Toward a Constructed Theology of Personality: Human Personality Explored in Light of Redemption History

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ABSTRACT

Recent interest in human personality (as evidenced by such tests as the Enneagram and MBTI profiles) has been met with relative silence from the theological community. Generally viewed solely as a matter for psychologists, theologians have missed the opportunity to analyze theologically the nature of being in terms of personality. This article attempts to bridge such a gap in literature with view to argue for the inclusion of personality within the Greek terms πνεῦμα and ψυχή. It will further examine how human personality fits within redemption history, exploring its creation, distortion, redemption, and glorification.

INTRODUCTION

There are no real personalities anywhere else (apart from God). Until you have given up your self to Him you will not have a real self. Sameness is to be found most among the most 'natural' men, not among those who surrender to Christ. How monotonously alike all the great tyrants and conquerors have been: how gloriously different are the saints. ~ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.[1]

While some secular anthropologists such as Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) dismiss religion as a mistaken inference from experience and reality, Christian theologians likewise dismiss often secular scholarship concerning the complexities of human makeup. Desiring to play solely within one's academic sandbox, Christian theologians often limit treatment of human nature to Augustinian anthropology, stressing innate moral inability before God, the depravity of human soul, and the corruption of the flesh (matters of little significance to many Post-Enlightenment and Post-Modern scholars). Likewise, matters of great significance to secular scholars rarely draw anything but ire or disinterest from biblical scholars.[2] Nowhere is this more evident than in the matter of human personality.[3]

1   C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1980), 226.

2   For example, see Evans, C. S., "Doing Psychology as a Christian: A Plea for Wholeness" in *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 40, no. 1: 32-36 (2012).

3   See Aleksander S. Santrac, "Towards the Possible Integration of Psychology and Christian Faith; Faculties of Human Personality and the Lordship of Christ" in *In Die Skriflig* 50.1 (2016), 1.

Over the past century, two notable works on theology and personality have been produced, namely *God and Personality* by Clement C. J. Webb (published 2004 and based upon the Gifford Lectures at University of Aberdeen from 1917 to 1919) and *The Theology of Personality* by William S. Bishop in 1926. Webb's treatment (the more influential of the two) argues that personality (distinct from individuality) must first be understood as it relates to the Trinity, then how it relates to humanity.[4] This is a particularly helpful observation that keeps the Christian tradition from resurrecting historic heresies of modalism and patripassionism while simultaneously upholding God's personal and transcendent qualities. Still, might more be said?

Church tradition is well aware that the triune God is united in essence yet distinct in personhood, yet such a comparison can also be made concerning human existence leading to a theology of personality. While the Cappadocian fathers helpfully led the church to distinguish between *ousia* and *hypostatis* (leading to the formulation of Christ being *homoousios* with the Father in the Nicene Creed), they did not formulate (for such was not their concern) how humans can also have the same substances yet be distinguishable subjects. Such is unquestionably true, however. While comprised of similar makeup (a body, mind, will, soul, emotions, and the like), humanity (reflecting the divine image) shares unique qualities that lead to individuality. These unique human qualities (much like the divine qualities) are not absorbed into a homogenous whole, for such would deny the essence and uniqueness of true humanity. They remain distinct features despite common properties. Such is the nature of the

human makeup, and such may be analyzed theologically. While treatment of the general qualities of humanity are warranted (and there is no shortage of Christian treatments on the body, mind, soul, and will), theological attention to the specific qualities of humanity (namely personality) are also warranted.

As such, inattention to human personality on the part of Christians is not justifiable on biblical grounds, nor should evangelicals believe they have nothing to contribute concerning this matter.[5] Indeed, this paper will argue that human personality is a deeply spiritual issue deserving serious theological reflection. Rejecting notions of monism, the Christian tradition has primarily argued that humans are holistic beings with an immaterial substance.[6] Regardless of one's position in the trichotomy (the belief a human is composed of a body, soul, and spirit) or dichotomy (being composed of a body and soul/spirit) debate, the Christian tradition recognizes that human beings have a personal substance unique unto themselves that makes them who they are.[7] People are defined

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4   Clement C. J. Webb. *God and Personality* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004).

5   See A. C. Tjelveit, "Lost Opportunities, Partial Successes, and Key questions: Some Historical Lessons" in *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 40.1 (2012), 19 who argues from a psychological perspective that human personality is based not solely upon human intellect and emotion but spiritual aspects as well. For a thoroughly comprehensive understanding of personality, he argues one must look to matters of faith to understand both origins and functions of human personality.

6   Up until the mid-twentieth century, biblical anthropology (primarily in Pauline studies) concerned dichotomy and trichotomy perspectives. The change is often attributed to Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 1:194-196. Still, it is argued that the Scriptures and earliest Christians maintained a view of the holistic self with material (body) and immaterial (spiritual) components. See Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology*, Olive Wyon, transl. (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 1957), 91-101.

7   See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, Matthew J. O'Connell, transl. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 522-532 who (while arguing from a dichotomist perspective) argues convincingly that the Old and New Testament scriptures point to a bodily and immaterial self.

Daniel Kirkpatrick, | A57
'Toward a Constructed Theology of Personality:
Human Personality Explored in Light of Redemption History'

not merely by external appearances but internal attributes, both of which were affected by the Fall of Adam and may be redeemed in Christ. While this paper does not seek to integrate psychology/ anthropology with theology, it does argue that such disciplines do not own a monopoly on the subject. Wishing to explore human personality in light of redemption history, this paper will seek to construct a theology of personality.

DEFINING PERSON AND PERSONALITY

Person

Humans as solely material substance (monism) argued in the modern era by Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Thomas Hobbes has a history dating back to early Greek philosophy through the influential works of Anaxagoras, Democritus, and Epicurus.[8] Not only is there no supernatural or transcendent being governing the universe, there is no immaterial substance to the self. While not denying that humans have thoughts and emotions, such materialists view human construction solely in biological terms. Religion is humanity's attempt to make sense of the reality around them, and given that culture helps shape personality, one's personality may become (albeit mistakenly) religious in nature according to this view.[9]

Such is not the Christian perspective, though the Christian perspective is vast.[10]

While not denying the biological components to the human framework (as in Docetism), the Christian tradition affirms the existence of the soul/spirit giving rise to the dichotomy and trichotomy debate mentioned above.[11] Solving such a debate is beyond the scope of this study, and recent scholarship has sought to nuance the distinction with simple recognition that the interconnection between all components makes the true self (termed psychosomatic holism).[12] Nevertheless, should one in dichotomic perspective hold to body and soul/spirit or trichotomic perspective (with personality fitting within the soul component), the central

8 Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, 40-49. Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 375.

9 Manning Nash, "Religion Beyond the Functionalist Frontier" in *Personality and the Cultural Construction of Society*, David K. Jordan and Marc J. Swartz eds. (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 246-249.

10 The argument made here, that Christians affirm the spiritual properties of humans, is not exclusive to the Christian faith and is (it is argued) found in most religious traditions. See Vassilis Saroglou, "Studying Religion in Personality and Social Psychology" in *Religion, Personality, and Social Behavior* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2014), 1-7, 17-19. As it relates to the vastness of the Christian perspective, the Eastern Orthodox notion of *theosis* is particularly insightful. Through the process of deification, the true personhood of a human is restored (in *ecclesial* community). Christ is the model of true personhood, and as one becomes Christ, a person can also reach true selfhood. See Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009), 162-163. See also Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1957), 53 and 121 who argues (from an Eastern Orthodox perspective) the distinction (as argued here) between *individuals* and *persons*. Individuals in this sense refers to the general makeup of humanity whereas *persons* refers to the unique attributes within a person. A perfected person (unique attributes) comes as a result of synergistic activity in becoming god, becoming like the divine, in complete participates with the divine nature. Exhaustion of this perspective is beyond the scope of this study, yet it should be included in mention of the vastness of Christian thought. There, one's personality is perfected by partaking of the divine nature (yet ultimately lost as it is absorbed into the divine). Another perspective is Christian humanism. In this view, humans are holistic, relational creatures with a natural dimension (biological, psychological, and social components) and existential dimension (spiritual, moral, and historical components). See R. Paul Olson, "Christian Humanism" in *Religious Theories of Personality and Psychotherapy: East Meets West* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 250. While perhaps too secular to the tastes of many evangelicals, this approach nevertheless recognizes the complexity of humanity (with personality belonging to the existential dimension) in a way consistent with church tradition.

11 For a historical and theological examination of the trichotomy and dichotomy debate, see Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 204-210.

12 Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 377.

point of agreement in the Christian tradition is that a person is composed of material (bodily) and immaterial (spirit, mind, emotions, will, and, it is argued here, personality) substances. Yet what is meant by personality?

Personality

The notion of personality is by no means a modern conception, and its definition in many respects depends upon the culture, language, school of thought, and time period the term is used. As Webb helpfully summarized, the Latin notion of *persona* carries the idea of social interaction, the Greeks understood personality (ὑπόστασις) as true existence beyond mere external appearances, and later Medieval usage (pioneered by Boethius at the beginning of the 6th century) understood personality (*persona*) as the individual subsistence of rational nature.[13]

Just as there are nuances in definition and usage historically, there are also broad understandings of personality in the modern period. Contemporary definitions for personality include: the lasting differences between persons in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors not specific to a given situation,[14] the individual differences in mental mechanisms reacting to particular situations,[15] and "The enduring configuration of characteristics and behavior that comprises an individual's unique adjustment to life, including major traits, interests, drives, values, self-concept, abilities, and emotional patterns."[16]

Despite the spectrum of definitions, one

may conceptualize personality as the inner part of a human being (distinct from emotions or the eternal soul) that defines the unique characteristics and behavior of a person. With such a conception in view, it is here argued that this fits well with the Greek term πνεῦμα.

Spirit and Soul

The Greek term πνεῦμα is most commonly translated as spirit, breath, or wind,[17] and while seemingly sporadic definitions, the term refers to vivifying activity by God (or Greek gods) resulting in life and/or inspiration.[18] One of the less frequent definitions of πνεῦμα is, "[A] part of human personality."[19] Aristotle's work serves as an example of this (see particularly *History of Animals* VIII.1, 588a18-b3 and IX.3-49) when he uses πνεῦμα referring to lions being courageous, dolphins being mild and gentle, and sheep being stupid (leading modern scholars to argue that Aristotle understood πνεῦμα in terms of personality).[20] Ancient Greek literature (while recognizing the distinctions between flesh and spirit) did not separate the two and found the inner and outer aspects of a person to be the whole personality.[21]

Such is consistent with New Testament usage, though certainly not every usage of

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13   Webb, 35-48.

14   Johan Ormel, Michael VonKorff, Bertus F. Jeronimus, and Harriëtte Riese, "Set-Point Theory and Personality Development" in *Personality Development Across the Lifespan* (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2017), 117.

15   Daniel Nettle, *Personality: What Makes You the Way You Are* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 43.

16   American Psychological Association, "Personality." https://dictionary.apa.org/personality

17   Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, William F. Arndt, F. Wilber Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker eds. and transl. [*BDAG*], 3rd ed., (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. πνεῦμα.

18   Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [*TDNT*], vol. VI Πε–Ρ (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), s.v. πνεῦμα, 340-344.

19   *BDAG*, s.v. πνεῦμα.

20   Mariska Leunissen, "Aristotle on Natural Character and its Implications for Moral Development" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 50.4.10 (2012), 508. See also *TDNT*, s.v. πνεῦμα, 355 who describes classical Greek usage of this noun as what brings individuality to things in an inner/spiritual sense that distinguishes a being from lifeless things.

21   *BDAG*, s.v. πνεῦμα, 833.

Daniel Kirkpatrick, | A59
'Toward a Constructed Theology of Personality:
Human Personality Explored in Light of Redemption History'

πνεῦμα would correlate to personality. Closely related to ψυχή (for reasons to be argued below), numerous New Testament authors use πνεῦμα to refer to personality.[22] Scripture speaks of those who are poor in πνεῦμα (Mt. 5:3, cf. 5:5 "gentle"), John the Baptist was said to be strong in πνεῦμα (Lk. 1:80), and Apollos is described as an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures, and fervent in πνεῦμα, speaking boldly to others (Acts 18:24-25). Romans 12:10-11 speaks beyond the fluidity of emotions to a stative sense of being, not being neglectful but fervent in πνεῦμα. 2 Timothy 1:7 tells that God has not given believers a πνεῦμα of timidity but of power, love, and discipline. Peter called his readers to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in πνεῦμα (1 Pet. 3:8). Being marked as humble, strong, eloquent, fervent, bold, sympathetic, and more as described here fits well with modern understandings of personality.

What is to be said of the relation of ψυχή to πνεῦμα? While most commonly translated as "soul," ψυχή is also translated as the inner aspects of a human's life, an entity within one's personhood.[23] Should a significant enough difference be found between ψυχή and πνεῦμα to distinguish between the two, the most notable difference (it is argued) is that the ψυχή would be the source through which the πνεῦμα is expressed.[24] Greek literature (including the New Testament) finds the ψυχή to be the seat and center of a person's life from which various external expressions are sourced.[25] Jesus' ψυχή was said to be deeply grieved to the point of death (Mt. 26:38/Mk. 14:34), Mary's ψυχή is said to exalt while her πνεῦμα rejoices (Lk. 1:46-47), and when a ψυχή is pierced, it is said to expose the thoughts and hearts of people (Lk. 2:35). The ψυχή is also viewed as the locus of sorrow (Jn. 12:27). While these outputs of ψυχή are emotions (which fluctuate and are common to all humans), it is not inconceivable to view the ψυχή as the source from which one's personality flows.[26] Such is argued to be the classic Roman Catholic belief.[27] In this tradition, the soul is the innermost aspect of a person, and that of greatest value to them. From it, one makes choices that direct the course of life, determining what type of person he or she will be.[28] The view that personality derives from the soul is also argued by evangelicals on both a biblical and sociological grounds.[29] Again, this assumes there is need to distinguish between ψυχή and πνεῦμα which not all agree is necessary.

With this understanding of personhood, personality, soul and spirit, it may be concluded that humans do have a personality, and such personality corresponds to the notions of πνεῦμα and ψυχή, both firmly biblical terms.

22 Ibid.

23 *BDAG*, s.v. ψυχή, 1099. . See also Moisés Silva, rev. ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), vol. 4, s.v. ψυχή, 729-731.

24 See *TDNT*, s.v. ψυχή, 616-617 for post-classical Greek examples of ψυχή as the bearer of thoughts, wills, and emotions characteristic of human personality. See also Silva, s.v. ψυχή,731. Justification for trichotomistic perspective especially in light of 1 Thes. 5:23 is not widely accepted. See F. F. Bruce, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45 (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 130-131.

25 BDAG, s.v. ψυχή, 1099. See also Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1983), s.v. ψυχή, 501.

26 See Silva, s.v. ψυχή, 732 who finds occurrences where ψυχή refers to "the whole inner life with its faculties of will, reason, disposition, and emotion."

27 Terence A. McGoldrick, "The Spirituality of Human Consciousness: A Catholic Evaluation of Some Current Neuro-Scientific Interpretations" in *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 18.3 (2012), 483-486. See Catechism of the Catholic Church, § 363-367.

28 Ibid.

29 Stephen P. Greggo, "Soul Origin: Revisiting Creationist and Traducianist Theological Perspectives in Light of Current Trends in Developmental Psychology" in *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 33.4 (2005): 258-267.

Thus, one's personality should be a matter of significance to those in the Christian faith. For consideration now is how one's personality fits within redemption history.

PERSONALITY IN REDEMPTION HISTORY

The origins of developing a holistic biblical framework broken into stages or time periods dates at least as early as Augustine in the second half of his *City of God*. His framework entailed creation of angels and humans (book 12), the sin and fall of Adam (books 13-14), and redemption/renewal (books 16-22). However, it is likely that N. T. Wright was the first to portray the Scriptures in terms of acts within a play, namely creation, fall, Israel, Jesus, and the rest of the New Testament.[30] Others, like Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, break the play into six acts with an intermission.[31] Some take a four-fold act approach of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification (the approach taken here for simplicity's sake).[32] This approach to Scripture is often termed *covenant theology*. Its purpose is to see Scripture as a grand storyline that holds together the plans and purposes of God. Finding one's place in this narrative has become of interest to many scholars, pastors, and lay-persons,[33] yet the

30   N. T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?" *Vox Evangelica*, 21 (1991), 7-32.

31   Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014). The acts are as follows: Creation, Fall, Redemption Initiated, Interlude (Intertestamental Period), Redemption Accomplished, The Mission of the Church, and Redemption Completed.

32   Nothing significant is lost in how these scholars have broken up the acts to the play.

33   See, for example, Bryan J. Dik, *Redeeming Work: A Guide to Discovering God's Calling for Your Career* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2020) who analyzes the notion of work, calling, and vocation in light of the four acts of redemption history.

aspect of human personality has never been, to-date, fully analyzed in light of this framework.

Creation

The first act within redemption history concerns the design (both construction and purpose) of the created order. As it relates to human personality, the Christian consensus is that it is a created element within humanity (unlike Plato's argument for the eternal existence of the soul). Whether one's personality derives from the soul (and the origin of the soul is a matter of debate) or whether it is one and the same thing has already been addressed and will not be further considered. The point to affirm at this juncture is that the immaterial part of the self which defines the qualities and characteristics of a person (defined here as personality) was bestowed upon human beings by act of divine creation (a view differing from that of naturalistic psychologists).

Secular scholarship has long debated whether personality is formed by nature or nurture, and the general consensus is that the answer is both. Yet how is one to understand nature and nurture from a biblical perspective? Is one's personality determined, even to a degree, through genetic transmission from one's parents? If so, how does this correspond to divine creation of human πνεῦμα and ψυχή?

Given the vast psychological research finding affinities between parents and their offspring in terms of character traits and temperament, it is logical (and biblically permissible) to concede that personality is an inherited trait (to a degree). However, this article wishes to propose that human personality development is not solely biological; it is a divine gift. If what was said above holds, human beings are complex creatures with a body and spirit/soul. While creatures owe their existence through natural processes, Scripture readily affirms that

Daniel Kirkpatrick,   A61
'Toward a Constructed Theology of Personality:
Human Personality Explored in Light of Redemption History'

life originates in and through God (Gn. 1:1ff, Jn. 1:3, Col. 1:16; cf. Acts 4:24, 14:15, 17:24-25, Heb. 11:3, Rev. 4:11). God may be thought of as the efficient cause of all creation (Deut. 4:35, 39, 1 Kgs. 8:60, Isa. 44:8, 45:5, 14, 22; cf. Neh. 9:6). Colossians 1:16 states: "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him," (NASB). While one's parents may be thought of as an instrumental cause, all beings owe their existence ultimately to God who has created all things visible and invisible (like human personality).

This includes all aspects of human makeup, body and πνεῦμα (Isa. 42:5, note the πνεῦμα derivative in LXX). It was shown above how πνεῦμα might rightly be understood to refer to personality, and such fits with the traditional understanding of creation. It affirms that God has made human beings who they are; thus, the whole human life owes its existence and personality to the Lord. In God's sovereignty, he has set human existence to be born when and how he desires (Ps. 139:13-16). Thus, humans were created by God to have the personality they have.

What is to be said of nurture? Does a constructed theology of personality deny the overwhelming body of research supporting environmental influence over personal development? On the contrary, this construction fully affirms the role and significance of nurture (understood as external influences). It simply wishes to affirm that such influences are not random events but sovereign acts of the Triune God to shape a person into whom he desires that person to be.

Personal growth and development, shaped by external means, may be found in numerous biblical examples. One may consider the contentious and furtive personality of Jacob who cunningly stole Esau's birthright only to be humbled throughout his life resulting in a servile stature before his brother in Gen. 33. Such a change in πνεῦμα for Jacob came after wrestling with God in Gen. 32.[34] Joseph, described in his youth as an obnoxious dreamer (Gn. 37:19-20), became shrewd and wise as leader in Egypt. Throughout this narrative of providence, one sees the sovereign hand of God shaping environments to turn Joseph into whom he was needed to be. Common in biblical literature is the notion that what seems common and ordinary in one's life has behind it divine activity (Ps. 27:23, Pro. 16:9, 20:24; see Gn. 50:20). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that environmental factors that shape human personality fall under the sovereignty of God leading towards personal growth and development. God has created people to be who they are, and such creation was deemed very good (Gn. 1:31). Such is the beginnings of understanding human personality in light of redemption history.

Fall

As the second act within redemption history, the fall refers to the disobedience of Adam in Genesis 3. What was created as very pleasing in God's sight is now marred with sin resulting in the corruption of the previously discussed created order. As a result of this disobedience, no area of creation is left untouched by the damaging effects of sin.[35] Scripture speaks to the

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34   How one understands such wrestling with God is a matter of debate and interpretation; however, the point to be made here is that God was sovereignly involved in the change of spirit and personality brought about in Jacob.

35   For a treatment of the fall in light of redemption history, see Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 53-68.

inherited corruption of human nature in Psalm 51:1-5, Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 7:18, and Isaiah 64:6 (cf. Romans 3:9-20). Additionally, it speaks to inherited guilt from Romans 5:12-21, James 2:10-11, and Galatians 3:10.[36]

Effects of the fall are further evidenced throughout the anti-Pelagian tradition upheld through much of church history.[37] Affirmed by Augustine[38] and upheld by numerous councils and creeds (such as Orange, Carthage, and article 9 of the Thirty-Nine Articles), humans inherit a sinful ψυχή and πνεῦμα different from that of original design. This view has been upheld and refined throughout church history. Citing Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12, Exodus 33:3, and Genesis 3:7, Luther argued for the heredity of sin that deeply corrupts human nature beyond human understanding.[39] Not believing human beings are as bad as they possibly could be, nor arguing that the *imago Dei* was completely lost, John Calvin argued that humans are corrupted and deformed in ψυχή and πνεῦμα because of the fall of Adam.[40]

If human beings are corrupted in spirit and soul as defined here, by implication the personality of the self was affected as well. What was designed to be a good personality has assumed corruption. While not a human being, one may witness the first corruption of personality as early as Genesis 3. Should the serpent of Eden refer to a corporal manifestation of Satan after his fall (distinct from the fall of Adam), one notices that his personality was viewed as ערם (transl. cunning, crafty, tricky.)[41] This (as argued above and below) need not be thought of as an innately immoral personality trait, yet it was employed immorally to lead others to sin showing a corruption of character. The origins of self-coconsciousness and the breakdowns between human relations have been attributed to the fall of Genesis 3.[42]

Such corruption of good design is evidenced throughout the rest of Scripture. One might see jealousy (a divine attribute in Ex. 20:5, 34:14, Deut. 4:24, 5:9) as corrupted in Cain, leading him to murder his brother (Gen. 4:4-8, cf. 1 Jn. 3:11-12). Scripture goes on to describe humans as arrogant (a perversion of good pride), vindictive (a twisted form of justice), lazy and gluttonous (distortions of pure rest and enjoyment of good things), and more. What was once bearing the divine likeness has become corrupted in nature.[43]

Such is true with modern understandings of personality. Common within current studies in

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36   As the doctrine of the fall of humanity is widely accepted and treated in most systematic theology books, its basis and effects will not be exhausted but presumed. It should be noted, though, this presumption assumes a western evangelical view of sin and inherited corruption. Such a position on sin is viewed quite differently from liberal and Eastern Orthodox perspectives. For a critical summary of the Eastern Orthodox perspective, see Danny Kirkpatrick, "An Analysis of Synergistic Theosis and Deification in Light of Monergistic Perspective" in *Southwest Journal of Arts and Sciences*, Spr. 2021, 1.1, 12-36.

37   It should be noted that medieval theology shows virtually no awareness of the councils which condemned Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism (a matter of significance during the Protestant Reformation). See Carl R. Trueman, *Grace Alone: Salvation as a Gift of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 87 and Alister E. McGrath *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 97-98.

38   Augustine, *On Nature and Grace*, chs. 10, 44, 46.

39   Martin Luther, "The Smalcald Articles," pt. 3, art. 1, in *The Book of Concord*, quoted in *A Compend of Luther's Theology*, ed. Hugh T. Kerr (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1943), 84.

40   John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.XV. IV.

41   Koehler & Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, M. E. J. Richardson, ed., vol I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), s. v. ערם.

42   See Bartholomew and Goheen, 43-44 who argues this point, affirming that the fall led to a breakdown (and death) of human relationships between God and fellow human beings.

43   See Jürgen Moltmann, *In the End – The Beginning: The Life of Hope* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 56-61 where he speaks of the corruption of humans (by choice) resulting in a loss of their true humanity. Such a departure from original design makes one enslaved to sin and evil.

Daniel Kirkpatrick, | A63
'Toward a Constructed Theology of Personality:
Human Personality Explored in Light of Redemption History'

human personality is the matter of introversion (one who is internally focused, being withdrawn of energy around larger groups of people) and extroversion (one with an external focus deriving energy from larger groups of people). Neither trait is inherently bad; it is (as argued here) by God's design. However, because of the fall, our inward and outward foci have become corrupted. Introverts are described as analytical in thinking, organized, and detailed-oriented; however, because of inherited corruption (it is here argued), they have difficulty working around others, prefer isolation, and are often overtly self-conscious.[44] Extroverts are found to be assertive, social, and people-focused; however, research has found them to be domineering, poor listeners, and exclusionary.[45] Comparatively, someone who is task oriented may have a strong work ethic, yet such devotion to work could lead to becoming a workaholic. Those who are more people-oriented enjoy close relationships, yet they could slip into being people pleasers, ready to do anything for the approval of others. One may be critical to a fault, being not just discerning but demeaning. The list could go on.

Human personalities are a divine gift; however, they were corrupted by the fall. While not as bad as they could possibly be, they (given their association to ψυχή /πνεῦμα) fail to be expressed in pure form. In the model of redemption history, humans abuse what God has given them, rebelling against their Creator and design, abusing their identities and abilities leading to violence, fractured relationships, and

a distortion of God's design.[46] Fortunately, act two is not the end of the story.

Redemption

The third act in *redemption* history may broadly be defined as redemption but more specifically refers to the work of Jesus Christ to establish the kingdom of God on the earth through his death, burial, resurrection, and glorification thereby restoring creation back to God's purposes.[47] Central to this act in redemption history is the gospel itself. While the term *gospel* has many definitions and uses, Michael Bird helpfully notes:

> The gospel is the announcement that God's kingdom has come in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord and Messiah, in fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures. The gospel evokes faith, repentance, and discipleship; its accompanying effects include salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit.[48]

While more could be said about the Gospel, nothing less should be said. As Bird helpfully notes, the Gospel is more than going to heaven when one dies. It is the victory of Christ over sin and death here and now, inaugurated through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus who brings the kingdom of God. While Christians live between acts three and four (a tension often called *already and not yet* or *inaugurated eschatology*), the Gospel has every relevance now. Jesus Christ, the true and perfect human being without sin, risen from the dead, is the first fruit of the new creation, and as believers

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44   Dana Stephens-Craig, Matthew Kuofie, and Richard Dool, "Perception of Introverted Leaders by Mid to High-Level Leaders" in *Journal of Marketing and Management* 6.10.05 (2015), 62-75.

45   Adam M. Grant, Francesca Gino, and David A. Hofmann, "Reversing the Extraverted Leadership Advantage: The Role of Employee Proactivity" in *Academy of Management* 54.3.06 (2011).

46   J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 61.

47   Bartholomew and Goheen, 129. Wolters, 69-70. See also Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008), 147-164, esp. 148-151.

48   Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 37.

are united by faith to him, they experience liberating effects from sin now (though its fullness is not yet realized).[49]

This view is helpfully developed by Jürgen Moltmann in his classic *Theology of Hope*. Those with faith in Christ have an eschatological hope fixed upon the resurrected Savior enabling the believer to face the difficulties of this life with confidence. The Parousia does not refer to God returning to what he abandoned but an imminent arrival in which the Christian waits for renewal and restoration.[50] The first workings of the eschatological kingdom have commenced, leading persons to new life in the here and now based upon the resurrection of the Son of God.[51] The work of transformation (including but not limited to humanity) has begun through the death, burial, resurrection, and glorification of Christ.[52]

The implications on human personality are numerous. Christ has redeemed the human πνεῦμα in the here and now, and while it awaits consummation, believers in Christ experience inward renewal in the present. That is to say, the effects of sin upon human personality have begun a process of redemption and renewal. No longer enslaved to sin, believers experience not a new personality but a renewed personality. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the person who seeks the approval of others above all else finds liberation knowing he or she is approved by God on the basis of the righteousness

of Christ. The workaholics who finds their identity in their work are set free to find their identity in the work of Christ. The domineering personality of an autocrat finds freedom under the lordship of Christ through the death of the old nature and the resurrection of the new. Those who succumb to the sin of laziness find the appropriate balance between fruitful labor and sabbath rest.

Thus, Christ came to redeem what sin marred in the human soul, and one has every reason to think that the human personality is incorporated in the redemption of the πνεῦμα. One's personality is not abolished in this recreating act; it is restored. As C. S. Lewis aptly stated,

> Christ will indeed give you a real personality: but you must not go to Him for the sake of that. As long as your own personality is what you are bothering about you are not going to Him at all. . . Your real, new self (which is Christ's and also yours, and yours just because it is His) will not come as long as you are looking for it. It will come when you are looking for Him.[53]

While the believer lives between acts three and four and awaits final consummation of personality, he or she can every hope that what was begun in conversion will result in glorification with all faults, short-comings, and limitations undone. To this end, one looks towards act four.

Glorification

The final act within redemption history is not so much an end as it is a new beginning.

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49 Middleton, 71-72.

50 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 227. See also 20-32. See also Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 96 where he aptly states, "Redemption doesn't mean scrapping what's there and starting again from a clean slate but rather liberating what has come to be enslaved."

51 Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 221.

52 See Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, *Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 36-37, 43.

53 Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 226. Here one might consider how a believer knows whether an aspect of personality needs changing. In response, one might say that believers (still affected by the Fall) may be impervious to their own personality imperfections, yet the Lord is not. As designer of their personalities, he knows where the deficiencies lay and has promised (through the resurrection of the dead) a glorified humanity without flaw or defect (Rev. 21:5).

Daniel Kirkpatrick, | A65
'Toward a Constructed Theology of Personality:
Human Personality Explored in Light of Redemption History'

Common perspectives on eschatology entail the annihilation of the world, a destruction of the original design; however, recent scholarship has made significant and convincing strides affirming that creation will be renewed, not annihilated. Much of this credit belongs to N. T. Wright who argued that Paul's eschatology envisions a remaking of heaven and earth that overcomes mortality and corruptibility (cf. Rom. 8:18-27, Rev. 21:1, Isa. 65:17, 66:22), thus affirming the goodness of original creation.[54] When the Lord returns, and the heavens and earth are renewed, creation will be set free from its bondage to share in the fullness and freedom of God's glory with all residual corruptions in the self laid to rest.[55] The complete abolishment of the original self is a pagan notion, argues Wright, and through Christ humanity may receive (through its resurrection in Christ) authentic selfhood.[56]

Further, act four is not a return back to act one (returning things to their pre-fallen state); it is the beginnings of the glorified state.[57] Incorruptible at this juncture, though still organic and developing, the final act of redemption history shows an unencumbered eternal existence that eternally develops toward the fullness of Christ. Without flaw or defect, without the burdens of sin, humans become not like the pre-fallen Adam but the preeminent Christ, the better Adam (1 Cor. 15:22-45). In so doing, humans remain who they are but better than they were. This is evidenced by the apostle John who refers to the new song sung by the redeemed, sung by those of every tribe, tongue, people and nation (Rev. 5:9, cf. 13:7, 14:6).[58] Notice that the unique attributes of persons remain in the eschatological kingdom. The glorified state does not rid one of uniqueness. It celebrates it while renewing, restoring, and glorifying it.

The implications, thus, on human personality are vast. One does not lose his or her personality through the unfolding of redemption history; rather, he or she finds it in its truest form. The introvert may remain an introvert, yet without flaw or defect. Such people, though, will not suffer from social anxieties or despair in isolation but may remain forevermore reflective, innovative, observant members of the glorified human race (who will still likely enjoy listening to others rather than talking about themselves). The extrovert will remain an extrovert, yet never perceived as domineering or exclusionary as mentioned above. The task-oriented person may remain a

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54 Wright, "Farewell to the Rapture" in *Bible Review* 17.4 (2001), 8.

55 Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 135-146. See esp. p. 142 where he states that one's "moral, thinking, cognitive, affective selves will also be renewed" through the undoing of all evil, allowing them to live in a fullness yet attained. This has every implication for the liberation of the personality without its abolishment. See also, Wright "Kingdom Come" in *The Christian Century*, 125.12 (2008), 29 where he states that the kingdom of God coming to earth is not dehumanizing to persons but a rescue and restoration of true humanity. While not all agree with Wright's view on justification, he provides a well-reasoned position that eschatology (for Paul) moves towards a goal for the redemption of God's people and rescue of the whole created order. Justification, for Wright, refers to the whole process from grace to glory where persons are renewed in humanity, not losing their original design. See Wright, *Justification* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 100-102.

56 Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 135-150. See also Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 32-38.

57 See Ted Peters, *God – The World's Future* 2nd ed.

(Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 156-157 who argues this point with what he calls proleptic humanity. Christ, he argues, makes one truly human, and in becoming truly human, one does not resort to a pre-fallen state of grace but becomes a partaker of the new creation.

58 See Middleton, 172-174 who aptly observes that human abstractions are not what is redeemed but people in their communal and cultural realities (reflecting original design but glorified at the return of Christ). If we can assume with Middleton that one's cultural identity is not absolved of its uniqueness but glorified, it is reasonable to assume that one's personal identity (personality) is not absolved but glorified.

person of detail and diligence yet not fret the temptations of turning work into an idol. The servant-hearted will have perfected natures, still loving and serving others without suffering the negative associations of being a people-pleaser on this earth.

One's personality needs not be thought of as a disease which needs to be cured. Rather, it is the authentic self, longing for liberation, which can only come through Christ. Upon death and the admittance of the soul into heaven, one has every reason to believe that one's πνεῦμα (which entails personality) remains intact and distinguishable from the other disembodied spirits. Additionally, upon the return of Christ, such πνεῦμα returns to a resurrected body resulting in a population diverse both in ethnicity and personality.

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Human personality is a gift from God, not merely a biological or social construct. God has made humanity as diverse in personality as he has in ethnicity, and such was created very good (Gen. 1:31). This article has argued that the notion of personality fits within the Greek notions and terms for ψυχή /πνεῦμα; however, personality has been marred by the fall leading to numerous types of personality defects. The solution to this dilemma is not the dissolution or homogenization of personality but its liberation through the Gospel of Christ. Upon reception of the Gospel by faith, the believer experiences inward renewal and spiritual resurrection leading to the beginnings of a renewed (not new) personality which will be perfected upon the return of Christ.

This article has attempted to construct a theology of personality in light of redemption history portrayed through four acts: creation, fall, redemption, and glorification. It argues that human personality was created to glorify God in all of its uniqueness, yet the fall has corrupted its nature resulting in defects. While the primary function of the Gospel is not to restore a person to authentic self in a way argued by existentialists, it does argue that one of the benefits of salvation in Christ is the inward, spiritual renewal of the self. Human personality can, through the Gospel, become what it was designed to be. Ultimately, though, it must await glorification where its uniqueness will be retained though perfected in a way that exalts the Son of God who rules over the glorified kingdom.

For practical consideration, now, is that (as argued at the beginning by C.S. Lewis) true personality can only be found in Jesus Christ. One's personality defects do not need suppression; they need a Savior. To become a true human, one must look to the True Human, Jesus, who was not incumbered by sin. Through union with him by faith, the believer can experience now what will be enjoyed forever at the Eschaton – a renewed sense of the self.

Additionally, one may feel more secure in his or her personality upon viewing it as a gift from God. While people should remember that their personality has been tainted by sin (and may not excuse their behavior by saying, "That's just how God made me"), they need not be ashamed of who they are nor feel they need to be something other than how they are. Areas for personality improvement need not be taken to the extent of changing personalities but to improve upon the personality God has given.

Finally, viewing personality in light of redemption history may lead people not only towards introspection but extrospection. In other words, recognizing that human

Daniel Kirkpatrick, | A67
'Toward a Constructed Theology of Personality:
Human Personality Explored in Light of Redemption History'

personality is divinely bestowed may help people become more accepting and less critical of others. Jesus commands his disciples to love their neighbors as themselves (Mt. 19:19, 22:39; Mk. 12:31, Lk. 10:27-28; cf. Lev. 19:18). It is often easy to love ourselves and justify our own personality defects. On the other hand, loving neighbors that same way, with their own personality defects, can make this command difficult to obey. However, the diversity of human personality reflects the beauty of God's manifold creation. God looks upon the defects within a person's soul and finds that the work of Christ is sufficient to overcome them (leading to reconciliation and good standing). It may be, as argued here, that the pathway for a more just and orderly society begins and ends through the Gospel of Jesus Christ which allows for true love of self and neighbor (personality and all).

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Daniel Kirkpatrick, | A69
'Toward a Constructed Theology of Personality:
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