that the use of the phrase "suitable for him" literally reads "as in front of him (or according to what is in front of him)." This phrase "suggests that what God creates for Adam will correspond to him. Thus the new creation will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal." Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 175.

<sup>14</sup> Allen Ross asserts that the language "suitable for him" can be understood as "according to his opposite." As such, "woman would share the man's nature; that is, whatever the man received at creation, she too would have . . . ; what he lacked ('not good') she supplied; and it would be safe to say that what she lacked, he supplied, for life in common requires mutual help." Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 126.

**Uniformity in blessing and mandate.** God gives both man and woman his blessing and mandate in Genesis 1:28 for procreation and vocation. Both male and female were blessed by God and mandated to be fruitful, to multiply and fill the earth, to subdue the earth, and to have dominion over the rest of creation.<sup>15</sup> Just as both gendered embodied persons are indispensable for procreation, both gendered embodied persons are equally required for subduing and ruling over creation.<sup>16</sup>

**Uniformity in need for relationship.** A critical aspect of the gendered embodied beings is their need for the other. It was “not good” for man to be alone, so God made a helper corresponding to him (Gen 2:18).<sup>17</sup> From the man’s own flesh, God created the woman. Only after uniting the man and the woman together did God declare all he had made to be “very good” (Gen 1:31). The man’s isolated existence was not good and was not according to his intended design. Humanity was always intended to live in community of male- and female-gendered embodied people. This reality is addressed as sociality in chapter 5.

**Distinction in formation.** God created man and then, separately, created woman (Gen 2:7, 21-22). She was made from Adam’s physicality, though not in the same way that she would soon reproduce from her own body. Rather than the woman’s being

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<sup>15</sup> John Walton elaborates on this sameness of purpose and mandate, discussing the function of humanity as a whole in Gen 1 and the treatment of the first man and woman in Gen 2 as archetypal characteristics of all humanity: “Genesis merges ideas from different ends of the cognitive environment: all humanity is in the image of God and collectively functions in a ruling capacity. People are central in the account of Gen 1 (all functions are directed toward them) and central in the cosmos, functioning as rulers in the image of deity.” John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 176-77.

<sup>16</sup> Ross confirms, “Human life, male and female, thus has great capacity and responsibility by virtue of being the image of God. First, humans may produce life . . . . Second, humans are to have dominion over the world.” Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 113. No differentiation of gender is given for the blessing and mandate in Gen 1:28.

<sup>17</sup> Hamilton expounds on God’s negative assessment of “man’s lack of a corresponding companion. The skies without the luminaries and birds are incomplete. The seas without the fish are incomplete. Without mankind and land animals the earth is incomplete. As a matter of fact, every phenomenon in Gen. 1-2, God excepted, is in need of something else to complete it and to enable it to function.” Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 175.

derived from an act of Adam, God brought forth the woman with no assistance or even consciousness of Adam. Thus, the key actor in both creation of man and woman is God, though the processes were distinct. Demonstrating the ontological equality of man and woman, God used the same elements (physical material and immateriality provided by God) and same model (*imago Dei*) to form both. Emphasizing the distinction of male and female, God created each individually in two distinct iterations.

**Distinction in type.** God created humanity as one kind with two types: male and female.<sup>18</sup> Though they have the same constitution, the basic quality of gender is distinct.<sup>19</sup> The two distinct types of the same kind is consistent with the Genesis pattern of the creation account, establishing the binarity of male and female within humanity. Genesis 1-2 clearly illustrates a pattern of binarity in God's act of creation:

nothing and something  
Creator and creature  
heaven and earth  
formless and void  
light and darkness  
day and night  
evening and morning  
waters above and waters below  
two types of commands: "Let there be" and "Let the earth bring forth"  
dry land and waters  
two great lights (sun and moon)  
creatures of the sea and birds of the air  
work and rest

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<sup>18</sup> The intent of the term *type* is to communicate that male and female are distinct varieties of the same category (humanity). Though they are both human, they are distinct in some fundamental way. Just as day and night are separate varieties within the same category (i.e., day as a 24-hour period of time), male and female are also distinguishable as separate types. Martin Luther used the term "class," stating "God divided mankind into two classes, namely male and female, or a he and a she." Martin Luther, *The Estate of Marriage*, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 45, *Christian in Society II*, ed. Walther I. Brandt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 17-18.

<sup>19</sup> Hamilton helpfully illustrates the distinction in type while maintaining the uniformity in kind: "The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole." Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 175. Though I reject the concept that each gender is one half of a whole, the two genders do in fact constitute humankind collectively. The distinct genders also hold a balance in humankind. Furthermore, though the basic quality of gender is distinct between the two types, the shared kind indicates uniformity in constitution. Thus, the two genders are not essentially different in constitution, essence, or properties.

two trees (of life, of knowledge)  
good and evil<sup>20</sup>

Within the context of this binary pattern, God’s decision to create two distinct types within humanity—male and female—is expected. The reality of humanity’s binarity in gender is clearly articulated in Genesis.<sup>21</sup>

**Summary of observations from creation.** The creation account in Genesis 1-2 indicates various similarities and distinctions between man and woman, according to God’s perfect design.

Table 1. Gender uniformities and distinctions in created state

<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Purpose	Gen 1:26-27
Kind	Gen 1:26-27
Constitution	Gen 1:31
Blessing and Mandate	Gen 1:28
Need for Relationship	Gen 2:18
<i>Distinction in . . .</i>	
Type	Gen 1:27
Formation	Gen 2:7, 21-22

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<sup>20</sup> These instances of binarity in the creation account are pulled directly from Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” 164. See also Allison, *Embodied*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> There are not many resources published on the binary pattern of creation. However, see Danielle Hitchen’s children’s book *Let There Be Light: An Opposites Primer*, Baby Believer (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2018). Furthermore, Megan DeFranza’s *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015) represents an academic treatment of gender binarity, though DeFranza ultimately interprets male and female to be the binary ends upon a spectrum of gender identities. In contrast, DeFranza’s reinterpretation of the binary pattern of creation is not supported by the biblical text. For instance, she asserts that the creation of light and dark as well as day and night allow for gradients of light to exist between the two absolutes (i.e., dawn and dusk). As Allison explicates, the emphasis in the binary pattern is God’s separation of the two binary instances (e.g., separated the waters above and the waters below in Gen 1:6-7). Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” 177. See also Allison, *Embodied*, 43-44.

First, the purpose, kind, constitution, blessing and mandate, and need for relationship are identical, shared with both man and woman. Second, the formation of man and woman were distinct; they were created on the same day in a similar manner but formed separately rather than simultaneously. Additionally, though all of humanity is of the same kind, the fundamental type of the man and woman is distinct, indicating the context of God's binary pattern in creation.

Important limitations for the application of the creation account include the reality that Adam and Eve were the first married couple, so aspects of their relational dynamic cannot be directly or universally applied to all men and women of all time (Gen 2:18-25). This first marriage establishes how all future marriages ought to be patterned (v. 24).<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, being the first man and the first woman, Adam and Eve's origination are exceptional and non-normative (Gen 2:7, 21-22). For instance, not all women are physically derived from all men. Additionally, not all women can be called "Mother of all the living" because all humanity proceeded from Adam and Eve (Gen 3:20).<sup>23</sup> The rest of humanity for all history literally came forth from Eve and her descendants. Thus, the basic similarities and distinctions in male and female evidenced at

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<sup>22</sup> This statement was informed by Thomas L. Constable, "Expository Notes: The Creation of Woman," NetBible, accessed November 8, 2019, <https://netbible.org/bible/Genesis+2>. The two becoming one flesh is an ontological claim (Gen 2:24). Jesus affirmed the ontological nature of the Genesis claim in Matt 19:4-8, declaring, "They are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." More than a physical union in marriage consummation, the joining of the husband and wife indicates a permanent shift in priority. Marriage is a covenant promise to prioritize the other person over oneself and one's other obligations. The narrator's comment in Gen 2:24 intends to apply "the principles of the first marriage to every marriage." Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 70. Furthermore, speaking of the creation of woman from man's rib, Wenham emphasizes the poetic nature of the account, claiming, "The story therefore needs to be closely read, for in its often poetic phraseology are expressed some of the Old Testament's fundamental convictions about the nature and purpose of marriage" (69).

<sup>23</sup> Significantly, Adam's declaration of Eve's name occurred after the fall, whereas his declaration of the woman as "woman" occurred before the fall. The name "Eve" (meaning "life-giver") demonstrated Adam's faith that God would still fulfill his promises to provide them with a seed (Gen 3:16) even after their failure to obey. Though Adam and Eve had proven untrustworthy, God and his word was unfailing. Eve's new name reflected the couple's belief in God's promises and intentions to carry out the creation mandate even after they accepted God's judgment. See Constable, "Expository Notes: Additional Effects on Adam and Eve." See also Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 148: "The name [Eve] celebrates the survival of the race and the victory over death."

their creation are common for all humanity, but the specific details of the man and woman's formation and relationship to one another may not be universal.

### **Temporal State**

Following the entrance of sin in the world, Scripture addresses the post-fall reality for humanity, which includes both the fallenness and the redemption of human beings.<sup>24</sup> Several passages reveal subtle distinctions for female-gendered embodiment in the temporal state. These passages are examined in the following sub-sections.

**Uniformity in guilt.** (Gen 3:6-13) Both man and woman ate the forbidden fruit, had their eyes opened, and hid in shame from God. The guilt of both is made explicit in God's coming judgment of both.<sup>25</sup>

**Uniformity in judgment.** (Gen 3:14-19) Though God does not directly curse humanity, God does curse creation: the serpent (v. 14) and the ground (v. 17). Speaking to the man and the woman, God judges the two objects of humanity's mandate: multiplication and subduing the earth (vv. 16-19).<sup>26</sup> This judgment oracle includes shared judgments for man and woman, though God addresses them individually. In addition to the judgment on the serpent (vv. 14-15), man and woman are addressed individually regarding child-bearing and cultivation, respectively (vv. 16, 17-19). A reading of Genesis 3 held apart from Genesis 1 could lead to misdirected assumptions that the judgments are distinct by gender. However, in light of the Genesis 1:26-28 affirmation

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<sup>24</sup> Many theologians treat post-fall reality of humanity as separate states of fallenness and redemption. One such example, Thomas Boston separates the temporal state into two separate states of existence: "natural man" after the fall and "regenerate man" in a state of grace. See Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> As emphasis on the punishment's fitting the crime, Hamilton claims, "God's word of judgment matches the sin. In response to the man's trespass of eating, God speaks no less than five times of eating in his word to the man (vv. 17 [3 times], 18, 19)." Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 202.

<sup>26</sup> God addresses his judgments to the serpent, the woman, and the man. However, the three direct recipients of God's curses are the serpent, child-bearing, and the ground.

for shared purpose and mandate, the objects of God's judgment in Genesis 3:16-19 are clearly the objectives of the mandate rather than the human agents.<sup>27</sup> The two objectives of humanity's mandate (procreation and vocation) are therefore judged, and the burden of the cursed creation is shared by man and woman.<sup>28</sup>

**Uniformity in requirements as Old Testament community.**<sup>29</sup> God requires all of his people to be holy as he is holy (Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26). In so doing, God commands the obedience of his people. As King Solomon clearly articulated, "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl 12:13 ESV). These requirements are further developed and connected to the term *virtues* in chapter 5.

**Distinction in personal presentation.** Regarding gender, ontological reality must be expressed even to the point of personal presentation (Deut 22:5). Not only is the action of cross-dressing offensive to God, but he declares the people themselves to be an abomination. This Old Testament (OT) law is not exclusively concerned with the superficial expression of fashion. Rather, the law addresses the idolatrous motivation and posture of the offender.<sup>30</sup> The abomination of the entire person, rather than the behavior, endorses ontological implications for personal presentation according to gender.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Derek Kidner states, "In mercy, the curse is on man's realm, not man himself." Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 71.

<sup>28</sup> Kidner parallels the two pains named in the oracles of judgment (Gen 3:16-17). The first pain noted in 3:16 ("*pain* in childbirth") is exactly repeated in 3:17c ("in *toil* you will eat of it"). The pain produced by the man and woman's shared sin becomes a shared burden for them both. Kidner, *Genesis*, 71.

<sup>29</sup> The requirements of the NT community will be addressed in a forthcoming section.

<sup>30</sup> The abomination of the person indicates their participation in "orgiastic rites involving transvestitism, or in some form of pagan worship, or both." Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 240-41. See also Jonathan R. Ziskind, "The Treatment of Women in Deuteronomy: Moral Absolutism and Practicality – Part 2," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (1999): 236.

<sup>31</sup> This aspect of personal presentation will be extensively addressed in chap. 5 regarding gender expression.

**Distinction in societal treatment.** Significantly, various OT laws pertain directly to female-gendered embodiment, detailing how a woman ought to be treated by Israelite society in a variety of circumstances. While the laws are directed at Israelite conduct, the commands indicate something of God's perspective of the ontological meaning of women. The following evaluation includes only those texts that refer exclusively to ontological issues related to female-gendered embodiment across all ages, classes, and relationship statuses. This section does not include passages that deal primarily with requirements for defined relationships (e.g., marriage) or that are nonexclusive to women (e.g., incest).<sup>32</sup>

*Laws regarding female biological functions* (Lev 12:1-8; 15:19-33). These laws specifically address female purification after childbirth and during menstruation. Separating ritual from moral purity is essential for accurately understanding God's provision for women in the Levitical law.<sup>33</sup> Thus, a woman's ritual uncleanness has no bearing on her moral purity. The laws that call for separation communicate the separateness of God's holiness from that which is unclean—either ritually impure or morally impure.<sup>34</sup> In fact, within the context of the Levitical laws, women's normal discharge (15:19-24), or menstruation, is directly mirrored with men's normal seminal emission (15:16-18).<sup>35</sup> God's view, as communicated to Israel in the Levitical law,

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<sup>32</sup> These categorizations are defined by Katie J. McCoy, "Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood and Their Implications for the Dignity of Women" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 17. For a thorough treatment of these laws in the context of Israelite society and Jewish patriarchy, see chaps. 3-5 of McCoy's dissertation. The following descriptions are also informed by McCoy's work.

<sup>33</sup> Jacob Milgrom separates impurity as a moral failing from impurity as a physical infirmity. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 766.

<sup>34</sup> In ancient Israel, blood represented life, and the loss of blood was considered a sign of death. Thus, God, the source of life, was opposed to death. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 767.

<sup>35</sup> W. H. Bellinger Jr., *Leviticus and Numbers*, New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series 3 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 92. Furthermore, the same term used for female discharge (Lev 15:19) is used for male discharge (15:2-3). Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).



demonstrates a positive disposition toward female biological function. Furthermore, the isolation of women during menstruation and following childbirth fostered sanitation and community health as well as provided reprieve for the woman from normal marital and family duties (e.g., marital sexual activity, caring for children, preparing meals). These laws regarding women's biological processes must be seen as provisional for women and as reminders of God's holiness (i.e., set-apartness from uncleanness whether ritual or moral).<sup>36</sup>

*Laws regarding sexual infidelity* (Num 5:11-31; Deut 22:13-21). Katie McCoy asserts three provisions interpolated by God for the accused woman. First, the laws protect women in their vulnerability. The accusers in each of the scenarios are the husbands of the women. Thus, these laws protect women from being wrongfully accused and abused by their husbands.<sup>37</sup> Second, the laws protect the women's innocence from guilt. The women are to be considered innocent until guilt was proven.<sup>38</sup> Third, once proven innocent, a woman's reputation can be restored in the community.<sup>39</sup> In each scenario, God provides for the dignity and value of the women, guarding them from their husbands' exploitation of their vulnerability.

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<sup>36</sup> For a more thorough treatment of the Levitical laws, see McCoy, "Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood," chap. 3, "Provision, Not Punishment: Particular Female Personhood and Laws on Biological Processes."

<sup>37</sup> Due to the nature of the accused crime (Deut 22:13-21), the typically required two witnesses would not have been present. Jonathan R. Ziskind, "The Treatment of Women in Deuteronomy: Moral Absolutism and Practicality – Part 1," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1999): 153.

<sup>38</sup> According to Timothy Ashley, such a law "prevents a jealous husband from punishing his wife on the basis of suspicion alone." Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 124.

<sup>39</sup> For more details on disgraced women, see McCoy, "Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood," chap. 5, "Established, Not Exploited: Particular Female Personhood and Laws on Violation and Coerced Disgrace." As an aside, these OT laws ought to cause the reader to contemplate how God's new covenant community is protecting women from exploitation. As evidenced in the OT law, the institution of marriage was not elevated above the protection of the individual. The reader must consider God's own valuation of the individual people, particularly the vulnerable party, above institutionalized relationship.

*Laws regarding unmarried woman's seduction or sexual assault* (Exod 22:16-17; Deut 22:22-29). The Deuteronomic Code addressing sexual assault “displayed a humanitarian concern for women, which was, in its cultural context, revolutionary.”<sup>40</sup> The Hebrew law limits punishment to the offending party, vindicating the woman and protecting her with a culturally unprecedented equality.<sup>41</sup> Not only does economic status have no bearing on the penalty (e.g., the rape of a slave woman constitutes the same punishment as the rape of a free woman), the attacked woman's testimony is deemed sufficient for Hebrew law. The laws intend a twofold purpose: the punishment of the guilty and the protection of the innocent.<sup>42</sup> Whether the virgin was betrothed or unbetrothed, the OT laws pursue justice for the victim, though the solution may seem abrasive to a contemporary Western reader. Rape is equated with murder and punished as such.<sup>43</sup> Whether the unbetrothed virgin is raped or coerced into sexual relations, the offending man is required to financially recompense the father of the virgin and to vindicate the reputation of the woman by marrying her, guaranteeing her future security.<sup>44</sup>

McCoy's argument verifies that the distinctions of the societal treatment of women in the OT community “demonstrate God's care for and defense of women's equal value and shared dignity.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> McCoy, “Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood,” 149.

<sup>41</sup> Ziskind, “The Treatment of Women in Deuteronomy – Part 2,” 232.

<sup>42</sup> Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 244.

<sup>43</sup> The intensity of the punishment is due to the offensiveness of the sin in the eyes of God. Evil must be removed from the midst of God's people (Deut 22:20). Ziskind, “The Treatment of Women in Deuteronomy – Part 2,” 232.

<sup>44</sup> Various views exist as to whether the unbetrothed virgin is raped or sexually coerced. Regardless, the Hebrew law protects her in the immediate present and long-term future. For further detail, see McCoy, “Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood,” chap. 4, “Vindicated, Not Victimized: Particular Female Personhood and Accusations of Infidelity.”

<sup>45</sup> The thesis of Katie McCoy's dissertation is as follows: “When interpreted according to their cultural context, Old Testament laws concerning particular female personhood demonstrate God's care for and defense of women's equal value and shared dignity, according to a relational pattern that is compatible

**Uniformity in requirements as new covenant community.**<sup>46</sup> God requires all of his people to be holy as he is holy (1 Pet 1:15-16). God is indiscriminate in his requirement for holiness from his people. Likewise, he indiscriminately provides the means by which his people can pursue holiness. Upon placing their faith in the atoning work of Christ, the Spirit of God indwells believers, enabling them to desire and do the things of God (Acts 2:4, 17-18, 22-24, 38-42; Heb 8:10). Extensive treatment of requirements in the new covenant community can be gleaned from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. Most notably for the purposes of this study, with the exclusion of particular relationships, Paul treats men and women uniformly in the community requirements.<sup>47</sup> Alongside the OT community requirements, the requirements of the new covenant community are further addressed and associated with the term *virtues* in chapter 5.

**Uniformity in union with Christ.** There is no distinction of gender or of particularities (e.g., ethnicity, nationality, age) in the body of Christ (Gal 3:28). This passage does not eradicate the existence of gender in the new covenant community. Rather, as Owen Strachan states, "It *does* mean that our fundamental reality in life is our identity in Christ."<sup>48</sup> Union with Christ gives a foundation to humanity's identity, both

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with gender complementarity." McCoy, "Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood," 13. McCoy's research and explanations are compelling and adequately substantiate her claim. While I uphold her interpretation of the OT law and of God's intention to protect the value and dignity of women, my thesis makes no claims to McCoy's perspective on patriarchal complementarianism.

<sup>46</sup> The new covenant community in this study is defined as the body of believers that belong to the new covenant, which was prophesied in Jer 31 and inaugurated with Christ's death and resurrection. The new covenant community is synonymous with the catholic (universal) church.

<sup>47</sup> Ephesians is divided to two halves: (1) all believers "are called by the Triune God to a destiny beyond our imagination," and (2) "how we who are called by God are to fulfill his plan and purpose in practical terms of day-to-day living." The destiny is shared with all believers. Likewise, the requirements are shared with all believers. However, there are defined relationships that do address gender-specific requirements; "Paul describes different relationships inside and outside the covenant community that are now altered and transformed by our new calling and destiny . . . : relationships in marriage between husband and wife . . . , between parents and children . . . , between masters and slaves . . . , [and] our relationship to the enemy and spiritual warfare." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 565-66.

<sup>48</sup> Owen Strachan, "Introduction: How Does the Gospel Shape Gender?," in *Good: The Joy of Christian Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Jonathan Parnell and Owen Strachan (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2014), xiv.

temporal and eternal. The church's union with Christ also eliminates gender stereotypes, clearly providing a culturally unbound foundation for gender identity.<sup>49</sup> Because of believers' union with Christ, all the benefits of Christ have been distributed to believers through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>50</sup>

**Uniformity in mission.** When Jesus commissions his disciples for their work of ministry in the world, he does not distinguish between genders (Matt 28:16-20).<sup>51</sup> The universality of the Great Commission for all believers is made clear in various scenarios. First, following a miracle performed by Jesus, the recipients of the miracle often responded by telling others about what Christ had accomplished for them.<sup>52</sup> Throughout Jesus's ministry, this early form of evangelism was shared by men and women (Mark 5:15-20; John 4:4-42; 9:1-39; Acts 8:25-39). Additionally, Mary Magdalene was the first person to testify of Jesus's resurrection (John 20:1-18).<sup>53</sup> Then, following Christ's

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<sup>49</sup> Strachan, "How Does the Gospel Shape Gender?," xiv. In contrast to the claims of this study, Strachan claims that the essential reality of men is to be "self-sacrificial leaders" and that the essential reality of women is to be "fearless followers of Christ." This assertion of male leadership and female followership is inextricably tied to Strachan's view of gender roles within marriage.

<sup>50</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: A New Translation*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 3.1.1-4. (Beveridge, 462-66).

<sup>51</sup> In conveying the intended meaning of *mission*, Andreas Köstenberger's explanation is beneficial: "Mission is the specific task or purpose which a person or group seeks to accomplish . . . , be it sending or being sent, coming and going, descending and ascending, gathering by calling others to follow, or following." Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 199. Likewise, Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert emphasize the two operating functions of the term *mission*: "(1) being sent and (2) being given a task." Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 19.

<sup>52</sup> The miracles referred to in this section were both spiritual and physical healing. Thus, though these healings were before the issuing of the Great Commission at Christ's ascension, the central person of the gospel would have been revealed to those spiritually healed, and their testimony would center on the works and person of the Messiah (John 4:29-30). In the instances that Jesus commanded the healed person to refrain from testifying about the miracle (Mark 1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), the exhortation of silence had more to do with the location (Jewish or Gentile town) and/or timing of the event in Jesus's ministry than it did with an intention to spread the news of Jesus Christ. The healing would have been a distraction from Jesus's ministry and/or caused animosity against Jesus before his even entering a village. See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 232.

<sup>53</sup> As D. A. Carson elucidates, a woman's witness would not have been viable in court. Thus, in God's selection of Mary Magdalene as the first witness to Christ's resurrection and as the vessel by

ascension, as is apparent in Acts and the remainder of the New Testament, the apostles dedicated their lives to local and foreign missions. As the apostles made disciples across the known world, men and women from various nations came to repent, believe, and join in the movement of the new covenant community (Acts 2:37-47; 5:14-16; 8:12).<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, many men and women were commended by the apostles for their partnership in the spreading the gospel (Rom 16:1-15; Phil 4:2-3; Col 4:15; 2 John 1:1-2).

**Exceptional topics: Marriage and church community.** Some special attention must be diverted to the unique relational reality of the covenant of marriage and the community of the church.

*Marriage.* The covenant relationship of marriage is exclusive to the individual partners covenanted together in marriage.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the marriage relationship and all related characteristics are exceptional to married individuals within the context of their respective marriages. Particular aspects of ontological significance can be gleaned from biblical passages pertaining to marriage (Gen 2; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Cor 7; Eph 5; Col 3; 1 Pet 3).<sup>56</sup> The following treatment of these passages does not address roles or functions within marriage, focusing exclusively on ontology.

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which to convey the news to the disciples, God demonstrates his consistent pleasure “to choose what the world deems foolish to shame the wise, so that no-one may boast before him (cf. 1 Cor. 1:27-29).” D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 1991), 636.

<sup>54</sup> The apostles would have been the first “itinerant missionaries.” See I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 123.

<sup>55</sup> The commitment language used to describe the first marriage is indicative of a covenant. The terms “leave” (or forsake) and “joined” (or cling or stick) are frequently used regarding Israel’s covenant with the Lord. Israel is commanded to not forsake the covenant (Deut 12:19; 14:27; 29:24), and God promises not to forsake Israel (Deut 31:8; Josh 1:5). Likewise, Israel is also commanded to cling to the Lord (Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:5). See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 70-71.

<sup>56</sup> In Mark 10:6-8, Jesus quotes both Gen 1:27 and 2:24 to communicate God’s objective of the marriage covenant. Gen 1:27 provides the foundation for the union, establishing the binarity of gender, shared image-bearing, and mutual complementarity of men and women. Then, the Gen 2:24 pattern of leaving and cleaving clearly expresses the permanence and indivisibility of marriage. In effect, “it lifts marriage from being a mere contract of mutual convenience to an ‘ontological’ status.” France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 392. Though Moses provided a means of acceptable divorce “because of your hard hearts,” marriage was intended to be a lifelong, covenantal commitment (Mark 10:4-5, 9).

*Uniformity in covenantal commitment.* As declared in Genesis 2:24, the two become one flesh and are bound to one another in total commitment.<sup>57</sup> Holiness in marriage is expressed as singular commitment to one another—holistic faithfulness to the covenant. Malachi 2:13-16 reveals that the perpetrator of unfaithfulness fails to guard his “spirit” rather than his body. The Lord declares, “So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously [against the wife of your youth]” (v. 16). Holiness in marriage is not simply physical virtue; faithfulness requires the commitment of the entire embodied person—body and spirit. It is also noteworthy that 1 Corinthians 7:34 declares that an unmarried woman can be holy in body and spirit, addressing her ontological meaning as a female embodied being. Thus, a female embodied being can fulfill her purpose and mandate without entering into marriage—or consequently into motherhood. Her ontological reality is thus detached from her roles.

*Distinction in some requirements.* Though many passages speak to distinctions in carrying out the commitments of marriage between men and women (Eph 5; Col 3; 1 Pet 3), these passages do not directly inform the ontological meaning of men or women.<sup>58</sup> For instance, woman as the weaker vessel could refer to her vulnerability in her followership position—not to a weakness in her intrinsic nature (1 Pet 3:7).<sup>59</sup> The

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<sup>57</sup> The divine intent for marriage is revealed in the Gen 2:18-25 account as “one man and one woman becoming one flesh and living together in their integrity.” The narrator makes the foundation of marriage explicit in his use of the present tense: “this is why a man leaves.” Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 127. See also France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 392-93. The various views on biblical allowance for divorce in particular scenarios are not addressed in this study. Though I recognize the existence of biblical exceptions for divorce, those exceptions do not alter the divine intent for marriage.

<sup>58</sup> The requirements for spouses are clearly distinct as the husbands and the wives are addressed separately. Requirements for husbands are detailed in Eph 5:25-33; Col 3:19; 1 Pet 3:7. Likewise, requirements for wives are itemized in Eph 5:22-24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1-6. Though the details of the requirements are distinct, the model (Christ) is the same. Christ as the model for the husband is illustrated in Eph 5:25-30, and Christ as the model for the wife is seen in both the church’s relationship to Christ (Eph 5:22-24) and the members’ relationships to one another (Phil 2:5-9). Similarly, the goal of the marriage requirements—and the church community requirements—is the same for husband and wife: harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit (1 Pet 3:8; see also Phil 2:1-4).

<sup>59</sup> Grudem consents that women can be understood as the weaker party in marriage, and “Peter therefore directs husbands that instead of misusing their authority for selfish ends they should use it to ‘bestow honour’ on their wives.” Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Nottingham, UK: IVP Academic, 2009), 110. Another possible interpretation considers the weakness of the woman to refer to a woman’s typically “inferior physical strength.” See Greg W. Forbes, Andreas J.

woman's position is deferential because she has placed herself in a more vulnerable position as a submissive wife. Similarly, 1 Timothy 2:9-15 communicates various functional distinctions for women within particular covenantal relationships (e.g., marriage).<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, Paul's discussion regarding women's head coverings while praying and prophesying asserts various strong ontological claims (1 Cor 11:2-16). However, Paul's words cannot be perverted to intend unequal glories, or unequal ontologies, between man and woman. Much theological debate centers on this passage, as the text is one of the lengthiest discussions on the relationship between the genders.<sup>61</sup> Paul's matter-of-fact language and brief explanations open the door for varying views of his intended meaning—whether readers summarily accept the words at face value (ignoring their own cultural perspective), creatively decipher the passage to fit their own cultural perspective, or dismiss Paul's words entirely as limited to the cultural context of first-century Corinth. It is plausible to contend that the passage reveals Paul's primary concern of the breakdown of gender distinctions “by analogy suggesting that the women were blurring the male/female relationships in general and sexual distinctions in particular.”<sup>62</sup> Additionally, Gordon Fee determines that the woman is rightly considered

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Köstenberger, and Robert W. Yarbrough, *1 Peter*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2014), 131. Such an interpretation would be affirmed by empirical research on male and female physical strength and size. Additionally, physical strength differences do not inform ontological meaning. Regardless of one's selected interpretation of “weaker” in 1 Pet 3:7, the emphasis of the verse lies on the action of the husband rather than the essential nature of his wife—much less the ontological meaning of all women.

<sup>60</sup> For a compelling and extensive argument that “woman” (1 Tim 2:11-15) refers to “wife,” see John R. Master and Jonathan L. Master, “Who Is the ‘Woman’ in 1 Timothy 2?,” *McMaster Journal of Theology & Ministry* 10 (2008-2009): 3-21.

<sup>61</sup> David Garland affirms that “because it contains one of the lengthiest discussions in the NT on the relationship between men and women, it has attracted the attention of many and the indignation of some.” David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 505.

<sup>62</sup> According to Gordon Fee, “Paul's understanding of the metaphor, therefore, . . . is ‘head’ as ‘source,’ especially ‘source of life,’ or origin.” Therefore, “Paul's concern is not hierarchical (who has authority over whom), but relational (the unique relationships that are predicated on one's being the source of the other's existence). Indeed, he says nothing about man's authority.” Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 555-56.

the glory of man because she was “*necessary* for him. She exists to his honor as the one who having come from the man is the one companion suitable to him, so that he might be complete and that together they might form humanity.”<sup>63</sup> Since the claim of woman being man’s glory (v. 7) is followed by Paul’s reminder of the mutual dependence (v. 11) and uniformity in origination as coming from God (v. 12), the passage affirms that “God has so arranged things that ‘in the Lord’ the one cannot exist without the other.”<sup>64</sup>

Similarly, in another interpretation of the passage, David E. Garland affirms male authority within marriage but focuses on the Corinthian context of a shame/honor society. For Garland, “the primary theme in the passage concerns the shame that attaches to a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered.”<sup>65</sup> Regardless of readers’ convictions on an appropriate interpretation of the passage, 1 Corinthians 11 cannot be considered conclusive evidence of ontological inequality.

*Church community.* The commitment of church community is exclusive to the individual members joined together in the local church body. As will be demonstrated, in the NT design, the leaders and church members are committed to one another. Moreover, the leaders and members share in community commitment regardless of gender. However, some particular scriptural requirements are defined for men and women regarding appropriate participation in the church. Various examples of these shared commitments and distinct requirements are discussed in the following sub-sections.

*Uniformity in commitment.* Significant scriptural evidence of the commitment of church members and their responsibility toward one another exists throughout the

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<sup>63</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 572-73.

<sup>64</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 578-79. Fee goes on to declare that “both man and woman, not just man, are from God. The one was created from the dust, the other through the man, and now finally both through woman. This seems clearly designed to keep the earlier argument from being read in a way that would subordinate women to men” (579).

<sup>65</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 506.



NT.<sup>66</sup> In addition to these descriptive accounts, several biblical metaphors assert the importance of church membership: a physical body, a flock of sheep, a family unit, and a temple structure.<sup>67</sup> Each of these metaphors speaks definitively to the scriptural evidence for church membership, the vital connection of the church members to one another, and the posture of the heart of the church members.<sup>68</sup> Church community requires deep, personal commitment of self, regardless of gender. In the words of Timothy Paul Jones, “No church member may claim immunity from accountability, regardless of his or her position in the community.”<sup>69</sup>

*Distinction in some requirements.* Various passages speak to distinctions in participating in church community, specifically regarding particular positions in the church. The purpose of interacting with these passages is not to define church leadership roles.<sup>70</sup> Rather, this study substantiates that though various distinctions in roles may be articulated in Scripture, the roles are not indicative or definitive of ontology. The roles, whether accepted at face value or interpreted non-traditionally, indicate which persons may be acceptable to assume the role but do not indicate the intrinsic nature of the

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<sup>66</sup> Matt 18:15-18, 19-20, 21-35; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; 1 Cor 12:4-13; 2 Thess 3:6-15. Interestingly, the specific “marriage” passages (e.g., Eph 5; Col 3; 1 Pet 3) cannot be rejected as irrelevant to the broader church community in so much as they serve as foundational descriptions for a body of believers. Mutual submission, self-sacrificing love, and humility are commanded of every believer in community with other believers (e.g., Matt 20:26-28; Eph 5:21; Phil 2:3; 1 Pet 5:5). In reference to 1 Pet 3, Karen Jobes declares, “How shortsighted it is to use this passage as if it were a marriage manual simply addressing the relationship between husbands and wives!” Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 209. She goes on to state that Peter’s directives for the particular groups of people (i.e., slaves, wives, and husbands) is part of a “unit of discourse that begins with the exhortation for Christians to live such good lives among the pagans that they might ultimately glorify God (2:11)” (210).

<sup>67</sup> Sam Emadi, “Metaphors and Membership: How Biblical Metaphors for the Church Require Church Membership,” 9Marks, May 7, 2019. <https://www.9marks.org/article/metaphors-and-membership-how-biblical-metaphors-for-the-church-require-church-membership/>.

<sup>68</sup> For further analysis on the listed metaphors, see Emadi, “Metaphors and Membership.”

<sup>69</sup> Timothy Paul Jones, “Part Two: Old Covenant Precedents for Leadership through Followership,” in *The God Who Goes before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership*, ed. Michael S. Wilder and Timothy P. Jones (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), 76.

<sup>70</sup> As noted previously, the intent of this study is not to define gender roles. I simply intend to communicate that though roles may exist, the roles themselves cannot be used to define the ontological meaning of men or women.

persons. Furthermore, these passages do not make any ontological suggestions regarding the other people who are unqualified to pursue particular roles. Regarding the office of overseer, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 describes the character as evidenced by his behavior.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the qualifications deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 identify the inner character required of a deacons, as discernible in their actions. Paul's emphasis on appropriate behavior is made clear in verse 15b: "I write to you so that you will know how one ought to *conduct* himself in the household of God" (emphasis original). The qualifications lists for these two leadership positions may indicate limitations by gender, but they certainly do not provide ontological definitions of either gender.<sup>72</sup> In the same way, the Titus 1:5-16 qualifications for elders define the required behavior of a potential elder. While verses 15-16 indicate that the consciences and minds of unbelievers are defiled, Paul emphasizes that "they profess to know God, but by their *deeds* they deny him" (emphasis original). Thus, the outward behavior demonstrates the inward unbelief of those who are unfit to be elders. Again, no ontological claim is made regarding gender. Finally, the third church position that seems to be designated by a list of qualifications is that of the widow (1 Tim 5:3-16). As with the elder and deacon, the qualifications of widows who are acceptable "to be put on the list" (v. 9) are signified by particular behaviors (vv. 5-13) or age (vv. 5, 11). While only women can be included on the widow list, those women must meet particular requirements of conduct that demonstrate their faith (vv. 5b, 9-10) and their vulnerability in the culture (v. 5a). In conclusion, though gender may be indicated as a prerequisite for various church positions, the qualifications lists of those positions do not provide ontological definitions of either gender.

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<sup>71</sup> In this study, the terms *elder*, *pastor*, *overseer*, and *bishop* are treated as synonymous in title, criteria, and responsibilities. *Deacon* is treated as a separate office. This is also the interpretation of Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, rev. and exp. ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995).

<sup>72</sup> For an example of limitations of church office due to gender, see Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 59-63. See also Dorothy Kelley Patterson, "What Should a Woman Do in the Church?," in *Women in the Church: An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 149-74.

**Summary of observations from temporal state.** A systematic scriptural survey reveals considerable uniformities in God’s treatment of his people, regardless of gender. Though less pronounced, a few meaningful distinctions between the genders are also disclosed, regardless of particular covenantal relationships (i.e., marriage and church community).

Table 2. Gender uniformities and distinctions in temporal state

<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Guilt	Gen 3:6-13
Judgment	Gen 3:14-19
Requirements as OT Community	Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26
Requirements as NT Community	Eph 4:1-16; 1 Pet 1:15-16
Union with Christ	Gal 3:28
Mission	Matt 28:16-20
<i>Distinction in . . .</i>	
Personal Presentation	Deut 22:5
Societal Treatment	Exod 22:16-17; Lev 12:1-8; 15:19-33; Num 5:11-31; Deut 22:13-21, 22-29

Outside of the context of the defined covenantal relationships (marriage and church community), God’s treatment of the ontological nature of gender is largely indistinct.<sup>73</sup> Scriptural evidence points to two gender distinctions in the OT community. The distinctions in personal presentation and societal treatment indicate the ontological

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<sup>73</sup> As previously substantiated, God’s restrictions and divisions of gender within the particular covenantal relationships of marriage and church community are not ontological. Defined roles, whether interpreted traditionally or non-traditionally, indicate the appropriate behavior of persons in the role but do not indicate the essential nature of the person.

reality of distinction between men and women. Scriptural gender distinctions in the new covenant community appear less obvious and seem to be limited to the presentation of and conduct of women within formally defined relationships (marriage and church community). In summary, evidence across the Bible as a whole indicates the principal distinction in the genders to be a distinction in type, followed by its expression evidenced in personal presentation, societal treatment, and within particular relationships (i.e., marriage and church community).

### **Restored State**

(Matt 22:26-30; Mark 12:18-27) The final culmination of God's redemptive act, inaugurated by Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, will bring complete restoration to his people and his creation. Though Scripture has much to say about the temporal state of humanity, less is explicitly clear in Scripture regarding the eschatological reality for female-gendered embodied beings. However, some particular ontological aspects are revealed.

**Uniformity in eternal reality of gendered embodiment.** Though human marriage is presumed to cease existence in the new heavens and new earth, gendered embodiment is an eternal reality.<sup>74</sup> Logically, "there is certainly sex [i.e., gender] in Heaven simply because there are human beings in Heaven."<sup>75</sup> As the final resurrection of the body is a critical assurance for believers, the complete embodied person will be raised—including the physical evidences of maleness or femaleness.<sup>76</sup> Christ's

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Kreeft, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven . . . But Never Dreamed of Asking* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990). In particular, in chap. 8 "Is There Sex in Heaven?", Kreeft provides excellent evidence for the eternality of gender. Furthermore, Matt 22:30 records Jesus's response to the Sadducees, indicating that with regard to marriage, humanity will be "like angels in heaven." As Kreeft aptly distinguishes, Jesus did not indicate that humanity would bear any other similarities to the angels, "such as lacking physical bodies" or indistinct genders (p. 129).

<sup>75</sup> Kreeft, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven*, 128.

<sup>76</sup> As Stanley Grenz writes, "To leave sexuality behind is to undercut the significance of the resurrection. This central Christian doctrine indicates that sexuality is not eradicated en route to eternity."

resurrected body was recognizable, bearing significant resemblance to his pre-resurrected body. The physical correspondence is evident by the recognition and belief of his followers at Jesus's reappearances.<sup>77</sup> Christ's physicality was evidenced in his crucifixion scars (John 20:24-29), substantiated by his literal consumption of food (Luke 24:41-42), and made undisputable in Christ's own claim "Touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). Just as Christ's incarnate form was a gendered body, so too his resurrected body would assuredly be gendered. Thus, the reality that female-gendered embodiment will exist for eternity is substantiated and compelling. Not only will the female person persist in the intermediate state but also in the restored state, she will receive her female-gendered resurrected body as expressive of her female-gendered body in her earthly existence.<sup>78</sup> Gendered embodiment will exist in heaven, and any earthly conflict on the expression of gender will also be alleviated. The manner in which female-gendered embodiment is expressed in the eschaton, however, can only be speculated.<sup>79</sup>

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Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, Matrix of Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 301. The traditional assumption from the text is that human marriage will cease to exist in eternity (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25). By logical consequence, sexual intercourse and child-bearing will also cease to exist in eternity. It is worth noting that historically Grenz's terminology around gender is troublesome. In his *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), Grenz uses the term *sexuality* interchangeably with the concepts of biological sex, gender, sexual activity, and sociality. This study's engagement with Grenz's concept of *sexuality* is limited to his discussion of sexuality as the bonding, relational aspect of human embodiment.

<sup>77</sup> Matt 28:9, 16-17; Luke 24:13-35; John 20:19-28; 21:1-2; Acts 1:3; 9:3-5; 1 Cor 15:6-7. Jesus Christ's various reappearances after his resurrection are marked by a recognition of him as Jesus, substantiating the resemblance of his resurrected body to his pre-resurrected body. In fact, in the cases where Christ was not recognized, Scripture indicates that divine intervention prevented people from recognizing Christ for a particular time: "but their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him" until "their eyes were opened and they recognized Him" (Luke 24:16, 31).

<sup>78</sup> Peter Kreeft asserts, "The resurrection body perfectly expresses its soul, and since souls are innately sexual, that body will perfectly express its soul's true sexual identity." Kreeft, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven*, 124. While I do not share Kreeft's division of body and soul, I do appreciate his emphasis on the existence of gender in the restored state. The resurrection body will perfectly express the gendered embodied person as that person was in her earthly existence.

<sup>79</sup> As each was a picture of the reality to come, the earthly roles of husband/wife, pastor/congregation, and parents/children will cease to be necessary in eternity. Thus, the ontological meaning of men and women cannot be derived from these temporal functions.

**Ultimate fulfillment of temporal roles.** Unlike gendered embodiment, biblical roles are temporal and will not be identical in the restored state. Christ’s finished work of redemption will ultimately and definitively fulfill the roles that were temporarily executed by his people. These roles are addressed further in the forthcoming sections.

**Summary of observations from restored state.** Scripture offers some explanation of the eschatological reality for female-gendered embodiment.

Table 3. Gender uniformity in restored state

<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Eternal Reality of Gendered Embodiment	Luke 24:39

The central observation of the restored state is that gendered embodiment is an eternal reality. Both male- and female-gendered embodied beings will exist in the new heavens and new earth. However, gender distinctions in the restored states are less explicit in Scripture. In order for the distinctions to be eternal, the gender distinctions must be ontological and not derivational of gender roles, which are temporary and seemingly isolated to the temporal state.<sup>80</sup> The reality of gender distinctions in formation and type are both ontological and eternal since these distinctions occurred at the origination of humanity, a situation that will not be reconstructed.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, one might infer that the new heavens and new earth will indeed have an organized society.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> By “limited to the temporal state,” I intend to communicate that in the restored state, the biblical roles will have been fulfilled and are no longer necessary in the same expression as the temporal state.

<sup>81</sup> Gen 9:8-17; Pss 37:29; 104:5; Isa 45:18; 2 Pet 3:10-18.

<sup>82</sup> The language in Rev 21 for the new heavens and new earth indicates God’s dwelling among his people (v. 3). Furthermore, the city of new Jerusalem is said to be illumined by the glory of God such

Thus, though the characteristics and requirements of new Jerusalem's society will be notably different from that of a fallen civilization, there could plausibly be expectations for personal presentation and treatment of others in the restored state. Without the presence of sin, the restored community will not need the requirements to protect the vulnerable or to guard against wickedness. However, the requirements could be understood as the freedom to live in the manner that humanity was designed, unrestrained by judgment, insecurity, or ignorance. Gendered embodiment will exist in the new heavens and new earth, necessarily implying that the expression of gendered embodiment will exist in the restored state.<sup>83</sup>

### **Theological Considerations for Female-Gendered Embodiment**

In addition to the above-listed scriptural affirmations of female-gendered embodiment, various theological considerations must be addressed. Though discussed briefly in previous sections, the *imago Dei* and biblical roles must be more thoroughly addressed to develop a theologically appropriate definition of female-gendered embodiment.

#### **The *Imago Dei***

The image-bearing design of humanity is biblically indisputable (Gen 1:27). However, many theological perspectives exist regarding the *imago Dei*. This section addresses the four prominent views and concludes with a fifth recommended perspective

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that "the nations walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it" (vv. 22-26). In order to have established nations, kings, and a city, some form a society must exist.

<sup>83</sup> As Kreeft writes, "Sexuality [gender] . . . is an essential aspect of our identity, spiritual as well as physical. Even if sex were *not* spiritual, there would be sex in Heaven because of the resurrection of the body." Kreeft, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven*, 128 (emphasis original). Kreeft goes on to elaborate on the expression of sexual activity (intercourse) existing in heaven, which is a speculative stance that I have neither included nor substantiated in this study.

which sustains that no scriptural explanation is offered to differentiate the characteristics of God according to gender.<sup>84</sup>

**Functional perspective of *imago Dei*.** This perspective designates the *imago Dei* as the functional application of God's nature onto humanity. Thus, the functions and purposes of humanity reflect aspects of God's nature.<sup>85</sup> As God intended for humanity to rule and oversee the rest of his creation, humanity's work functionally represents God. The error with this view lies in the misplaced causality. Humanity's ruling function is the result of bearing God's image rather than the essence of the image itself.<sup>86</sup>

**Relational perspective of *imago Dei*.** The relational perspective isolates the social capacity of humanity as the prominent aspect of image-bearing.<sup>87</sup> Thus, humanity seems to represent God only—or primarily—in this capacity to relate to God and to other humans. Though humanity does have the design and capacity for relationship, which is both intended by and originated in God's own nature, the basis of the *imago Dei* cannot be isolated to this single characteristic of being human.<sup>88</sup> The sociality of humanity is be further explored and defined in chapter 5 of this study, and the research indicates the significance of relationality, or sociality, for gender interaction.

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<sup>84</sup> The four categories of historical perspectives of *imago Dei* (functional, relational, substantive, and teleological) are provided by Estep, "Christian Anthropology," 17-18.

<sup>85</sup> Estep, "Christian Anthropology," 18.

<sup>86</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 185, 188. See also Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 96. Notably, a similar misunderstanding of function as definitive of essence is indicative of the current evangelical gender discussion as well.

<sup>87</sup> Estep, "Christian Anthropology," 18.

<sup>88</sup> The relational view of image-bearing was championed by Karl Barth, indicating that "the divine image means that God can enter into personal relationships with man, speak to him, and make covenants with him." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 185. See also Karl Barth's relational perspective, or "the existence of the I and Thou in confrontation." Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation*, vol. 3, pt. 1, ed. T. F. Torrance, and G. W. Bromiley (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 185.



**Substantive perspective of *imago Dei*.** This view determines that some substantive aspect of being human represents God. This prevalent perspective includes various views of what the key image-bearing aspect would be.<sup>89</sup> Some views champion a psychological representation and likeness to God. Others insist that humanity physically represents God in temporal form. Still other views espouse humanity's ethical or moral capability as the outworking of the *imago Dei*. The majority view holds that humanity shares mental and spiritual qualities with God.<sup>90</sup> However, there has been no historical consensus around precisely what the mental and spiritual qualities might be.<sup>91</sup> The primary issue with this majority view is that the perspective separates the image from the likeness, insisting that the image is the natural aspect and the likeness is the supernatural aspect of humanity.<sup>92</sup> Isolating image-bearing as physical unduly separates humankind's physicality from spirituality.

**Teleological perspective of *imago Dei*.** In the teleological view, humanity's final objective is to be the image and likeness of God. Though humanity currently bears God's image, realization of the full *imago Dei* will be an eschatological reality. Thus, the teleological perspective presents a post-fall view of the *imago Dei*, since only fallen humanity requires redemption. This view seems to overlook the pre-fall aspect of being image-bearers by emphasizing that the ultimate objective (*imago Dei*) has not yet been attained.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Estep, "Christian Anthropology," 17-18.

<sup>90</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 186.

<sup>91</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 30. See also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 185.

<sup>92</sup> This separation of natural (image) from supernatural (likeness) originates with Irenaeus. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 185.

<sup>93</sup> Estep, "Christian Anthropology," 18.

**Ontological perspective of *imago Dei*.** Each of the above perspectives falls short of holistically describing the extent to which humanity bears God’s image and likeness.<sup>94</sup> Only an ontological approach appropriately recognizes the whole person as an image-bearer representing God as his vice-gerents on earth. As communicated by Allison, the above approaches share a common fault of treating humans “like the many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Rather, in our humanness, we are constructed holistically with a wholeness and completeness that does not allow us to be divided into this part or that part. We are human beings in our entirety . . . [and] are created in the image of God.”<sup>95</sup> Because this ontological perspective considers the whole person, the view includes both the vertical and horizontal aspects of humanity’s image-bearing. Further, Gentry and Wellum warn, “It is important to note that this definition of the divine image is not a functional but an *ontological* one.”<sup>96</sup> The authors are referring to the ontological definition of *imago Dei* that incorporates both the vertical (sonship) and horizontal (servant kingship) aspects of humanity’s image-bearing nature.<sup>97</sup>

As the whole person, material and immaterial, is designed in the image of God, this bears significant implications for an appropriate theological understanding of gendered embodiment. First, both male and female bear God’s image—materially and immaterially.<sup>98</sup> Second, no scriptural explanation is offered to differentiate the characteristics of God that are solely manifest in specific genders. In other words, the

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<sup>94</sup> Gentry and Wellum contend that the historical views fail to satisfy “the grammatical and historical interpretation of the text.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 186.

<sup>95</sup> Gregg R. Allison, “Humanity, Sin, and Christian Education,” in *A Theology for Christian Education*, ed. James Riley Estep Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison (Nashville: Broadman-Holman, 2008), 180.

<sup>96</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200 (emphasis original).

<sup>97</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 194-95. *Imago Dei* is best defined as a “divine-human relationship with two dimensions” being “a covenant relationship between God and man [sonship], and . . . a covenant relationship between man and the earth [servant kingship]” (200).

<sup>98</sup> Estep, “Christian Anthropology,” 30-31.

Bible does not indicate that female-gendered embodied persons exclusively image God in a particular way. Finally, the ontological definition of *imago Dei* is deliberately distinguished from a functional interpretation of *imago Dei*.<sup>99</sup> This separation of ontological definition from functional definition has significant bearing on the gender discussion at hand. Many well-respected theologians have ascribed to an ontological definition of divine image, claiming that “those who define the image merely in functional terms are in error both linguistically and theologically.”<sup>100</sup> Interestingly, simultaneously in the same conservative theological circles, the definition of gender hovers futilely over functionality.

### **Purpose of Biblical Roles**

Without excogitating the specific aspects of gender roles, the theological nature of biblical roles must be addressed *in toto*.<sup>101</sup> In reference to biblical roles, this study addresses the positions or offices in Scripture that are defined in criteria and responsibilities. Such roles include, but are not limited to, priest, prophet, king, judge, husband, wife, and elder. The scriptural roles are consistently used as living illustrations, metaphors, and motifs that point toward a greater reality. All roles instituted by God are intended to illustrate a divine reality. The assignment of roles is never intended to communicate the essence of the person fulfilling the role. Rather, the roles are descriptive—not only of the person accomplishing the literal role but also, ultimately, of the Person who perfectly fulfills the role.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200.

<sup>100</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 201. Gentry and Wellum quote Eugene Merrill’s definition of the divine image: “It is a functional statement and not one of essence.” Eugene H. Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 14.

<sup>101</sup> Roles are further addressed in chap. 5 regarding gender expression.

<sup>102</sup> Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the roles of judge and king (Luke 1:32-34; Acts 10:36-43; 17:30-31) as well as priest and prophet (Heb 2:14-18; 5:1-10; 7; 8). Through union with Christ, all believers are now able to participate in these functions (Rom 5:17; 6:3-11; Col 3:1-4).

Thus, the ontological meaning of a person must be considered separately from the theologically informed fulfillment of the role. Within a defined relationship or set of circumstances, a person may be described by a role. This role is informative of the function of the person and may be descriptive of qualities of the person. The role is never definitive of the person's meaning or purpose. In Deuteronomy, the offices of judge, king, prophet, and priest are defined (Deut 16:18-18:22). The required standards for each role are explicated by Moses to the people of Israel. By these standards, the roles are to be appointed and/or judged. However, the persons who assume the offices are not defined by them, though qualities of the person are revealed by the standards required for each office. The person of David is not defined by his role as king, nor is his ontological meaning derived from the title he carried. Likewise, qualities of Deborah can be presumed by the role she fulfilled, but her natural essence is not derived from her function as judge. The person is not defined by the role, though the role ought to indicate some descriptive qualities about the person. To define a person by her role is to divorce the role from its greater illustrative purpose.

As each biblical role illustrates a reality greater than the individual function, each role or office ought to be understood in the greater context of redemptive history. For instance, the *munus triplex* must be understood in both the OT function of the motif and the NT Christological fulfillment of the motif.<sup>103</sup> As such, the *munus triplex* is most helpfully understood “when the three offices are seen first and foremost as functions that have been fulfilled in Christ and conveyed to the whole people of God through union with Christ.”<sup>104</sup> Now, united with Christ—the righteous Prophet, Priest, and King—every

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<sup>103</sup> Wilder and Jones, *The God Who Goes before You*, 51.

<sup>104</sup> Wilder and Jones, *The God Who Goes before You*, 52. In the same paragraph, the authors go on to disassociate the individual from the role, declaring that “understanding these roles in light of their fulfillment in Christ reminds us that the positions to which leaders are called never situate us as sovereigns above the communities we serve but as stewards among a people God has purchased.” In other words, the role does not bring value and importance to the person. Rather, the value of the role is found in the person of Christ. Likewise, in Christ alone will the person find the ability and authority to serve in the role.

member of the new covenant is called to participate equally in the pursuit of holiness and justice. While each office fulfilled a particular function in the OT context, the ultimate purpose of the collective roles was to illustrate the perfect fulfillment of Christ as the model for the offices collectively.<sup>105</sup> The OT office of priest can be examined in isolation, but the priest role must be ultimately defined in relationship with the office of king (and judge). It is the collection of the roles together that provides meaning rather than the isolated offices themselves. Thus, when the role ceases to exist, the meaning of the person is not lost. When the purpose of the role is fulfilled, such as with Christ's inauguration of the new covenant, the necessity of the role as an illustration is no longer necessary.

### **Proposed Theological Paradigm for Female-Gendered Embodiment**

In light of the above scriptural survey of ontological gender distinction, a basic theological definition of female-gendered embodiment can be reasonably attempted.

*Female-gendered embodiment is the condition of embodied beings who were created as the imago Dei in the female-type of humankind and who engage the purpose, mandate, and virtues of humanity with a uniquely female expression.* Allison elaborates that “there are no particular properties that belong exclusively to women or that belong exclusively to men. There are, instead, common human properties that are—indeed, must be—expressed in gendered ways.”<sup>106</sup> In addition to empirically proven physical differences

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<sup>105</sup> Just as the roles of prophet, priest, and king are fulfilled in Christ, the marriage roles and church leadership roles also find ultimate fulfillment in Christ. When Christ's bride, the church, is united with the Bridegroom in the eschaton, human marriage and associated roles will cease to exist (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; Rev 21:2-10). Likewise, the roles of elder/pastor/bishop are also temporary roles intended to point to Christ, as the good shepherd who cares for and protects the flock (John 10:11-14).

<sup>106</sup> Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” 166. In his subsequent publication, Allison has updated the above quote to the following statement:

There are no particular capacities and properties (obviously, outside of reproductive capabilities) that belong exclusively to women or that belong exclusively to men. There are, instead, common human capacities and properties are—indeed, given gendered embodiment, will naturally be—expressed by women in ways that are fitting to women and expressed by men in ways that are fitting to men. Men and women uniquely express common human traits as men and as women. (Allison, *Embodied*, 47)

between male and female embodiment, the critical distinction between genders is the expression of humanity's purpose, mandate, and virtues.<sup>107</sup> This theological paradigm is further developed into a robust theological framework in chapter 5.

### Conclusion

In faithfulness to Scripture and to historical orthodox theology, this chapter has established several claims that are illustrated and elaborated upon in chapter 5. Regarding scriptural affirmations, many claims have been substantiated. The characteristics of gender and their respective scriptural references are summarized in the following table.

Table 4. Gender uniformities and distinctions in scriptural survey

Created State	
<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Purpose	Gen 1:26-27
Kind	Gen 1:26-27
Constitution	Gen 1:31
Blessing and Mandate	Gen 1:28
Need for Relationship	Gen 2:18
<i>Distinction in . . .</i>	
Type	Gen 1:27
Formation	Gen 2:7, 21-22

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Both statements serve to communicate the shared properties which are common to both genders and to indicate that the expression of the shared properties varies according to gender.

<sup>107</sup> Empirical research on physical differences include, but are not limited to, anatomy, hormones, chromosomes/genes, brain patterns, typical size, and typical strength. See 5n13.

Table 4 continued

Temporal State	
<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Guilt	Gen 3:6-13
Judgment	Gen 3:14-19
Requirements as OT Community	Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26
Requirements as NT Community	Eph 4:1-16; 1 Pet 1:15-16
Union with Christ	Gal 3:28
Mission	Matt 28:16-20
<i>Distinction in . . .</i>	
Personal Presentation	Deut 22:5
Societal Treatment	Exod 22:16-17; Lev 12:1-8; 15:19-33; Num 5:11-31; Deut 22:13-21, 22-29
Restored State	
<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Eternal Reality of Gendered Embodiment	Luke 24:39

First, all of humanity is embodied and gendered. Both embodiment and gender are intrinsic and immutable to human existence. Second, Scripture defines significant, pervasive, shared characteristics between male and female: purpose, constitution, kind, blessing and mandate, need for relationship, guilt, judgment, requirements, union with Christ, mission, and eternal gendered state. Third, in addition to the listed uniformities in gender, Scripture offers several indications of distinction between male- and female-gendered embodiment in the created and temporal states: formation, type, personal presentation, and societal treatment. Gender distinctions in the restored states are less apparent and therefore have not been claimed as conclusive in this study.

Regarding theological considerations, several additional concepts have been proposed. Notably, the *imago Dei* is equally applicable to both genders, though it is unhelpful to attempt to designate attributes of God to particular genders. The *imago Dei* is also elemental to the ontological meaning of human existence, intrinsically applied to every facet of gendered embodiment. The value and dignity of all humanity is directly derived from their image-bearing nature. Furthermore, because biblical roles are temporary and intended to illustrate a transcendent reality, ontological meaning cannot be suitably derived from functionality.

Finally, a preliminary ontological definition of female-gendered embodiment has been proposed: *Female-gendered embodiment is the condition of embodied beings who were created as the imago Dei in the female-type of humankind and who engage the purpose, mandate, and virtues of humanity with a uniquely female expression.* This definition and the elements proposed in the biblical affirmations and theological considerations are further addressed in chapter 5.



## CHAPTER 4

### ENGAGING PAUL EVDOKIMOV'S MODEL

This chapter engages Paul Evdokimov's model of women as proposed in his *Woman and the Salvation of the World* in order to address the following inquiry: If an ontological model of theological anthropology already exists, what does it say, and what can be learned from it?<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

After reviewing and summarizing the theological anthropological framework proposed in *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, this chapter interacts with Evdokimov's anthropology of woman according to three standpoints for assessment.<sup>2</sup> First, the research assesses Evdokimov's model from a charitable perspective to identify the beneficial aspects of his conclusions. Next, the research critically assesses the Evdokimov model to identify any erroneous and unhelpful aspects. Finally, the study takes an appropriative perspective to define the suitable means of adopting, accepting, and applying features of the model.

Within the assessment structure outlined above, the following categories guide the rendering of Evdokimov's theological framework for defining female-gendered

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<sup>1</sup> The chapter will engage extensively with Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World: A Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Women*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994). Evdokimov's work has been engaged within the Orthodox and Catholic traditions. Though Evdokimov's work is reasonably well-known in Europe, his theology is lesser known in the English-speaking world. See Peter C. Phan's American Catholic engagement with Evdokimov in "Gender Roles in the History of Salvation: Man and Woman in the Thought of Paul Evdokimov," *Heythrop Journal* 31, no. 1 (January 1990): 53-66. To my knowledge, this chapter is the first interaction with Evdokimov's ontological model from the evangelical tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Adapting the language and basic structure from John David Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2): Engaging and Appropriating Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (October 2019): 476-94.

embodiment ontologically: (1) definition of woman, (2) treatment of Christ's gendered embodiment, and (3) idyllic state of man and woman.

### **Review of Evdokimov's Model**

The background and content of Evdokimov's model in *Woman and the Salvation of the World* are addressed in this section.

### **Selection of Evdokimov's Model**

As substantiated in the preceding chapters, there is a scarcity of ontological models of women in Christian literature. For the purposes of this study, a comparison model required the following elements: (1) from the Christian tradition, (2) ontological in nature, and (3) within the discipline of theological anthropology.

The overwhelmingly prominent definitions for women available in Christian literature are based on roles and functions, as interpreted by the various Christian groups. Outside of Evdokimov's model, there are no known Christian models providing an ontological definition of woman according to theological anthropology. In *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, Evdokimov uniquely offers a theological anthropology of women that is ontological rather than functional. According to his Orthodox theology, Evdokimov provides ontological perspectives of sexuality and gender within the wider category of Christian tradition. Furthermore, Evdokimov's model classifies within the discipline of theological anthropology, defining the meaning of humanity primarily from Scripture and from a theological foundation.<sup>3</sup> As previously established, the perspective of theological anthropology is differentiated significantly from somatology, body

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<sup>3</sup> I am not suggesting that the theological foundation of Eastern Orthodoxy is precisely congruent with my own theological assumptions—as outlined in chap. 1, sect. "Research Assumptions," subsect. "Theological Assumptions." Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism operate from differing worldviews. "The infinitely nuanced differences between the Eastern and Western theologies derive from different conceptions of God, and from the nature of His relationships to human beings." Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 34. However, the basis of the presented Orthodox model for theological anthropology is incontestably rooted in an understanding of God as the supreme Source and Creator of humanity, designing humanity in his own image and restoring a fallen humanity through his sovereign, active redemption.

theology, and theology of the body.<sup>4</sup> Evdokimov asserts that the study of God is foundational to defining humanity's meaning, claiming, "It is by knowing God, and only by knowing God, that man can know himself."<sup>5</sup>

### **Background of *Woman and the Salvation of the World***

Paul Evdokimov was a Russian writer, professor, and theologian. Born to a noble family in St. Petersburg in 1901, he immigrated to France after the Russian Revolution; he taught and wrote primarily from Paris until his death in 1970. Evdokimov was a professor at St. Sergius Theological Institute in Paris, serving as the Director of the Center for Orthodox Studies and as the Director of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Geneva. Evdokimov has been considered by many to be "a theological bridge between East and West," as his theological writing and teaching reflect both his Orthodoxy and ecumenism.<sup>6</sup> Part of the Orthodox diaspora, Evdokimov believed Orthodoxy had much to contribute to the ecumenical movement of his time.<sup>7</sup> A prolific writer, Evdokimov published thirteen books and hundreds of articles in over fifty different journals; his work has been translated into some fifteen languages.<sup>8</sup> He produced many theological works covering a wide array of theological topics, including theological anthropology, marriage, iconography, monasticism, spirituality, and Eastern Orthodox theology generally.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See 7n16 (in chap. 1, sect. "Scope of Embodiment").

<sup>5</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 40.

<sup>6</sup> For additional information about Evdokimov, his writings, and his life's passions, see Paul Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church: A Paul Evdokimov Reader*, ed. Michael Plekon and Alexis Vinogradov (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000). Many thanks to Michael Plekon for his review of this chapter and his important clarifications in the reception of Evdokimov's ontological model of women by contemporary Orthodox theologians.

<sup>7</sup> Janet Crawford, review of *Woman and the Salvation of the World: A Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Women*, by Paul Evdokimov, *Ecumenical Review* 49, no. 3 (July 1997): 384.

<sup>8</sup> Peter C Phan, "Gender Roles in the History of Salvation: Man and Woman in the Thought of Paul Evdokimov," *Heythrop Journal* 31, no. 1 (January 1990), 54.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Evdokimov's theological works were first published in French in the 1950s and 1960s. Translated into English, his publications include, but are not limited to, the following: Paul Evdokimov,

Evdokimov originally published *La Femme et le Salut du Monde* in 1958. At the time of its initial publication in French, *La Femme* blazed the trail for an Orthodox theology of woman and was praised for its achievements for the Orthodox tradition. In the book's initial review in 1960 for *The Ecumenical Review*, Vasil T. Istavridis praised Evdokimov for answering the gaping lack of anthropology of women in Orthodox theology. Istavridis exclaims, "Anyone who wishes to make a study of the position and the rights of woman in the family, Church and society . . . will find an Orthodox answer to the problem in the work of Paul Evdokimov."<sup>10</sup> In the late 1980s, the book was translated into English at St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York.

### **Book Thesis and Key Supporting Arguments**

In writing *La Femme*, Evdokimov intended to differentiate between man and woman through an ontological model built upon biblical archetypes. Evdokimov builds this model upon the theological foundation of Eastern Orthodoxy. As such, his perspective of ontology is best described in his own overview of Orthodoxy: "Orthodox Theology makes a sharp distinction between the causal level (within the divine being) and the level of manifestation (of life, of revelation, of witnessing outside of the divine existence) in the world. Only the Father is the supreme causal principle."<sup>11</sup> In contrast to

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*The Sacrament of Love: The Nuptial Mystery in the Light of the Orthodox Tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985); Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life*, trans. Michael Plekon, Alexis Vinogradov, and Sister Gertrude (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998); Paul Evdokimov, *Orthodoxy*, trans. Jeremy Hummerstone (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011); Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*, trans. Steven Bigham (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Vasil T. Istavridis, review of *La Femme et le Salut du Monde: Étude D'Anthropologie Chrétienne sur les Charismes de la Femme*, by Paul Evdokimov, *Ecumenical Review* 13, no. 1 (October 1960): 117.

<sup>11</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 220. While Evdokimov's model is clearly built from a foundation of Orthodox theology, his model for the ontology of women cannot be considered representative of a unified view of Orthodox theology regarding an ontological definition of women. Many contemporary Orthodox scholars have respectfully and decidedly disagreed with Evdokimov's model, particularly regarding the inherent giftings, skills, and competencies of men and women. See Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women in the Church*, trans. Fr. Steven Bigham (Pasadena, CA: Oakwood, 1990).

phenomenological studies or functional roles, Evdokimov's ontological model asserts that the answer to the question of woman "is found on the spiritual level of the charisms, as revealed in the archetype of the feminine, because it contains and explains all the modes of being a woman."<sup>12</sup> Thus, the ontology of woman can be found only by tracing the manifestation of woman to the causal level, back to God himself.

**Origins of humanity.** Evdokimov contends that man and woman must always be considered in their intended design for complementarity.<sup>13</sup> He stresses the distinctions of man and woman as "contraries" and "components" of an integrated whole, affirming the divine intent for the first human to be a genderless being.<sup>14</sup> Believing the Genesis 3 fall to be responsible for the genders' "contraries" becoming "contradictions," Evdokimov claims "the feminine and the masculine are engaged in a conflict of opposition and of a bad polarity that leads to despair and to the clash of contradictions."<sup>15</sup> Such polarity and pervasive conflict will be resolved only in the ultimate "convergence" at the end-times.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 23. Interestingly, in personal correspondence to an Evdokimov scholar, his widow indicated that Evdokimov's perspective on an ontology of women had changed by the end of his life. Unfortunately, Evdokimov passed away suddenly and was never able to revise *Woman and the Salvation of the World* or publish content which presented his modified view.

<sup>13</sup> Evdokimov argues that "it is of utmost methodological importance to return first to the universal, communal plane of human destiny, before making any differentiation into male and female." Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 24. The integration of man and woman as one whole is derived from the biblical language of "and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Additionally, several extrabiblical sources likewise affirm the original and ultimate intent for the unity of man and woman: "His Kingdom would come. . . when the two shall be one . . . and the male with the female neither male nor female" (2 Clement 12:2). St. Clement of Rome, *The So-called Second Letter to the Corinthians*, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, trans. Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M. F. Marique, and Gerald G. Walsh (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 72-73. This concept of an ideal androgynous being will be addressed in the forthcoming sections of this chapter.

<sup>15</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 24. Evdokimov supports the eschatological progression from "contradictions" to "contraries" to ultimate "convergence" from The Epistle of Barnabas 6:13, which states, "Behold, I make the last things as the first." See St. Polycarp, *The Letter of Barnabas*, in Glimm, Marique, and Walsh, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 200. Evdokimov also references Nicholas of Cusa's doctrine *coincidentia oppositorum*, "the convergence of opposites." See

Evdokimov establishes ontological order as the correspondence of the “empirical world” according to “the laws of the Spirit.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, a woman is not nurturing because of her physical ability to bear children. Rather, “it is from her maternal spirit that the corresponding physiological and anatomical capabilities are derived.”<sup>18</sup> For Evdokimov, charisms and spirituality are determinative of one’s nature. Thus, “the physiological and the psychic depend upon the spirit *normatively*, serving it and expressing it.”<sup>19</sup> Second, harkening back to his original claim of the unity of man and woman, Evdokimov seeks to illustrate “the charismatic differentiation which determines the masculine and feminine derives from the reality they hold in common.”<sup>20</sup> The reality of male and female commonality is posited “from the beginning as their source, and is then presented as the goal to be reached,” consummated in “their final integration in the Kingdom.”<sup>21</sup> Evdokimov’s vision for the unity, divergence, and ultimate re-integration of male and female provides the undergirding structure of his anthropological work.<sup>22</sup>

**Feminine archetype.** As a result of the crisis of anthropological meaning Evdokimov perceived in modern civilization, he sought to “answer the question of ultimate truth of the human being and of his normative ontology.”<sup>23</sup> Evdokimov believed the suitable approach to respond to axiological judgments was to construct ontological

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Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, *Of Learned Ignorance*, Rare Masterpieces of Philosophy and Science (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1954).

<sup>17</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 17. Evdokimov is not alone in his view of the intended unity of male/female as the ideal human. Origen of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Pope John Paul II—for example—held similar views.

<sup>22</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 229.

models in an archetypal structure. For Evdokimov, the archetypal model of the feminine is the *Theotokos*.<sup>24</sup> He provides seven reasons for this claim, listed below. Each reason is presented as a uniquely female charism embodied in the Virgin Mary.<sup>25</sup>

First, the Virgin provides *Vita Nova*. The first reason presented by Evdokimov for the *Theotokos* as the feminine ontological model is that she is the source of the *Vita Nova* (“New Life”).<sup>26</sup> With this perspective of a believer’s rebirth, “anthropology arises from its ‘Mariological wellspring.’”<sup>27</sup> In the eternal God’s conception of Jesus Christ in Mary, the definitive inauguration of the church age commences.<sup>28</sup> The plan for humanity’s redemption is set in motion with Mary’s consent, her *fiat*. The birth of the Messiah then signals the rebirth of every Christian. The *fiat* of Christ (Matt 26:39) echoes that of the Virgin upon the announcement of her conception of Christ (Luke 1:38). Christ became incarnate voluntarily; similarly, Mary willingly gave of herself for his incarnation.<sup>29</sup> In this way, Evdokimov celebrates the incarnation as not only dependent on

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<sup>24</sup> Evdokimov writes, “The archetype of the feminine presents no problem; it is found clearly in the *Theotokos*.” Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 229. *Theotokos* is translated from Greek as “God-bearer,” referring to the Mother of God (17).

<sup>25</sup> Out of respect for and consistency with Evdokimov’s work, the titles attributed to Mary, the mother of Jesus, will be capitalized throughout this chapter.

<sup>26</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 211.

<sup>27</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 211; uncited quotation of John Chrysostom.

<sup>28</sup> Evdokimov writes, “The Virgin’s ministry as a woman begins at the moment of the Annunciation, but archetypically it is rooted in the Cross.” Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 212.

<sup>29</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 211. Citing Vladimir Lossky’s account of a homily delivered by Nicholas Cabasilas, Evdokimov expounds, “Just as He became incarnate voluntarily, so He wished that His Mother should bear Him freely and with her full consent.” Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1976), 141.

the triune God but also as “the work of the will and faith of the Virgin.”<sup>30</sup> As such, “the faith of every believer is included, and rooted in, the deed of the Virgin, her *fiat*.”<sup>31</sup>

Second, the Virgin is *hagiophany*, holiness manifested, and the archetypal *plêrôma*.<sup>32</sup> The second reason posited by Evdokimov asserts the manifestation of divine holiness in the Virgin.<sup>33</sup> All believers are united with Christ and share in his death and resurrection.<sup>34</sup> However, because the Virgin shared her own body with Christ through her maternal bond, she is uniquely connected to him as kin. Her union with Christ’s resurrection is thus distinct. Many Orthodox liturgical epithets acclaim the particular fullness achieved by Mary, calling her the “First-fruits of the Kingdom,” the “Gate of Heaven,” and “the one who destroyed the fetters of sin.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, Mary’s unique fulness—archetypal *plêrôma*, through her union with Christ—is indicated by her being the first fruits of God’s kingdom. On the basis of her Assumption (Dormition), Mary paved the way for all humanity to pass from death to life.<sup>36</sup> She is the “archetypal prefiguration” of the new creation.<sup>37</sup> This deification of creation presumes the Assumption of the Virgin. Affirming the holiness manifested in Mary, Evdokimov thus proports a correspondence

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<sup>30</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 211. Here, Evdokimov quotes Nicholas Cabasilas’s homily, as quoted by Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 141.

<sup>31</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 211n1. Furthermore, Evdokimov roots the *Vita Nova* in the special honor awarded by the Orthodox Church for martyrdom. Calling the death of her son “the wound of the Virgin,” Evdokimov argues that her martyrdom is the basis of “the feminine archetype [which] is born of Spirit and of blood” (212). He cites Simeon’s words to Mary in Luke 2:35 (“and a sword will pierce even your own soul”) as evidence of her martyrdom.

<sup>32</sup> Evdokimov defines *hagiophany* as “any manifestation of what is holy.” Evdokimov, *Woman*, 275. By *plêrôma*, he means “totality, fulness, plenitude, completion, perfection . . . The Church is the *Plêrôma* of Christ” (277).

<sup>33</sup> Evdokimov claims that the central mystery of the church is revealed in the Virgin: *hagiophany* (the manifestation of holiness) and *doxophany* (the manifestation of glory). As “the first divinized human being, she represents the perfect union of the human and the divine.” Evdokimov, *Woman*, 213 (emphasis original).

<sup>34</sup> In Orthodoxy, believers’ sharing of Christ’s blood occurs through eucharistic union.

<sup>35</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 213.

<sup>36</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 214.

<sup>37</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 213.



between the “human hypostasis” of the Virgin and the “divine hypostasis” of Christ himself.<sup>38</sup> As a parallel between Christ’s Ascension and the Virgin’s Assumption, Evdokimov asserts, “God made man, and the human being made god—an illustration of the most forceful patristic saying: ‘God became man so that man might become god.’”<sup>39</sup> Therefore, in Evdokimov’s model, the holiness and archetypal *plêrôma* of Mary, as a reflection of Christ, provides the way for all humanity to become resurrected creatures.

Third, the Virgin is the archetype of the feminine royal priesthood.

Evdokimov’s third reason presents the ministry of the woman as part of her essential nature. Evdokimov contends that man alone possesses the priestly powers. While the office and functions of priesthood and pastoral authority lie with man, the woman represents the priesthood through her maternal protection. As such, “the ministry of woman does not lie in ‘functions’; it resides in her nature. The ministry of orders does not belong to her charisms; that would be a betrayal of her being.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, it is for the man—in his priestly duties—to seize the treasures of heaven in order to battle the flesh, but the woman—in her essential nature—represents the heavenly treasury.<sup>41</sup> In her unique connection to the Holy Spirit, the woman “safeguards, vivifies, and protects every part of the masculine creation.”<sup>42</sup> Being the first fruits of God’s kingdom, woman (*Theotokos*)

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<sup>38</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 214.

<sup>39</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 214.

<sup>40</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 215.

<sup>41</sup> In his treatment of the charism of the royal priesthood, Evdokimov distinguishes between man and woman in several significant ways. First, he identifies man as connected by his essential nature with Christ the Priest and woman as connected by her essential nature with the life-giving Holy Spirit. Following Evdokimov’s logic from this ontological claim, man is then the “Overseer,” and woman is “Life” and “Paradise.” Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 215. According to Evdokimov, man expresses his nature through action, duty, and function, whereas, woman “operates on the level of the structure of ‘being.’” She is the “womb of creation,” giving of herself “into which the content, Word, power, and deeds places itself” (216). Man, as responsible for the priesthood of orders, is charged with “transforming all human beings into the royal priesthood.” Christ alone is the ultimate, eternal Priest. In the eschaton, all priestly function will belong to Christ. However, at Christ’s side will be the *Theotokos*, representing the universal priesthood, for she manifests all humanity as the essence of the kingdom (217).

<sup>42</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 215.

stands “at the head of the people, of the universal priesthood . . . , for she manifests it as the ‘being’ of the Kingdom itself . . . , the eternal, explicit model of human destiny.”<sup>43</sup>

Fourth, the Virgin is the archetype of *sôphronsynê*.<sup>44</sup> The fourth reason asserts the ontological chastity of the woman. The charism of *sôphronsynê*—ontological chastity or archetypal integrity—refers to “the specifically feminine charism of purity, which straightens the crooked path of iniquity that wounds and perverts human ontology.”<sup>45</sup> The ontological chastity encompassed in *sôphronsynê* does not refer simply to physical purity but more precisely to a spiritual purity. In the process of human deification, the complete transformation of humanity, or metamorphosis, occurs only in closeness to God. Ontological chastity is perfected in humanity as “the result of fearsome proximity to God . . . , a burning bush.”<sup>46</sup> In this sense, the Virgin-Mother is the archetypal manifestation of ultimate integrity. Orthodox tradition associates the Virgin with the image of a flaming face and often refers to her directly as the “burning bush.”<sup>47</sup> According to Evdokimov, “In her maternal chastity, the Virgin is the most powerful expression of the divine love for mankind.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, ontological chastity bears with it the implication of self-sacrificing love.

Fifth, the Virgin embodies the eternal virginal-motherly of the feminine. Evdokimov presents the fifth reason of the *Theotokos* as the ontological model of woman based upon the charism of intercession. The charism of intercession is enabled through

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<sup>43</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 217.

<sup>44</sup> Evdokimov employs *sôphronsynê* specifically as “chastity, virginity.” Thus, “a sophrosynic being is one who is chaste in the structure of the spirit, integrated. The word refers to the pre-eminent quality embodied in the Virgin Mary.” Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 278.

<sup>45</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 217.

<sup>46</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 218.

<sup>47</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 217.

<sup>48</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 219.

the Holy Spirit, who is the expression of “hypostatic motherhood.”<sup>49</sup> Because Christ’s authority to judge the earth is associated with his humanity (John 5:27), and his humanity is derived from his mother, she has a unique place as intercessor for humanity at the time of judgment.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, Evdokimov intimately associates the Virgin with the Person of the Holy Spirit.<sup>51</sup> In a lengthy elucidation of the *filioque* and the distinction between “procession from” as origination versus manifestation, Evdokimov concludes that the Holy Spirit does not add to the content of the Son. The Spirit “attests to it and reveals it” (John 16:14).<sup>52</sup> Likewise, the Spirit does not replace the Father “but creates the maternal state as a spiritual power to give birth and to increase being,” to vivify the revelation of the Son and to convey the presence of the Father.<sup>53</sup> Finally, Evdokimov uses the feminine charism of intercession to explicate the purpose (“charismatic vocation”) of woman as “spiritual motherhood that brings forth Christ in every human being through the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>54</sup>

Sixth, the Virgin embodies the ecumenical *fiat*. The sixth reason defends the unique feminine ministry to the universal church as embodied in Mary. As Evdokimov relegates deeds to the masculine realm, he contends that the female guardianship of the church is innate to her nature. While ecumenism is largely male-dominated, it remains

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<sup>49</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 221.

<sup>50</sup> Evdokimov interprets John 5:27 as basing Christ’s authority over the earth, as given by the Father, upon his title as “Son of man.” This authoritative title indicates Christ’s humanity and his unique authority to judge the earth. For Evdokimov, Christ’s humanity is directly drawn from that of the Virgin. Thus, “this maternal charism of the feminine [intercession] will assume its full power in the hour of judgment.” Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 219.

<sup>51</sup> Evdokimov references Origen’s quote of Gospel of the Hebrews in which Christ says, “My mother, the Holy Spirit.” Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 2.12.87, in *Origen: Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1-10*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, Fathers of the Church 80 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), 116.

<sup>52</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 220.

<sup>53</sup> Evdokimov counterbalances the *filioque* with the *spirituque*, claiming that the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father in procession of *origin* but from the Son in procession of *manifestation* only. Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 221.

<sup>54</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 222.

“strongly marked by a male spirit and is therefore so non-liturgical. It does not sing; it talks and discusses.”<sup>55</sup> Intra-Christian conflicts loudly assert fidelity to their own tradition, ringing an attitude of “We cannot” (*non possumus*).<sup>56</sup> This sentiment directly contradicts Mary’s *fiat*: “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38 ESV). The ecumenical confession ought to mimic the *sôphronsynê* (ontological chastity, purity, integrity) of the Virgin. Thus, “to woman belongs the task of correcting the masculine zeal that blunders so frequently, deeper and deeper, into a profanation of the mysteries [of the Church], to the detriment of the spiritual values.”<sup>57</sup> The feminine correction is born of her unique charisms, including *sôphronsynê*, *hagiophany*, and intercession.

Seventh, the Virgin embodies holiness. Distinct from the second reason (*hagiophany*), Evdokimov’s seventh reason refers to the woman’s holiness of being. While masculinity is associated with deeds, femininity is connected with being. The woman “has the power to bruise the head of the serpent, but not by her deeds (the domain of the masculine). It is through her very being.”<sup>58</sup> Orthodox tradition holds that because of the Virgin’s particular dedication to the Lord, she was able to conceive the Son of God. This occurrence reveals the power of every woman “to bring forth God in devastated souls.”<sup>59</sup> Deeds alone will not save a person; rather, “salvation will come only from holiness,” from abiding in the God who is holy.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, “in the conditions of

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<sup>55</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 223.

<sup>56</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 223.

<sup>57</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 223.

<sup>58</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 224.

<sup>59</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 224. In the same paragraph, Evdokimov declares, “Above all, woman possesses this natural charism to bring forth Christ in the souls of human beings.”

<sup>60</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 225. Evdokimov distinguishes between holiness of being and of having. “Holiness,” Evdokimov argues, “can never be a ‘function.’” Holiness of being is not synonymous with “sacredness of forms, ritual and functions.” In fact, it is entirely possible for a very disciplined person, faithful to sacred functions, to be utterly deplete in spiritual holiness (224).

actual life, sanctity is more at home to woman.”<sup>61</sup> Because of a woman’s sanctity of being, she has an innate connection with ushering in new life and a proclivity toward grasping the “the relationship of essence and existence.”<sup>62</sup>

**Summary.** The charisms that Evdokimov assigns specifically to woman, on account of the *Theotokos*, include life-giving, *hagiophany*, *sôphronsynê*, intercession, self-sacrificing love, and holiness of being. Each of these charisms spill over from the essential nature of woman. In isolating these charisms as uniquely feminine, Evdokimov contradicts any notion of egalitarianism. According to Evdokimov, woman’s very ontology uniquely positions her to partake with God and to bring forth God in others. If existence and essence coincide in God, “a woman is more apt to come close to this relationship of essence and existence.”<sup>63</sup> In fact, Evdokimov claims “this is the most natural resplendence of her charismatic state.”<sup>64</sup> In woman, all human beings come forth, physically and spiritually. Triumphantly, Evdokimov concludes, “The world will be saved by Beauty—not just any beauty, but that of the Holy Spirit, that of the woman, ‘robed with the sun.’”<sup>65</sup>

### Evaluation of Evdokimov’s Model

This section includes an organized evaluation of Evdokimov’s model for the theological anthropology of women, as presented in *Woman and the Salvation of the*

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<sup>61</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 225.

<sup>62</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 225. In this perspective of the integration of essence and existence, Evdokimov denounces the existential concept of function driving meaning: “‘Man is what man does’: this existentialist formula is true only inside the divine activity” (14). For Evdokimov, “the most profound and hidden structures of the empirical world correspond to the laws of the Spirit”; it is from the spirit that the physiological and psychic are derived—not vice versa (16).

<sup>63</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 225.

<sup>64</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 225. Evdokimov is referring to the woman’s ability to grasp the relationship of existence and essence through humility.

<sup>65</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 225. Evdokimov quotes Rev 12:1.

*World*. Adopting a protocol from the “principle of inverse consistency,” the study evaluates Evdokimov’s model from the perspectives of charitable, critical, and appropriative interactions. Furthermore, the following categories guide the rendering of Evdokimov’s theological framework for defining female-gendered embodiment ontologically: (1) the definition of woman, (2) the treatment of Christ’s gendered embodiment, and (3) the idyllic state of man and woman.<sup>66</sup>

### Means of Evaluation

As previously noted, the evaluation of Evdokimov’s model applies a hermeneutical protocol based on John David Trentham’s “principle of inverse consistency.” In effort to foster “qualifying-integrationists,” the “principle of inverse consistency” provides a method for reading the social sciences with both confessional integrity and intellectual honesty.<sup>67</sup> Trentham’s hermeneutical protocol includes the following steps and intentions:

Table 5. Trentham’s four-step hermeneutical protocol<sup>68</sup>

Interpretive Steps	Interpretive Aims
1. Envision Redemptive Maturity	Develop a thoroughgoing confessional-doctrinal vision and imagination for human development unto Christlikeness.

<sup>66</sup> The presented three categories are not comprehensive enough to adequately assess a complete theological anthropology. However, they are sufficiently precise for evaluating the treatment of female-gendered embodiment in a theological anthropology.

<sup>67</sup> Trentham, “Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2),” 483. Trentham’s “‘principle of inverse consistency’ . . . is put forth as a conceptual tool for interpreting developmental models with confessional and intellectual virtue.” Trentham, “Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1),” 458.

<sup>68</sup> This is the exact representation of the hermeneutical protocol presented by Trentham, “Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2),” 488. The bracketed interpretive steps reflect the three perspectives employed in this study, as adapted from Trentham’s protocol. The first interpretive step (“Envision Redemptive Maturity”) for this study was addressed in chap. 3. The second step (“Read for Receptivity”) was addressed in the previous section (“Review of Evdokimov’s Model”). The last two interpretive steps will be addressed in this chapter.

Table 5 continued

Interpretive Steps	Interpretive Aims
2. Read for Receptivity	Gain a deep and thorough understanding of the proposed paradigm with intellectual honesty and precision.
3. Employ Reflective Discernment [Charitable and Critical Interactions]	Interpret the paradigm from a critically reflective <i>and</i> charitably reflective perspective.
4. Identify Appropriate Outlets [Appropriative Interaction]	Carefully identify the various contexts and processes in which the model may be utilized to inform or enhance the practice and administration of Christian education.

By use of this “hermeneutic of caution,” I intend to affirm the insight afforded by the Orthodox tradition and Evdokimov’s research while simultaneously governing redemptive insight according to evangelical confession.<sup>69</sup> Of course, theology of another Christian tradition is not precisely interchangeable with secular social scientific theory. However, the interpretive steps advanced by Trentham are equally applicable. Not every Christian tradition affirms biblical truth as normative, and the interpreted biblical truth is not shared across Christian groups. Across lines of Christian traditions, charitable caution must be employed.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Trentham, “Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 2),” 482.

<sup>70</sup> See Albert Mohler’s principle of theological triage in R. Albert Mohler Jr., “A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity,” Albert Mohler, July 12, 2005, <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/>. In this article, Mohler organizes a scale of theological urgency for doctrinal disagreements: (1) first-level issues speak to those doctrines that are essential for authentic Christian faith (e.g., Trinity, Jesus as God-man, justification by grace through faith, authority of Scripture); (2) second-level concerns are those that would cause believers to break fellowship, dividing by denominations and congregations (e.g., baptism, church polity); (3) third-tier issues include those doctrines that need not cause believers to break fellowship and differences that can be maintained within the unity of a congregation (e.g., communion structure, eschatology). This study’s interaction with Eastern Orthodoxy spans across all three levels of theological urgency. As such, I have opted to utilize Trentham’s “principle of inverse consistency” to provide a structure for cautious engagement.

Furthermore, each of the interpretive interactions are organized according to three categories. First, the evaluation of Evdokimov's definition of woman is crucial for responding to the research questions of this study. Second, no biblical understanding of human gendered embodiment can be achieved without engaging Jesus Christ's incarnated body.<sup>71</sup> Third, the idyllic state of man and woman ascertains both the created and eschatologically intended state of human gendered embodiment.

### **Charitable Interaction**

The research assesses Evdokimov's model from a charitable perspective to identify the beneficial aspects of his conclusions. First, Evdokimov's model must be "read for receptivity."<sup>72</sup> It would not be a beneficial exercise to interact with Evdokimov's Orthodox theology point by point. Rather, this study builds from the theological assumptions listed in chapter 1, affirming an orthodox evangelical theology. Thus, a charitable interaction with Evdokimov's proposed theological anthropology, specifically as it relates to woman, does not necessitate agreement with each of his Orthodox theological claims.<sup>73</sup> Without assenting to Evdokimov's underlying Orthodox assumptions, many of Evdokimov's thought-provoking claims and tantalizing imagery, as presented in the previous sections, can be appreciated.

**Definition of woman.** First, the principal significance of Evdokimov's model is his insistence of an ontological definition rather than a functional definition of

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<sup>71</sup> Marc Cortez writes, "Christology is absolutely central to any adequate knowledge of the human person." Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 19.

<sup>72</sup> See step 2 in table 5 ("Trentham's four-step hermeneutical protocol").

<sup>73</sup> See 90n70 above—on Albert Mohler's principle of theological triage—for further explanation of my caution in engaging Evdokimov's theology and for justification of adapting Trentham's hermeneutical protocol as the means of engaging Evdokimov's theology.



woman.<sup>74</sup> For Evdokimov, the physical and cognitive characteristics manifest spiritual realities.<sup>75</sup> In direct opposition to existentialism, Evdokimov asserts that charisms and spirituality determine one's nature; essence and existence go hand in hand.<sup>76</sup> Thus, Evdokimov's ontological definition of woman is contained in his statement "The truth about woman . . . is found rather on the spiritual level of the charisms, as revealed in the archetype of the feminine [the *Theotokos*], because it contains and explains all the modes of being a woman."<sup>77</sup> His use of archetype is particularly effective as a means to transcend typecasts such as "faithful spouses, pious widows, and, more generally, all women who are reduced to the one dimension of 'domesticity.'"<sup>78</sup> Similar to the impetus for this study, Evdokimov wrote in response to misplaced judgments of value and behavior. He believed the question of value and meaning of humanity cannot be answered within the ethical realm of anthropology.<sup>79</sup> Rather, metaphysical answers must be provided to answer "the question of ultimate truth of the human being and of his normative ontology."<sup>80</sup> Evdokimov's ontological response asserts that the value of women (and men) is determined not from superficial qualities and visible behavior but rather from innate spiritual realities. In this sense, women's ontological identity is manifested in—rather than determined by—her unique manner of existence. Evdokimov

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<sup>74</sup> This statement is made particularly clear in chap. 1 of this thesis as the justification for my engaging Evdokimov's model in this study. See chap. 1, sect. "Definition of Research Population." See also 15n43.

<sup>75</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 16.

<sup>76</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 225.

<sup>77</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 23. In this statement, he is contrasting the spiritual level of charisms with the human qualities of individual women.

<sup>78</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 23. The archetypal structure of his model serves to debunk the stereotypes that can "present only one purely historical point of reference: patriarchy, the reign of the male."

<sup>79</sup> In his prologue, Evdokimov posits that "one of the most frequent methodological errors is that of posing 'the question of woman' empirically, and of defining it only on the basis of her actual position in the world." Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 18-19. Such sociological and biological categories fail to define metaphysical truth.

<sup>80</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 229.

maintains the distinction between male and female, insisting that woman “has her own intuitions and judgments, her ideal world, her manner of weaving her being in relation to others and to herself. Defined psychologically and sociologically by the world, woman is also defined by the mystery of her own being.”<sup>81</sup> This definition is the inimitable “mode of being” that discloses the ontological distinction of woman. She reflects unique metaphysical realities, anchored in her essence and derived from her Creator. Critically, in Evdokimov’s celebration of feminine charisms that manifest God in the world, he maintains the feminine charisms as distinct from a claim of feminine elements within God’s own being.<sup>82</sup> The triune God is simple, and his attributes cannot be divided or separated according to masculine and feminine.<sup>83</sup>

Second, Evdokimov’s exercise to define a distinction between the genders is laudable. He confirms a single human kind presently appearing in two types—man and woman.<sup>84</sup> In a historical review, Evdokimov presents three mutually exclusive options for understanding the distinctions of gender: (1) male and female are polar opposites in “irreducible opposition” (e.g., solar versus earthly); (2) male and female exist in the total dependence of one upon the other (e.g., female lunar’s being dependent upon the male sun); or (3) male and female exist in total autonomy and independent spheres.<sup>85</sup> In a pointed interaction with Simone de Beauvoir’s conceptualization of woman, Evdokimov

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<sup>81</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 21.

<sup>82</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 220.

<sup>83</sup> The simplicity of God’s nature has been a longstanding tenet in the doctrine of the God. John of Damascus describes God as “simple, uncompounded, incorporeal.” John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith* 1.2.2, in *St. John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase Jr., Fathers of the Church 37 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 167. Gerald Bray further explains that God cannot be parsed into separate components because “he [God] is the basic minimum of divinity as well as the maximum, the ultimate reality in himself.” Gerald Lewis Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 94.

<sup>84</sup> Istavridis, review of *La Femme et le Salut du Monde*, 117.

<sup>85</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 21.

rebutts her conclusion of woman's "otherness" as defined in *The Second Sex*.<sup>86</sup> In contrast to the defined options of understanding gender distinctions, Evdokimov offers a fourth option in which man and woman "reveal themselves as a felicitous and indispensable complementarity."<sup>87</sup> Rather than opposition, male and female participate in a dance of equality and difference, "each according to his or her own nature."<sup>88</sup>

Finally, Evdokimov recognizes an interesting connection between wisdom (*Sophia*) and female personification.<sup>89</sup> Evdokimov also invokes the feminine characters employed by ancient philosophers, Orthodox theologians, and modern sociologists to represent wisdom.<sup>90</sup> This female language for wisdom is reflective of Scripture's frequent personification of wisdom as a woman (Prov; Song).

**Treatment of Christ's gendered embodiment.** Evdokimov's exclusion of Christ as the archetypal *man* and his presentation of the body of Christ as the archetypal *human* is noteworthy. Though Evdokimov repeatedly draws association between men and

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<sup>86</sup> Simone de Beauvoir's significant work *The Second Sex* defines woman as "the Other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley, First Modern Library ed. (New York: Random House, 1952), xx. This reciprocity, de Beauvoir contends, is imbalanced and asserts the inferiority of woman's alterity. From her existentialist perspective, there is no archetype, no "changeless essence" of woman. Rather, there exists only the present battle of female independence, as "they aspire to full membership in the human race" (xxix-xxx).

<sup>87</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 21.

<sup>88</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 21. As examples, Evdokimov cites light and shadow as well as positivity and negativity. Unfortunately, by his use of the term *complementarity*, Evdokimov is referring to a "consubstantiality of the complementary principles." As such, males or females are—respectively—only half of a human, being separated from their reciprocal, complementary element (139). By contrast, this study does not consociate consubstantiality with the term *complementarity*.

<sup>89</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 220-21. Please note, my use of the term *Sophia* is distinct from the theological meaning that Evdokimov ascribes to the term. For Evdokimov, *Sophia* is the divine wisdom, the source of "the anthropomorphosis of God and the theomorphosis of man" (208). She is "the feminine aspect of the divine energies" distinct from God's essence but expressed in his interaction with the world (203). *Sophia*'s work is to give human form to the divine thoughts, to bring about "the *humanization* of Yahweh." Sophiology is an extensive, complicated, and treasured aspect of Orthodox theology.

<sup>90</sup> Among others, Dante Alighieri, Carl Jung, and various Orthodox Sophiologists are mentioned along with their respective perspectives.

Christ, the Son of God, he does not cite Jesus Christ as the archetypal man.<sup>91</sup> Rather, Evdokimov posits John the Baptist as the archetype of the masculine.<sup>92</sup> Notably, he states that “the mystical body of Christ is neither male nor female, because it is the place of their integration.”<sup>93</sup> Though Christ is recognized as physically male in his incarnation, Evdokimov asserts the ultimate fulfillment of humanity in the body of Christ, in whom the differentiation of male and female is overcome.<sup>94</sup>

**Idyllic state of man and woman.** For Evdokimov, the ideal state of humanity is the “convergence” of the two genders, in which the gender “contradictions” are embraced as “contraries” within the restored humanity.<sup>95</sup> It is unclear if Evdokimov considers this idyllic state to be the perfect communion of male- and female-gendered embodied beings or some unembodied comingling of the masculine and feminine in “mutual and universal interpenetration.”<sup>96</sup> As Evdokimov’s focus is not on embodiment, the phenomenon of the ultimate fulfillment of male and female persons is ambiguous. He declares that rather than men and women, “we shall be the Masculine and the Feminine, the two dimensions of the one *plêrôma* of Christ.”<sup>97</sup> Regardless of his intent for eternal

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<sup>91</sup> In fact, Evdokimov’s theological anthropology defines “man-woman” as the first archetypal human, Adam before Eve. Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 139. Eventually, his model presents Christ as the ultimate archetype of humanity, the second Adam as the first Adam (227). Additionally, Evdokimov’s association of man with Christ and woman with the Holy Spirit will be elucidated in forthcoming sections.

<sup>92</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 227.

<sup>93</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 228.

<sup>94</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 25.

<sup>95</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 24.

<sup>96</sup> Evdokimov argues for an ultimate transcendence above gender. In comparing the negation of genders to the fulfillment of the OT law, Evdokimov claims it is necessary “to pass through the law, and to *fulfill* it to the last letter”; thus, “the aim is not to be asexual, but . . . to transform the relationships between the masculine and the feminine into the ‘totally other.’” Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 25 (emphasis original).

<sup>97</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 25. Rather than an eradication of gender, Evdokimov sees an elimination of segregated existence, in which “the one will exist through the other; the masculine through the feminine, and the feminine through the masculine.”

embodiment, Evdokimov emphasizes the complementarity of the two genders as an ontological reality and an eschatological certainty.

### **Critical Interaction**

The research develops a critical assessment of the Evdokimov model to determine any unprofitable aspects. As the study “employs reflective discernment,” particular aspects of Evdokimov’s model warrant critique.<sup>98</sup> The structure of Evdokimov’s model directly reflects his Orthodox worldview and corresponding theological anthropology. If all manifestations, or things that exist outside of the divine being, necessarily display the underlying spiritual essence, then the true meaning of man and woman is derived from their unique charismatic properties.<sup>99</sup> While this study similarly holds that ontological meaning is not derived from physical properties and functions, this study does not align with Evdokimov’s theological assumption of a spiritual level of charisms. Thus, on theological grounds, the structure of Evdokimov’s archetypal model is not constructive for the purposes of an evangelical ontology of women.<sup>100</sup>

**Definition of woman.** Evdokimov’s definition of female-gendered embodiment according to the archetype of the *Theotokos* asserts female-specific

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<sup>98</sup> See step 3 in table 5 (“Trentham’s four-step hermeneutical protocol”). Step 3 in the Inverse Consistency Protocol, “Reflective discernment,” demands both the critical and charitable postures, but the charitable engagement with Evdokimov’s has been already addressed.

<sup>99</sup> It is unclear from Evdokimov’s model—as presented in *Woman and the Salvation of the World*—if he is ascribing to, or directly influenced by, some form of Platonic idealism. For Evdokimov, manifestations of God are considered “energies” and are distinct from his (i.e., God’s) essence.

<sup>100</sup> Notably, in personal correspondence I had with Michael Plekon, the Evdokimov scholar candidly discussed the concerns he and other Orthodox theologians had regarding Evdokimov’s model: “The idea of delineating archetypes is not so much the issue. The question of describing the ontologies, complementary, of women and men and thus the gifts, skills, competencies even from scriptural and other sources is presumptive. The contributions of the social sciences and history and cultural anthropology are really not employed meaningfully. This is an a priori exercise.” I find this perspective indicative not only of Evdokimov’s presentation in *Woman and the Salvation of the World* but also relevant to many of the ontological definitions provided for women in evangelical literature as well—which typically focus on her function, role, and relation to man.

charisms. Such a definition fosters gender essentialism, as particular giftings and ontological characteristics are distinguished as female-only. According to the preceding scriptural survey of this study, the distinction of genders lies in the expression of virtues rather than inherent charisms or unique female properties.<sup>101</sup> Qualities such as holiness, purity, humility, and self-sacrificing love cannot be relegated to a particular gender.<sup>102</sup> Evdokimov's separation of men and women into the physical realm of the masculine and the feminine realm of being is especially incongruent with the concept of gendered expression of common human properties substantiated in this study.

Furthermore, Evdokimov contends that not only are the masculine and feminine charisms distinct, but "in their unity, the masculine and the feminine exclude any common denominator."<sup>103</sup> To satisfy the ultimate convergence of the two sexes in his theological anthropology, he can allow for no overlap in properties that would lead to an "unworkable synthesis."<sup>104</sup> Thus, in the spiritual realm, there are no common human properties; the metaphysical realities of the masculine and feminine are intrinsically opposite and incongruent. By contrast, an inseparability of the materiality and immateriality of gendered embodied beings necessitates common human properties. The physical and ontological realms can no longer be segregated by masculine and feminine since male- and female-gendered embodied people equally inhabit both. Additionally, because of the separate spheres of the masculine and feminine in the corrupt humanity,

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<sup>101</sup> See chap. 3, sect. "Proposed Theological Paradigm for Female-Gendered Embodiment" and table 4 ("Gender uniformities and distinctions in scriptural survey). The term *virtues* will be further investigated in chap. 5.

<sup>102</sup> God requires holiness, purity, and mutuality of all his people regardless of gender. While Evdokimov would consent to the common demands of the kingdom on the church, he contends that the transformation of the mind and inner sanctity is more easily accessible to women because of their inherent connection to new life and innate humility. Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 225.

<sup>103</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 250.

<sup>104</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 250. For Evdokimov, the reality the two sexes hold in common is an eschatological goal and cannot be confused with ontological nature (17).

Evdokimov subsequently asserts separate vocations, destinies, and ministries.<sup>105</sup> Man is called to exert dominion over the earth, to cultivate the ground, and “to show the creative, inventive power of his mind.”<sup>106</sup> At his side, the woman is “destined to procreate, to protect, to be the source of life and the wellspring of holiness.”<sup>107</sup> Such a disparity of purpose was not supported in this study’s scriptural survey. Rather, man and woman share purpose, mandate and blessing, and mission.<sup>108</sup>

**Treatment of Christ’s gendered embodiment.** Evdokimov seems to treat the Person of the Son in two distinct manners. Foundational to Evdokimov’s view is “the ontic affinity between the masculine and the Word, as there is an ontic affinity between the feminine and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>109</sup> Evdokimov asserts that any one person of the Trinity can never be alienated from the *plêrôma* of the Trinity; each Person necessarily signifies the essence of the other two Persons. In the same way, he declares that the presence of the Holy Spirit held by the Virgin and the presence of the Word held by her Child display “the mysterious face of the Father.”<sup>110</sup> Because of the action of the Word, he is associated with the masculine realm of deeds. On the other hand, the spiritual motherhood of woman represents the Holy Spirit.<sup>111</sup> The associations of man to Jesus

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<sup>105</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 228.

<sup>106</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 258.

<sup>107</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 258.

<sup>108</sup> See chap. 3, sects. “Uniformity in purpose,” “Uniformity in blessing and mandate,” and “Uniformity in mission” under the heading “Created State.”

<sup>109</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 27.

<sup>110</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 17. Evdokimov’s theology includes a lengthy explanation of the Holy Spirit as hypostatic motherhood, “the breath of the eternal life-giving” (220-21).

<sup>111</sup> Pointedly, Evdokimov separates masculine and feminine realms as pertains to Christ’s ministry on earth: “It can be said that the feminine, centered on its own being is under the sign of the Nativity and of Pentecost, the birth of the new creation and the new age. The masculine is energetic; it is under the sign of the Resurrection, of the Transfiguration, and of the *Parousia*.” Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 222.

Christ and woman to Holy Spirit are unhelpful. The individual Persons of the Trinity cannot be affiliated with a gender.<sup>112</sup> God is a-gendered, totally other from humanity. Because of God's total otherness, neither his Persons nor the *imago Dei* can be classified according to human categories such as male and female. Second, Evdokimov distinguishes Christ as "the universal Archetype of humanity."<sup>113</sup> Being the second Adam, he is just as the first Adam. Neither the first Adam, before Eve, nor the second Adam, Jesus Christ, were differentiated as masculine or feminine.<sup>114</sup> While "there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ" (Gal 3:28), this reality for the church asserts the equality of union with Christ rather than the convergence of gender in Christ. As for the physical body of the incarnate Christ, he was assuredly male. Scripture describes him using all-male language (son, man, he/his/him), and there is no impression of a genderless or gender-ambiguous presentation of Christ.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, the resurrected Christ retained unique physical characteristics; he was recognizable by those who knew him before his death. As the recognizable Christ also bore the scars of his unique death, it is unreasonable to assume that some physical characteristics would be

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<sup>112</sup> To clarify, Evdokimov is not claiming the innate elements of God to be masculine or feminine. Aligning with the Eastern Orthodox tradition, he holds that the essence of God, which cannot be gendered, is distinct from the manifestations or energies of God, which do occur in both masculine and feminine dimensions. *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 220n24.

<sup>113</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 227.

<sup>114</sup> Evdokimov writes, "The mystical body of Christ is neither male nor female, because it is the place of their integration." Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 228. It seems that Evdokimov employs masculine and feminine as terms that encompass the essence of being a man or a woman. Thus, it is unclear whether he asserts the physical incarnation of Christ to be in an asexual body or whether he believes Christ to represent the union of complementary masculine and feminine on a spiritual level.

<sup>115</sup> It could be that Evdokimov intended for Christ to have a biological sex but to hold both the masculine and feminine essences. Evdokimov does declare that "the *ecce homo*—humanity of Christ—cannot be reproduced or imitated, but is near everyone, for each one finds in it his or her own truth, his or her ontological place." Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 227-28. In that sense, the archetypal human could have been physically gendered upon his incarnation without having a gender associated to his ontological nature. This study does not open the door for such disunity between biological sex and gender.



present (e.g., facial features, voice, scars) and others absent (e.g., physical anatomy, physiological features).<sup>116</sup>

**Idyllic state of man and woman.** Evdokimov treats the ideal human as being integrated male and female, reflecting the Archetypal human of Christ. Adam before Eve was neither male nor female, as “Scripture presents from the beginning the mystery of the human being as an inseparable totality, in the form of two halves united in one whole.”<sup>117</sup> In the beginning, the “undifferentiated unity” preceded “its separate elements.”<sup>118</sup> However, the ultimate destiny of humanity is the “paradisiacal man,” representing the future “unity in which each of the elements is maintained in all its unique value.”<sup>119</sup> As such a future state would require either eternal disembodiment or the eternal discontinuity between the material and immaterial aspects of gender, this study rejects Evdokimov’s paradisiacal human.

### **Appropriative Interaction**

The study also takes an appropriative perspective to define the suitable means of adopting, accepting, and applying certain factors of Evdokimov’s model. Various aspects of the model can be readily appropriated into this study’s proposed framework for female-gendered embodiment.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> See chap. 1, sect. “Biblical Priority: A Theological Anthropology,” for the basis of this study’s theological anthropology and a brief argument against a genderless incarnate Son. See also Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 199, who affirms, “Although the resurrection narratives present Jesus’s body as transformed in some way, nothing about those narratives suggests a transformation of identity such that he is no longer the same male individual the disciples knew him to be.” Furthermore, according to Cortez, the early church fathers indicate that they perceive the resurrected Jesus as the apostles did, gendered and embodied.

<sup>117</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 137.

<sup>118</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 137.

<sup>119</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 149, 137.

<sup>120</sup> Due to the nature of this study, the appropriated concepts can be adopted separate from their underlying assumptions, as the concepts are generative. Aspects of Evdokimov’s model will be employed to generate aspects of the forthcoming definitional framework.

Evdokimov's approach of providing an ontological definition of gender properly distinguishes gender from a one-dimensional functional basis. Furthermore, Evdokimov's model limits gender to male and female, associating gender with biological sex. Only two archetypes are presented, those of the *Theotokos* as the feminine archetype and St. John the Baptist as the masculine archetype. The distinction of the two genders is presented as ontological, though the gender differences are manifest practically in everyday life. Notably, female-gendered embodiment is revealed in sociality, in "her manner of weaving her being in relation to others and to herself."<sup>121</sup> Evdokimov's gender distinctions are not abstract or superficial. Grounded in ontological essence, gender is clearly manifest in earthly existence.<sup>122</sup> In other words, gender is the "how" to the common "what" of humanity.<sup>123</sup> In creation and in union with Christ, men and women share common properties and a common eschatological objective. However, their respective types approach their shared destiny distinctively.

Additionally, the model's affirmation of archetypal reciprocity bears appropriative consideration. The distinct genders cannot be viewed as polar opposites, as unevenly dependent, or as principally independent. Humanity as male and female is one kind, one common principle, united in creation and sharing the same ultimate destiny of redemption. Male and female are two complementary types of the same kind.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 21. The use of the term *sociality* refers to this study's definition as presented in chap. 1 (see sect. "Proposed Theological Paradigm for Female-Gendered Embodiment") and revisited in this chapter. *Sociality* is not a term used by Evdokimov.

<sup>122</sup> The use of *essence* and *existence* here should be understood as employed in Evdokimov's model. Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 225.

<sup>123</sup> Evdokimov asserts that "the masculine and the feminine are the 'how'; and their archetypes show the forms and the means associated with the very concrete personal destiny of each specified type, in order to actualize the 'what' that is common to all." For Evdokimov, the "what" of humanity is the God-man, the archetype of humanity, representing the ultimate deification of the church. Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 228.

<sup>124</sup> Again, though Evdokimov intends complementarity as a "constituent element of the one human reality," his emphasis on complementarity as man and woman's offering their respective capacities toward the mutuality of the other can be appropriated as a guiding concept. Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 23.

## Conclusion

While this study cannot affirm Evdokimov's model unconditionally, many isolated assertions of the model can be appropriated for the development of the ontological framework for female-gendered embodiment. Regarding the definition of woman, Evdokimov's ontological approach is appreciated. Meaning is not determined by material manifestation.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, Evdokimov's treatment of Christ's gendered embodiment precludes Christ's embodied genderedness from positing man as more wholly human than woman. Finally, the idyllic state of man and woman does include the ontological reality and eschatological certainty of complementarity and unity.

Though some of Evdokimov's assumptions are incongruent with the foundations of this research, many assertions of Evdokimov's theological anthropology must be considered and addressed in the development of an ontological framework for female-gendered embodiment. First, Evdokimov's model affirms the ultimate unity of the body of Christ in the kingdom of God. His theological anthropology affirms the eschatological certainty of male- and female-gendered embodied people in perfect communion with each other and with God. In addition, Evdokimov's model demands a position regarding the extent of the image-bearing nature of humanity. A thorough theological anthropology must consider the extent to which, and the manner in which, humanity reflects God's image. Because God is simple, his attributes and his Persons cannot be subdivided for analysis. The Persons and attributes of God are not gendered, nor can they be associated directly with a particular gender. However, if an ontological definition of female-gendered embodiment is to be achieved, the *imago Dei* must be thoughtfully considered, especially as it pertains to the two genders.<sup>126</sup> Finally, though

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<sup>125</sup> Evdokimov asserts *existence* as a normative manifestation of *essence*. See 101n122.

<sup>126</sup> See chap. 3, sect. "Theological Considerations for Female-Gendered Embodiment," subsect. "The *Imago Dei*," for this study's position on the *imago Dei* universally and the image-bearing of male and female.

this study would reject the association of the Holy Spirit with woman, the scriptural personification of wisdom as feminine must be explored.

Evdokimov's ontological model of women is unprecedented. His comprehensive theological anthropology and metaphysical treatment of the genders is unparalleled in Christian literature. For Evdokimov's model to achieve his primary aim, comparable studies must be attempted, "each one corroborated by its own tradition, will provide a richer vision of all the possible aspects."<sup>127</sup> This study is one such answer to his ecumenical invitation, a sympathetic engagement of conflicting anthropologies.

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<sup>127</sup> Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 28.

## CHAPTER 5

### ESTABLISHING A DEFINITIONAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter synthesizes the information from the preceding chapters to develop the definition introduced at the end of chapter 3 in order to propose a definitional framework for the ontological meaning of women. In large part, this framework is built from the paradigms of embodiment defined by Gregg Allison.<sup>1</sup> While the framework is prompted by many of the elements established in the precedent work of Allison, the organization and depth of the proposed framework seeks to expand Allison's four theses and to substantiate a specific definition of female-gendered embodiment.

#### **Introducing the Framework**

Following the comprehensive interaction with the theological anthropology of women proposed by Paul Evdokimov, the study proposes an alternative framework for defining the ontological identity of women according to theological anthropology. A valid definitional framework must aim to apply to all people across all time and all cultures. The following proposed framework submits that no human has ever existed outside of the framework parameters. Likewise, no human can ever exist who does not fit within the parameters of the framework. These are lofty objectives, but they are essential for any framework of human ontology to endure.<sup>2</sup> Principally, the proposed framework

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<sup>1</sup> Primarily, the framework builds from Gregg Allison's four theses identified in his SBTs Faculty Address; see Gregg R. Allison, "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 157-80. The theses are further developed in his book; see Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> In establishing a universal framework, I am not ignoring exceptions to the rules or outliers from the general population of humanity. There are those who may not easily identify within some of the definitional parameters because of medical conditions (e.g., intersex), cultural displacement (e.g., refugees), and/or ethnic blurring (e.g., blended or mixed families). However, a framework cannot be developed based on the exceptions. And the exceptions do not preclude an individual from fitting within the definitional

seeks to answer the question: What does it mean to be a gendered being, specifically a woman?

### **Taxonomy for Gendered Embodiment**

The framework is composed of multiple parameters upon which an ontological definition can be constructed. The five layers of definitional parameters are listed below. Though all parameters are addressed for all humankind, this study centers on female-gendered embodiment.

1. *Embodiment*: All humans are embodied. Human existence requires embodiment.
2. *Gendered* embodiment: All humans are embodied as either male or female. Embodiment necessitates genderedness.
3. *Dependent*, gendered embodiment: Each human is constitutionally dependent on God. God-oriented relational design and capacity are foundational aspects of being a gendered embodied person.
4. *Social*, dependent, gendered embodiment: Each human is constitutionally social. People-oriented relational design and capacity are foundational aspects of being a gendered embodied person.
5. *Particular*, social, dependent, gendered embodiment: Each human has unique aspects (ethnicity, family/kinship, temporality, spatiality, context, story) that constitute their particularity and add dimension to their personhood.

No person can exist outside of the five parameters, and each parameter builds from the reality of the preceding parameter.<sup>3</sup> These five parameters serve to elaborate on the work of Allison and to demonstrate some unique aspects of female-gendered embodiment across each facet.<sup>4</sup> Each of the five definitional parameters are addressed in

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parameters, though they may make some of the categories feel arbitrary. More will be discussed on the limitations of the framework in chap. 6.

<sup>3</sup> For example, embodiment necessitates gender, and genderedness requires the state of embodiment. See the forthcoming section titled “2. Gendered Embodiment.”

<sup>4</sup> Four of the five parameters (embodiment, gender, sociality, and particularity) are identified and so named by Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” 160. See also Allison, *Embodied*. While Allison assumes humanity’s dependence on God, he does not explicitly define dependence as a parameter of human embodiment.

this chapter according to various categories, forming a taxonomy of gendered embodiment. The proposed framework is developed considering these seven categories:<sup>5</sup>

1. *Divine design* identifies God's perfect intention and formation of the respective parameter. As Creator, God's deliberate creation of humankind is evident in both Scripture and human experience.
2. *Human capacity* refers to the human ability to live within the divine design. Tainted by sin, the human faculty of each parameter has the potential for perversion, both conscious and unconscious.<sup>6</sup>
3. *Created state* considers God's original design for woman in the garden of Eden before the fall.
4. *Temporal state* acknowledges the post-fall reality for woman and the intermediate state of disembodiment after death before the new heavens and new earth.
5. *Restored state* speculates the eternal state of embodiment when woman is restored to her glorified state.
6. *Uniquely female aspects* consider the realities and expressions of each parameter that are distinctly female manifestations of the condition as expressed by female embodied people.
7. *Potential perversions* recognize the *conscious* and *unconscious* perversions of each parameter as a result of sin.<sup>7</sup> In the temporal state, some amount of incongruence will always exist between the divine design and the human capacity for each parameter. In the restored state, perfect congruence will be restored, as the corruption of the parameters will be eliminated.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter follows and expands upon the content of the following table.

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<sup>5</sup> These seven categories are original to this study. Though aspects of the categories have been addressed in many other publications, the collective treatment of the categories is unique to this study. Additionally, Allison uses *design* and *capacity* in his recent publication, *Embodied*, but he credits the concept and terms to my research and this study.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Tennent affirms the idea of design vs capacity, stating "We should never confuse our original design with our fallen inclinations and orientations." Timothy Tennent, *For the Body: Recovering a Theology of Gender, Sexuality, and the Human Body* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2020), 32.

<sup>7</sup> Note: It is outside of the scope of this study to decipher conscious sin from the unconscious effects of the fall. Though this is an important differentiation for discipleship, it is not the onus of this research to define precisely where a person's individual guilt begins. I attempt only to affirm that perversions of the parameters of embodiment include both conscious and unconscious elements because of the fallenness of humankind and the presence of sin in the world.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Hoekema explores the various phases of human existence from creation to redemption. Focusing on the structural and functional aspects of humanity's image-bearing, Hoekema's terms include *the original image*, *the perverted image*, *the renewed image*, and *the perfected image*. Some of his concepts overlap with this framework, though a different perspective and terms are used. See Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1994).

Table 6.1. Proposed taxonomy for gendered embodiment:  
Embodiment, genderedness, and dependence

Parameter	Embodiment	Genderedness	Dependence
Divine Design	Original design, the normative state, and the promised eternal state of all humanity	Two types of humankind—male and female—with uniquely gendered expressions of common human properties	God-oriented relational design; Universal, constitutional dependence on God
Human Capacity	Universally unconscious but includes conscious engagement with embodiment of self	Unconscious capacity to be gendered for all humans universally; Conscious engagement with genderedness	Includes the desire for, expression of, and receptivity of relationship with God
Created State	Designed for life and work in garden of Eden	Male and female	Created in the image of God, by God, and for God
Temporal State	Deeply perverted by sin; Evidenced by death and decay, temporary disembodiment, and harm to self	Male and female; Deeply affected by sin with incongruence (conscious or unconscious) between design and capacity; Splintered view of gender (biological sex and gender identity)	Temporal-specific aspects including fragility of life, suffering, noetic effects of sin, and idolatrous nature
Restored State	Glorified embodiment, intended for eternity in the presence of God	Male and female	Creator-creature; King-citizen dynamics
Uniquely Female Aspects	None applicable	(1) Female-type of humankind; (2) Female expression of common human properties	Female expression of dependence
Potential Perversions	Unconscious: the disembodied state of many people during the temporal state; Physiological disorders, physical handicaps, and other medical conditions; Conscious: self-harm (cutting, suicide, addiction), negligence (sloth, gluttony), and recklessness (death-defying acts)	Unconscious: intersex, gender confusion/incongruence; Conscious: transgender identity, SRS, HRT	Unconscious: sin nature; Conscious: acts of idolatry



Table 6.2: Proposed taxonomy for gendered embodiment:  
Sociality and particularity

Parameter	Sociality	Particularity
Divine Design	People-oriented relational or attractional aspect of gendered embodiment; Two-directional	Collection of characteristics making every human experience unique; Includes ethnicity, family/kinship, temporality, spatiality, context, story
Human Capacity	Includes the desire for, expression of, and receptivity of interpersonal relationships	Includes the aspects of individuality and community
Created State	Existence of only marriage	Unknown and presumed
Temporal State	Divine order with specific rules of engagement for various relationships	Limitations in perspective—tendency toward barricading fellowship; Christ's particular incarnation giving meaning to particularity
Restored State	Eternal siblingship	Provides invitation toward enriched sociality and dependence
Uniquely Female Aspects	Female expression of sociality; Specific roles as pertaining to formal roles in temporal state	Female expression of particularities
Potential Perversions	Conscious: extramarital affair; Unconscious: hormonal imbalances, hormone surges (e.g., puberty), mental and/or social disorders, trauma from abuse	Forms of tribalism, self-promotion, anti-sociality, and hatred; Unconscious: generational racism; Conscious: polarization

Following the development of the five parameters according to the seven defined categories, an ontological definition of female-gendered embodiment is proposed: *Female-gendered embodiment is the condition of being particular, social, dependent, gendered embodied people who were created as the imago Dei in the female-type of humankind and who engage the purpose, mandate, and virtues of humanity with uniquely female expression.*

## **1. Embodiment**

All humans are embodied beings. As originated in Eden, verifiable in present day, and indicated as an eternal reality, embodiment is the proper state of human existence. In this sense, embodiment is treated as both the condition of having a body and the exploration of embodied life.<sup>9</sup> The condition of human embodiment has been expertly and thoroughly addressed from an evangelical perspective by Gregg Allison and Marc Cortez, among others.<sup>10</sup> Aspects of Allison and Cortez's works are discussed and elaborated briefly, organized by the defined categories.

### **Divine Design for Embodiment**

As the climax of his creation, God designed humanity in his own image.<sup>11</sup> In the *divine design for embodiment*, each human is comprised of immaterial and material

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<sup>9</sup> Allison notes that in addition to simply having a body, "embodiment is a field of study that explores how people are present bodily and engage physically in the world. Thinking, feeling, willing, purposing, moving, and acting are common activities, all of which include some bodily component." Allison, *Embodied*, 14-15.

<sup>10</sup> See Allison, "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," 157-80; Allison, *Embodied*; Gregg R. Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 4-17; Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017); Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010); Joshua R. Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020). See also the summary of relevant scholarly contributors to theological anthropology from Protestant and Catholic traditions (in chap. 2, sect. "Precedent Literature for Ontological Model in Christian Theology: Embodied Beings").

<sup>11</sup> See chap. 3, sect. "Theological Considerations for Female-Gendered Embodiment, subsect. "The *Imago Dei*," for an overview of the various perspectives of humanity's image-bearing.

aspects.<sup>12</sup> Both the material and immaterial are required to constitute a human being; no human does or can exist without being embodied. Embodiment is the original design, the normative state, and the promised eternal state of all humanity. Thus, embodiment is the proper state of human existence now and forever.

Notably, human beings are embodied as individuals. Each human is, as an isolated entity, an embodied being. For the parameter of embodiment, a person requires no other people in order to be a whole embodied being. Moreover, all people are united in the universal condition of embodiment. Because embodiment is fundamental for human life and universally the same for all people, a sense of “one body” as the humankind is reasonably appropriate. United as the humankind, “there is one kind [of flesh] for humans” (1 Cor 15:39 ESV). Furthermore, common human properties are shared across all humankind.<sup>13</sup> These properties are developed in the coming sections. Embodiment thus includes aspects of individual autonomy and universal sameness of kind.<sup>14</sup>

### **Human Capacity for Embodiment**

Embodiment is involuntary and indispensable for human existence. The *human capacity for embodiment* is universally *unconscious* but includes *conscious* engagement with the embodiment of self. No human chooses to be embodied, nor does anyone have the opportunity to select their body. Though alterations—whether superficial or irreversible—can be made to the body, no human being can successfully exchange or reject embodiment and live. Embodiment is a vital aspect of being human; to reject

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<sup>12</sup> Though God is spirit (John 4:24), he created his image-bearers with material and immaterial components. Thus, humanity’s physicality does not mimic God’s physical presence, but humanity’s embodiment is required to image God rightly.

<sup>13</sup> Allison uses the term *common human capacities* to include aspects of human existence such as “reasoning, emotion, will, and purposing,” as well as *common human properties* to refer to virtues, fruit of the Spirit, and other positive qualities. Allison, *Embodied*, 47. This study’s employment of the term *common human properties* is intended to refer to the purpose, mandate, and virtues that are universal to all humankind. This concept is further explained in coming sections.

<sup>14</sup> The concept of community and interpersonal relationships is further explored in the section titled “4. Social, Dependent, Gendered Embodiment.”

embodiment is to cease to be alive. The ability to be embodied is provided to, and required for, all human beings.

### **Embodiment in Created State**

In the beginning, humankind was created by God for God's purposes; this is the *created state*. Humankind was designed in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). God created humankind from materiality and immateriality, the two parts being inseparable (Gen 2:7, 22).<sup>15</sup> As image-bearers, the man and the woman were commanded “to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 1:28). Humankind was embodied by design and charged with an embodied mandate. Embodiment is indispensable to fulfill the cultural mandate—both procreation and vocation.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, embodiment was not inconsequential, metamorphic, or associated with sin.<sup>17</sup> At creation, humankind's embodiment was seen by God to be “very good” (Gen 1:31).

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<sup>15</sup> Though it is the divine design that the material and immaterial aspects of human embodiment not be separated, it is the case that in the intermediate state, people continue to exist in a disembodied state, separated from their material body. This temporary disembodied state is not proper. In this period of separation between the material and immaterial aspects of human embodiment, the person—and all their respective characteristics—does not cease to exist. See 19n54 for more regarding the person versus nature distinction.

<sup>16</sup> As Allison writes, “Importantly, this divinely given purpose—the so-called ‘cultural mandate,’ or the duty to build human society—is accomplished by, and only by, embodied image bearers.” Allison, *Embodied*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> Embodiment is not inconsequential because it is required to pursue and complete the mandates given by God. Embodiment is not metamorphic because human beings were fully embodied as human beings from the beginning. Finally, embodiment is not associated with sin because the first man and woman were created sinless and embodied. Furthermore, human beings created in God's image would not have been innately sinful, nor would God have declared humankind's embodiment to be “very good” if the physicality was associated with sin (Gen 1:26-27, 31).

## **Embodiment in Temporal State**

All humans exist as embodied beings in the *temporal state*. All people are born in bodies, all experience life in bodies, and all encounter death in bodies.<sup>18</sup> Because of sin, death entered the world (Rom 5:12). Sin inhibits the human capacity for embodiment from complying with God’s design for embodiment. The experience of human embodiment has been deeply corrupted by sin, as evidenced by deformity, decay, and death. Death also inhibits humanity’s ability to remain embodied until the final resurrection and restoration. Paul speaks of this inappropriate state of disembodiment as being “unclothed” (2 Cor 5:1-5). Disembodiment is not the proper, nor the final, state of human existence.

It was amidst this state of discordance between design and capacity that the Son of God became incarnate. He was the perfect human with no dissonance between divine design and human capacity. Although Christ was deeply affected by sin in the world—to the point of his sacrificial death—his conscious human capacity perfectly aligned with God’s design for humankind. Christ was simultaneously perfect humanity and undiminished deity, which entails he was embodied exactly as all humans are embodied.<sup>19</sup> With his personal and universally normative embodiment, the perfect Adam’s incarnation affirms the parameter of embodiment.

## **Embodiment in Restored State**

In the *restored state*, embodiment will be the eternal state for all human beings—regardless of their belief in, and/or submission to, God (Acts 24:15). For

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<sup>18</sup> This is the general rule for humanity. Of course, there are exceptions for birth and human experience (e.g., miscarried babies, developmental disorders, paralysis), but these exceptions serve only to affirm the normative nature of the rule. Also, there are recorded in Scripture only two instances of people who did not experience death and directly entered into a disembodied state: Enoch (Gen 5:22-24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11). Again, these are exceptions to rule, as all other people in human history have experienced death as embodied beings.

<sup>19</sup> My thanks to Glenn Kreider for this excellent phrase: “perfect humanity, undiminished deity” in reference to Christ’s incarnation. The normalcy of Christ’s humanity does not detract from the singularity of Christ’s deity.

believers, eternal embodiment means a state of glorified embodiment, partaking in the final resurrection and enjoying God's presence for all eternity (John 11:25; 1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4).<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, Christ in the glorified state is also embodied (Acts 1:6-11).<sup>21</sup> This is evident in his appearances after his resurrection and his self-revelation to his disciples.<sup>22</sup> Christ's incarnation confirms the value of embodiment and promises restoration for the human state of embodiment.<sup>23</sup>

### Uniquely Female Aspects of Embodiment

As embodiment is the proper state of existence for all human beings, male and female alike, there are no *uniquely female aspects of embodiment* as a state of existence. Genderedness is addressed in the forthcoming section.

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<sup>20</sup> Additional (though not exhaustive) scriptural references regarding the final resurrection of all human beings include the following: 1 Sam 2:6; Job 19:25-27; Pss 16:9; 17:15; Dan 12:2; Hos 13:14; John 5:21, 29; 6:39; Acts 24:15; Rev 20:4-6. Notably, regardless of one's eschatological view, "embodiment is the future hope and blessing for human beings." See Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," 13.

<sup>21</sup> Marc Cortez rightly notes that we have only glimpses of "the eschatological condition of humanity" from the life of Christ in his "resurrection, ascension and occasional descriptions of his return and future kingdom." Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 188.

<sup>22</sup> Matt 28:9, 16-17; Luke 24:13-35; John 20:19-28; 21:1-2; Acts 1:3; 9:3-5; 1 Cor 15:6-7. As noted in chap. 3, Jesus Christ's various reappearances after his resurrection are marked by a recognition of him as Jesus, substantiating the resemblance of his resurrected body to his pre-resurrected body. Furthermore, after Christ's ascension, revelations given to the apostles include visions and language indicating an embodied Christ who is standing (Acts 7:55-56) and sitting (Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12) at the right hand of the throne of God.

<sup>23</sup> A note from chap. 1 (9n25) is worth repeating here: The theological concept of embodiment "recalls the distinctive feature of Christianity, that God became body and in so doing has confirmed and healed all our bodily nature. This was a scandal in the religions of the ancient world—and is an unresolved challenge in the present world." Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *I Am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 103-4. God's act of redemption on humanity's behalf provided the means of reconciliation and restoration between fallen humanity and perfect God. Thus, this study agrees with Moltmann-Wendel that Christ's incarnation validates the significance of humanity's embodiment and ultimately restores humanity into unbroken communion with God. However, Christ's incarnation did not eradicate sin's presence or sin nature in the temporal state of existence. Christians eagerly await Christ's return and final victory.

## Potential Perversions of Embodiment

Because of original sin and the propensity of human beings toward sin, various *perversions of embodiment* exist. The divine design is perfect, but the human capacity has been damaged by sin. These potential corruptions in the human capacity for embodiment include both *unconscious* and *conscious* perversions. Unconscious perversions would include the disembodied state of people during the temporal state, as previously discussed (2 Cor 5:1-5). Other unconscious perversions of embodiment include psychological and physiological disorders, physical handicaps, and all other medical conditions that render embodiment incongruent with the divine design. Any involuntary corruption of human capacity for embodiment does not indicate a lesser value of the human being. Rather, unconscious perversions serve to demonstrate the extensive and devastating effects of sin in the temporal state. To illustrate, the phenomenon of phantom limbs indicates an innate sense of embodied wholeness. Though a limb is missing from the body, the person still senses and even experiences the existence of the absent limb. The person's "bodily integrity" insists that the limb should be, and experientially still is, present.<sup>24</sup> Despite the unconscious perversion of the person's capacity for embodiment (the medical amputation or otherwise involuntary absence of the limb), the mind and body insist on recognizing a wholeness that is not present.<sup>25</sup> Though the presence of sin wedges a gap between the divine design and the human capacity for embodiment, human beings innately sense the discrepancy. Jerram Barrs refers to this human awareness as "echoes of Eden." In addition to God's special and general revelation, Barrs contends that God provided to humankind "a recollection of the original good creation; there is an awareness that the world we now live in is broken and fallen, and there is recall of the promise and hope of

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen Gaukroger, "Phantom Limbs," in *Embodiment: A History*, ed. Justin E. H. Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 310.

<sup>25</sup> Allison appropriately uses the phantom limbs syndrome as an illustration of the state of disembodiment in the intermediate state. Allison, *Embodied*, 257. In this case, I am using the same illustration as an innate sense in every person of the divine design for embodiment, despite the presence of conscious and unconscious perversions of human capacity for embodiment.

the restoration of what is good.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, the general humankind innately senses and objects to the unconscious perversions of embodiment.

In addition to unconscious perversions, various conscious perversions also exist. Volitional perversions of embodiment would include self-harm (e.g., masochistic behavior, cutting, addictions, suicide), negligence (e.g., sloth and gluttony), and recklessness (e.g., death-defying acts).<sup>27</sup> A conscious or volitional perversion devalues one’s condition of embodiment, degrades the body, and usurps God’s divine design for embodiment with one’s own plans. As such, conscious perversions of human capacity for embodiment are sinful and must be treated as sin in order to pursue repentance and reconciliation.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

Embodiment is intended by God, is proper for human existence, and is inherently good.<sup>29</sup> In the restored state, believers will experience perfect alignment between the divine design for embodiment and their own human capacity. The perishable will put on the imperishable and declare victory over sin and death (1 Cor 15:50-57). After the final resurrection, no perversions will exist—neither conscious nor unconscious.

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<sup>26</sup> Jerram Barrs, *Echoes of Eden: Reflections on Christianity, Literature, and the Arts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 74.

<sup>27</sup> See Allison, *Embodied*, 128-37. for an extensive treatment of the “deadly sins” against the body, including sloth and gluttony. In this study, the term *recklessness* is employed in the legal sense, wherein recklessness is an “extreme indifference to human life” and/or “grave risk of life.” These are also the general definitions of second-degree murder. Note: Conscious and unconscious harm inflicted on one human being from another—physical or otherwise—is considered a perversion of sociality rather than embodiment.

<sup>28</sup> Many conscious perversions may often be associated with unconscious perversions (e.g., cutting with psychological disorders such as depression). Anyone responsible for the care and spiritual development of people must exercise discernment in addressing conscious sin amidst unconscious perversion. More on this distinction will follow in coming sections.

<sup>29</sup> By “inherently good,” I am referring to God’s declaration of “very good” over his completed creation in Gen 1:31. I am not contradicting the doctrine of original sin, but I am distinguishing between sin nature and embodiment in order to oppose Gnosticism and Neo-Gnosticism.



Individual and universal embodiment of the redeemed will be eternally accepted, enjoyed, and celebrated.

## 2. Gendered Embodiment

Genderedness is the embodied state of being either male or female. Human embodiment has always been, and will always be, a gendered state of being.

Genderedness is dependent on the state of being embodied and is irrevocably tied to embodiment. Gender thus “maps almost completely onto (correlates with) human embodiment” and cannot be separated from the human state of being embodied.<sup>30</sup> As there is no embodiment without gender, there can be no genderedness separate from embodiment. Thus, gender cannot be splintered into materiality and immateriality.<sup>31</sup> As material and immaterial are normative, inseparable realities of human existence, gender is likewise indivisible.<sup>32</sup> Gender pervades every aspect of human existence.<sup>33</sup> Gender is

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<sup>30</sup> Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” 163. See also Allison, *Embodied*, 45.

<sup>31</sup> These terms are each fraught with confusion, as they are used differently, and often indiscriminately, across disciplines. In this study, I intend to communicate that the visible (physical, material, biological, anatomical, measurable) and the invisible (immaterial, spiritual, psychological, emotional, personhood) aspects of being a human being are gendered. For further examples of the contemporary use of these terms within Christian discussion, see James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds., *Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> In effort to clarify the ontological nature of gendered embodiment, this study does not distinguish definitively between *biological sex* and *gender identity*. I acknowledge that sex and gender are not synonymous terms. And though many aspects can be distinguished between sex and gender, this study is not dividing the characteristics intentionally. However, I do address the distinction between sex and gender extensively in appendix 2 (“Distinction of Gender and Sex”). See also chap. 1, sect. “Terminology and Definitions: Gender.” See also 18-19n54. By contrast, Farris builds a substance dualism ontology in which he associates *biological sex* with physicality (body) and defines *gender* or *sexual identity* as an essential quality of the soul. Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 206. While Farris staunchly connects *gender*, *biological sex*, and *sexuality*, the approach to gendered embodiment based in substance dualism opens the door for mismatched bodies and souls (e.g., male body with female soul), (226-28).

<sup>33</sup> Gender is not solely sociological but also biological and theological. See chap. 1, sects. “Theological Assumptions,” “Biological Assumptions,” and “Sociological Assumptions” under the heading “Research Assumptions.”

ontological and spans the created, temporal, and restored states of human existence. All humans are embodied as either male or female (Gen 1:27) and will be for eternity.<sup>34</sup>

### **Divine Design for Gendered Embodiment**

The *divine design* of humanity in God's image included the creation of male and female. According to Gregg Allison's paradigm for human embodiment, "God's design for his image-bearers is that they are gendered human beings."<sup>35</sup> At the point of creation, Scripture clearly indicates that God's design of humanity was in his image and as male and female (Gen 1:26-27). The Genesis 1 and 2 creation accounts emphasize the binary nature of humankind. The climaxing event of creation, God's forming of humanity, continues the pattern of binarity established on the preceding days of creation. As substantiated in the preceding scriptural survey (chap. 3), both male and female types were divinely designed in God's own image. Each type of gendered humankind carries the *imago Dei*. Of course, God himself is not gendered, just as he is not embodied (Exod 3:14; John 4:24; Col 1:15).<sup>36</sup> However, when God became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), God the Son was embodied and gendered.<sup>37</sup> The perfect human, Jesus Christ

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<sup>34</sup> These claims will be substantiated throughout this chapter. As communicated in the chap. 1, sect. "Research Assumptions," subsect. "Theological Assumptions," the proposed framework will not engage any form of gender outside of male and female.

<sup>35</sup> Allison, "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," 160. See also Allison, *Embodied*, 39.

<sup>36</sup> God is outside the bounds of human categories. Both men and women are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27) as categories of human (gendered embodied) existence do not exist within God, who is beyond gendered embodiment. Furthermore, it is because God is outside of gendered embodiment that his image can be displayed in both male and female embodied people equally.

<sup>37</sup> See Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 210. In particular, Cortez's chap. 6 ("The Male Messiah") provides insightful considerations for Christ's gendered embodiment. For the purposes of this study, the fact that Christ was gendered is significant. Male embodiment is not elevated over female embodiment in light of Christ's incarnation. Rather, both genders are affirmed as the proper state of human embodied existence. For the parameter of gendered embodiment, the fact that Christ was gendered as a male is historically and contextually crucial. Theologically, Christ's maleness has significant implications for gender, as expertly articulated by Marc Cortez in *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*. In particular, Christ's incarnation affirms gendered embodiment as the proper state of human existence but denies the basic tenets of gender essentialism (203-11). Cortez very clearly argues against the necessity of gender essentialism for recognizing distinction between genders. He claims that "It is entirely possible to reject gender essentialism while still affirming the importance of biological difference related to sexuality" (208). Cortez continues: "Most importantly, I would argue that gender essentialism is *not* required for

was incarnate as a gendered embodied being.<sup>38</sup> Gendered embodiment was deliberate at the creation of humankind and was affirmed by the incarnation of Christ.

Furthermore, just as human beings are embodied as individuals, each human is individually a gendered being. Either male or female, every human being is individually gendered. Male-gendered embodied people do not require female-gendered embodied people in order to be fully gendered—and vice versa. Male and female are not two halves of a whole.<sup>39</sup> For the parameter of genderedness, a person requires no other people in order to be a whole gendered embodied being. This autonomy also indicates the non-hierarchical nature of genderedness. While coming sections elucidate the relational qualities of humankind, the existence of one gender is not dependent on, or subject to, the existence of another.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, all people are united in the universal condition of gendered embodiment, and all female-gendered embodied people share in various realities. All women across all time and all cultures share the commonality of being female. Genderedness is thus an autonomous condition for every human being and simultaneously a unifying, universal condition for each gender—male and female.

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maintaining either a traditional sexual ethic or a complementarian view of church governance” (209; emphasis original).

<sup>38</sup> Paul Evdokimov likewise emphasizes the importance of Jesus Christ as the archetypal human—rather than an archetype for men only. Evdokimov’s treatment of Christ’s gendered embodiment precludes Christ’s embodied genderedness from positing man as more wholly human than woman. Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World: A Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Women*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994), 228. “The fact that the Son became incarnate as a gendered individual,” contends Cortez, “would seem to require us to affirm that sexuality [genderedness] is an essential feature of human existence.” Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 198.

<sup>39</sup> This statement directly contradicts fractional gender complementarity, which asserts each gender as half of the human whole, as defined by Sister Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, vol. 3, *The Search for Communion of Persons, 1500-2015* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 31.

<sup>40</sup> This claim contradicts both traditional gender polarity (i.e., male is superior to female) and reverse gender polarity (i.e., female is superior to male). God created man and woman with uniform constitution and distinct formation. One does not depend on the other for existence or meaning. For more on the philosophical development of these opposing views, see Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 3:31-32.

**Gender uniformities for male and female.** The scriptural survey in chapter 3 established various uniformities for gendered embodiment, according to God’s design for gender. These uniformities are listed in the below table.

Table 7. Gender uniformities in scriptural survey

Created State	
<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Purpose	Gen 1:26-27
Kind	Gen 1:26-27
Constitution	Gen 1:31
Blessing and Mandate	Gen 1:28
Need for Relationship	Gen 2:18

*Table 7 continued*

Temporal State	
<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Evidence</i>
Guilt	Gen 3:6-13
Judgment	Gen 3:14-19
Requirements as OT Community	Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26
Requirements as NT Community	Eph 4:1-16; 1 Pet 1:15-16
Union with Christ	Gal 3:28
Mission	Matt 28:16-20
Restored State	
<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Evidence</i>
Eternal Reality of Gendered Embodiment	Luke 24:39

The uniformities of all gendered embodied people can be accurately generalized as *common human properties*. These common properties include all realities that are the same across all humans, male and female alike. The list of uniformities in the above table can be summarized in the terms *purpose*, *mandate*, and *virtues*.

*Purpose.* All gendered embodied beings are uniform in *purpose*: to glorify God as image-bearers.<sup>41</sup> Being uniform in *constitution* (material and immaterial), all human beings are of the same *kind*.<sup>42</sup> The purpose of humankind transcends both the created and the temporal states. Additionally, humankind shares their original purpose as an eschatological destiny, a reality of the restored state.<sup>43</sup> The purpose of humankind is enabled by their common nature and carried out through their shared mandate.

*Mandate.* All gendered embodied beings are uniform in *mandate and blessing*: to subdue and to fill the earth. The cultural mandate given in Genesis 1 and the mission given to the disciples in Matthew 28 are not contradictory to, or replacements for, one another.<sup>44</sup> Rather, the Great Commission corresponds with the cultural mandate,

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<sup>41</sup> See the sect. “Created State,” subsect. “Uniformity in purpose,” as well as sect. “Theological Considerations for Female-Gendered Embodiment,” subsect. “The *Imago Dei*,” in chap. 3 for further details and substantiation of this treatment of purpose.

<sup>42</sup> God created human beings after their kind; both male and female are of the human kind. See chap. 3, sect. “Created State,” subsects. “Uniformity in constitution” and “Uniformity in kind.” Peter Gentry elaborates that before the creation of humanity, the term *according to their kind* appeared ten times (Gen 1:1-25). When God created man and woman, he likewise created them after their kind. When Adam and Eve produce Seth, Seth is brought forth after their own kind (Gen 5:3). Moreover, Gen 5:1-3 confirms the sameness of humankind, reiterating that God named both male and female “humanity” when he created them. As God created humankind in his own image and likeness, so too Adam begat Seth in his own image and likeness. Seth resembles Adam, as he was brought forth according to his own kind. See Peter J. Gentry, “Humanity as the Divine Image in Genesis 1:26-28,” *Eikon* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 56-69. If there were any doubt that all human beings are of the same kind as the first man and woman, Rom 5 dispels such doubt. Every human is guilty of sin—not only because of their individual sin but primarily due to their shared guilt in original sin as members of the human kind. Human beings’ sin nature reflects the reality of their inclusion in humankind (Rom 5:12-14). In this study, “humankind” is synonymous with “human race.” As such, the term *race* is not used in this study to denote ethnicity. All humans are of the same race (humanity) but differ in their respective ethnicities.

<sup>43</sup> As the Westminster Shorter Catechism states, “Man’s chief aim is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” The Westminster General Assembly 1647, *Westminster Shorter Catechism with Proof Texts (ESV): An Aid for Study of the Holy Bible*, ed. Robert B. Balsinger (Wheaton, IL: Good News, 2010), 10.

<sup>44</sup> The mandate for humankind has been consistent across the created and temporal states. See the continuity of the mandate pre-fall and post-fall in Gen 1:28; 3:20; 9:7; Matt 28.

acknowledging the work of making disciples as an aspect of both reproduction and work. Believers are tasked with filling and subduing the earth, both physically and spiritually.

Furthermore, all gendered embodied beings are uniform in their *need for relationship*; by design, interpersonal relationships are required to fulfill humankind's mandate.<sup>45</sup> The shared *guilt* for sin and the common *judgments* received as a result of sin are also irrevocably tied with accomplishing the mandate. Though the mandate transcends the created and temporal states, human beings' ability to accomplish it has been deeply affected by the presence of sin. In the restored state, humankind will have the freedom from sin to perfectly fulfill the original mandate, though the manifestation of its fulfillment will be distinct from both the created and temporal states.<sup>46</sup>

*Virtues.* All gendered embodied beings are uniform in *virtues*, the common human properties that are commanded by God and desirable for a fruitful life.<sup>47</sup> Scripture's presentation of the qualities required for a flourishing life and community is gender-indiscriminate.<sup>48</sup> In this study, the term *virtues* includes the qualities of flourishing, fruit of the Spirit, and spiritual giftings.<sup>49</sup> The qualities of flourishing refer to God's requirements of his people to be holy, explicitly commanded in both the OT and

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<sup>45</sup> The need for relationship is further explained in forthcoming sections on sociality.

<sup>46</sup> Without marriage, child-bearing will also cease in the restored state. The building of, and ruling over, the new heavens and new earth will be the work of humankind in the eschaton (Dan 7:18, 27; 1 Cor 6:2-3; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 22:3).

<sup>47</sup> While the virtues (and purpose and mandate) are universal for all people across all time, a truly flourishing life, in both the temporal and the eschatological senses, can only be achieved through faith in Christ. The common human properties are true for all humankind but achievable only in God's people. Without the reconciliation afforded by Christ, congruence between divine design and the human capacity is impossible.

<sup>48</sup> Again, this study is not addressing biblical roles, which may dictate appropriate behavior within formal defined relationships. Furthermore, genderedness is not the appropriate parameter within which to discuss biblical roles. Roles and functions are relevant to the parameter of sociality, examining how people relate to one another.

<sup>49</sup> In his extensive treatment of the virtues, Thomas Aquinas considers the virtues as separate but connected with "the gifts, beatitudes, and fruits." St. Thomas Aquinas, "Question LV The Essence of Virtue," in *Treatise on the Virtues*, trans. John A. Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 50.

NT.<sup>50</sup> In brief, God's people will experience a prosperous life if they love God and love their neighbor (Matt 22:37-40). The virtues are thus indicated as the *requirements for community living*. Such qualities of flourishing are also examined and celebrated in Christ's Sermon on the Mount with the listed beatitudes (Matt 5:1-12). God both commanded holiness and provided the means by which his people could pursue holiness. As such, these required qualities are best understood as faith-based virtues.<sup>51</sup> The fruit of the Spirit, identified in Galatians 5:22-23, are the markers of all people who "belong to Christ" (Gal 5:24). Additionally, the spiritual giftings given to believers are intended for their individual and communal flourishing (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph 4:11). Regardless of the selected list of gifts, the objective is clear. Believers are to commit themselves and their received spiritual gifts as a "holy sacrifice to God," with each individual member applying his or her gifts toward the benefit of the "one body in Christ" (Rom 12:1, 5). For Augustine, virtue is "the good use of free will."<sup>52</sup> The human capacity for virtuous living is explored further in the coming parameters. In addition to commanding holiness and providing the means to pursue holiness, God also assured holiness for his people through their *union with Christ*.<sup>53</sup> All gendered embodied beings are uniform in *union with Christ* and therefore have the ability to pursue the virtues and

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<sup>50</sup> Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; Eph 4:1-16; 1 Pet 1:15-16. See discussion in chap. 3 concerning the OT and NT requirements for community living (sect. "Temporal State," subsects. "Uniformity in requirements as Old Testament community" and "Uniformity in requirements as new covenant community").

<sup>51</sup> The term *faith-based virtues* is borrowed from Jonathon T. Pennington, *Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 234. Pennington describes the Sermon on the Mount as "an eschatological, Christ-centered, kingdom-oriented piece of wisdom literature with roots in the Jewish Scriptures that invites hearers into human flourishing through faith-based virtues."

<sup>52</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *The Retractions*, trans. Mary Inez Bogan, Fathers of the Church 60 (Washington DC: Catholic University of American Press, 1999), 38.

<sup>53</sup> Just as all human beings, being of the same kind, share in the guilt of original sin, all who are united to Christ, being of one body, share in the gift of grace: "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:17).

the assurance of ultimate flourishing.<sup>54</sup> What are considered volitional faith-based virtues in the temporal state will be instinctive facts of life in the restored state for all of God's people.

As a natural extension, the virtues also include any characteristics that enhance or support the qualities of flourishing, such as wisdom (Prov 1:1-7), courage (Josh 1:9), and nurturing (Eph 6:4).<sup>55</sup> Each of these biblical characteristics is demanded of and available to all believers, regardless of gender.<sup>56</sup> As an example, nurturing is explicitly commanded of fathers in Ephesians 6:4, exhorting men to "raise up," literally to nourish or to nurture, their children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." In the same way, Paul describes his affection for the Thessalonian church "as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children" (1 Thess 2:7). Though the apostles could have been heavy-handed with the church in Thessalonica, they deliberately chose to nurture gently (1 Thess 2:7-8).<sup>57</sup> The characteristic of nurturing, though often epitomized by an affectionate mother, is by no means relegated in Scripture to women as a female-specific

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<sup>54</sup> Again, union with Christ is awarded to all gendered embodied beings who are believers. Not all gendered embodied people are united with Christ; therefore, not all gendered embodied people have the ability to pursue, or the assurance of flourishing resulting from, the virtues.

<sup>55</sup> An interesting study is the prevalent personification of wisdom as a female (Sophia), though the virtues are available to, and expected of, all believers. For an Eastern Orthodox perspective, see Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, 220-21. Carol Meyers also develops the female personification of wisdom in Carol L. Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 177-81. From a Catholic perspective, Sister Prudence Allen also traces wisdom through history. She identifies how the concept was treated philosophically and whether wisdom served toward sex polarity, sex unity, reverse sex polarity, or sex complementarity for each of the addressed philosophers. Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, vol. 1, *The Aristotelian Revolution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 128, 340.

<sup>56</sup> Of course, these virtues are available to unbelievers as well. For more detail on the universal availability of insight according to general revelation, image-bearing, and common grace, see John David Trentham, "Reading the Social Sciences Theologically (Part 1): Approaching and Qualifying Models of Human Development," *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (October 2019), 465-73.

<sup>57</sup> Paul often uses the language of children to describe the converts he has made and the churches he has planted (1 Cor 4:14-15; Phil 2:19-23; 3 John 4). Additionally, the very act of shepherding, a metaphor often employed in Scripture for caring for God's people, is inherently a nurturing behavior (Ps 23; John 21:15-17; 1 Pet 5:1-3). See also Michael S. Wilder and Timothy P. Jones, *The God Who Goes before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), 109-28.



characteristic.<sup>58</sup> Any character quality commended in Scripture is likewise applied to both male- and female-gendered embodied people by the biblical authors.<sup>59</sup>

This section has elaborated on the engagement of purpose, mandate, and virtues as uniform across gendered embodiment. The following section details the female-type and the uniquely female engagement of the common human properties.

**Gender distinctions for male and female.** Though the gender uniformities are significant, there is also substantive distinction in gendered embodied beings between male and female. The scriptural survey in chapter 3 revealed particular distinctions in the *created* and *temporal* states of human existence. The survey did not reveal additional distinctions in the *restored state* but affirmed the eternal reality of gendered embodiment as male and female.

Table 8. Gender distinctions in scriptural survey

Created State	
<i>Distinction in . . .</i>	
Type	Gen 1:27
Formation	Gen 2:7, 21-22
Temporal State	
<i>Distinction in . . .</i>	
Personal Presentation	Deut 22:5

<sup>58</sup> Scripture also describe God in motherly terms, though God is not gendered or embodied (see, e.g., Deut 32:11-12; Isa 49:15; 66:13; Hos 11:3-4).

<sup>59</sup> This assertion of common human properties is articulated by Cortez, as he insists that the biblical authors shared the expectation that the Spirit would generate all the same virtues displayed in Christ in the heart and life of the believers—regardless of gender: “The Bible never claims that some Christian qualities are limited either to men or women . . . . The Bible simply calls on all believers to be Christlike.” Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 205. Additionally, Meyers goes to great lengths to demonstrate that might, strength, bravery, ambition, and initiation—though generally associated with men in Western culture—are all explicitly used to describe the female in Song of Solomon. Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 177-81.

Societal Treatment	Exod 22:16-17; Lev 12:1-8; 15:19-33; Num 5:11-31; Deut 22:13-21, 22-29
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The four distinctions identified in the scriptural survey can be classified according to two categories: *type* and *expression*. As an ontological distinction, male- and female-gendered embodied people are different *types* of human *kind*. God created two types (male and female) of one kind (humanity). The types are clearly articulated in Genesis 1:27, identified as two distinguished realities for humankind. Both types are intended to represent the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26-27). The female-type thus represents the image of God as an ontological reality of being a woman.<sup>60</sup> The distinction between the two types is discernible though indefinable at an ontological level.<sup>61</sup> In a similar way, much can be identified of the meaning of humankind's bearing the image of God, but the extent to which, and precise manner in which, the *imago Dei* exists in humanity is still a considerable mystery.<sup>62</sup> Scriptural evidence reveals God's intention for distinction in the genders by specifying their distinct *formation*. Made in the same image, of the same kind, and of the same constitution, the man and the woman were formed separately. God differentiated them as separate entities, illustrated in the explicit iterations of human formation, in keeping with the binary pattern of creation.

In addition to ontological *type*, male- and female-gendered embodied people are distinct in *expression* of gender. As a phenomenological distinction, the *expression* of

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<sup>60</sup> Likewise, the male-type represents the image of God as an ontological reality of being a man. This fact establishes the dignity of all people—male and female (Gen 5:1; 9:6).

<sup>61</sup> Importantly, the distinction of type is not an affirmation of gender essentialism. The common human properties (purpose, mandate, and virtues) are not divided into exclusively male and female properties. Instead, humankind exists in two distinct image-bearers with both possessing shared human properties. This study especially rejects any notion of gender distinction that promotes gender inequality, discrimination, and/or subjugation. The two genders are distinct in type but not in properties.

<sup>62</sup> See chap. 3, sect. "Theological Considerations for Female-Gendered Embodiment," subsect. "The *Imago Dei*." Sonship and servant kingship seem to be the most comprehensive and scripturally faithful understanding of humankind as image-bearers. However, we can affirm that though humankind bears God's image and likeness, God is entirely *other* than humankind. Thus, the human understanding of God's image and our recognition of the extent of that image in its defaced state are still very limited.

gendered embodied beings is distinguished in some aspects of *societal treatment* and *personal presentation*. The preceding scriptural survey (in chap. 3) identified that God’s community of people recognized various differences in the treatment of men and women—outside of formal relationships (i.e., marriage and church community). This distinction of expression signifies that the perspective, method, and manifestation of living out the common human properties is different for male and female. Much research has been accomplished, detailing various empirical differences in epistemology, psychology, development, etc., of males and females.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, within philosophy, many ancient and contemporary concepts of man and woman hinge on their distinct expressions. For instance, Pope John Paul II speaks of a man and woman’s propensity to behave in ways that reflect their respective genius.<sup>64</sup> Historically, the various disciplines of science and philosophy have recognized that men and women generally behave differently—though successfully defining the differences has been consistently allusive. Attempted universal standards for appropriate male and female behavior have been myopic and insufficient.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> For reference to research in biology and physiology, see chap. 1, sect. “Research Assumptions,” subsect. “Biological Assumptions.” See 5n13 and 6n14. For research in epistemology, see chap. 2, sect. “Overview of Field of Anthropology of Women,” subsect. “Psychology of Women.”

<sup>64</sup> According to Allen, Pope John Paul II calls these propensities “the maternal way” for women and “the paternal way” for men. Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 3:567. Pope John Paul II’s propensity concept (feminine genius and masculine genius) sympathizes with Aristotle’s distinction of man and woman according to outer generation and inner generation, respectively. Aristotle’s empirical view of female receptivity erred toward passivity, believing only the male to contain “the efficient cause of generation.” See Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals* 2, trans. Arthur Platt (Raleigh: Generic NL Freebook, n.d.), 3. The late pope, however, expounds on woman’s propensity to receive and to generate new life within herself. Flourishing for a woman, then, was to live according to her propensity of generating inside herself and of her self-giving to others. See Pope John Paul II, “Letter to Women,” accessed August 13, 2020, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf\\_jp-ii LET\\_29061995\\_women.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii LET_29061995_women.html). In these philosophical paths, expression reflects ontological, gender-specific traits (e.g., gender essentialism). By contrast, this study affirms the ontological distinction of male and female according to type but limits expression to a phenomenological distinction informed by context (e.g., culture, society, personality).

<sup>65</sup> This claim has been substantiated in the preceding chapters. Again, this study does not affirm gender essentialism or a distinction in essence between men and women. I do, however, affirm the essentialism of gender for human embodiment. That is, gender is essential for human embodiment.

Male and female expression cannot be defined universally. Rather, gender-typical expression falls on a spectrum that is context-defined.<sup>66</sup> Regarding biblical virtues, Marc Cortez states, “The Bible never claims that some Christian qualities are limited to either to men or women, nor does it imply that there are distinctively male and female ways of exemplifying those qualities.”<sup>67</sup> Scripture does not dictate virtues that are gender-specific, nor does it limit the expression of virtues according to gender.<sup>68</sup> The manner in which the common human properties are expressed is thus informed by context. Allison defines *gender expression* as “the set of attitudes and behaviors conveyed by people, significantly influenced by their society’s expectations for (generally speaking, male and female) persons. Gender stereotypes abound and differ from culture to culture.”<sup>69</sup> While the spectrum of expression is broad, Scripture does, however, seem to provide the guiderails for spectrum values. The scriptural limitations for the spectrum of gender expression seem to be concerned with the willful act to disregard one’s gender in effort to be seen as, or identified with, the other gender type. God’s apparent concern is not with defined feminine and masculine expression of common human properties. Rather, God’s concern seems to be with women’s intentionally behaving as men (or with men’s intentionally behaving as women) in order to be identified as a man (or as a woman). Gendered expression, then, must reflect a

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<sup>66</sup> Many have argued that “we find the same differences everywhere” between men and women. For one such example, see J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2012), 46. Interestingly, Budziszewski goes on to claim that the statistical analysis of traits do not “get down to the underlying causal reality, the essential difference between men and women” (48). Furthermore, “the statistical generalizations hold only for some men and women; they are merely averages” (49). These generalizations cannot, therefore, be held as the ontological differences of man and woman.

<sup>67</sup> Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 205.

<sup>68</sup> Preston Sprinkle affirms, “the Bible is much more concerned that we be godly, not stereotypically masculine or feminine.” *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2021), 84.

<sup>69</sup> Allison, *Embodied*, 40-41. Though he affirms some form of gender essentialism, J. Budziszewski consents that “although men and women are capable of the same virtues, they tend to practice them in different modes. . . . [E]ach sex ‘inflects’ the virtues differently.” Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex*, 51. Allison, and I, would argue that context determines whether or not a person’s expression of the common human properties is gender-typical.

woman's creation as the female-type and her acceptance of her female-gendered embodiment (and reflect a man's creation as the male-type and his acceptance of his male-gendered embodiment).<sup>70</sup>

Considering an OT example, Moses declares, "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God" (Deut 22:5). Pointedly, the person, not the isolated act of cross-dressing, is identified as the abomination. This OT law seemingly addresses the idolatrous motivation and posture of the offender.<sup>71</sup> The abomination of the entire person, rather than the behavior, endorses ontological implications for personal presentation according to gender. Thus, the concern is not with clothing but with the breakdown of the distinction of genders.<sup>72</sup> Looking at the intentions of the individual, God recognizes the breakdown of gender distinction as an act of idolatry.

Similarly, the NT reiterates God's concern with humanity's maintaining distinctions in gender. As an example, Paul addresses an issue in the Corinthian church regarding the propriety of women in worship services (1 Cor 11:2-16). As presented in the scriptural survey (in chap. 3), it is plausible to contend that the passage reveals Paul's primary concern of the breakdown of gender distinctions "by analogy suggesting that the women were blurring the male/female relationships in general and sexual distinctions in particular."<sup>73</sup> Paul's concern, then, would be the willful expression of women as men (or

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<sup>70</sup> In his treatment of clothing, Allison makes a nearly identical statement for clothing choice as indicating male and female acceptance of their given genders. See Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," 9. See also Allison, *Embodied*, 200.

<sup>71</sup> The abomination of the person may indicate their participation in "orgiastic rites involving transvestitism, or in some form of pagan worship, or both." Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 240-41. See also Jonathan R. Ziskind, "The Treatment of Women in Deuteronomy: Moral Absolutism and Practicality – Part 2," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (1999): 236.

<sup>72</sup> Allison interprets Deut 22:5 as underscoring the "givenness of gender"; he argues that "such rejection of their God-given maleness and femaleness is a heinous sin before their Creator." Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," 9. See also Allison, *Embodied*, 200.

<sup>73</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 555-56. Regarding 1 Cor 11,

as a-gendered) and the contradiction of the created order.<sup>74</sup> Scriptural evidence reveals God's treatment of the distinction in the genders and his concern that gender distinctions remain in the expression of male- and female-gendered embodiment.<sup>75</sup>

**Summary of gender design.** The definition of gender according to divine design can be identified as the following statement: Gender refers to the two types of humankind—male and female—who share uniformity in purpose, mandate, and virtues but who differ in expression of the common human properties. In God's design for humankind, the two types possess many uniformities and few distinctions and are complementary of each other.<sup>76</sup> Sister Prudence Allen's use of the term *integral gender complementarity* is helpful.<sup>77</sup> In her treatment of the term, Allen asserts that each gender is integral, as opposed to fractional or incomplete; male and female are whole persons autonomous of one another. By complementarity, Allen affirms the equal dignity, significant difference, synergetic relation, and intergenerational fruition of male and

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Preston Sprinkle asserts that "biblical scholars across the conservative-liberal spectrum agree almost unanimously that Paul is establishing a principle that men and women should maintain distinctions in how they present themselves." Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 92.

<sup>74</sup> By *created order* in this sense, I mean that men and women are ontologically distinct as intended in the divine design for gendered embodiment—as either male or female.

<sup>75</sup> Sprinkle affirms that "presenting oneself as male or female isn't so much about the fabric or shape of clothing but about the purpose behind it. . . . God is far more interested in people's hearts." Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 94.

<sup>76</sup> This emphasis on both the uniformities and distinctions of gender aligns with aspects of the Roman Catholic affirmation of man-woman complementarity. In this version of complementarity, the fundamental dignity and the significant distinctions of the male and female must be upheld and balanced. See Sister Prudence Allen, "Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 9, no. 3 (2006): 87-108. Additionally, Allen's three-volume publication *The Concept of Woman* traverses the historical philosophical treatment and development of the concept of women in effort to defend "the equal dignity and simultaneous significant difference of a woman and a man within a living *integral gender complementarity*." Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 3:557 (emphasis original).

<sup>77</sup> While I appreciate the term itself, I do not ascribe to the underlying assumptions of the concept. Allen contends, "The <sup>spirit</sup> soul <sup>psyche</sup> / body composite identity of man and woman is a necessary prerequisite for the integral gender complementarity of a woman and a man." Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 3:567. The <sup>spirit</sup> soul <sup>psyche</sup> / body composite of human identity is a distinctly Catholic adaptation of a neo-Thomist philosophical concept. In this form of human composition, the soul is added to a body upon conception. For Allen, the replacement of this identity with any other metaphysical framework will result in the polarity of the genders or the subordination of one under the other (3:552).

female.<sup>78</sup> Thus, both genders are independently whole, correspondingly contribute to the cultural mandate, and uniquely express common human properties.

Gender uniformities (purpose, mandate, and virtues) and distinctions (type and expression) span created, temporal, and restored states of human existence. Critically, the expression of gender will be transformed in some ways in the restored state, but genderedness will not be ontologically refashioned.

### **Human Capacity for Gendered Embodiment**

The *human capacity for gendered embodiment* includes conscious and unconscious elements. Genderedness is involuntary and inherent for human embodiment. Every human being who has ever existed and will ever exist is by design—and has the capacity to be—gendered. The human capacity for genderedness can be perverted consciously and/or unconsciously; potential perversions of gendered embodiment are identified in a coming section.

### **Gendered Embodiment in Created State**

Genderedness was integral to the divine design and human capacity for embodiment from the beginning in the *created state*. The claims previously substantiated in the divine design section serve to illuminate the created state of gendered embodiment. When creating humankind, God created a man and a woman, separately. Though they shared the same constitution and kind, man and woman were distinct in type. God gave the first man and first woman the cultural mandate, defining his expectations and provisions for their work and multiplication. Not only was embodiment required to fulfill

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<sup>78</sup> In Allen's definition of *integral gender complementarity*, complementarity includes the following four elements with their respective scriptural references: (1) equal dignity (Gen 1:26), (2) significant difference (Gen 1:27), (3) synergetic relation (Gen 1:28; 2:24), and (4) intergenerational fruition (Gen 5:1-32). Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 3:637.

the cultural mandate, genderedness was also indispensable. Gendered embodiment is very good and very necessary to pursue humankind's purpose, mandate, and virtues.

### **Gendered Embodiment in Temporal State**

Through the first man and first woman, all other human beings were generated. Following the fall in Genesis 3 in the *temporal state*, Adam and Eve continued pursuing the mandate to fill and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). Their descendants did likewise. However, the world and all humankind are deeply affected by sin. In genderedness, the effects of sin are best understood as an incongruence. Both conscious and unconscious incongruence has arisen between the divine design and the human capacity for genderedness. As a result, the physicality of gender (biological sex) and gender identity (immaterial aspects of genderedness) have been divided as distinguishable and independent.<sup>79</sup> As will be explained in forthcoming sections on sociality, the engagement of people with one another is greatly influenced by their genderedness. While roles and functions associated with gender apply to the temporal state, such roles are a reality of sociality rather than innate genderedness.

### **Gendered Embodiment in Restored State**

In the *restored state*, all human beings will be embodied and gendered. This study has already established the assurance of eternal embodiment. As embodiment necessitates genderedness, gendered embodiment is not only presumptive but also assured. Furthermore, restoration will return congruence between the divine design and the human capacity for gendered embodiment. Though gendered embodiment in the created state cannot be considered the idyllic state of human embodiment, the first man and first woman do clearly illustrate the divine design for humankind. After final

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<sup>79</sup> As previously noted, I recognize that biological sex and gender are not precisely interchangeable terms. However, this study is not purposed to define them comprehensively or to treat them separately. See appendix 2 ("Distinction of Gender and Sex").



restoration, genderedness will be whole, with no incompatibility between material and immaterial or between design and capacity.

Additionally, the framework has established that gender uniformities and distinctions span created, temporal, and restored states of human existence. However, the expression of gender in sociality and dependence will be altered in some ways in the restored state, but gender will not be ontologically transformed. Because roles are associated with the temporal state, the expression of gendered embodiment in formal defined relationships will differ in the restored state. This expression in relationships is further addressed in the sociality parameter.

### **Uniquely Female Aspects of Gendered Embodiment**

The afore-proposed definition of female-gendered embodiment can now be revisited. *Female-gendered embodiment is the condition of being particular, social, dependent, gendered embodied people who were created as the imago Dei in the female-type of humankind and who engage the purpose, mandate, and virtues of humanity with uniquely female expression.*

As substantiated in the divine design section, gendered embodiment includes two uniquely female aspects: type and expression. Humankind exists in two types—male and female—with gendered expressions of common human properties (i.e., purpose, mandate, and virtues). All women across all time and all cultures share the commonality of being the female-type of humankind. Their uniquely female expressions, however, will vary greatly. Female-type is an ontological term. Likewise, female is an ontological category of human reality. On the other hand, female expression is phenomenological and is the result of the ontological distinction of the female-type of humankind. Critically,

uniquely female expression is also determined by each individual's particularities.<sup>80</sup> Phenomenological expression is thus informed by gender and particularities.<sup>81</sup> As such, universal standards for female expression are shortsighted and unsupported.<sup>82</sup>

### **Potential Perversions of Gendered Embodiment**

Because of sin, the human capacity for genderedness has the potential for conscious and unconscious perversion. As an illustration, the medical condition of intersex is an unconscious perversion of gendered embodiment. By no willful decision of the individual, a notable percentage of the human population is born with the intersex condition, by which one or many markers for gender are atypical (i.e., sex chromosomes, reproductive organs, and/or anatomical sex).<sup>83</sup> This dissonance between design and capacity is an unconscious corruption of genderedness. Similarly, *gender confusion*, or *gender incongruence*, would be considered an unconscious perversion. The term *gender confusion* refers to an involuntary sense of conflict between one's physical genderedness

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<sup>80</sup> *Feminine* is a sociological term and context-specific. Feminine standards cannot be contrived or defined universally. *Womanhood*, because of the theological baggage and contextual limitations, must be treated likewise. *Femininity* and *womanhood* do not, and cannot, have universal definitions.

<sup>81</sup> Particularities will be defined and addressed in the forthcoming section titled "5. Particularities."

<sup>82</sup> This is not to say that biblical roles are nonexistent. However, appropriate female expression within formal defined roles is not universal for all women. Roles are, by nature and by definition, confined to formal relationships and covenanted parties.

<sup>83</sup> Though difficult to determine, approximately 1-2 babies out of every 2,000 births are medically classified as suffering from the intersex condition. This translates to roughly .05-.1 percent of the known population. For more information on the condition of, sociological turmoil surrounding, and activism for intersex, see David A. Rubin, *Intersex Matters: Biomedical Embodiment, Gender Regulation, and Transnational Activism*, SUNY Series in Queer Politics and Cultures (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017). Notably, this estimate is not universally accepted, and many doctors and scholars consider the number of people with intersex variations to be between 1-4 percent of the population. Due to the variety of atypical sex characteristics possible, the timing in life when those characteristics may become apparent, and a lack of standard medical criteria to classify a case as an intersex variation, the population estimates are variable and likely conservative. See Tiffany Jones, "Intersex Studies: A Systematic Review of International Health Literature," *SAGE Open* 8, no. 2 (April 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017745577>. See also Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 117.

and immaterial genderedness.<sup>84</sup> This disturbance can be caused by various medical conditions (e.g., intersex, hormonal imbalance) and/or by external forces (e.g., abuse, bullying, trauma). The involuntary sense of confusion must be considered an unconscious perversion.<sup>85</sup>

Unlike gender confusion, assuming a transgender identity would be considered a conscious perversion of gendered embodiment.<sup>86</sup> The decision to present oneself as the gender of one's choosing, rather than the gender one innately has, is a conscious perversion.<sup>87</sup> Transgender lifestyle, puberty blockers, sex reassignment surgery (SRS), and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) embrace a conscious self-determination of gender identity that is separate from one's innate genderedness.<sup>88</sup> As substantiated in this study, material and immaterial aspects of gendered embodiment cannot be separated or

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<sup>84</sup> See also Preston Sprinkle's argument that "the question of incongruence is ultimately a question about human *ontology*." Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 24 (emphasis original).

<sup>85</sup> In this study, I do not use the term *gender dysphoria*, the diagnostic category for gender confusion. I do not intend to diminish the emotional and psychological distress caused by the phenomena of gender incongruence, but I intend to avoid the assumed acceptance of transgender identity underlying the concept of *gender dysphoria*. More on gender confusion and potential implications will be discussed in chap. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Transgender involves a conflict between a person's physical gender and the gender with which he or she identifies. Transgender is typically used to encompass "many types of people whose expression of gender, in one way or another, does not match their birth sex, including cross-dressers, transsexuals, and other gender-variant/nonconforming people." Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*, 242. Consistent identification with a gender which is incongruent with one's biological sex is a willful, conscious perversion of the genderedness capacity. Note the separate treatment of transgender identity from gender confusion or gender incongruence. See also Sprinkle's careful treatment of the trans\* movement and fundamental concepts in *Embodied*.

<sup>87</sup> This statement excludes the individuals in the aforementioned intersex condition. By definition of the term, intersex sufferers do not have an easily determined innate gender. Sprinkle asserts that in the case of unambiguous biological sex, "then our bodies should determine who we are, male or female." Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 157. He goes on to state, "If we are asking an ontological question . . . , I don't think gender should override sex when there is incongruence."

<sup>88</sup> SRS involves the willful, conscious action of undergoing voluntary surgery in order to have the physical appearance of the selected/desired gender—whether completely or partially. Also called gender-affirming or gender-confirmation surgery, SRS includes "various surgical procedures that serve to change one's body to align with one's gender identity." Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding Transgender Identities*, 242. In addition to, or in replacement of, SRS, some people pursue hormone replacement therapy (HRT) "to facilitate the development of secondary sex characteristics as part of the process of transitioning" (241). HRT is also referred to as gender-affirming hormone therapy. As a practical matter, should a child or adolescent elect to pursue hormone blockers, HRT, and/or SRS, the question of their legal and moral right to act on such a decision becomes controversial. Notably, American law forbids minors from elective medical procedures in any other category.

exchanged. An attempt to do so is a conscious perversion of the human capacity for gendered embodiment, forcing an incompatibility between divine design and human capacity.

## **Conclusion**

Genderedness is an ontological reality of being human, inseparably intertwined with the material and immaterial aspects of embodiment. Male and female are distinct from one another in both type and expression. Type is an ontological distinction, whereas expression is a phenomenological distinction. Type is distinct according to binarity: male and female. By contrast, expression is distinct along a spectrum: context-defined female-typical and male-typical. The scriptural limitations on the spectrum of expression are the willful desire to be identified with the other gender type. Such a volitional action to identify with androgyny or other genderedness is treated in Scripture as an act of idolatry. Thus, male and female are decidedly not identical or interchangeable in ontological definition or in phenomenological reality.

## **3. Dependent, Gendered Embodiment**

Each human is constitutionally dependent on God. God-oriented relational design and capacity are fundamental aspects of being a gendered embodied person. Dependence is the intended human state of utter reliance on God as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and King. Dependence is ontological and spans the created, temporal, and restored states of existence.

## **Divine Design for Dependence**

The ontological nature of humankind includes the *divine design* of constitutional dependence on God.<sup>89</sup> Humans were created by God for God (Col 1:15-

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<sup>89</sup> The reality of humanity's dependence on God permeates every page of Scripture. This section will not be able to treat the parameter exhaustively, though I hope to communicate it sufficiently.

18). Human dependence on God is intentional and is right (Acts 17:28). The fact that humankind was created in God's image logically necessitates God for the existence of humankind; God is both the Creator and the pattern for humankind (Gen 1:26-27). Regarding the image of God, Catherine McDowell states, "Humans correspond to God because God creates them. Thus, this correspondence is intrinsic to the relationship between Creator and created."<sup>90</sup> Because of the nature of God, the parameter of dependence is vertically oriented and one-directional. All human beings constitutionally need God, but God does not need humankind (Ps 50:12; Acts 17:24-28). Although God's existence and completeness is independent from humanity, God deeply loves his creation. God's interaction with humanity, particularly evidenced by the incarnation and self-sacrifice of the Son, demonstrates God's independent, transcendent love for human beings (John 3:16-17).<sup>91</sup>

The divine design for dependence is crucial for the achievement of the common human properties (i.e., purpose, mandate, and virtues). As image-bearers, humanity's purpose is reliant on God. As Peter Gentry comments, "The notions of obedient sonship and servant kingship define humanity both functionally and ontologically."<sup>92</sup> Both ontological meaning and functional realization illustrate humanity's need for God. Gentry expounds, "Also, the priority of worship is determinative for implementing the mandate."<sup>93</sup> Humanity's common human properties

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<sup>90</sup> Catherine McDowell, "'In the Image of God He Created Them': How Genesis 1:26-27 Defines the Divine-Human Relationship and Why It Matters," in *The Image of God in an Image Driven Age: Explorations in Theological Anthropology*, ed. Beth Felker Jones and Jeffrey W. Barbeau, Wheaton Theology Conference Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 35. McDowell applies this principle to Gen 5:1-3, indicating that Seth corresponds to Adam because Adam begat Seth. Similarly, humanity resembles God because they were created by him.

<sup>91</sup> Just as God clothes the grass of the field and the birds of the air, how much more does he cares for his people (Matt 6:25-33 // Luke 12:22-31).

<sup>92</sup> Gentry, "Humanity as the Divine Image in Genesis 1:26-28," 69.

<sup>93</sup> Gentry, "Humanity as the Divine Image in Genesis 1:26-28," 69. Worship can be understood as the recognition of one's dependence on God and celebration of God's character, total otherness, and provision.

can be accomplished only in dependency on God. Though humanity's dependence is ontological and eternal, the expressions of humanity's dependence are not static.<sup>94</sup>

### **Human Capacity for Dependence**

Dependence is an involuntary and constitutional condition for gendered embodiment. Though God's design for humanity's dependence is unspoiled, the *human capacity for dependence* has been corrupted by sin. Human capacity includes a person's desire for, expression of, and receptivity of relationship with God.<sup>95</sup> People cannot change or reduce their need for God, but people can direct their desire toward false gods. Likewise, people cannot alter their design to receive God, but they can choose to reject him, thereby perverting their receptivity. More details on the potential perversions are addressed in forthcoming sections.

### **Dependence in Created State**

As discussed in the previous section of the divine design for dependence, human beings were intrinsically dependent on God in the *created state*. Man and woman were created in the image of God, by God, and for God. Humanity's dependence on God as part of their design is demonstrated in the reality of embodiment. In the created state, humanity experienced some of the limitations of embodiment. Human beings are limited ontologically because God as Creator brought humanity into existence *ex nihilo* (Gen 1). Human beings are limited spatially, as embodied beings are bound by time and space. God is omnipresent, but his creatures are limited by their embodiment.<sup>96</sup> Human beings were further limited physically. Though God is the omnipotent source and sustainer of

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<sup>94</sup> Some variations in humanity's manifestation of dependence will be discussed in the forthcoming sections, especially regarding the temporal and restored states.

<sup>95</sup> This study is not a commentary on predestination or irresistible grace, though I hold to doctrine of predestination and recognize the simultaneous existence of free will.

<sup>96</sup> God is not bound by time (Rom 8:30); God created and ordained time (Gen 1; Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32).

life (Acts 17:24), humans need food, water, sleep, and shelter. Human embodiment is limited in strength. Additionally, human beings are limited epistemologically. God alone is the source and revealer of truth. The presence of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” and the serpent’s temptation to eat of it and “be like God” indicate limitations of humanity’s knowledge (Gen 3:2-5). Even before the entrance of sin in the world, humans had intrinsic limitations (ontological, physical, and epistemological), demonstrating inherent dependence on God.

### **Dependence in Temporal State**

In the *temporal state*, humanity’s reliance on God manifests in additional ways. Because of the presence of sin, humanity is desperately dependent on God as Redeemer (Gen 3:15; Ps 62:1; John 1:29). Furthermore, the limitations of human embodiment manifest specifically temporal aspects of dependence. Due to the fall, humans experience the fragility of life (Pss 78:39; 103:14; Isa 40:6-8; Jas 4:13-14), suffering (Job 14:1; Rom 8:35; 2 Cor 1:5; Phil 1:29), the noetic effects of sin (Eph 4:17-19), and an idolatrous nature (Exod 20:3; Gal 4:8; Col 3:5; Rev 9:20). Despite humanity’s propensity to reject God, “God causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt 5:45). Human recognition of needing God is not a prerequisite to constitutional dependence on God. All human beings—both the good and the evil—are dependent on God for all aspects of life.

### **Dependence in Restored State**

As dependency is ontological, human beings will still be constitutionally dependent on God in the *restored state*, illustrated in God’s title as King (Rev 19:16). The temporal-specific limitations will be lifted for the redeemed, but the Creator-creature dynamic will still exist. Additionally, the glory of God will replace the need for the sun and the moon, but the new heavens and new earth will not replace humanity’s reliance on God (Isa 60:19; Rev 21:23; 22:5). Other original limitations of human embodiment (e.g.,

ontological, physical, epistemological limitations) in the restored state are not clear in Scripture. The effects of sin will be eradicated, but the limitations of the glorified embodiment can only be speculated. One limitation is certain: human beings will still be inherently dependent on God. Dependence is an ontological reality of human embodiment.

### **Uniquely Female Aspects of Dependence**

The expression of human dependence is directly informed by gender, and the *uniquely female aspects of dependence* are manifest in female expression. A woman's ontological design and capacity for dependence are not distinct; both male and female are constitutionally dependent on God. However, a woman relates to God in uniquely female ways because she is a woman. As discussed above, female expression of common human properties is phenomenological. Thus, the uniquely female ways of expressing dependence cannot be defined universally. The lack of a standard definition for female-specific dependence does not prohibit the reality of uniquely female expression of dependence.

### **Potential Perversions of Dependence**

The human capacity for dependence has conscious and unconscious elements that have been perverted by sin. Though humanity cannot alter reliance on God, human beings can direct their desire toward false gods. John Calvin spoke of this human desire for dependence, referring to the human mind as a “factory of idols.”<sup>97</sup> Indeed, the propensity to desire other gods includes both *unconscious* (i.e., sin nature) and *conscious*

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<sup>97</sup> Calvin is speaking of literal, physical idols to represent the concept of God that humanity holds in their minds. Calvin argues, “Idolatry has its origin in the idea which men have, that God is not present with them unless his presence is carnally exhibited.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: A New Translation*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 1.11.8. (Beveridge, 97). Regardless of Calvin's intent toward physical or intangible idols, the perversion of the parameter of dependence is made clear. Humankind has a propensity to direct their desire for God toward false gods of their own making.



(i.e., sin of idolatry) aspects. In the same way, humanity cannot change their design to receive God, but human beings can choose to reject God. This perversion of receptivity likewise has conscious and unconscious elements. The desire for and receptivity of dependence are logically interdependent, and a perversion in one will result in a perversion of the other. Furthermore, the perversion in either desire for or receptivity of dependence will result in the perversion of the expression of dependence. One's posture toward God will be manifested in every area of one's life. Scripture is explicit in communicating humanity's capacity and propensity to reject God (Lev 26:15).<sup>98</sup> Likewise, Scripture also communicates the human capacity to choose God.<sup>99</sup> Enabled by God, the human capacity to desire God, to express need, and to receive God can be met: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh 24:15).<sup>100</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Dependence is the God-oriented relational design and capacity for gendered beings to desire, to express, and to receive relationship with God. The design of dependence is perfect, ordained by God, and untainted by sin. However, the human capacity—desire, expression, and receptivity—of dependence has been affected by the fall and can be perverted, consciously and unconsciously. After the final restoration of creation, humanity's capacity will perfectly align with the divine design for dependence. Human beings have always and will always need God. Much more could—and should—be said regarding the constitutional reliance of humanity on God. This study intends only

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<sup>98</sup> See also Num 11:18-20; Deut 31:20; 32:15-18; 1 Sam 8:7-8; 10:19; 2 Kgs 17:15; Pss 81:11-13; Isa 1:4, 28; 65:11; Jer 15:6; Matt 23:37; Luke 7:30; 9:22; Acts 13:46.

<sup>99</sup> Exod 32:26; Deut 30:19; Josh 24:15; Ps 119.

<sup>100</sup> Again, this parameter is not intended to be a fully developed commentary on predestination versus free will. Though human beings have a capacity to choose God, the root of their capacity is God's principal choosing of them (John 15:16; Eph 1:4; 1 John 4:19).

to establish the parameter as a fundamental element for a framework of human embodiment.<sup>101</sup>

#### **4. Social, Dependent, Gendered Embodiment**

Each human is constitutionally social.<sup>102</sup> Sociality is the people-oriented relational or attractional aspect of gendered embodiment. While separate from human dependence on God, prosperous sociality is contingent on appropriate dependence, for “it is only as people come to God that they can come together in any lasting way.”<sup>103</sup> The parameter of sociality includes the design and capacity for gendered beings to desire, to express, and to receive relationship with other human beings.<sup>104</sup> The design of sociality is perfect, ordained by God, and unspoiled by sin. However, the human capacity of sociality has been affected by the fall and can be perverted in its motivation and expression. Social capacity has both conscious and unconscious components. People-oriented relational design and capacity are inherent aspects of being a gendered embodied being.

#### **Divine Design for Sociality**

Humankind was made by God to live in community with one another (Gen 2:18). By *divine design*, human beings desire, express, and receive relationship with one

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<sup>101</sup> Note: God’s act of salvation and the engagement of free will are related to, but not contained within, the parameter of dependence. All people, redeemed or not, are designed as, and have the capacity for, dependence. Salvation, and all its related conditions (justification, sanctification, glorification), transcends all aspects of human embodiment. Redeemed people are, and should be, markedly different in their ability/capacity to live within the design of each parameter of human embodiment. This is an obvious opportunity for further research.

<sup>102</sup> The use of the term *social* is strategic. Many other terms have been used to describe the concept of the parameter of *sociality* (e.g., relationality, sexuality, alterity). However, many of the other terms are fraught with imprecise application and/or distracting associations. See Allison’s justification for *sociality* in Allison, *Embodied*, 74-75. See also 20n61.

<sup>103</sup> John S. Hammet, “Human Nature,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, Bruce Riley Ashford, and Kenneth Keathley, rev. ed. (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 329.

<sup>104</sup> According to Allison, *sociality* is “the universal human condition of desiring, expressing, and receiving human relationships.” Allison, *Embodied*, 73.

another. Sociality is thus two-directional and horizontal in nature.<sup>105</sup> Unlike the parameter of dependence, human sociality is symbiotic; people need each other. The human need to relate should not be interpreted as brokenness or weakness. Instead, relational needs are an innate, good aspect of humanity's design. Humanity's social design is intended to image God's relationality (i.e., *imago Dei*), to picture God's union with his people (e.g., body of Christ and bride of Christ), and to foster reliance on God (i.e., dependence).<sup>106</sup> Sociality includes—but is not limited to—sexual activity. Allison claims, “God’s design for his image bearers is that they are social human beings who express their sociality in appropriate interpersonal relationships and, in the case of marriage, through sexual activity.”<sup>107</sup> God intends for human beings to relate to, and to be in relationship with, each other. Sociality is ontological and thus spans the created, temporal, and restored states of existence—though human sociality is greatly affected by sin, redemption, and restoration.<sup>108</sup>

**Sexuality.** Sociality is the appropriate context in which to discuss sexual activity, or sexuality of embodiment, as sexual activity is a means of engaging in sociality and is appropriate only within marriage. Sociality is not limited to sexuality, though much research has directly associated interpersonal relationships with sexual drive.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> The human need for God is not an aspect of sociality. See the previous section titled “3. Dependent, Gendered Embodiment.”

<sup>106</sup> John 13:34-45; 17:20-21; Acts 2:46-47; Rom 15:5-7; Eph 5; 1 John 4:19. In reference to the Body of Christ, John Kleinig makes an interesting affirmation of sociality: “There is so much of him that no single person can show Him adequately; He needs a whole community of different people, each with their different characteristics, all taken together, and each making a unique contribution.” John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 71.

<sup>107</sup> Allison, *Embodied*, 73.

<sup>108</sup> Note: Sociality is ontological, but defining the appropriate means of relating to one another is not eternal. Appropriate social expression differs across created, temporal, and restored states.

<sup>109</sup> Sigmund Freud’s psychosexual stages of development set the stage for decades of research that center humanity’s libido (as the sexual energy of the id) as the fundamental driving force for relationships and functional society. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. and rev. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962).

Marc Cortez's perspective on sociality and sexuality is helpful: "The reproductive and fecund nature of sexuality can be understood as expressions of this drive toward community."<sup>110</sup> Thus, the innate "drive toward community" is not limited to—but is certainly expressed in—sexual activity.<sup>111</sup> Between marriage partners, sexual activity is good, right, and healthy. Humans are social beings and sexual beings. Critically, sexuality is not to be confused with genderedness. And gender is not determined by sexual compatibility.<sup>112</sup> Rather, genderedness informs an individual's sociality, including—but not limited to—sexuality.

**Divine order.** Throughout Scripture, God has defined a divine order for sociality, or rules of engagement for the temporal state according to gender. Allison describes the divine order of human sociality thus:

Biblically and theologically, that divine order expresses itself, in the case of women, (1) in relationship with other women, as friendship apart from same sex attraction and homosexual activity; and, (2) in relationship with men, as friendship apart from lust and heterosexual activity (with one exception for such activity: marriage to a man). Human sociality from a biblical perspective expresses itself, in the case of men, (1) in relationship with other men, as friendship apart from same sex attraction and homosexual activity; and, (2) in relationship to women, as friendship apart from lust and heterosexual activity (with one exception for such activity: marriage to a woman).<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Cortez uses the term *bonding* to express the universal human drive toward *sociality*. He claims, "although this drive toward bonding in community has its ground in human sexuality, its ultimate human expression resides in the bonding found in the eschatological coming together of the people of God." Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 67.

<sup>111</sup> Stanley Grenz describes sexuality, or relational needs, as the "the dynamic that forms the basis of the uniquely human drive toward bonding." Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, Matrix of Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 278. Additionally, according to James Nelson, human "sexuality . . . is both the physiological and psychological grounding for our capacity to love." James B. Nelson, *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), 8.

<sup>112</sup> Rachel Gilson's recent publication is a helpful explanation of sexuality, as a component of sociality, in current-day language. The book is also an encouragement toward aligning one's volition in accordance with God's design for sexual activity, particularly as it relates to same-sex attraction. Rachel Gilson, *Born Again This Way* (Denmark: Good Book, 2020).

<sup>113</sup> Allison, "Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment," 171.

The divine design for sociality then includes sanctioned rules of engagement. The divine design for sociality is flawless, unblemished by sin. Humanity's need for relationship with one another is indispensable to human nature and spans all states of human existence. However, in God's perfect design, the rules and expressions of human sociality are not static and have changed across time and formal relationships. As listed in the scriptural survey (in chap. 3), various OT laws detailed the societal treatment of women. God's people were commanded to relate to Israelite women in particular circumstances (e.g., menstruation, alleged infidelity) according to defined manners of engagement (e.g., isolation, exclusion from worship). Though God's intended distinction of gender has not changed, his commandments for societal treatment of men and women have changed. The concerns of ritual purity in the Levitical law were fulfilled in Christ, and moral purity can be found only in Christ (Rom 8:1-4).

**Roles.** Sociality is the appropriate context in which to discuss gender roles within marriage, family, and organizations such as the church (e.g., complementarianism and egalitarianism). As these roles indicate appropriate means of gender expression within defined social relationships, they are concerns of sociality. Though the manifestation of gender roles will often overlap with expression, the roles themselves are an aspect of expression. Roles are the means by which sociality is expressed in particular defined relationships. Marc Cortez affirms,

Marriage can be understood as a basic—perhaps even paradigmatic—expression of this drive toward bonding in the present age. Although humans continue to be sexual beings in the eschaton . . . , the marital (i.e., covenantal) framework of this bonding will be expressed in the eschatological community and its relationship with the triune God.<sup>114</sup>

Gender roles in marriage, like human marriage itself, are limited to this side of the eschaton. With the cessation of human marriage in the restored state, so too comes the

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<sup>114</sup> Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 67.

discontinuance of gender-specific roles in marriage. Roles are, by definition, temporary and associated with defined circumstances.<sup>115</sup>

**Gender balance.** Regardless of one's views of gender roles (i.e., complementarianism or egalitarianism), the presence of gender balance is necessary across sociality. By God's design, his creation was complete and "very good" only with the presence of both the male and the female (Gen 1:31). Imperative for accomplishing humanity's purpose and mandate, both genders are required.<sup>116</sup> Gender balance is crucial for human community, productivity, and flourishing.<sup>117</sup> Human beings need relationships with both genders to function according to design—and the functioning of society requires the engagement of both genders.

### **Human Capacity for Sociality**

Sociality is an involuntary and constitutional condition for gendered embodiment, and all human beings have the capacity for interpersonal relationships. *Human capacity* for sociality includes the desire for, expression of, and receptivity of human relationship. As a result of the fall, the human capacity for relationships can be

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<sup>115</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *role* as "a function or part performed especially in a particular operation or process." An alternative definition offered by Merriam-Webster is "a socially expected behavior pattern usually determined by an individual's status in a particular society." *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "Role," accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/role>. Both definitions feature a situational emphasis on the meaning of role. Aimee Byrd has a similar position on the context-driven nature of roles; see Aimee Byrd, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: How the Church Needs to Recover Her Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2020), 119-20.

<sup>116</sup> In *Discovering Eve*, Meyers includes some interesting and helpful illustrations of the importance of gender balance. Isolated sections of the book are helpful for this study. For instance, in ancient Israel, gender balance was not an obtuse topic. Lev 27 demonstrates that the Israelite production ratios of women to men were 40:60. Of course, women and men were not performing the same tasks, but close to 40 percent of the nation's productive tasks were accomplished by women. Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 168-73.

<sup>117</sup> In Allen's words, gender balance is demanded by the concept of *integral gender complementarity*. Her use of the term *complementarity* includes (1) equal dignity (Gen 1:26), (2) significant difference (Gen 1:27), (3) synergetic relation (Gen 1:28; 2:24), and (4) intergenerational fruition (Gen 5:1-32). The complementarity of the genders compels gender balance. Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 3:637.

corrupted consciously or unconsciously.<sup>118</sup> By divine design, the human capacity for sociality is directly informed by gender, an ontological reality of being embodied. The manner in which a female embodied person desires, expresses, and receives relationship with other human beings (both male and female) will be influenced by—and at times dictated by—her female-genderedness. Principally, the expression of sociality will be dependent on gender and phenomenological in nature. However, some aspects of social expression, namely sexual activity and related sexual expressions, are determined in the divine design and assigned by gender. As noted previously, God’s design for sociality includes a divine order for its expression.

### **Sociality in Created State**

In the *created state*, sociality was limited to a single marriage relationship. The first man and first woman had no companions of the same gender or of the other gender with whom to relate or to bond. They had no community outside of each other. Male friendships, female friendships, and other-gender friendships did not yet exist. Because pre-fall sociality represented only marriage, it is unwarranted and perilous to derive universal standards for social expression from the created state. Universal and ontological aspects of sociality must be distinguished from what is marriage-specific sociality.

### **Sociality in Temporal State**

Sociality in the *temporal state* includes the full variety of relationships in community. Beyond a marriage relationship, there are also children, siblings, friends, and groups or communities. The temporal state includes a divine order with specific rules of engagement for various relationships. It is in the temporal state that Scripture emphasizes

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<sup>118</sup> Allison categorizes the allegiance of capacity with design as positive sociality and the perversion of capacity in rebellion of design as negative sociality. Allison, *Embodied*, 76.

siblingship as the appropriate category for all human sociality.<sup>119</sup> Sibling sociality across gender lines is not only fruitful; it is necessary.<sup>120</sup> In fact, “friendship between the sexes may take us not out of ourselves but beyond ourselves and may make us more whole, balanced and sane than we could otherwise be.”<sup>121</sup> Appropriate siblingship affirms the divine order, defined roles, and gender balance in human relationships.

### **Sociality in Restored State**

In the *restored state*, sociality will remain an intrinsic aspect of human embodiment. However, the rules of engagement and aspects of the divine order will change.<sup>122</sup> When marriage ceases, the unique rules associated with marriage—including but not limited to sexual activity—will undoubtedly cease or change. In the eschaton, the divine design and the human capacity for sociality will be in perfect alignment. Human sociality will be characterized by eternal siblingship.<sup>123</sup> As brothers and sisters in Christ, co-heirs with Christ, and children of the Father, all believers will live in rich, pure, and complete community (Rom 8:15-17).

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<sup>119</sup> Allison engages sociality as biblical siblingship extensively in Allison, *Embodied*, 77-82. For an additional, non-academic exploration of Christian siblingship, see Aimee Byrd, *Why Can't We Be Friends? Avoidance Is Not Purity* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2018).

<sup>120</sup> Timothy Tennent bemoans the neglect of deep, “spirit-bonded” friendships in contemporary Protestant Christianity, which is particularly detrimental to unmarried. “The decline of intimate friendships and the paucity of celibate communities in the Protestant world mean that these [single] followers of Christ are effectively banished to a life of perpetual loneliness, with no one to share life with. This is a serious problem that the contemporary church needs to vigorously and intentionally address.” Tennent, *For the Body*, 86.

<sup>121</sup> Gilbert Meilaender, “Men and Women—Can We Be Friends?,” *First Things*, June 1993, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/1993/06/men-and-women-can-we-be-friends>.

<sup>122</sup> Tennent emphasizes the importance of both marriage and celibacy as markers of different aspects of human life in the eschaton. Tennent, *For the Body*, 80.

<sup>123</sup> Kleinig affirms the perpetuity of siblingship, stating “So unlike the human family and marriage, which are provisional because they belong to this age, our relationship with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ is eternal (cf. Mark 3:33-35; 10:29-30).” Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made*, 189.



## Uniquely Female Aspects of Sociality

All humankind is desirous of, expressive of, and receptive of interpersonal relationships. As expected, the expression of human sociality is directly informed by gender, and the *uniquely female aspects of sociality* are manifest in female expression. A woman relates to others in female ways because she is a woman. As noted previously, female expression of common human properties is phenomenological. Thus, beyond the divine order's governing the temporal state and the limiting of sexual activity to heterosexual marriage, the uniquely female ways of expressing sociality cannot be defined universally.<sup>124</sup>

As an example of gender distinction in phenomenological expression, the relational needs and expressions of women are commonly different from that of men, especially in adolescence. The relational needs of young females are crucial for identity formation, the stage of development associated with adolescence.<sup>125</sup> Significant empirical research on the topic of gender distinction in identity development concludes that "interpersonal concerns may be more important for women's identity than for men's."<sup>126</sup> Many studies have established seemingly consistent distinctions between male and female behaviors and tendencies, particularly regarding relational needs.<sup>127</sup> In general,

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<sup>124</sup> For discussion on the requirements for women in particular roles, specifically marriage and the church, see chap. 3, sect. "Biblical Affirmations of Ontological Gender Distinction," subsect. "Exceptional Topics: Marriage and Church Community." See also sect. "4. Social, Dependent, Gendered Embodiment," subsect. "Divine Design for Sociality," specifically, sub-subsect. "Divine Order," in this chapter.

<sup>125</sup> Erik Erikson's thorough treatment of identity as a psychosocial concept is thus considered the gold standard in the social sciences. Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968).

<sup>126</sup> J. E. Marcia et al.'s 1993 review of identity research provides valuable insight into both identity formation in adolescents and the potential implications of gender differences. The publication serves as a guide through psychosocial theory and noteworthy empirical research. Reviewing significant research completed over the three decades before the book's publication confirms that interpersonal issues are statistically more important to women than to men, as clearly established by various researchers. See James E. Marcia, "The Status of the Statuses: Research Review," in *Ego Identity: A Handbook for Psychosocial Research*, by J. E. Marcia et al. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1993), 37.

<sup>127</sup> For studies proposing the importance of interpersonal issues to women, Marcia et al. cites studies by Archer (1985), Kroger (1983), Marcia and Friedman (1970), Schenkel and Marcia (1972), and Josselson (1988). Marcia, "The Status of the Statuses," 37. See also Dori Baker and Ned Edwards, "What

females are described as more “people oriented” and males as typically more “things oriented.”<sup>128</sup> In a 2011 study, David Perry and Rachel Pauletti asserted that social relationships with peers most clearly evidence the gender differences in adolescents.<sup>129</sup> Summarizing the research of other scholars, Perry and Pauletti affirmed that “girls’ same-sex friendships are characterized by greater intimacy, self-disclosure, validation, caring, and relationship repair.”<sup>130</sup> This generalization of female peer relationships differs distinctively from the typically competitive, assertive, and self-protecting traits associated with male peer relationships in adolescence across the research.<sup>131</sup> Though both men and women are ontologically social beings, the expression of sociality may vary greatly.<sup>132</sup>

### Potential Perversions of Sociality

Human capacity for sociality can be perverted in desire, expression, and/or receptivity, whether *conscious* or *unconscious*. When the motivation for sociality is selfishness rather than self-sacrifice, perversion always follows. A clear example of conscious perversion would be a married woman’s engaging in sexual activity with a man who is not her husband. Her desiring of, expressing of, and receiving of sociality

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Would Catherine of Sienna Do? Spiritual Formation and the Brains of Adolescent Girls,” *Religious Education* 107, no. 4 (2012): 371-87.

<sup>128</sup> See R. Su, J. Rounds, and P. I. Armstrong “Men and Things, Women and People: A Meta-Analysis of Sex Differences in Interests,” *Psychological Bulletin* 135, no. 6 (2009): 859-84. See also Alice Hendrickson Eagly, Anne E. Beall, and Robert J. Sternberg, *The Psychology of Gender*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guildford Press, 2004), 169-91. This is not to claim that interpersonal issues are of no importance to males and their identity formation. However, social relationships have been empirically proven to be generally more important to females than males. Likewise, one cannot assume that tasks are unimportant to women. The gender-specific claims are generalizations supported by empirical data and are thus *generally* accurate for gender classes—though not *always* accurate for each individual. See Marcia, “The Status of the Statuses,” 37.

<sup>129</sup> David G. Perry and Rachel E. Pauletti, “Gender and Adolescent Development,” *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 21, no. 1 (March 2011): 62.

<sup>130</sup> Perry and Pauletti, “Gender and Adolescent Development,” 62. Perry and Pauletti also reference the work of Benenson and Christakos (2003); Parker, Low, Walker, and Gamm (2005); and Rose, Carlson, and Waller (2007).

<sup>131</sup> Perry and Pauletti, “Gender and Adolescent Development,” 62.

<sup>132</sup> Expression of sociality is filtered through gender and also informed by particularities such as ethnicity, family, and context.

through her affair are clearly saturated in volitional sin. Unconscious perversion, though less clear, is no less damaging. Some perversions in the human capacity for sociality are involuntary and non-volitional, resulting from, for example, hormonal imbalances, hormonal surges (e.g., puberty, pregnancy, menopause), mental and/or social disorders (e.g., anxiety, autism), or trauma from abuse (e.g., physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, abandonment). In these instances, the desire for, and receptivity of, human relationships may be perverted by the presence of sin in the world and its devastating effects on the lives of human beings. To be clear, people are responsible for their sin and are required to acknowledge their sin and to repent of it. People are responsible for their expressions of sociality.<sup>133</sup> However, by recognizing the potentially unconscious aspects of human capacity for sociality (i.e., desire for and receptivity of), this study suggests that some non-volitional situations (e.g., hormones, trauma) may make the affected human beings susceptible to unconscious perversions in sociality.<sup>134</sup> Critically, potential perversions of human sociality include both willful and non-volitional aspects.

## **Conclusion**

Sociality is thus ontological and informed by gender, an ontological reality of being embodied. The divine design for sociality is perfect, but human capacity can be perverted consciously and unconsciously. All human beings are responsible for their volitional expression of sociality. The parameter of sociality spans all states of human

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<sup>133</sup> I am not ignoring handicaps that impair some human beings from making conscious decisions in their actions. Mental and social disorders are in themselves perversions of embodiment and sociality. Some individuals suffering from such disorders may be rendered incapable of choosing their behavior. As these situations are exceptions to the rule, the question of individual responsibility for expression of sociality in impaired individuals is beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>134</sup> Much more could and should be said on the topic, but this study is not intended to distinguish between the effects of sin and the sin itself. See the 2020 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) report for a helpful stance on distinguishing between sin and the universal effects of sin. While this distinction is beyond the scope of this study, there is an opportunity for further research and refinement within the framework. Presbyterian Church in America General Assembly, “Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality,” sects. 4-6 (pp. 8-9), May 2020, <https://pcaga.org/aicreport/>.

existence. The divine order of sociality has been ordained by God and is limited to the created and temporal states. In the restored state, human sociality will be marked by eternal siblingship. Though sexual activity and roles—as understood in the temporal state—will no longer exist, gender balance is an eternal necessity and reality.

## **5. Particular, Social, Dependent, Gendered Embodiment**

*Particularity* is the collection of characteristics that are constitutional to gendered embodiment and that render every human's experience as unique. Particularities include the six elements: ethnicity, family/kinship, temporality, spatiality, context, and story.<sup>135</sup> These one-of-a-kind aspects constitute an individual's particularity and add dimension to their personhood.<sup>136</sup> Every human being is “a unique, unrepeatable person.”<sup>137</sup>

### **Divine Design for Particularity**

The *divine design* for humanity includes particularities that are constitutional to gendered embodiment.<sup>138</sup> God's design for particularity is perfect and unaffected by sin. God intended for humankind to multiply, to fill the earth, and to comprise a variety of people groups and perspectives. Particularities are eternal as part of the divine design, though they will be redefined and understood correctly in the restored state. Perversions to particularities are temporal, associated with the human capacity. Particularities are predominantly involuntary. In general, people are unable to choose their ethnicity, family

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<sup>135</sup> See Allison, *Embodied*, 61-62. Allison uses both terms *ethnicity* and *race* as particularities. In this study, the term *race* is intentionally not employed. See 120n42.

<sup>136</sup> Note: Particularities, though overlapping in categories, are distinct from the concept of *intersectionality*. The parameter of particularity is not a commentary on intersectionality.

<sup>137</sup> Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 3:469.

<sup>138</sup> Stanley J. Grenz notes that “Although undeniably important, racial differences and other factors do not loom as foundational in personal and social identity as do those distinctions which arise out of the fact that we are sexual beings [male and female].” Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 29.

of origin, historical context, etc. Though gender is not a particularity, particularities are no more elective than is gender. For instance, ethnicity is involuntary; it is not optional or coincidental (Acts 17:26). One's ethnicity is an aspect of ontological particularity. Like gender, ethnicity is an eternal reality of embodiment (Rev 7:9). Also like gender, ethnicity is not hierarchical.

Particularities are not tied to post-fall realities. As an illustration, consider Genesis 10-12. A perversion of human capacity for particularity is made explicit in Genesis 11:4: "Let us make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." Thus, humanity rejected God's divine design and sought to establish singularity and human-centric unity, solidified by their shared architectural feat. In addition to a perversion of dependence, the Tower of Babel clearly reflects a perversion of particularity, a resistance to diversity in humankind. As a result, God scatters the builders, but God still blesses them. The promise of Genesis 12 "was universal and was limited in its participation only by the response of faith—even as it was so limited for Abraham's participation."<sup>139</sup> Therefore, "what the nations could not attain by their own organization and goals would now be given to them in grace."<sup>140</sup> Particularities are not intended as barriers for participation in God's kingdom. Rather, particularity is designed to image God's creativity in his manifestation of the *imago Dei* and to foster dependence and sociality. The variety of perspectives afforded by human particularities enrich human experience, community, and understanding of God. The invitation of particularities is further addressed in the coming section on the restored state.

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<sup>139</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 47.

<sup>140</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God*, 47.

## **Human Capacity for Particularity**

Particularity is an involuntary and constitutional condition for gendered embodiment. All human beings have the capacity for particularity, which includes the aspects of individuality and community. No human being has the opportunity to select his or her particularities. Ethnicity, family/kinship, temporality, spatiality, context, and story are largely assigned to each human.<sup>141</sup> Humankind does, however, have the capacity to accept and participate in their given particularities. Because of sin, the human capacity for particularity can be perverted consciously and/or unconsciously.

## **Particularity in Created State**

The details of particularity in the *created state* are largely unknown and presumed. Because the first man and first woman had no defined ethnicity, family of origin, or nationality, particularity looked very different in the created state. However, the common human properties (i.e., purpose, mandate, and virtues) established at creation, do demand particularities. Multiplication and filling the earth would logically result in multiple people groups. Furthermore, human embodiment necessitates particular limitations, including temporality, spatiality, context, and story. The post-fall Adam and Eve were not different individuals from the pre-fall couple. They would carry with them their respective histories and perspectives for the remainder of their lives—and into eternity.

## **Particularity in Temporal State**

In the *temporal state*, two critical aspects of particularity are revealed. First, the perversion of human capacity for particularity is demonstrated. Particularities, as the

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<sup>141</sup> As previously noted: In establishing a universal framework, I am not ignoring exceptions to the rules, or outliers from the general population of humanity. There are those who may not easily identify within the definitional parameter of particularity because of cultural displacement (e.g., refugees), ethnic blurring (e.g., blended or mixed families), etc. However, a framework cannot be developed based on the exceptions. And the exceptions do not preclude an individual from fitting within the definitional parameters, though they may make some of the categories feel arbitrary.

inherent filters of unique human experience, necessarily represent limitations in perspective. Due to sin, these limitations are often barriers for fellowship. In modern culture, particularities often serve to divide people from one another. When particularities become identities rather than characteristics, division results. Perverted by sin, particularities become barriers rather than invitations.

Second, the impact of Christ's incarnation on particularity is made clear. Particularity has meaning because the eternal God engages with humanity at the level of particularity—as individuals. The value of humanity's particularity is confirmed by the particular incarnation of God's own Son. Christ's particularity was overwhelmingly ordinary, further demonstration that God's perfect will for humankind is a diverse community of distinctly particular individuals.<sup>142</sup>

### **Particularity in Restored State**

Particularities are eternal as part of the divine design. As seemingly indicated in Scripture, all human beings have continued history after death.<sup>143</sup> Regarding his particularities, Jesus Christ “will always be the one who was born to Mary, who befriended sinners, who walked on water, and who gave his life on the cross . . . Jesus remains *Jesus* forever.”<sup>144</sup> Regarding all human beings' particularities, “we see in Jesus that the eschatological state involves the discrete identities of human persons and the

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<sup>142</sup> Of course, God engages with humanity on the level of communities, peoples, and nations also (e.g., Abrahamic covenant, Jesus's ministry to the Jews). But the particularity of Jesus's incarnation negates any claim that God does not see or care about the individual.

<sup>143</sup> On this point, Cortez directly contradicts Karl Barth. While Barth asserts a temporal finitude for all humanity, Cortez insists, “The biblical material presents Jesus has having a continued, historical existence after his biological death.” Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 254. For Barth's view on the termination of a person's history at Christ's return, see Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans. H. J. Stenning (London: Revell, 1933), 102. Barth, in fact, argues for the cessation of all history, or “the termination of history, history at the termination of the story, of the life story of the individual as well as the story of the world and of the Church” (102).

<sup>144</sup> Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 256 (emphasis original).

continued development of their personal histories.”<sup>145</sup> Human particularity is thus good and eternal.

In the *restored state*, particularities will be redefined and understood rightly. The limitations of perspective shaped by particularities will still exist but will no longer be barricades for fellowship. Perspectival limitations will be invitations for more meaningful community. Particularities will invite people toward sociality, enriching relationships by promoting a deeper understanding of others. Particularities will also foster deeper dependence as God’s people worship the creativity and unlimited wisdom of God. Citizenship to the kingdom of God and eternal siblingship will fundamentally override—though not minimize or eradicate—the sense of belonging to any nation, tribe, ethnicity, family, or historical context (Gal 3:28; Rev 7:9-10). Particularity in the restored state will serve to perfectly illustrate the diversity of the body of Christ in true communion with one another and the triune God (John 17:20-24).

### **Uniquely Female Aspects of Particularity**

Like the other parameters of human embodiment, the female expression of particularity is uniquely female because female-gendered embodied beings express their particularities. Genderedness is not a category of particularity, but gender and particularities work together, often indistinguishably, to construct one’s perspective. Just as an Indian woman cannot perfectly assume the perspective of an Indian man, neither can she perfectly assume the perspective of a Brazilian woman. Human experience is informed by ethnicity and context—and other particularities—but filtered through gender.<sup>146</sup> An individual’s perspective is primarily constructed by her gender and her

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<sup>145</sup> Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*, 256.

<sup>146</sup> Cortez discusses the impact of cultural context on understanding genderedness in Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 55. Allison emphasizes the elemental aspect of an individual’s filter according to gender, declaring that “we are gendered all the way down, so we view all of life from our male perspective or female perspective.” Allison, *Embodied*, 78.



respective particularities. A woman cannot disassociate herself from her gender for a gendered neutrality. Neither can she disassociate herself from her ethnicity, family of origin, story, etc., for impartial objectivity. The diversity of perspectives, afforded by gender and particularities, are not only unavoidable but also required for flourishing as embodied beings.

### **Potential Perversions of Particularity**

As with other ontological aspects of embodiment, the *perversions of particularities* are temporal. Perversions of the human capacity for particularity can be *conscious* and *unconscious*. In their worst form, these perversions lead to tribalism, self-promotion, anti-sociality, and hatred.<sup>147</sup> An illustration of an unconscious perversion of the human capacity for particularity would be generational racism. In the case of generational racism—though unintended by the progeny—the generations preceding have cultivated a culture or environment of racism. As a result, the descendants carry on a tradition that disenfranchises some groups based on ethnicity.<sup>148</sup> The tradition can be an attitude and/or system (e.g., academic, social, legal). Generational racism, often unconscious on the part of the descendants, is the unawareness of imbedded bigotry.<sup>149</sup>

An example of conscious perversion of particularity could be polarization of people according to isolated or multiple particularities. One such example would be the uncritical application of intersectionality as a tool for polarity. The social scientific

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<sup>147</sup> Allison notes the power of humankind to destroy unity by privileging one group and/or by disenfranchising another. Allison, *Embodied*, 66.

<sup>148</sup> To be clear, unconscious perversion of particularity does not absolve individuals of the responsibility to examine their thoughts, perspectives, and belief systems for non-volitional corruption. Again, the purpose of this study is not to demarcate the beginning and end of individual sin. I intend only to demonstrate the presence of unconscious and conscious corruption in each of the parameters.

<sup>149</sup> For a helpful treatment of racism within current American churches, see Jaison K. D. McCall, “The Lived Experience of African American Pastors: A Phenomenological Study” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022). Generational racism is the opposite of the concept of *woke*. According to McCall, *woke* can be understood as the awareness and action against racial and social injustice. In the church, *woke* is “to be able to understand how cultural, socioeconomic, philosophical, and historical realities inform our responsibility as believers in Jesus Christ.” Eric Mason, *Woke Church: An Urgent Call for Christians in America to Confront Racism and Injustice* (Chicago: Moody, 2018), 25.

concept of intersectionality engages many of the same categories presented in the paradigm of particularity (e.g., ethnicity, socioeconomic status, culture). Intersectionality compares these qualities in order to identify the privileged groups from the marginalized groups.<sup>150</sup> Unfortunately, the comparison often seems to result in condemnation and polarization.<sup>151</sup> Christ's particularity demystifies the concept of polarization. The Son incarnate was an embodied man with specific particularities: Jewish, born of Mary, adopted by Joseph, a resident of Nazareth in the first century AD.<sup>152</sup> The perfect human being was not a generic human; he was particular in an astonishingly ordinary way. Particularities of the individual do matter, but the sum of them could never constitute the value of the individual. Furthermore, Jesus' earthly ministry was predominantly for the Jews (Matt 15:24). Allison rightly concludes, "What began as a particular ministry eventually developed, in accordance with divine purpose, into a worldwide redemptive movement."<sup>153</sup> Particularity has meaning because the eternal God engages with humanity

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<sup>150</sup> The concept of *intersectionality* originates with Kimberlé Crenshaw's 1989 article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," in *University of Chicago Legal Forum* vol. 1989, no. 1, art. 8, <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf>. In today's Western society, the concept has taken on a more comprehensive approach:

Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves. (Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality, Key Concepts* [Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016], 2)

<sup>151</sup> Albert Mohler comments on the uncritical application of intersectionality as a tendency to "reduce human beings to a certain set of distinguishable identities that are more prized and valued than other identities—it establishes basic human identity in *differences* rather than a *commonality* shared amongst all humankind." R. Albert Mohler Jr., "The Power of the Gospel and the Meltdown of Identity Politics," Albert Mohler, February 12, 2019, <https://albertmohler.com/2019/02/12/power-gospel-meltdown-identity-politics/?fbclid=IwAR0WCy-rAYKsNNjp7YxhpAgtDfj2nw5oxuOIYektKVpdCQoySTl08Ot7MIc>.

<sup>152</sup> For an extensive treatment of Jesus's particularity, see Allison, *Embodied*, chap. 6, "The Son's Body," 113-24.

<sup>153</sup> See Allison, *Embodied*, 69.

at the level of particularity—as people groups (Jews) and as particular individuals (believers).<sup>154</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Particularities are God-given ontological realities of being embodied. Every human being is characterized individually by their unique collection of particularities (i.e., ethnicity, family/kinship, temporality, spatiality, context, and story). The divine design for particularities is perfect and eternal, but human capacity for particularity can be perverted consciously and unconsciously by sin. When God’s design and human capacity for particularities are restored to harmony, the perspectival limitations of particularities will serve to gather and enrich the community of God as they celebrate the creativity and wisdom of God together.

## **Framework Summary**

The ontology of humanity has been substantiated as the state of *particular, social, dependent, gendered embodiment*. All people across all time and all cultures have existed as particular, social, dependent, gendered embodied people. Each of these parameters of human existence span across the realities of the created, temporal, and restored states of existence. Humanity was divinely designed with these five parameters of existence. Though the human capacities are perverted by sin, the divine design has not been lost with the fall. Ultimately, humanity will be restored in such a way that the human capacity of these five parameters will be perfectly aligned with the divine design for them.

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<sup>154</sup> This claim intends to communicate God’s redemptive mission for the Jews in a biblical-historical sense, not as a dispensational claim. Jesus’s ministry was primarily for the Jews (Matt 10; 15:24), but his redemptive work was for all who would believe (Matt 28:18-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8; 11:19-25). Allison extensively addresses Jesus’s particularity in his incarnation and work of redemption. See Allison, *Embodied*, 68-70.

In conclusion, the ontological definition of female embodiment is proposed as the following: *Female-gendered embodiment is the condition of being particular, social, dependent, gendered embodied beings who were created as the imago Dei in the female-type of humankind and who engage the purpose, mandate, and virtues of humanity with a uniquely female expression.*

No person can exist outside of the five parameters, but each parameter builds from the reality of the preceding parameter (e.g., embodiment necessitates gender). Because of the centrality of gender to human embodiment, the intrinsic nature of woman is defined by her female-gendered embodiment and manifest in her design and capacity for dependence, sociality, and particularity. A woman is unique in her type of humankind and in her expression of being human. Her genderedness is an ontological reality. Furthermore, female-gendered embodiment is more fundamental to her being than are her particularity, sociality, and dependence; her genderedness is thus evidenced through those three parameters. Female expression is phenomenological and linked inextricably with particularity, sociality, and dependence. Her expression of these parameters are female expressions because she is a female-gendered being.<sup>155</sup> Her phenomenological expression is evidence of her ontological distinction. Since gender roles are effectively rules of social engagement within specific relationships, the ontological meaning of women is not defined by roles. To be clear, an ontology built separately from function is not to say that the ontological meaning of women would be ill-suited for potential biblical roles. As previously asserted, function ought to be fitting to ontology. However, because biblical roles cannot categorically define a woman's ontology, do not apply to all women everywhere (e.g., singles, non-mothers), and apply specifically to sociality in the

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<sup>155</sup> Byrd expresses a similar claim: "My contributions, my living and moving, are distinctly feminine because I am female." Byrd, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 114. While I would avoid the use of the term *feminine* because of its sociological implications, I agree with Byrd's sentiment. A woman expresses her condition in distinctly female ways because she is a woman. See the *type* and *expression* distinctions in the section titled "2. Gendered Embodiment."

temporal state, an ontological definition cannot be deduced from axiological assumptions. A woman is not irrelevant to her potential roles, but her being is not defined by her functions. Accordingly, the presented definitional framework attempts to provide an ontological perspective on the nature of the female-gendered embodied person. Her ontological reality will not shift across time, culture, or role. The proposed definitions attempt to establish the timeless and intended nature of being a woman, created in God's image for his glory and for the accomplishment of his work both in the present age and the eschaton to come.

## CHAPTER 6

### ASSESSING THE DEFINITIONAL FRAMEWORK

A framework for the universal condition of human embodiment has been proposed, with specific attention to female-gendered embodiment (chap. 5). While the presented taxonomy has been substantiated throughout the study, the research has been certainly limited in scope. This chapter identifies several of the framework's achievements, limitations, and practical implications.

#### **Framework Achievements**

The state of *particular, social, dependent, gendered embodiment* has been demonstrated through review of precedent literature (chap. 2), scriptural survey (chap. 3), and extensive interaction with an ontological approach to genderedness from the Eastern Orthodox tradition (chap. 4). Ultimately, the framework attempts to establish a universal taxonomy for gendered embodiment, building from the paradigms defined by Gregg Allison (chap. 5). As a first attempt, the framework proposes a clear, logical, and supported structure for the various realities of human embodiment. The parameters and categories defined in the taxonomy are universal, applicable to all people, across all time and contexts. While these claims may seem fantastic, timeless universality is essential for an ontological framework to operate effectively. Principally, the framework sought to define female-gendered embodiment as follows: *Female-gendered embodiment is the condition of being particular, social, dependent, gendered embodied people who were created as the imago Dei in the female-type of humankind and who engage the purpose, mandate, and virtues of humanity with a uniquely female expression.* To that end, the framework presents some potential triumphs.

First, the framework affirms the ontological value and dignity of women. In fact, the taxonomy of gendered embodiment highlights the uniformities of men and women as humankind with common human properties. Handcrafted by God, men and women share purpose, mandate, and virtues in the divine design. Not only are the uniformities extensive; the distinctions imply no hierarchical structure in gendered embodiment. Male- and female-gendered embodied beings are distinct types of humankind with distinct expressions of the common human properties (i.e., purpose, mandate, and virtues). The two types are made explicitly distinct as male and female (Gen 1:27), punctuated by separate formations (Gen 2:21-22). The ontological type is demonstrated in the phenomenological expression of gender. Women are gendered embodied beings who were created as the *imago Dei* in the female-type of humankind, just as men are gendered embodied beings who were created as the *imago Dei* in the male-type of humankind. There is no hierarchy of ontological type in humankind. Women have dignity, value, and stand-alone contribution.

Second, the definition of female-gendered embodiment extricates ontological meaning from function or role. The tendency in previous research has been to define genders according to roles and gender-relative functions. Unfortunately, this functional approach misclassifies axiological considerations as ontological assumptions. Defining the ontology of genderedness is an entirely separate concern from the roles or behavioral patterns of a gender. To determine ontology according to what is deemed good and right behavior is to erect an ontological definition on the pillars of axiological judgments. The ontological approach does not negate gender-typical behavior or even the suitability of formal roles for genders, but ontological meaning is not determined from generalized behavior and roles. The definition of female-gendered embodiment provided by the framework is generated from ontological considerations within the discipline of theological anthropology.

Third, the framework vindicates common human properties from gender-specific ownership. No aspect of the common human properties (i.e., purpose, mandate, and virtues) is gender-specific. Because male and female human beings are of the same constitution and kind, their shared purpose as image-bearers is to glorify God. This common human purpose is enabled by their intrinsic nature and accomplished through their shared mandate. Both the first man and the first woman were given the mandate and blessing to subdue and to fill the earth (Gen 1:28). In the same way, the mandate given to Jesus's disciples is not gender-restricted (Matt 28). Believers are tasked with filling and subduing the earth, both physically and spiritually. Interpersonal relationships are required to fulfill the mandate in accordance with humankind's social nature. All gendered embodied beings are uniform in their need for relationship. Additionally, human beings share guilt for sin and the resulting judgments as a result of sin. The shared mandate is deeply affected by sin in the temporal state but will be renewed and unhindered in the restored state—though the manifestation of its fulfillment will be distinct from both the created and temporal states.

Additionally, all gendered embodied beings are uniform in the virtues commanded by God and desirable for a flourishing life. These shared qualities are the expectations for communities of believers and are enabled by believers' union with Christ. The same faith-based virtues, fruit of the Spirit, and spiritual giftings are provided to, and required of, all believers—male and female. In the framework, no biblical virtue is gender-specific. Recognizing the roles of culture and context in the assignment of characteristics as prominently male-typical or female-typical establishes the spectrum of expression for the common human properties. A gentle man ought not be targeted as falling short of biblical masculinity. Likewise, a courageous woman cannot be implicated as failing to live out biblical womanhood. According to the spectrum of expression, the only scriptural limitation for gender expression is the deliberate intention to present oneself as the other gender. Thus, according to the framework, a courageous woman falls



short of living out her female-genderedness only when she intends by her courage to be perceived as a man. Female-typical expressions of courage will vary across cultures and contexts, and a woman could plausibly display male-typical expressions of courage without intending to be perceived as a man.<sup>1</sup> If the common human properties, including all virtues, are not constrained by gender, stereotypes cannot be interpreted as biblical gender expression.

Fourth, the framework begins the work of exonerating the concept of genderedness from both involuntary assignment and voluntary orientation. Not only is an ontological definition of women crucial to affirm the value of woman, superseding a functional role, but an ontological definition of women is also necessary to protect women from the diminishing value relegated to women when people can self-identify as women regardless of any biological (and/or socially defined) realities of being a woman. A man cannot become a woman by declaring himself to be a woman even if he suffers from an incongruence between biological sex and gender identity. To do so would be to diminish all value associated with the social space of being, living, and developing as a woman. Declaring oneself to be a woman does not automatically award a person the influence, recognition, obstacles, privilege, and oppression associated with that social space.<sup>2</sup> To pretend that a self-declaration entitles one to the historical properties (social benefits and misfortunes) necessary to occupy the role is to devalue the role and the

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<sup>1</sup> Display of virtues is not determined by formal roles, though the appropriate expression of some virtues may be tempered by formal roles in the parameter of sociality. For example, a female broad complementarian could celebrate her spiritual gift of teaching but refrain from expressing her gift in certain circumstances in her church (e.g., preaching in the church service). Though the virtue (spiritual gift of teaching) is not male-specific, she may elect to express the virtue, according to her conviction on roles in the church. Regarding a woman's giftings and instruction, Durrett eloquently explains that "the capacity to do this [to fill the pulpit] does not imply the necessity, any more than knowing how to dance makes it incumbent on females to appear on the stage." Reuben Thomas Durrett, "The Sublime Effects of a Liberal Female Education" (address delivered at the public examination of W. F. Broaddus's Female Academy, Shelbyville, KY, July 26, 1849), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin H. Arbour and John R. Gilhooly, "Transgenderism, Human Ontology, and the Metaphysics of Properties," *Evangelical Philosophical Society* (2019): 22.

persons legitimately occupying that role.<sup>3</sup> The inseparability of the material and immaterial aspects of genderedness guard against the viability of gender incongruence as justification for gender transitions.

Being a woman is a good thing, a divinely designed condition of existence. The condition of female-gendered embodiment is not reduced by the existence of the other gender, is not defined by temporal roles in sociality, is not relegated to particular character qualities, and cannot be attained by self-declaration. The ontology of being a woman is handcrafted by God, simultaneously self-evident and inscrutable.

### **Framework Limitations**

Several limitations can be identified in the proposed definitional framework. Though the framework offers many potential achievements, substantiating the definitional framework was necessarily limited in scope. There are, therefore, various gaps in the research provided to support the framework structure. The limitations in the presented study provide ample room for additional corroborating and dissident research to come alongside the established framework. This section attempts to identify a few opportunities for future research.

The approach of this definitional framework was necessarily theological. Engagement with Evdokimov's ontology of woman and Allison's paradigms of embodiment required an approach within theological anthropology. As a complement, a thorough philosophical approach may also be executed to scrutinize, enhance, and validate or challenge the proposed framework. Such a philosophical exercise was well executed by Sister Prudence Allen in her three-volume work *The Concept of Woman*. Sister Allen, especially in volume three, sought to validate the concept of integral

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<sup>3</sup> See also the accusations of "cultural appropriation and fraud" directed at Rachel Dolezal, a white woman who claimed to be black. In addition to general social outrage, the State of Washington charged Dolezal with felony of theft by welfare fraud and second-degree perjury in 2018. Like ethnicity, gender is a given condition; it cannot be acquired by self-declaration.

complementarity across philosophical history, confirmed by her distinctly Catholic theology.<sup>4</sup> A similar historical philosophical study could be accomplished to examine and to elaborate on the ontological definition and taxonomy recommended by the established framework. Moreover, a historical sociological approach to the definition of women from a conservative evangelical perspective would also verify the framework.

The spectrum details for gender expression could inspire many additional studies, both qualitative—especially phenomenological—and quantitative across the following parameters: dependence, sociality, and particularity. While the framework does establish some universal boundaries for the continuum, the actual values of male-typical and female-typical expression on the spectrum remain to be defined. The scriptural limitations for the spectrum of gender expression seem to be concerned with the willful act to disregard one's gender in effort to be seen as or identified with the other gender type. However, Scripture does not dictate common human properties that are gender-specific, nor does it limit the expression of those properties (e.g., virtues) according to gender.<sup>5</sup> The manner in which the common human properties are expressed is thus informed by environment, relationships, and particularities. Marc Cortez assents, “studies of the ‘essential’ male and the ‘essential’ female in various contexts indicate that these concepts are strongly influenced by cultural conceptions of male and female.”<sup>6</sup> If defining the gender-typical values along the spectrum of expression is important to other

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<sup>4</sup> Sister Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, vol. 3, *The Search for Communion of Persons, 1500-2015* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Note: The denial of limitations of expression of common human properties does not eradicate the existence of gender roles for formal defined relationships such as marriage and church governance—limited to the temporal state. This point has been sufficiently validated in the previous chapters.

<sup>6</sup> Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 49. Cortez thoughtfully distinguishes among the primary views of gender: androgyny, essentialism, and constructivism. After presenting and critically engaging each perspective, Cortez suggests, “the safest approach here may be to affirm a modest or chastened essentialism that acknowledges the fundamental nature of sexuality but declines to claim that it has fully grasped precisely what that means” (55). Notably, Cortez seems to have distanced his view of gender from gender essentialism by the time he published *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology* (2017). See 117-118n37.

scholars, then the work must be accomplished acknowledging the cultural and contextual formation of such values. As the framework rejects universal definition of male-specific and female-specific properties, the effort to define context-specific gender expression could be pursued on a phenomenological basis.<sup>7</sup>

As a peripheral matter, the framework attempts a definition toward personhood. According to the framework for human embodiment, *particularity, sociality, dependence, genderedness, and embodiment are the essential aspects of personhood*. Every human being is embodied and gendered from the point of conception.<sup>8</sup> Human dependence is an involuntary reality of the Creator-creature relationship, and recognition of reliance is not required for the reality of dependence to persist. Sociality is an out-working of the intrinsic nature of a gendered embodied being. Likewise, particularities add dimension and uniqueness to the person and are innate to the ontological nature of being human. All particular, social, dependent, gendered embodied people are persons.<sup>9</sup> In the contemporary debate of human existence versus personhood, the church needs a verifiable definition of the constitution of a human being.<sup>10</sup> While the framework was not intended to address the philosophical and political debate of personhood directly, further research could build from the framework to meet a great need. Furthermore, the nature

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<sup>7</sup> Cortez helpfully distinguishes essential, universal expressions of gender from an essentialist view of gender: "Human sexuality, then, is a natural and essential aspect of humanity. This does not mean, however, that any particular expression of, or interpretation of, human sexuality must be viewed as natural or essential." Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 49.

<sup>8</sup> As substantiated in the study, this claim excludes the intersex population as exceptional to the intended human condition. See chap. 5, sect. "2. Gendered Embodiment," subsect. "Potential Perversions of Gendered Embodiment."

<sup>9</sup> Further research on personhood ought to engage the philosophical work of Robert Spaemann *The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something'*, trans. Oliver O'Donovan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Spaemann denies that personhood is achieved or proven but rather innate, declaring "although persons relate to one another a priori through mutual recognition, recognition is not an antecedent condition for being a person but a response to a prior claim" (3). See also Spaemann, *Essays in Anthropology: Variations on a Theme*, trans. Guido de Graaff and James Mumford (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> The debate of personhood versus existence is widespread and lies at the base of such issues as embryo and/or fetus viability, physician-assisted dying (death with dignity), and societal attitudes toward mental and physical handicaps. For an extensive treatment of fetus viability as an indicator of personhood status, see Astrid Christoffersen-Deb, "Viability: A Cultural Calculus of Personhood at the Beginnings of Life," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2012): 575-94.

versus person distinction bears further discussion, particularly regarding the ontological nature of gendered embodiment as persistent in the intermediate state. Though the nature of embodiment changes in the temporal state (i.e. disembodiment) and the restored state (i.e. glorification), the person persists. Precisely how genderedness carries through the disembodied state and into the glorified state bears additional consideration and speculation.

Additional study is required regarding the historical and original language study of female and male expression in both ancient Israel and the new covenant community. For example, an in-depth study of Deuteronomy 22:5 in the original Hebrew and within the context of the OT law would yield additional insight to God's perspective on cross-dressing as an ontological issue and idolatrous act. Similarly, the commanded societal treatment of women in ancient Israel (e.g., betrothed virgins) and in NT church (e.g., widows) also bears further research. Such an extensive study could reveal additional detail on the appropriate expression toward women in various circumstances for God's people.

The distinction of conscious and unconscious perversions must be further vetted. Conscious perversion is sin as it demonstrates a willful rebellion against God's design. However, the study does not attempt to define when unconscious perversion is or becomes sinful. All perversion is consequence of sin, but whether the perversion demonstrates individual sin or original sin has not been distinguished. Such a distinction could be required for some practical aspects of discipleship and counseling.

The distinctions among the parameters of dependence, sociality, and particularity across the three states of human existence (created, temporal, restored states) bear further research and explanation. Each parameter remains as an ontological reality of human existence, but the rules of engagement and manifestations of the parameter may be altered across the states. For instance, further research could address how humanity's dependence on God has shifted throughout the temporal state. From the point of the fall

to the consummation of the kingdom of God with the new heavens and new earth, how has humanity's dependence on God manifested? Such a study could address the soteriological aspects of dependence and define expression of dependence across the biblical covenants. Further research could also speculate the nature of dependence in the restored state. Another opportunity for further research would address the distinctions of sociality in the restored state. If marriage and the church governance no longer exist (in the same manifestation as the temporal state), will there be formal relationships with corresponding gender roles in the restored state? Furthermore, which particularities will be present in the restored state? How will they differ from the temporal state? Will particularities be more or less significant in the restored state if eternal siblingship and citizenship of the kingdom of God take precedence as humanity's descriptors? These questions and many others provide ample opportunity for further research among the parameters across the three states of human existence.

God's act of salvation and the engagement of free will are related to, but not fully explained within, the parameter of dependence. All people, redeemed or not, are designed for, and have the capacity for, dependence. Salvation and all its related conditions (justification, sanctification, glorification) transcend all aspects of human embodiment. Redeemed people are—or should be—markedly different in their capacity to live within the design of each parameter of human embodiment. Though perfect alignment between the divine design and human capacity for each parameter is impossible before the restored state, the evidence of the indwelling Spirit and a believer's union with Christ should be apparent in the temporal state. The extent to which believers' capacities are or could be aligned with the divine design in each parameter provides another opportunity for further research.

Finally, the framework must be vetted by other scholars from within and without the evangelical tradition. Such vetting is required to test, refine, and validate the framework as accurate and beneficial for theological study and application to praxis.

## **Framework Implications**

This section focuses on the definition of potential implications of the framework for women in a variety of contexts. For an ontological framework to be beneficial, the concepts must be translated into practical living, addressing on-going and day-to-day concerns of human experience. The framework established in this study suggests many potentially immediate implications for women, families, churches, communities, and American society.

For the individual woman, her understanding of her ontological nature is at stake. If the ontological meaning of a woman is derived from her potential roles (i.e., marriage and the church)—as has been the historical practice of the conservative evangelical church—she is classified as a follower by nature.<sup>11</sup> The far-reaching implication of such classification is the lowered, or at least restricted, expectations for her contribution to the family, the church, and society. Moreover, tethering the ontological definition of being a woman to temporal roles becomes increasingly tenuous for women who do not or cannot participate in the roles (e.g., singles, barren women, divorced women). The personal identity of each woman must be understood through her relationship to God and then to others. The ontological model of female-gendered embodiment addresses both aspects of her identity as an individual image-bearer and as a member to a corporate community, both of which are foundational to her self-conceptualization. The proposed framework provides the parameters from which a woman can understand herself. An accurate self-conceptualization could foster the assurance and confidence a woman needs to engage with others in theologically healthy ways. Importantly, agreement with the established framework for female-gendered embodiment does not negate any particular stand on gender roles. In fact, both a broad

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<sup>11</sup> See chap. 1, sect. “Conclusion.” See also 23n66.

complementarian and a strong egalitarian could hold to this framework of gendered embodiment, though they would differ on some practical details of sociality.

The framework combats many extrabiblical restrictions imposed on women, which could be classified as the “soft bigotry of low expectations.”<sup>12</sup> Maintaining different standards and/or unequal expectations because of accessibility rather than ability is a soft form of discrimination. The “low expectations” addressed by the study include the incorrect or incomplete ontological definition of women derived from function, as discussed above. In response, the established framework exposes the disparate expectations belied by the discrepancy of theological training between men and women as unfounded—not only in academia but also in the local church. In academia, men have historically had superior access to higher education across all disciplines.<sup>13</sup> Regarding theological study, the fact of superior male access was the logical result of seminaries intending to train male clergy.<sup>14</sup> Women’s access to formal theological training has

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<sup>12</sup> The phrase “the soft bigotry of low expectations” is attributed to George W. Bush in a 2000 speech to the NAACP. Former President Bush used this phrase to denote the discrepancy in the education of children across America according to ethnicity. The speech launched the No Child Left Behind Act. Technically, the phrase was coined by Michael Gerson, the former president’s speech writer at the time of the speech.

<sup>13</sup> In the Middle Ages formal education past grammar school was almost exclusively reserved for males. For young girls to pursue education, the expensive endeavor had to be funded entirely by parents or wealthy benefactors. For the social elite, a female education might include languages, basic writing, arithmetic, and liberal arts such as literature, poetry, music, and art. The intention of providing a young lady with an education derived almost exclusively from a desire to enhance her marital potential. See Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. M. M. Postan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 80-86. In the Modern Age, educational access for women improved much later. The American perspective on female education shifted drastically between 1820 and 1850, affirming the intellectual equality of women with men. Leonard I. Sweet, “The Female Seminary Movement and Woman’s Mission in Antebellum America,” *Church History* 54, no. 1 (1985): 41-55. While some extraordinary women blazed the trail in male-typical educational environments (e.g., the first female graduate from law school was Ada Kepley in 1870, and the first female to earn a medical degree was Elizabeth Blackwell in 1849), the normalizing of equal education for men and women did not come until decades later.

<sup>14</sup> Even before the concept of modern seminaries emerged, the medieval monasteries and convents conveyed the disparity of theological training and contribution with gender-divided living, study, and service. Female convents were also under the supervision of male leadership, at least at the level of the pope if not below. With the advent of modern seminaries (Harvard College being the first in North America in 1636), the intended students were male clergy (pastors, priests, and ministers). George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Female seminaries were established in America in the mid-1800s, predominantly on the understanding that “women could not perform the duties of wife and mother adequately without a high degree of education and learning.” Sweet, “The Female Seminary Movement,” 43. In addition to the realms of wifehood and motherhood, the increased emphasis on female education advocated the usefulness



advanced significantly, though discrimination against women within theological programs is still pervasive.<sup>15</sup> Within church communities, the emphasis of teaching and programing ought to be directed toward the contribution of women in ministry and toward partnership across gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, and socioeconomic standing. Instead, the role expectations and limitations of women seem to be often emphasized to the detriment of the theological development of women. In an article for the *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Peter Schemm aptly comments on the “inherent chauvinism” of fixating on female limitations in the church, declaring that “it is actually a great insult to women that any and every other thing they are fit by God to do and instructed by God to do is somehow less important than teaching men.”<sup>16</sup> Lowered expectations—though often unintentionally—denote a second-class citizenship, demoting women to the theological training, intellectual respect, and volume of voice restricted to her expected roles and contributions.<sup>17</sup>

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of women for the kingdom of God (44). Some male seminaries also opened their doors to female students (the first being in 1833), though women were typically enrolled in separate programs, like a college preparatory curriculum. Some conservative seminaries still restrict female enrollment in particular courses such as preaching.

<sup>15</sup> From some views, exclusion of women from any courses would be considered discrimination. By contrast, I mean only to indicate that the very presence of women in seminaries is still rebuked by some vocal critics. In her 2018 research, Linda Reed looked extensively at the confusion of churches and seminaries regarding appropriate theological training for women. Linda Marie Reed, “Theological and Practical Ministry Training for Women in Complementarian Higher Education: A Mixed Methods Study” (EdD thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Peter R. Schemm Jr., “Learned and Holy,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 11, no. 2 (2006): 6.

<sup>17</sup> A brief survey of the Christian resources marketed toward women would reveal the emphasis of women’s roles in the family and church and female-stereotypical issues. For example, the 2014 *ESV Women’s Devotional Bible* included feature articles catered specifically toward the perceived needs of female readers, in addition to some generic article topics. The subjects of the female-specific articles include eating disorders, emotional health, forgiveness and shame, and missional living. *ESV Women’s Devotional Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014). By contrast, the male-specific articles in the 2015 *ESV Men’s Devotional Bible* focused on leadership, self-control as essential for biblical manhood, the local church, calling, pornography, and a man’s work. *ESV Men’s Devotional Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015). While the subject matter of each version is doubtless edifying for the respective gender, the side-by-side comparison reveals an underlying discrepancy in the expectations for female study of Scripture. The featured articles suggest perhaps that women must focus on emotional issues, while men must focus on leadership in ministry. This article comparison was brought to my attention by Aimee Byrd in *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: How the Church Needs to Rediscover Her Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Reflective, 2020), 38-39.

Regarding the on-going gender revolution, the established framework also has much to say. Armed with an ontological definition, the church will have a defensible stance against the onslaught of attacks against a binary, biblical view of gender. Whereas a functional definition of gender emphasizes works and performance of roles, an ontological definition of gender promotes appropriate expression of an inherent reality. When one asks the question “What is a woman?” the response that “a woman should do this” is hollow and incomplete. First, the proposed ontological definition of gendered embodiment combats the notion of gender interchangeability. If men and women are truly interchangeable, then nothing is unique about either. The parameter of gendered embodiment expressly communicates the ontological distinction of type and the phenomenological distinction of expression. Beyond biological and physiological differences, men and women are not interchangeable. Both contribute uniquely to the humankind and the manifestation of the common human properties. As presented in this study, male and female are decidedly not identical or interchangeable in ontological definition or in phenomenological reality. Not only does the notion of interchangeability strip the value of each gender, but also adoption of gender neutrality leads to acceptance of gender dysphoria and gender spectrums.

Second, the framework addresses the phenomenon of gender dysphoria. As discussed in chapter 5, gender dysphoria is the diagnostic category for gender confusion based on the underlying assumption that a person can experience oneself as a gender that is not reflected biologically *and* that such an experience is evidence of one’s true inner self. While the framework accounts for gender confusion, or the incongruence between divine design and human capacity for gendered embodiment, the framework does not advocate the pursuit of transgender identity. The framework does not diminish the emotional and psychological distress caused by the phenomenon of gender incongruence, but the taxonomy does not embrace the so-named “gender-affirming” practices of transgender identity affirmed within the concept of gender dysphoria. Practices like

cross-dressing, SRS, and HRT are deemed gender-affirming because they allow people to express themselves as they feel themselves to truly be—rather than as they exist biologically. Because this study does not splinter biological sex and gender identity into separate realities, genderedness cannot be confined to, or determined by, one or the other. There is no hierarchy of one over the other because the material and immaterial are indivisible. Though gender confusion is a reality brought on by an incongruence between the divine design for gendered embodiment and the unconscious perversion of human capacity, the decision to override one's innate gender with a gender of one's choosing is defined as a conscious perversion.<sup>18</sup> Thus, a self-determination of gender identity and a volitional action to identify with other genderedness is identified as an abomination or act of idolatry (Deut 22:5; 1 Sam 16:7). Notably, the study's distinction between the possibility of gender confusion (as an unconscious perversion) and the decision of transgender identity (as a conscious perversion) opens the door for meaningful, forbearing ministry amidst the gender revolution.

Finally, careful application of the framework combats the growing acceptance of gender spectrums. Though gender expression lies on a continuum dictated by contextually driven measurements of gender-typical expression, genderedness is binary. The ontological condition of gendered embodiment is either male or female—not between male and female. By contrast, the phenomenological reality of gender expression lies on a continuum from female-typical to male-typical expression. Other-gender expression does not necessarily signify identification with the other gender or rejection of one's own gender. A woman, for example, can have an apt mathematical mind, or a man can be soft-spoken and gentle-natured. Though the woman and man's expressions are not gender-typical, they are not less female or male because of their

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<sup>18</sup> Sufferers of intersex are excluded from this statement, as their innate gender may be indeterminable from their anatomical and biological makeup. See chap. 5, sect. "2. Gendered Embodiment," subsect. "Potential Perversions of Gendered Embodiment."

nontypical expressions. In interpersonal relationships and in ministry, believers benefit from the freedom provided by the spectrum of expression protected within the scriptural boundary of binary genderedness. As the ontology of gender is immutable in the framework, sexual orientation, sexual expression, and gender bias can be helpfully understood, explained, and rectified, as necessary.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the framework for female-gendered embodiment proposes an ontological definition from the perspective of theological anthropology. The study is an effort to address the deep chasm in theological literature for an anthropology of women from a confessional evangelical perspective. If a theological anthropology of women can be adequately defined, then appropriate means of applying the framework to the lives of women and their communities can be explored. Though this study establishes only a first step toward defining female-gendered embodiment, a well-constructed theological model of gendered embodiment will manifest in interpersonal relationships, family dynamics, church communities, and society at large.

Intellectual exercise is hollow without a call to action. This study will be successful if theological scholars engage with the framework from their respective perspectives. As we challenge, sharpen, and encourage one another, may we move toward a more unified understanding of what it means to be a female-gendered embodied being—for individual women, for families, for churches, and for society. Beyond defining a framework for ontological meaning, may an amended and enriched theological anthropology correct and benefit our lives and our communities.

## APPENDIX 1

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS<sup>1</sup>

*Binarity of gender* asserts that the divine design for genderedness includes male or female—as indicated in Scripture (Gen 1:26-27). The binarity of gender is expected in the binary pattern of creation in Genesis 1 and 2. Following God’s creation of heaven and earth, light and darkness, day and night, evening and morning, dry land and waters, etc., God created humankind: male and female.

*Common human properties* are the uniform qualities shared across all humankind, male and female alike. The common human properties can be summarized as purpose, mandate, and virtues. The inseparability of the materiality and immateriality of gendered embodied beings necessitates common human properties, as opposed to gender-specific qualities.

*Conscious perversion* of human capacity for the parameters of embodiment involves the willful rebellion against the divine design for the respective parameter.

*Created state* considers God’s original design for woman in the garden of Eden before the fall.

*Dependence* is the creaturely aspect of being an embodied being. Each human is constitutionally dependent on God as Creator and Sustainer. God-oriented relational design and capacity are foundational aspects of being a gendered embodied person. The design of dependence is perfect, ordained by God, and untainted by sin. However, the human capacity of dependence has been affected by the fall and can be

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<sup>1</sup> This glossary includes the definitions of terms as I have defined and used them in this study. The substantiation of each definition can be found in the preceding chapters of the study.

perverted in its motivation and expression. The capacity of dependence has both conscious and unconscious components.

*Divine design* identifies God's perfect intention and formation of the respective parameter. As Creator, God's deliberate creation of humankind is evident in both Scripture and human experience.

*Female-type* is the gendered embodied state of being a woman, a member of the humankind. Female embodiment means both the material and immaterial aspects of a woman are gendered by God's design both in life and for eternity.

*Female-gendered embodiment* is the state of being particular, social, dependent, gendered embodied people who were created as the *imago Dei* in the female-type of humankind and who engage the purpose, mandate, and virtues of humanity with uniquely female expression.

*Gender* refers to the two types of humankind—male and female—who share uniformity in purpose, mandate, and virtues but who differ in expression of the common human properties. In God's design for humankind, the two types possess many uniformities and few distinctions and are complementary of each other.

*Gender confusion / incongruence* identifies the effect of sin on genderedness as an incongruence between the divine design and the human capacity for gendered embodiment—specifically unconscious incongruence. The term *gender confusion* refers to an involuntary sense of conflict between one's physical genderedness and immaterial genderedness. This disturbance can be caused by various medical conditions (e.g., intersex, hormonal imbalance) and/or by external forces (e.g., abuse, bullying, trauma).

*Genderedness* is the embodied state of being either male or female. God's design of humanity in his image included the creation of male and female. Gender is not only sociological but also biological and theological. Gender cannot be splintered into physicality and personhood. Rather, gender pervades every aspect of human

existence. This study treats gender as binary—as either male or female—as indicated in Scripture (Gen 1:26-27). Because of sin, the human capacity for genderedness has the potential for conscious and unconscious perversion.

*Gender distinctions* include the two ways in which male and female are distinct from one another: type and expression. Male and female are different types of human kind.

Type is an ontological distinction and a binary reality. Male and female also demonstrate unique expressions of the common human properties. Expression is a phenomenological reality and a distinction of spectrum, which is context-defined.

*Gender uniformities* identify the primary ways in which male and female are the same, the common human properties shared across humankind. Several uniformities are identified in a scriptural survey: purpose, kind, constitution, blessing and mandate, need for relationship, guilt, judgment, requirements as an OT community, requirements as a NT community, union with Christ, mission, and eternal reality of gendered embodiment (see chap. 3). These common human properties can be summarized as uniformity in purpose, mandate, and virtues.

*Human capacity* refers to the human ability to live within the divine design. Tainted by sin, the human faculty of each parameter has the potential for perversion, both consciously and unconsciously.

*Human embodiment* refers comprehensively to the constitution of all humanity. Each human is comprised of immaterial and material aspects according to God's perfect design in his own image (*imago Dei*). Both the material and immaterial are required to constitute a human being; no human does or can exist without being embodied. Embodiment is the original design, the normative state, and the promised eternal state of all humanity. The design of embodiment is perfect, ordained by God, and untainted by sin. However, the human capacity of embodiment has been affected by the fall and can be perverted both consciously and unconsciously.

*Identity* is an ontological descriptor of the innate nature and condition of a human being.

While many other facets and nuances of the term exist, in this study identity could be defined formally as “the relation each thing bears just to itself” and is considered persistent. Each person is an individual with a first-person perspective irrevocably associated with their particular embodiment.

*Immaterial* refers to the soul or spirit of a human being, or any aspect of the person that is not visible or tangible. Both the material and immaterial aspects of a human are eternal and gendered.

*Male-type* is the gendered embodied state of being a man, a member of the humankind.

Male embodiment means both the material and immaterial aspects of a man are gendered by God’s design both in life and for eternity.

*Mandate* is the common human property that includes the cultural mandate and blessing received in Genesis 1. Humankind was charged with subduing and filling the earth. The mission given to the disciples in Matthew 28 does not contradict or replace the Genesis 1 mandate. Rather, the Great Commission corresponds with the creation mandate, opening the work of making disciples from beyond the bounds of farming and fertility. Humankind’s mandate transcends the created, temporal, and restored states, though the fulfilment of the mandate in the restored state will be distinct from its pursuit in the previous states.

*Material* is used to describe the physical aspect of the human being, that which is visible, tangible, and biologically gendered. The material aspect of being human is commonly referred to as the body.

*Ontological* is used to describe the metaphysical nature of being. Thus, the ontological meaning of women would intend to define a woman’s intrinsic nature, as designed at creation, as preserved in the temporal state, and as redeemed in the eschaton.

*Particularity* is the collection of characteristics that make every human’s experience unique. Each human has unique aspects (i.e., ethnicity, family/kinship, temporality,



spatiality, context, story) that constitute her particularity and add dimensionality to her personhood.

*Potential perversions* recognize the conscious and unconscious perversions of each parameter as a result of sin. In the temporal state, some amount of incongruence will always exist between the divine design and the human capacity for each parameter. In the restored state, perfect congruence will be restored since the corruption of the parameters will be eliminated.

*Purpose* refers to the common human property of uniform purpose for all gendered embodied beings, which is to glorify God as image-bearers. Humankind's purpose transcends the created, temporal, and restored states, though the outworking of the purpose in the restored state will be distinct from its presentation in the previous states.

*Restored state* speculates the eternal state of embodiment when woman is restored to her glorified material and immaterial state.

*Sociality* is the people-oriented relational or attractional aspect of gender. Sociality is the design and capacity for gendered beings to desire and to receive relationship with other human beings. The design of sociality is perfect, ordained by God, and untainted by sin. However, the human capacity of sociality has been affected by the fall and can be perverted in its motivation and expression. Social capacity has both conscious and unconscious components.

*Sexual activity* refers to the expression of one's sociality that is appropriate only within the covenant of marriage. God's design of marriage includes the sexual manifestation of sociality for enjoyment, edification, and procreation. A person may pervert this expression of sociality due to a perversion of his or her social capacity—whether conscious, unconscious, or a combination of both.

*Spectrum of expression* identifies the human expression of gender as context-defined.

Thus, gender-typical expression falls on a spectrum, as determined by context.

Scripture does not dictate virtues that are gender-specific, nor does it limit the expression of virtues according to gender. The manner in which the common human properties are expressed is thus informed by environment, relationships, and particularities. While the continuum of expression is broad, Scripture does, however, seem to provide the guiderails for spectrum values. The scriptural limitations for the spectrum of gender expression seem to be concerned with the willful act to disregard one's gender in effort to be seen as or identified with the other gender type.

*Temporal state* acknowledges the post-fall reality for woman and the intermediate state of disembodiment after death before the new heavens and new earth.

*Transgender identity* indicates conscious perversion of gendered embodiment. Namely, the decision to present oneself as the gender of one's choosing, rather than the gender one innately has, is a conscious perversion. The physicality of gender (biological sex) and gender identity (immaterial aspects of genderedness) have been divided as distinguishable and independent. Transgender lifestyle, sex reassignment surgery (SRS), and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) embrace a conscious self-determination of gender identity that is separate from one's innate genderedness.

*Unconscious perversion* refers to the non-volitional incongruence of human capacity with divine design for each of the parameters of embodiment.

*Uniquely female aspects* consider the expressions of each parameter that are distinctly female manifestations of the condition as expressed by female embodied people.

*Virtues* are the common human properties that are commanded by God and desirable for a fruitful life. Virtues include the qualities of flourishing (Matt 5:1-12; 22:37-40), spiritual giftings (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph 4:11), and fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). By way of natural extension, the virtues also include any characteristics that enhance or support the qualities of flourishing, which could include wisdom (Prov 1:1-7), courage (Josh 1:9), and nurturing (Eph 6:4). What are

considered volitional faith-based virtues in the temporal state will be instinctive facts of life in the restored state for all of God's people.

## APPENDIX 2

### DISTINCTION OF GENDER AND SEX

The question of humankind's sexed nature has been a focus of human thought for millennia. However, contemporary society's treatment of gender as an issue separate from biological sex is "unprecedented in history."<sup>1</sup> As an issue of ethics, sex and gender have long been evaluated according to behavior, and societies have managed sexual activity with suspicion and caution. As an issue of ontology, sex and gender are inescapably intertwined with human identity, and yet the two concepts (sex and gender) are indivisible. The absorption of sexual preference and inner gender identity into the primal sense of self is distinguished from the historical separation of actions—whether moral or immoral—from a person's identity. This phenomenal cultural shift can be evidenced in common LGBTQ+-affirming statements such as "I have to be true to myself," "I've been living a lie," and "I can't change who I am." The elevation of gender identity as one's cardinal identity—sometimes over and against one's biological sex—is a recent maladaptation that has disastrous consequences for individuals, families, and society as a whole.

The forthcoming discussion answers the question Is there a Christian foundation for treating gender as distinct from biological sex? The concepts of gender and sex will be explored through biblical, theological, historical social, and Christian ethical perspectives in order to prove that a scriptural ontology of genderedness is required to appropriately join biological sex and gender as inseparable concepts that are

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<sup>1</sup> See Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 35. Following a similar line of logic, Trueman makes the claim, "While sex may be presented today as little more than a recreational activity, sexuality is presented as that which lies at the very heart of what it means to be an authentic person. That is a profound claim that is arguably unprecedented in history."

rightly expressed through a biblical ethic of sexuality. The research will seek to affirm the following ontological understanding of gender: *Humankind exists in the two types of male and female, which reflect both the material and immaterial aspects of gendered embodiment. Sex and gender are ontological realities of human composition, designed as congruent; humans are gendered all the way down.*<sup>2</sup>

Concerning approach, this research first defines the terms to be employed. Second, the research explores the concept of gender according to (1) biblical, (2) theological, (3) historical social, and (4) Christian ethical perspectives. The distinction of gender and sex will be investigated within each perspective. Finally, a brief consideration for the Christian practitioner is presented. In addition to the resources cited throughout, the foundation of the research is based on the framework for female-gendered embodiment developed in chapters 1-6, and many details of the framework are discussed, though not comprehensively substantiated, in the following sections.<sup>3</sup>

### **Defining the Terms**

The following terms are fraught with nuance, history, and misapplication. The academic disciplines (specifically history, social sciences, and theology) do not have a consensus as to the use of the terms sex and gender. The discussion will define and engage the terms according to the following definitions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The language of “gendered all the way down” is derived from the work of Gregg R. Allison. Allison emphasizes the elemental aspect of an individual’s filter according to gender, declaring that “we are gendered all the way down, so we view all of life from our male perspective or female perspective.” Gregg R. Allison, *Embodied: Living as Whole People in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021), 45.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the following sections will be drawn and summarized from the research presented in chapters 1-6 of this dissertation. This repetition is intentional, in effort to make a self-contained argument for the inseparability of gender and sex.

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of discussing distinctions between gender and sex, the provided definitions are consistent with, but not identical to, the those provided in appendix 1 (“Glossary of Terms”).

*Gender* encompasses both the material and immaterial aspects of being an embodied person.<sup>5</sup> *Gender* is both innate to the individual and demonstrated in the person's physicality. Thus, *gender* refers to the embodied condition of being male and female and remains congruent with the reality of sex. In simple terms, *sex* is bodily, but *gender* is holistic.<sup>6</sup> Because the material and immaterial aspects of embodiment are inseparable, a person's *sex* and *gender* cannot be disentangled or contradictory.<sup>7</sup> Human beings are gendered all the way down—materially and immaterially—and gender cannot be splintered into physicality and personhood.<sup>8</sup> Nor can gender be limited to a physical trait or a social behavior. Genderedness encompasses not only sociological but also biological and theological meaning.<sup>9</sup>

*Sex* refers to human types of male and female. A person's *sex* generally refers exclusively to the material aspects of embodiment that demonstrate the gender physically. In contemporary culture, sex most typically signifies *biological sex* and indicates the embodied traits that characterize each human type as male or female “such as

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<sup>5</sup> The material-immaterial structure of human embodiment will be addressed in a forthcoming section on theological anthropology.

<sup>6</sup> Prior to the sexual revolution, the terms *sex* and *gender* were not divided into separate concepts. In fact, *gender* was used almost exclusively in reference to grammatical study. See Benj. Ide Wheeler, “The Origin of Grammatical Gender,” *Journal of Germanic Philology* 2, no. 4 (1899): 528-45.

<sup>7</sup> By divine design, sex and gender are not intended to be contradictory. However, in human experience, there are certainly post-fall realities that render the congruence of sex and gender to be frustrated and/or hindered (e.g., intersex condition, gender dysphoria). This claim has been substantiated in the preceding research (chaps. 1-6). Furthermore, though disembodiment is a reality for humans during the intermediate state, it is not the intended or proper state.

<sup>8</sup> Scientifically and culturally, a distinction between the terms *gender* and *sex* is necessary. Based on the bibliological conviction that sex and gender are intended to be congruent, I will largely treat the terms as connected though nuanced. For more insight on the sex-versus-gender discussion, see Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018). See also James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds., *Understanding Transgender Identities: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Though gender can still be used to signify sex, in contemporary usage, gender most often denotes the immaterial and/or experiential aspects of being male or female (or gender-variant). Gender is thus typically treated as sociological and as related to—but not determinative of—gender identity.

chromosomes, genes, hormones, and physical markers.”<sup>10</sup> *Sex* has frequently also been referred to as *assigned sex*, *assigned gender*, *natal male*, and *natal female*. Almost universally, sex carries a connotation of physicality and materiality.

*Gender identity* in this discussion will be used to define a person’s “internal sense of masculinity and femininity, and the social roles associated with each.”<sup>11</sup>

Typically, *gender identity* refers to the congruence a person experiences with the gender-typical expressions or gender stereotypes of their respective context. However, the term itself is nebulous and fraught with conflict and internal inconsistency.<sup>12</sup> Like gender expression, gender identity is considered phenomenological.

*Gender expression* connotes “the set of attitudes and behaviors conveyed by people” that are greatly influenced by their respective context and cultural expectations.<sup>13</sup>

*Gender expression* could be considered as the social outworking of the biological sex.<sup>14</sup>

*Gender expression* thus considers the ethology of the ontological reality. As defined within specific social contexts, expressions can present as masculine or feminine (according to cisgender standards).<sup>15</sup> Despite many unwarranted claims, no universal standards—secular or biblical—for male and female expressions exist; gender expression

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Yarhouse and Julia Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities: Understanding the Diverse Experiences of Today’s Youth* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Yarhouse and Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities*, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Inherently, the concept of *gender identity* has significant inconsistencies. Primarily, one’s *gender identity* refers to a personal sense of one’s gender—assuming that one’s sensed gender could differ from one’s biological sex. However, this self-determination is largely based on sociologically derived meaning of masculine/feminine. The internal, psychological meaning ascribed to one’s gender is effectively determined by one’s interpretation and acceptance/rejection of the social norms for masculine/feminine expression. The issue of gender identity as an “iterative, interactive process” rather than an immutable personal reality is explored at length in Yarhouse and Sadusky, *Emerging Gender Identities*, chap. 2, “How Language and Categories Shape Gender Identities.”

<sup>13</sup> Allison, *Embodied*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> This is the description of *gender* as offered by Sandra Glahn, “Male and Female in Interpersonal Expression,” in *Sanctified Sexuality: Valuing Sex in an Oversexed World* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 77.

<sup>15</sup> The terms *cisgender* and *non-cisgender* are used in this research in order to critically engage the concept of gender identity. The use of these terms does not imply an uncritical acceptance of trans\* as an appropriate descriptor of a person’s genderedness.

is phenomenological.<sup>16</sup> In other words, attitudes or behaviors deemed feminine or womanly in one culture or time period may be interpreted as masculine or manly in another context (e.g., crying in public).<sup>17</sup> Roles and functions are axiological considerations of gender expression and are therefore relevant to, though not determinative of, gender.

*Sexuality* refers to sexual desire and attraction; it is one component of humankind's social nature.<sup>18</sup> *Sexuality* also appears as the terms *sexual orientation*, *sexual identity*, and *sensuality*. The two most commonly identified categories for sexuality include heterosexuality (opposite-sex attraction) and homosexuality (same-sex attraction), though Scripture expressly permits only a heterosexual lifestyle (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4-6; Rom 1:26-28). As part of the LGBTQ+ movement, advocates have proposed and propagated a wide variety of terms for sexuality. Though many of the terms for sexual variations and fluidity have become increasingly common, no unanimous list exists for all possible presentations of sexuality.

*Sexual activity* refers to the expression of one's sexuality that is appropriate only within the covenant of marriage. God's design of marriage includes heterosexual sexual relations for enjoyment, edification, and procreation.<sup>19</sup> By inclusion of the term

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<sup>16</sup> The ontology of genderedness is not determined by the phenomenological expression of gender. This claim has been substantiated in the preceding research (chaps. 1-6).

<sup>17</sup> For cross-cultural examples of male expression and variety of views of masculinity, see Carol Custis James, *Malestrom: Manhood Swept into the Currents of a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> This definition then differs from the one offered by Stanley J. Grenz, who defines human sexuality as "the sense of incompleteness, together with the quest for wholeness." Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, Matrix of Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 19. See also his comprehensive treatment of sexuality as the outworking of gender and the basis of all interpersonal relationships in Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

<sup>19</sup> A *theology of sex*, e.g., sexual activity, will not be covered in this research. To further clarify, a *theology of sex* would begin with Scripture to inform what sexuality is and how sexuality ought to be expressed. In contrast, a *sexual theology* begins with human experience as sexual beings in order to inform the interpretation and application of Scripture. James B. Nelson, *Body Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 21. This research affirms a *theology of sex* as the appropriate complement to the biblical study of gender.



*sexual activity*, this research can employ the term *sex* to connote material reality without the misinterpretation of referencing intercourse or sexual activity.

*Identity* will be used as an ontological descriptor of the innate nature and condition of a human being. While many other facets and nuances of the term exist, in this study, identity could be defined formally as “the relation each thing bears just to itself” and is considered persistent.<sup>20</sup> Each person is an individual with a first-person perspective irrevocably associated with his or her particular embodiment.<sup>21</sup>

In contemporary sociological literature—and secular mainstream usage—the concepts of *gender identity*, *biological sex*, and *sexuality* are considered separate and autonomous. Many additional terms could be included and defined, but the selected terms are sufficient for the following discussion.

### **Gender as Ontological**

An evaluation of gender must consider the (1) biblical, (2) theological, (3) historical social, and (4) Christian ethical perspectives of the concept of gender. In doing so, the research will emphasize gender as an ontological concept, indivisible from the concept of sex and the reality of human physicality. Much of the research from the biblical and theological perspective sections will be drawn and summarized from the research presented in the preceding chapters (i.e., chaps. 1-6).

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<sup>20</sup> This is a formal definition of *identity* as provided by Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 415. Though much more could be said about the term *identity*, particularly regarding *personal identity*, this study intends to employ the simplified concept of identity that “has a richness and ambiguity that escapes formal characterization” (416). This definition of identity is also shared by Joshua R. Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 27.

<sup>21</sup> Without engaging the various philosophies of identity within theological anthropology—including the variations of substance dualism presented by Farris—we can adapt Farris’s metaphysical approach to identity that describes, “I am identified with the first-person perspective I have that is constituted by my body, yet my perspective is nonreducible to the parts of my body. . . . Rather, it is a novel higher-order property that makes me *me*.” Farris *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 39 (emphasis original).

## 1. Biblical Perspective

Scripture considers gender, as the embodied condition of being male and female, an ontological reality indivisible from the physical reality of biological sex. Genderedness (the material and immaterial aspects of gendered embodiment) is thus ontological, but gender identity and gender expression are phenomenological. No clear distinction of sex and gender as separate concepts exists in Scripture, though the distinction of the male and female sexes is explicit, and various ramifications for societal treatment based on sex are outlined in the Old and New Testaments. The phenomenological expressions of gender ought to be harmonious with the reality of ontological gendered embodiment. Furthermore, Scripture does offer a potential category for atypical genderedness: the eunuch. However, the basis of this category includes its connection with sex. Gender proves to be a simultaneously distinct yet inseparable concept from sex.

**Biblical survey of gender.** From a brief biblical survey, a biblical perspective of gender can be demonstrated.<sup>22</sup> Regarding human constitution, human beings have a material and immaterial constitution that is inseparable. Of principal importance for genderedness, Scripture offers two types of humankind: male-gendered embodied people and female-gendered embodied people. These two types are present at the creation of humankind and are essential to the divine design of humankind. The material and immaterial aspects of embodiment are indivisible; thus, gender cannot be bifurcated into external and internal components. Both male- and female-gendered embodied people are gendered all the way down. As far as distinctions between the two types, the Bible asserts the ontological equality of men and women, but Scripture does not affirm the sameness of men and women. Rather, Scripture clearly articulates both uniformity and distinction in God's treatment of men and women. Understanding these uniformities and distinctions

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<sup>22</sup> This brief biblical survey has been adapted from the preceding research (chaps. 1-6).

between male and female serves to demonstrate the ontological nature of gender, as genderedness spans the created, temporal, and restored states of human existence. See the following table for a summary of biblical claims regarding an ontology of gender.

Table A1. Gender uniformities and distinctions in scriptural survey

Created State	
<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Purpose	Gen 1:26-27
Kind	Gen 1:26-27
Constitution	Gen 1:31
Blessing and Mandate	Gen 1:28
Need for Relationship	Gen 2:18
<i>Distinction in . . .</i>	
Type	Gen 1:27
Formation	Gen 2:7, 21-22
Temporal State	
<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Guilt	Gen 3:6-13
Judgment	Gen 3:14-19
Requirements as OT Community	Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26
Requirements as NT Community	Eph 4:1-16; 1 Pet 1:15-16
Union with Christ	Gal 3:28
Mission	Matt 28:16-20
<i>Distinction in . . .</i>	
Personal Presentation	Deut 22:5

Societal Treatment	Exod 22:16-17; Lev 12:1-8; 15:19-33; Num 5:11-31; Deut 22:13-21, 22-29
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*Table A1 continued*

Restored State	
<i>Uniformity in . . .</i>	<i>Scriptural Reference</i>
Eternal Reality of Gendered Embodiment	Luke 24:39

First, all of humanity was created embodied and gendered. Both embodiment and gender prove intrinsic and immutable to human existence. Second, Scripture defines significant, pervasive shared characteristics between male and female: purpose, constitution, kind, blessing and mandate, need for relationship, guilt, judgment, requirements, union with Christ, mission, and eternal gendered state. Third, in addition to the listed uniformities in gender, Scripture offers several indications of distinction between male- and female-gendered embodiment in the created and temporal states: formation, type, personal presentation, and societal treatment. Gender distinctions in the restored states appear less apparent and therefore cannot be claimed as conclusive. In summary, men and women are not the same biblically. As substantiated in this brief biblical survey, there is ontological meaning for gender that is inherently congruent with sex by divine design. Encompassing the material and immaterial aspects of human existence, the term *gendered embodiment*, therefore, appropriately describes the ontological reality of being male and female.

**Biblical distinction of sex and gender.** The distinction of the male and female sexes is explicit, but biblical references to gender, gender expression, and gender identity must be more carefully examined. Various OT laws pertain directly to female-gendered embodiment, detailing how a woman ought to be treated by Israelite society in a variety

of circumstances (e.g., menstruation, childbirth, sexual infidelity, sexual assault).<sup>23</sup> While the laws are directed at Israelite conduct, the commands indicate something of God's perspective of the ontological meaning of women. Gender is treated as ontological and congruent with sex. Likewise, some prescriptive parameters are provided in the NT for social roles of women within the covenant relationship of marriage and the community of the church.<sup>24</sup> As evident across Scripture, God does not appear to consider male and female as identical, nor does Scripture overtly distinguish between biological sex and gender identity. Instead, assuming a congruence between sex and gender, Scripture establishes some (though admittedly very few) gender-specific regulations for appropriate gender expression and societal treatment. These social regulations, though very limited in the NT, could affect only a person's gender expression and potentially the construct of a person's gender identity—the regulations have no influence on gender and sex. Critically, gender is treated as ontological and enduring, though some of the attitudes and behaviors regarding gender (toward women in particular) are temporal and context-driven.

The only occurrences when gender, and therefore gender identity, might be engaged as an isolated concept could be the biblical discussion of eunuchs. Scripture does include several explicit references to eunuchs. For example, in Isaiah 56:4-5, God promises to establish monuments for eunuchs that will be better for them than sons and daughters. In this case, the prophet's use of eunuch emphasizes perpetuity and legacy generated by faith rather than procreation and lineage. It would be an interpretive stretch to determine non-cisgender identities or biblical standards for gender expression from

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<sup>23</sup> See Exod 22:16-17; Lev 12:1-8; 15:19-33; Num 5:11-31; Deut 22:13-21, 22-29. See engagement with these passages in the preceding research (chaps. 1-6). See also Katie J. McCoy, "Old Testament Laws Concerning Particular Female Personhood and Their Implications for the Dignity of Women" (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

<sup>24</sup> See Gen 2; Mark 10:6-9; 1 Cor 7; Eph 5; Col 3; 1 Pet 3; 1 Tim 3; Titus 1. These passages are discussed in the preceding research (chaps. 1-6).

this passage. Additionally, Matthew 19 includes Jesus's reference to three kinds of eunuchs: eunuchs by birth, eunuchs made by human hands, and eunuchs for God's kingdom (v. 12). This verse may be the most expressive biblical citation on the reality of gender variation, though clear emphasis remains on the sex or material aspect of gendered embodiment.<sup>25</sup> The first two categories of eunuchs offered by Jesus are identified by physical markers: atypical sex at birth (which would have been determined by unusual genitalia in ancient times) and castration. The third category, though largely disputed among interpretations regarding the physical and social ramifications, definitively refers to the individual's posture of faith. In fact, the primary emphasis of all three categories is an individual's commitment to and participation in God's kingdom. Though male eunuchs could not publicly participate in Jewish worship, they could be equal participants in God's kingdom—and in the NT church. This is the truth revealed in Isaiah 56 and illustrated in Acts 8 with the salvation and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch.

In the case that sex is involuntarily (or voluntarily) distorted or indistinguishable, the gender variation of *eunuch* has been offered in Scripture as an explanatory category with the social ramifications of abstaining from marriage and of an inability to procreate. No other social standards or gender expressions are offered in Scripture for potentially gender-variant persons. Moreover, Megan DeFranza notes that barren women are often mentioned in Scripture, though agendered or gender-ambiguous people are not. "Hermaphrodites or androgynes are not mentioned in the Scriptures but appear in Jewish commentaries and early Christian literature."<sup>26</sup> It does seem that the ancient Christians were aware of and had explanations for categories other than male and female, though to assign categorical identities and endorsed expressions beyond *eunuch* from Scripture would be an interpretive stretch.

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<sup>25</sup> In the case of eunuchs by birth, the condition of intersex must be considered.

<sup>26</sup> Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 68.

It is also worth noting that any biblical references to eunuchs are made separately from discussions on transgender issues such as personal presentation. For instance, the Deuteronomy 22:5 reference to cross-dressing highlights the idolatry of the individual's heart rather than any ambiguity in biological sex. Regarding gender, ontological reality must be expressed even to the point of personal presentation. Not only is the action of cross-dressing offensive to God, but he also declares the offending people themselves to be an abomination. This OT law is not exclusively concerned with the superficial expression of fashion. Rather, the law addresses the idolatrous motivation and posture of the offender.<sup>27</sup> The abomination of the entire person, rather than the behavior, endorses ontological implications for personal presentation according to gender. Thus, the concepts of gender expression and gender identity—the social aspects of genderedness—are scripturally intertwined with an ontological perspective of gender.

Though the case could be made for a biblically recognized category of gender beyond male and female, only one such potential variation exists: *eunuch*. Biblical discussion of eunuchs emphasizes the validity and perpetuity of their faith rather than outlining any social acceptability for fluidity in self-identification, roles, or self-presentation. In fact, the primary issue for both discussions—eunuch and transgender presentation—is the faith of the individual. Gender and therefore gender identity are not considered concepts separate from binary biological sex.

**Summary.** The biblical perspective of gender reveals an ontological reality indivisible from the physical reality of sex. No clear distinction of sex and gender as separate concepts exists in Scripture, though the distinction of the male and female sexes is explicit. Although Scripture does offer a potential category for atypical genderedness

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<sup>27</sup> The abomination of the person indicates their participation in “orgiastic rites involving transvestitism, or in some form of pagan worship, or both.” Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary: Old Testament Series 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 240-41. See also Jonathan R. Ziskind, “The Treatment of Women in Deuteronomy: Moral Absolutism and Practicality – Part 2,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (1999): 236.



(the eunuch), the basis of this category includes its connection with sex. Gender is a distinct yet inseparable concept from sex.

## 2. Theological Perspective

In addition to the preceding biblical examination, some theological considerations must also be addressed in regard to distinction between gender and sex: theological anthropology, gender binarity, and biblical roles.

**Theological anthropology.** First, this research builds upon the theological anthropology assumption of an inseparability between material and immaterial aspects of human embodiment.<sup>28</sup> There can be no separation of materiality and immateriality; no one can reject embodiment and continue to live. Furthermore, disembodiment is an unnatural and expressly temporary state of human existence. Because of the holistic nature of embodiment, the materiality and immateriality of a person cannot be severed. Consider the futility of treating the brain, the mind, and thoughts as disjointed, autonomous entities. Clearly the terms refer to distinct things, but not one of them can be defined or engaged independently of the others. So it is with the material and immaterial aspect of gendered embodiment. As gendered embodied beings, humankind is gendered “all the way down.”<sup>29</sup> As material and immaterial are normative, inseparable realities of human existence, gender is likewise indivisible.<sup>30</sup> Gender pervades every aspect of

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<sup>28</sup> See Allison, *Embodied*. See also the preceding research (chaps. 1-6).

<sup>29</sup> Gender correlates with human embodiment and cannot be separated from the human state of being embodied. See Allison, *Embodied*, 26.

<sup>30</sup> By contrast, some scholars, such as Joshua Farris, build a substance dualism ontology that associates *biological sex* with physicality (body) and define *gender* or *sexual identity* as an essential quality of the soul. See Farris, *Introduction to Theological Anthropology*, 206. While Farris staunchly connects *gender*, *biological sex*, and *sexuality*, the dualistic approach to gendered embodiment opens the door for mismatched bodies and souls (e.g., male body with female soul; see pp. 226-28).

human existence.<sup>31</sup> Gender is ontological and spans the created, temporal, and restored states of human existence.

Furthermore, the foundational element of theological anthropology is the *imago Dei*. Scripture's first reference to humanity features the divine deliberation and decision to create humankind in the image of God (Gen 1:26). Immediately following the declaration of humanity's creation in God's image comes the remarkable clarification "male and female he created them" (1:27b). As God designed the whole person, material and immaterial, in the image of God, the clarification of male and female bears significant implications for an appropriate theological understanding of gendered embodiment. First, both male and female bear God's image—materially and immaterially.<sup>32</sup> Second, Scripture offers no explanation to differentiate the characteristics of God that solely manifest in specific genders. In other words, the Bible does not indicate that female-gendered embodied persons exclusively image God in a particular way (e.g., nurturing, compassion, or creating new life through birth). Finally, the ontological definition of *imago Dei* must be deliberately distinguished from a functional interpretation of *imago Dei*.<sup>33</sup> Only an ontological approach appropriately recognizes the whole person as an image-bearer representing God as his vice-regents on earth.<sup>34</sup> Because this perspective considers the whole person, the view includes both the vertical and horizontal aspects of humanity's image-bearing. Further, Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum warn, "It is important to note that this definition of the divine image is not a

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<sup>31</sup> Gender is not solely sociological but also biological and theological. See the discussion on *gender* in the preceding sect. "Defining Terms."

<sup>32</sup> James R. Estep Jr., "Christian Anthropology: Humanity as the *Imago Dei*," in *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology & Human Development*, ed. James R. Estep and Jonathan H. Kim (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 30-31.

<sup>33</sup> Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 200.

<sup>34</sup> Gentry and Wellum contend that the historical views fail to satisfy "the grammatical and historical interpretation of the text." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 186.

functional but an *ontological* one.”<sup>35</sup> The authors refer to the definition of *imago Dei* that incorporates both the vertical (sonship) and horizontal (servant kingship) aspects of humanity’s image-bearing nature.<sup>36</sup> As the creation of humankind as the *imago Dei* is essential for human ontology and humanity’s image-bearing necessarily entails genderedness materially and immaterially, gender must be considered as an ontological aspect of human reality.

**Gender binarity.** Second, the binarity of gendered embodiment is intrinsic to human existence. Male and female binarity is explicitly expressed at creation and affirmed in the incarnation and resurrection of Christ.<sup>37</sup> God created humanity as one kind with two types: male and female.<sup>38</sup> Though they have the same constitution, the basic quality of gender is distinct.<sup>39</sup> The two distinct types of the same kind is consistent with the Genesis pattern of the creation account, establishing the binarity of male and female within humanity. Genesis 1-2 clearly illustrates a pattern of binarity in God’s act of creation:

nothing and something  
Creator and creature  
heaven and earth

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<sup>35</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200 (emphasis original).

<sup>36</sup> Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 194-95. *Imago Dei* is best defined as a “divine-human relationship with two dimensions” being “a covenant relationship between God and man [sonship], and . . . a covenant relationship between man and the earth [servant kingship]” (200).

<sup>37</sup> The following treatment of binarity in gender as reflective of the binary pattern in creation has been adapted from the preceding research (chaps. 1-6).

<sup>38</sup> The intent of the term *type* is to communicate that male and female are distinct varieties of the same category (humanity). Though they are both human, they are distinct in some fundamental way. Just as day and night are separate varieties within the same category (i.e., day as a 24-hour period of time), male and female are also distinguishable as separate types of humankind.

<sup>39</sup> Victor Hamilton helpfully illustrates the distinction in type while maintaining the uniformity in kind: “The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole.” Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 175. Though I reject the concept that each gender is one half of a whole, the two genders do in fact constitute humankind collectively. The distinct genders also hold a balance in humankind. Furthermore, though the basic quality of gender is distinct between the two types, the shared kind indicates uniformity in constitution. Thus, the two genders are not essentially different in constitution, essence, or properties.

formless and void  
 light and darkness  
 day and night  
 evening and morning  
 waters above and waters below  
 two types of commands: “Let there be” and “Let the earth bring forth”  
 dry land and waters  
 two great lights (sun and moon)  
 creatures of the sea and birds of the air  
 work and rest  
 two trees (of life, of knowledge)  
 good and evil<sup>40</sup>

Within the context of this binary pattern, God’s decision to create two distinct types within humanity—male and female—is not only consistent; it is also expected. The reality of humanity’s binarity in gender is clearly articulated in Genesis.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, Christ’s incarnation affirms gender binarity. When God became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), God the Son was embodied and gendered as a single, uncontested gender type.<sup>42</sup> The perfect human being was not genderless (asexual, agendered), nor was Jesus both male and female simultaneously, nor was he gender ambiguous or gender fluid.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> These instances of binarity in the creation account are quoted directly from Gregg R. Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 164.

<sup>41</sup> There are not many resources published on the binary pattern of creation. However, see Danielle Hitchen’s children’s book *Let There Be Light: An Opposites Primer*, Baby Believer (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2018). Furthermore, Megan DeFranza’s *Sex Difference in Christian Theology* (2015) represents an academic treatment of gender binarity, though DeFranza ultimately interprets male and female to be the binary ends upon a spectrum of gender identities. DeFranza’s reinterpretation of the binary pattern of creation, however, is not supported by the biblical text. For instance, she asserts that the creation of light and dark as well as day and night allows for gradients of light to exist between the two absolutes (i.e., dawn and dusk). As Allison explicates, the emphasis in the binary pattern is God’s separation of the two binary instances (e.g., separated the waters above and the waters below in Gen 1:6-7). Allison, “Four Theses Concerning Human Embodiment,” 177.

<sup>42</sup> See Marc Cortez, *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology: A Constructive Account of Humanity in the Light of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 210. In particular, Cortez’s chap. 6 (“The Male Messiah”) provides insightful considerations for Christ’s gendered embodiment. For the purposes of this study, the fact that Christ was gendered is significant. Male embodiment is not elevated over female embodiment in light of Christ’s incarnation. Rather, both genders are affirmed as the proper state of human embodied existence. For the parameter of gendered embodiment, the fact that Christ was gendered as a male is historically and contextually crucial. Theologically, Christ’s maleness has significant implications for gender, as expertly articulated by Cortez in *ReSourcing Theological Anthropology*. In particular, Christ’s incarnation affirms gendered embodiment as the proper state of human existence but denies the basic tenets of gender essentialism (203-11).

<sup>43</sup> Some theologians suggest that both male and female must be present to fully image God. While God does intend for humanity to reflect his image in community, it is significant that Jesus Christ embodied a single gender, yet he was the exact representation of God (Heb 1:1-4; John 14:6-10). The binarity of genderedness is affirmed by the equal image-bearing nature of each gender individually.

Jesus Christ was incarnate as a male-gendered embodied being. Furthermore, Christ's resurrected body was male-gendered; he was recognizable, bearing significant resemblance to his pre-resurrected body. The physical correspondence is evident by the recognition and belief of his followers at Jesus's reappearances.<sup>44</sup> Just as Christ's incarnate form was a male-gendered body, so too his resurrected body would assuredly be gendered. Binary gendered embodiment was deliberate at the creation of humankind and was affirmed by the incarnation and resurrection of Christ. All humans are embodied as either male or female (Gen 1:27) and will be for eternity.<sup>45</sup>

**Biblical roles.** Third, there is a clear distinction in Scripture between gender roles (an axiological reality) and gendered embodiment (an ontological reality).<sup>46</sup> Though biblical roles certainly do exist—and some roles are associated with particular genders (i.e., husband, wife, pastor/elder/bishop)—these roles are never definitive of the value or inherent identity of the individual holding the role.<sup>47</sup> Rather, the roles are descriptive—not only of the person accomplishing the literal role but also, ultimately, of the Person

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<sup>44</sup> Matt 28:9, 16-17; Luke 24:13-35; John 20:19-28; 21:1-2; Acts 1:3; 9:3-5; 1 Cor 15:6-7. Jesus Christ's various reappearances after his resurrection are marked by a recognition of him as Jesus, substantiating the resemblance of his resurrected body to his pre-resurrected body. In fact, in the cases where Christ was not recognized, Scripture indicates that divine intervention prevented people from recognizing Christ for a particular time: "but their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him" until "their eyes were opened and they recognized Him" (Luke 24:16, 31).

<sup>45</sup> The issue of intersex, which may make the diagnosed person's experience of the binary type ambiguous, will be addressed in a forthcoming section.

<sup>46</sup> The following treatment of biblical roles has been adapted from the preceding research (chaps. 1-6).

<sup>47</sup> See Michael S. Wilder and Timothy P. Jones, who describe the *munus triplex* as most helpfully understood "when the three offices are seen first and foremost as functions that have been fulfilled in Christ and conveyed to the whole people of God through union with Christ." Michael S. Wilder and Timothy P. Jones, *The God Who Goes before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2018), 52. In the same paragraph, the authors go on to disassociate the individual from the role, declaring that "understanding these roles in light of their fulfillment in Christ reminds us that the positions to which leaders are called never situate us as sovereigns above the communities we serve but as stewards among a people God has purchased." In other words, the role does not bring value and importance to the person. Rather, the value of the role is found in the person of Christ. Likewise, in Christ alone will the person find the ability and authority to serve in the role.

who perfectly fulfills the role.<sup>48</sup> If personal identity is informed by—but never defined by—one’s roles, then the ontological reality of male- and female-gendered embodiment is not dependent on fulfilling a gender-specific role.<sup>49</sup> In other words, a single male is no less male because he is not a husband. Similarly, a female is not less valuable or essential because she does not serve as pastor/elder in her local church. The limitation of gender to roles—particularly female roles of wife, mother, and congregant—diminishes the theological significance of both genderedness and human roles. Thus, the treatment of gender as strictly the immaterial outworking of biological sex through patterns and/or prescriptions of behavior is insufficient. Ontological identity is not dependent on axiological considerations.

On the other hand, the ethical assumptions of performing biblical roles are in fact tethered to the ontological reality of gendered embodiment—both generally and specifically. In order to meet the criteria for pastor/elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, one must meet the moral standards for behavior (which require embodiment generally) and—according to the conviction of many believers—be a man (which requires male-gendered embodiment specifically).<sup>50</sup> Similarly, to fulfill the role of wife, one must be a female-gendered embodied person who is monogamously married to a male-gendered embodied

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<sup>48</sup> Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the roles of judge and king (Luke 1:32-34; Acts 10:36-43; 17:30-31) as well as priest and prophet (Heb 2:14-18; 5:1-10; 7; 8). Through union with Christ, all believers are now able to participate—analogically—in these functions (Rom 5:17; 6:3-11; Col 3:1-4).

<sup>49</sup> Just as the roles of prophet, priest, and king are fulfilled in Christ, marriage roles and church leadership roles also find ultimate fulfillment in Christ. When Christ’s bride, the church, is united with the Bridegroom in the eschaton, human marriage and associated roles will cease to exist (Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; Rev 21:2-10). Likewise, the roles of elder/pastor/bishop are also temporary roles intended to point to Christ, as the good shepherd who cares for and protects the flock (John 10:11-14).

<sup>50</sup> The terms *elder*, *pastor*, *overseer*, and *bishop* are considered as synonymous in title, criteria, and responsibilities. This is also the interpretation of Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, rev. and exp. ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995). For an example of limitations of church office due to gender, see Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 59-63. See also Dorothy Kelley Patterson, “What Should a Woman Do in the Church?,” in *Women in the Church: An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 149-74.

person.<sup>51</sup> The unavailability (e.g., singleness), rejection (e.g., cohabitation), or perversion (e.g., same-sex marriage) of a particular role does not alter the ontological reality of gendered embodiment. Thus, a person need not reject the ontological reality of his or her genderedness simply because he or she cannot or chooses not to fulfill a particular role.

**Summary.** The term *gendered embodiment* appropriately considers the materiality and immateriality of human nature and recognizes that *sex* and *gender* are congruent by divine design. The presented theological considerations demonstrate that all human beings are made in the image of God and that image-bearing includes the aspect of being male and female. Additionally, roles and functions—particularly those associated with gender—are axiological and temporal rather than ontological.

### 3. Historical and Sociological Perspective

Primarily, the emergence of gender as an internal experiential reality that divorces gender from an external physical reality of sex can be traced to the shaping of cultural by postmodernism.<sup>52</sup> Nancy Pearcey identifies a body/person split in Western philosophy. While modernists prioritize facts, physicality, and the body as sole reality, postmodernists prioritize the person, values, and relativist experience as ultimate reality.<sup>53</sup> The resulting culture of dualism fragments the “view of the human being, in which the body is treated as separate from the authentic self.”<sup>54</sup>

The treatment of *gender* as an academic term distinct from *sex* began in mid-twentieth century with the rise of the feminist movement.<sup>55</sup> Previously, gender was used

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<sup>51</sup> Definitions of marriage will be explored in a forthcoming section.

<sup>52</sup> See Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, “Introduction.”

<sup>53</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 9-15.

<sup>54</sup> Pearcey, *Love Thy Body*, 14.

<sup>55</sup> By the 1970s and 1980s, *gender* was assumed to be a separate concept from *biological sex* in scholarship. Elizabeth Clark, “Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History,” *Church History* 70, no. 3 (2001): 414.

almost exclusively in reference to grammatical study.<sup>56</sup> Prior to second- and third-wave feminism, scholarship occasionally used gender as a descriptor of behavior and manner associated with the two sexes, but feminist scholars first formalized the term “as a way of referring to the social organization of the relationship between the sexes.”<sup>57</sup> Joan Scott’s solution for a definition of gender reads thus: “The core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.”<sup>58</sup> Gender became a discipline of study within history with various focuses, including women’s history and gender history from the lenses of general history and Christian history. Typically, women’s history centers on the social, political, and economic forces at play in any given historical context and seeks to identify the treatment, role, and engagement of women in those sectors.<sup>59</sup> By contrast, gender studies tend to focus on the production of knowledge and include both men and women key players.<sup>60</sup> As a result of extensive feminist work, contemporary scholarship treats gender sociologically rather than ontologically.<sup>61</sup>

The treatment of female as inferior or as derogatory has a long history within and beyond Christianity. For example, the historical, and resulting social, posture of Eve as the ultimate seducer and the picture of gullibility simultaneously vilifies and victimizes women in ways that Scripture entirely rejects. Glenn Kreider claims, “Any argument that

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<sup>56</sup> See Wheeler, “The Origin of Grammatical Gender,” 528-45.

<sup>57</sup> Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053.

<sup>58</sup> Scott, “Gender,” 1067.

<sup>59</sup> Clark, “Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History,” 419.

<sup>60</sup> Clark, “Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History,” 414, 419.

<sup>61</sup> In fact, Clark claims that by 2001, “within religious studies on women and gender, almost all scholars profess to accept the notion of gender as socially constructed.” Clark, “Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History,” 419. Notably, the feminist emphasis on separating sex and gender was not intended to diminish the value associated with being female. In fact, the postmodernist view of gender identity as the true inner self and as superior to biological sex has been largely criticized by many feminists.



Eve, and her daughters, are seducers of men lacks biblical support. There is no intimation in the fall narrative in Genesis or Paul's language in the NT that Eve is somehow responsible for deceiving or seducing Adam."<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, it is not logical that Eve—and her daughters—are more easily seduced than men; as Kreider elucidates, Eve cannot be both innately and maliciously seductive but simultaneously naïve and vulnerable.

Regarding use of feminine imagery as derogatory, Ross Kramer illuminates the use of images and symbols in language that portray “the Other” as female as a derogatory and other-associating signal. He discusses “the characterization of the Other as woman, and the role that gender plays in the construction of the Other in religious propaganda of the Greco-Roman world.”<sup>63</sup> For instance, John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, accused Judaizing Christian males of being a “gathering choruses of effeminates and a great rubbish heap of harlots” for participating in a festival at a Jewish synagogue.<sup>64</sup> In addition to being a confrontation against Judaism, Chrysostom's declaration also insults the targeted men by assigning derogatory feminine identities.

Furthermore, long before the splintering of the terms sex and gender, historical Christianity placed great importance on the concepts of sexuality and gender expression. Throughout the patristic period of Christianity, sexual continence and repression were highly valued in pursuit of holiness. Thus, sex, gender, and the related sexual ramifications were largely perceived negatively in historical Christianity.

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<sup>62</sup> Glenn Kreider, “Eve: The Mother of All Seducers?,” in *Vindicating the Vixens: Revisiting Sexualized, Vilified, and Marginalized Women of the Bible*, ed. Sandra Glahn (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2017), 145.

<sup>63</sup> Ross Kramer, “The Other as Woman: An Aspect of Polemic among Pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman World,” in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, ed. Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn (New York: NYU Press, 1994), 123.

<sup>64</sup> John Chrysostom, *Saint John Chrysostom: Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, Fathers of the Church 68 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1979), 1.2.7.

**Intersex.** The issue of intersex has taken on increasing significance in the discussion of gender in both secular and Christian discussions. By no willful decision of the individual, a notable percentage of the human population is born with the intersex condition, by which one or many markers for gender are irregular (i.e., sex chromosomes, reproductive organs, and/or anatomical sex).<sup>65</sup> However, the relevance of intersex to gender variation is limited for a number of reasons. First, intersex is an exception to the biblical perspective on human gender as designed by God—male and female. An individual may receive the intersex classification because of “atypical features in a person’s sex chromosomes, reproductive organs, or anatomical sex (or two of the three, or all three).”<sup>66</sup> No matter the precise reason(s) for the diagnosis, the medical field considers intersex an atypical condition or a disorder.<sup>67</sup> Second, the intersex condition is not synonymous with or causally related to gender variations encompassed in trans\* identities. For instance, a person can suffer from gender dysphoria without being intersex. Likewise, many intersex individuals can, sometimes with medical aid, flourish in a cisgender society. And because of the broad criteria for intersex, many individuals do not even know they are intersex. Of the population classified as intersex, only extremely rare cases render biological sex ambiguous; in fact, “it’s been estimated that as many as 99

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<sup>65</sup> Though difficult to determine, approximately 1-2 babies out of every 2,000 births are medically classified as suffering from the intersex condition. This translates to roughly .05-.1 percent of the known population. For more information on the condition of, sociological turmoil surrounding, and activism for intersex, see David A. Rubin, *Intersex Matters: Biomedical Embodiment, Gender Regulation, and Transnational Activism*, SUNY Series in Queer Politics and Cultures (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017). Notably, this estimate is not universally accepted, and many doctors and scholars consider the number of people with intersex variations to be between 1-4 percent of the population. Due to the variety of atypical sex characteristics possible, the timing in life when those characteristics may become apparent, and a lack of standard medical criteria to classify a case as an intersex variation, the population estimates are variable and likely conservative. See Tiffany Jones, “Intersex Studies: A Systematic Review of International Health Literature,” *SAGE Open* 8, no. 2 (April 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017745577>. See also Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2021), 117.

<sup>66</sup> Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 117.

<sup>67</sup> Intersex is also called “differences of sex development” (DSD) or “disorders of sex development” by Intersex Society of North America, “What Is Intersex?,” accessed January 15, 2022, [www.isna.org/faq/what\\_is\\_intersex](http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex).

percent of people who have an intersex condition are unambiguously male or female.”<sup>68</sup> Intersex people equally bear God’s image with non-intersex people. However, the ambiguity of their gender markers does not validate gender variance as natural or gender as separate and superior to biological makeup.

**Summary.** The separation of the terms *sex* and *gender* into social categories began with the feminist movement in the twentieth century. Prior to the sexual revolution, the terms *sex* and *gender* were not divided into separate concepts. Though modern academia and Western society still treat the terms as distinct, there has been no consensus or consistency established for their individual meanings.

#### 4. Christian Ethical Perspective

Finally, a brief survey of Christian ethics of human sexuality will reveal the intended congruence between gender and sex. In addition to the issues of gender demonstrated in the preceding “Biblical Perspective” section, Scripture has quite a bit to say regarding human sexuality and sexual activity.<sup>69</sup> Humans are embodied as either male or female, and this complementary gendered embodiment is essential for pursuing the cultural mandate for procreation and vocation (Gen 1:26-28). Each gender type pursues the common human properties with uniquely male- or female-gendered expression. Because the cultural mandate and the biblically defined qualities of flourishing (e.g., fruit of the Spirit, beatitudes, and spiritual giftings) are common to all humankind, there are no gender-specific expressions—though each context will certainly have male-typical and female-typical expressions of the common human properties.<sup>70</sup> In contrast to gender,

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<sup>68</sup> Sprinkle, *Embodied*, 120.

<sup>69</sup> Recall the aforementioned definitions of *sexuality* as one manifestation of sociality and *sexual activity* as that physical expression of sexuality that is appropriate only within exclusive heterosexual marriage.

<sup>70</sup> These claims have been substantiated in the preceding research (chaps. 1-6). However, a similar concept of gender-typical expressions as pervasive but context-specific can be found in J. Budziszewski’s *On The Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2012), 46-51.

sexuality is a specifically social aspect of being embodied people—the desiring, expressing, and receiving of relationship.<sup>71</sup> Given this ontological reality of social gendered embodiment, Scripture provides and implies several guidelines for human flourishing in a post-fall context. Additionally, Christian ethics has ample research elaborating the values and behavior of moral living as sexual beings. Regarding the ethics of human sexuality for this research, two prominent areas must be considered: marriage and sexual activity.

**Marriage.** Scripture, church history, and conservative contemporary Christianity maintains that marriage is the covenantal relationship between one man and one woman.<sup>72</sup> Christ offers the most transparent scriptural definition of marriage—“so they are no longer two but one flesh” (Matt 19:4-6)—and references the Genesis 2 creation account of the first man and woman as its foundation (2:24). Extensive Christian theological literature defends the view of marriage as between one man and one woman, for a variety of theological and philosophical reasons.<sup>73</sup> In their *What Is Marriage?*, Ryan T. Anderson, Sherif Girgis, and Robert P. George formally define marriage as “a comprehensive union: a union of will (by consent) and body (by sexual union); inherently ordered to procreation and thus the broad sharing of family life; and calling for permanent and exclusive commitments, whatever the spouses’ preferences.”<sup>74</sup> Only a

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<sup>71</sup> See Allison, *Embodied*, 44. Note that by describing sexuality as *social*, the research specifically refers to Allison’s term of *sociality* rather than generically to the social scientific field.

<sup>72</sup> It is also worth noting that historical secular sociology also championed traditional marriage for its service to stable society. “Marriages have always been the main and most effective means of rearing healthy, happy, and well-integrated children.” Ryan T. Anderson, Sherif Girgis, and Robert P. George, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012), 7.

<sup>73</sup> Pope John Paul II cites that “the language of the body” requires a rereading in the truth. For the late pope, this truth was the essential gifting of oneself within a spousal bond, a meaning he closely linked with the redemption of the body. Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 111, 123-24. See also Alexander Pruss, *One Body: An Essay in Christian Sexual Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

<sup>74</sup> Anderson, Girgis, and George, *What Is Marriage?*, 6.

marriage between a man and a woman is “inherently ordered to procreation.” While procreation is not essential to marriage, it is universally normative to marriage.<sup>75</sup> The one-flesh union entails not only physical intimacy but a holistic giving of self. In fact, sexual activity is itself a symbol of the nature of marriage: “one-flesh unity is the body’s language for one-life unity.”<sup>76</sup> Marriage is also traditionally considered exclusive and life-long. Because of the uniting nature of marriage itself and its typical realization of procreation, marriages are intended to be “a permanent and exclusive commitment.”<sup>77</sup>

Finally, marriage holds a deeply illustrative purpose as demarcating the exclusive covenantal relationship between Christ and the church. As image-bearers, “we express the central aspect of the divine nature—being the community of love—in various ways . . . . [T]he primal reflection of the divine essence is the community of male and female which we call marriage.”<sup>78</sup> Not only are all people invited to reflect this divine giving and receiving as the *imago Dei* generally, but also believers are privileged to join with Christ as his bride specifically (Eph 5:25-32). The model for human marriage is Christ’s sacrificial love for his people, a union that will be consummated when the church is physically united with Christ in a glorified state upon Christ’s return (Rev 19:7-9).

**Sexual activity.** Having defined marriage, sexual activity can now be thoughtfully considered. Sexual activity is one expression of sexuality, which is rightly expressed only within marriage between a man and a woman. Both the act and the

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<sup>75</sup> On a similar note, marriage is not essential to gendered embodiment, though it is normative. In other words, a man need not be a husband in order to be fully a man. For this reason, among others, defining gendered embodiment by roles (e.g., husband or father) is an inadequate approach.

<sup>76</sup> Budziszewski, *The Meaning of Sex*, 28.

<sup>77</sup> Anderson, Girgis, and George, *What Is Marriage?*, 87.

<sup>78</sup> Grenz, *Sexual Ethics*, 84. Here, Grenz appeals to the *imago Dei* of humankind as fundamental to marriage. This relational perspective the *imago Dei* is shared by many other theologians. Another such example is Pope John Paul II: “The image of God is found in man and woman above all in the communion of love between them, which reflects the communion of love between the persons of the Trinity.” Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, xxv.

context of sexual activity have moral implications.<sup>79</sup> Sexual activity is inherently moral or immoral.<sup>80</sup> Sexual activity clearly carries its own ethical values because any kind of sexual intercourse outside of the marital sexual union of a man and a woman is itself considered immoral.<sup>81</sup> In the words of J. Budziszewski, “If it [sex] doesn’t ‘have to’ mean anything, that means it doesn’t ever mean anything really.”<sup>82</sup> Sexual intercourse contains ethical meaning inherently—not exclusively when partners determine that it does.

Additionally, sexual activity performed outside of the context of biblical marriage is also considered immoral.<sup>83</sup> Even in sociological terms, extramarital sexual activity is denounced as morally wrong and socially unhealthy—for the individuals, the

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<sup>79</sup> Although a long-standing concept in Judeo-Christian tradition, the inherent morality of sexual activity was not recognized by the ancient Greek or Roman societies. Kyle Harper argues that “by reducing the sex act down to the most basic constituents of male and female, Paul was able to redescribe the sexual culture surrounding him in transformative terms.” Kyle Harper, *From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 95. For an extensive treatment on the morality of sexual activity as an inherently ethical issue in contemporary society, see Robert Reilly, *Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior Is Changing Everything* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014).

<sup>80</sup> To this end, Reilly argues that based on the teleological nature of humanity, sexual activity has an inbuilt purpose toward generation and unity: “One [fundamental view of reality] is that things have a Nature that is teleologically ordered to ends that inhere in their essence and make them what they are. In other words, things have inbuilt purposes.” Reilly, *Making Gay Okay*, xi-xii. Carl Trueman furthers this argument by explaining, “To the modern post-Freud, post-Nietzsche mind, those who argue that sex acts have intrinsic moral content are merely expressing irrational aesthetic preferences rooted in cultural conditioning of simple prejudice. Sex becomes morally significant only as it is an expression of the self or of personal identity.” Trueman, *Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, 349.

<sup>81</sup> Specifically regarding the morality of the act of sexual intercourse, the various forms of acceptable sexual intercourse between a married man and woman (e.g., oral, anal, and coital) are regularly debated among Christians. However, coitus is universally accepted as morally upright within marriage. Sexual activity that occurs between two men or between two women is inherently immoral (Lev 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:9-10). Additionally, sexual activity that is performed among three or more individuals is also inherently immoral, because such activity would require same-sex penetration.

<sup>82</sup> Budziszewski, *The Meaning of Sex*, 3. In this quote, Budziszewski is differentiating between an inherent ethical meaning of sexual activity and the contemporary *laissez-faire* attitude toward sexual intercourse that requires only that sexual activity “doesn’t ever mean anything in any way that could restrict our choices.”

<sup>83</sup> Specifically regarding the morality of the circumstances surrounding sexual activity, sexual intercourse is moral only within marriage. Sexual activity performed outside of marriage (including extramarital or unmarried, both heterosexual or homosexual) is immoral because of the context. Sexual activity within unbiblical marriages (e.g., polygamy or same-sex) is also immoral because of the context. Even marital sexual intercourse can be immoral if performed with the wrong intentions (e.g., violence, objectification, manipulation).

marriage, the family, and society as a whole.<sup>84</sup> Most Christian scholars defend the unitive and procreative nature of sexual activity as the basis of its ethical value.<sup>85</sup> Both the act itself and the context must reflect the generative and unitive aspects of sexual activity. Any act or context that attempts to divorce the unitive and/or procreative nature of sexual activity is thus immoral.<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, sexual activity illustrates the consummation of Christ and the church. Because of this biblical metaphor and the necessity for human flourishing, extramarital sexual activity is expressly prohibited in Scripture (Prov 6:32-33; 1 Cor 7:2; Heb 13:4).<sup>87</sup>

**Summary.** Having briefly considered the established Christian ethics of human sexuality, an autonomous treatment of ethics for gender identity becomes nonsensical. If both the actions associated with sexuality (sexual activity) and the context (marriage) can be assigned ethical value, a separate concept of gender identity can have no moral sexual expression except that which falls within the ethical confines of heterosexual marriage between cisgender people.

### **Brief Implications for the Christian Scholar**

The proposed philosophy of gender has additional, inescapable implications for the Christian scholar. If sex and gender are not treated separately in Scripture, should

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<sup>84</sup> See Reilly, *Making Gay Okay*, 59.

<sup>85</sup> For some examples, see Pope John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 99. See also Budziszewski, *The Meaning of Sex*, 33; Reilly, *Making Gay Okay*, 36; Pruss, *One Body*, 359.

<sup>86</sup> In Reilly's words, "Only a unitive act can be generative, and only a generative act can be unitive—in that only it makes two 'one flesh.' That is why the unitive and procreative aspects of sex are inseparable." Reilly, *Making Gay Okay*, 36. Furthermore, I believe the issue of procreation centers on being "inherently ordered to procreation" rather than persistent intent to procreate.

<sup>87</sup> Note: The pervasive biblical condemnation of idolatry as unfaithfulness/harlotry is evidence of God's righteous jealousy for the affections of his people. There can be no direct projection of human infidelity as idolatry except as a demonstration of the perpetrator's sin—both against one's spouse and against God. In other words, marital faithfulness is important as both a metaphor and an institution for human flourishing; human marriage is, however, not equivalent to or interchangeable with God's covenant with his people.

theology scholars treat them as distinct issues? While contemporary culture and secular disciplines perpetuate the concepts of sex and gender as divisible and, in many instances, as unconnected, the manner in which the Christian scholar engages the issues and the terms has significance. Each individual must determine how they can be faithful to biblical and theological assumptions of gender while maintaining intellectual integrity to the historical and sociological concepts of gender. While the biblical and theological assumptions for gender cannot be convoluted to match the contemporary view of gender, a scholar's use of the terms ought to be consciously determined so as to inspire cross-convictional discussion—within and outside of Christianity. The definitions and nuances of the terms surrounding gender have become so complex that a scholar would do well to temper one's terminology based on one's respective context and audience.

### **Conclusion**

The concepts of gender and sex have been explored through (1) biblical, (2) theological, (3) historical social, and (4) Christian ethical perspectives in order to prove that a scriptural ontology of genderedness is required to appropriately join biological sex and gender as inseparable concepts that are rightly expressed through a biblical ethic of sexuality.

From a biblical standpoint, no clear distinction of sex and gender as separate concepts exists in Scripture, though the distinction of the male and female sexes is explicit. Additionally, Scripture does offer a potential category for atypical genderedness (the eunuch), but the basis of this category includes its connection with sex. Theological considerations demonstrate that all human beings have a material and immaterial constitution that is inseparable. The term gendered embodiment appropriately considers the materiality and immateriality of human nature and recognizes that sex and gender are congruent by divine design. Human beings are made in the image of God, and that image-bearing includes the aspect of being male and female. This male and female



binarity is affirmed in the creation account. Additionally, roles and functions—particularly those associated with gender—are temporal rather than ontological. A historical social perspective reveals that the splintering of sex and gender as separate concepts is a recent development in history. While social considerations (both axiological and ethological) associated with gender are certainly important and relevant, there is no universal standard for gender-typical attitudes and behavior. As such, gender expression, the social outworking of genderedness, must be understood as context-specific. Additionally, to relegate gender as an entirely sociological construct is to diminish the ontological composition of humanity—inseparable material and immaterial aspects. Finally, the Christian ethical perspective affirms gender as indivisible from the concept of sex and therefore irrevocably tied to the reality of human physicality. As both the actions associated with sexuality (sexual activity) and the context (marriage) can be assigned ethical value, a separate concept of gender (and/or gender identity) can have no moral sexual expression except that which falls within the ethical confines of heterosexual marriage between cisgender people.

Is there a Christian foundation for treating gender as distinct from biological sex? While there is certainly a Christian and an intellectual basis for *distinguishing* between gender and sex, there is no scriptural or theological grounding for an *autonomous treatment* of gender as separate from sex. The research has sought to affirm the following ontological understanding of gender: *Humankind exists in the two types of male and female, which reflect both the material and immaterial aspects of gendered embodiment. Sex and gender are ontological realities of human composition, designed as congruent; humans are gendered all the way down.*

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## ABSTRACT

### ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR FEMALE-GENDERED EMBODIMENT IN A REDEMPTIVE CONTEXT

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This study establishes an ontological framework for defining female-gendered embodiment, proposing a definition which is scripturally grounded and ontologically based. If a woman does not comprehend her essential purpose and ontological nature, she may perform duties and responsibilities, but the richness of her living within her God-given design will be diminished—to the detriment of the individual, the family, the church, and society as a whole. Likewise, women, families, and churches will suffer when women are communicated an incomplete definition of their ontological meaning (e.g., a strictly functionally based or roles-derived meaning). Though gender is the central topic of much present-day evangelical scholarship, evangelical scholars typically do not have a shared, working definition of the term. This research articulates a theological paradigm to identify female-gendered embodiment, distinctively engages the only known theological model for defining women ontologically (by Evdokimov), establishes a framework to define female-gendered embodiment ontologically, and assesses the framework from various perspectives. The proposed, original taxonomy of gendered embodiment serves to foster cross-boundary discussions toward the objective of defining female-gendered embodiment within theological anthropology.

Keywords: human embodiment, theological anthropology, theology of the body, gender, gender expression, gender distinction, ontology of women, gender roles

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