
BODY, SOUL, AND HUMAN LIFE

The Nature of Humanity
in the Bible

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CONTENTS

<i>Series Preface</i>	ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xv
1 The Bible, the Natural Sciences, and the Human Person	1
Humanity and Human Identity in Biblical Theology	3
Traditional Theological Anthropology and Contemporary Challenges	16
Why Science Matters	21
Some Definitions	29
In Anticipation	32
2 What Does It Mean to Be Human?	35
Distinctively Human?	38
Clearing the Deck	46
“In the Image of God He Created Them” (Gen 1:27)	61
“To the Measure of the Full Stature of Christ” (Eph 4:13)	65
Conclusion	70

3 Sin and Freedom	72
Challenges from the Natural Sciences	76
Freedom and Sin: Three New Testament Coordinates	87
Conclusion	103
4 Being Human, Being Saved	106
Questioning Conversion in Luke-Acts	109
The Neural Correlates of Change	115
Luke-Acts and “Embodied Conversion”	122
Concluding Reflections	138
5 The Resurrection of the Body	140
Resurrection in Israel’s Scriptures	144
The Gospel of Luke and the Intermediate State	157
The Disciples and the Resurrected Jesus (Luke 24:36–49)	166
The “Resurrection Body” at Corinth	170
Conclusion	178
Suggested Reading	181
Bibliography	183

SERIES PREFACE

As a discipline, formal biblical studies is in a period of reassessment and upheaval. Concern with historical origins and the development of the biblical materials has in many places been replaced by an emphasis on the reader and the meanings supplied by present contexts and communities. The Studies in Theological Interpretation series will seek to appreciate the constructive theological contribution made by Scripture when it is read in its canonical richness. Of necessity, this includes historical evaluation while remaining open to renewed inquiry into what is meant by history and historical study in relation to Christian Scripture. This also means that the history of the reception of biblical texts—a discipline frequently neglected or rejected altogether—will receive fresh attention and respect. In sum, the series is dedicated to the pursuit of constructive theological interpretation of the church's inheritance of prophets and apostles in a manner that is open to reconnection with the long history of theological reading in the church. The primary emphasis is on the constructive theological contribution of the biblical texts themselves.

New commentary series have sprung up to address these and similar concerns. It is important to complement this development with brief, focused, and closely argued studies that evaluate the hermeneutical, historical, and theological dimensions of scriptural reading and interpretation for our times. In the light of shifting and often divergent methodologies, the series will encourage studies in theological interpretation that model clear and consistent methods in the pursuit of theologically engaging readings.

An earlier day saw the publication of a series of short monographs and compact treatments in the area of biblical theology that went by the name *Studies in Biblical Theology*. The length and focus of the contributions were salutary features and worthy of emulation. Today, however, we find no consensus regarding the nature of biblical theology, and this is a good reason to explore anew what competent theological reflection on Christian Scripture might look like in our day. To this end, the present series, *Studies in Theological Interpretation*, is dedicated.

PREFACE

Not long ago, a *New York Times* article reported, “Neuroscientists have given up looking for the seat of the soul, but they are still seeking what may be special about human brains, what it is that provides the basis for a level of self-awareness and complex emotions unlike those of other animals.” Noting the now-common view that morality and reason grow out of social emotions and feelings that are themselves linked to brain structures, the article suggests that, maybe, what makes us human is all in the wiring of the brain.¹

Does our brain account for our essential humanity? What of the long-held and popular view that the sine qua non of genuine humanity is the soul? This is not the stuff of mere curiosity. A host of pressing issues is at stake. What portrait of the human person is capable of casting a canopy of sacred worth over human beings, so that we have what is necessary for discourse concerning morality

¹ Sandra Blakeslee, “Humanity? Maybe It’s All in the Wiring,” *New York Times*, 9 December 2003, F1.

and for ethical practices? If humans, like sheep, can be cloned, will the resulting life form be a “person”? Are we free to do what we want, or is our sense of decision-making a ruse? What happens when we die?

Questions of this sort increasingly find their way into our daily newspapers, internet magazines, and evening news reports. More and more, it is neuroscientists who are setting the agenda for these discussions, some of whom (Antonio Damasio, for example, or Joseph LeDoux) have proven remarkably adept at telling their stories and thinking through the implications of their findings for audiences of non-specialists. Largely missing from the conversation are voices that take seriously what scientists are finding *while at the same time* bringing to bear on the discussion the perspectives and insights of biblical faith. As a result, we find ourselves treated to astonishing claims about how neuroscience has undermined biblical views of the human person, typically by persons who apparently have little exposure to the biblical materials.

My entrée into this conversation came just over a decade ago when Nancey Murphy invited me into a workgroup led by Warren Brown, Newton Malony, and herself. This was an interdisciplinary project on “Portraits of Human Nature,” associated with the Lee Edward Travis Institute for Biopsychosocial Research at Fuller Theological Seminary and funded by The Templeton Foundation.² This invitation led to another, from Malcolm Jeeves, and to my participation in an interdisciplinary consultation on “Mind, Brain, and Personhood: An Inquiry from Scientific and Theological Perspectives,” also funded by The Templeton Foundation.³ I am grateful to these friends. Each in their own way, they have pressed upon me the critical nature of these issues. Interaction with Malcolm Jeeves in particular – as well as the indefatigable encouragement of another friend, Jim Holsinger, M.D. – led me finally to graduate

² See Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature* (TSc; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

³ See Malcolm A. Jeeves, ed., *From Cells to Souls – And Beyond: Changing Portraits of Human Nature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

work in neuroscience at the University of Kentucky, which allowed me more fully to engage in the sort of interdisciplinarity requisite to this study. This book, then, is a progress report on where my thinking at the interface of these disciplines has led me.

One of the features of interdisciplinary study is the difference in protocols regarding language-use. My readers will note that the non-inclusive term “man” appears repeatedly in my citations of others’ works – not only in writing from earlier historical periods but also among our contemporaries. This is because concerns with inclusive language for human beings usually taken for granted in the church and in theological scholarship have not found their way into the other areas of academic discourse with which I am concerned in this work. I hope it will not prove too much a stumbling-block that I have decided, when citing others, to allow them their own words without emendation.

Throughout the lengthy and involved period of incubation of the perspectives and substance of this book I have given lectures and papers in a number of settings: Southeast Regional Meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature; Society of Biblical Literature Consultation on the Use of Cognitive Linguistics in Biblical Interpretation; Society of Christian Philosophers; Society of John Wesley Scholars; The Society for the Study of Psychology and Wesleyan Theology; Joint Meeting of the American Scientific Affiliation (USA) and Christians in Science (UK); and Pacific Coast Theological Society. I am grateful for opportunities for interaction on these concerns afforded me in those contexts. In preparing this book, I have drawn from a range of earlier publications, including: “‘Bodies – That Is, Human Lives’: A Re-examination of Human Nature in the Bible,” in *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature* (ed. Warren S. Brown, Nancy C. Murphy, and H. Newton Malony; TSc; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 149–73; “Restoring the Human Person: New Testament Voices for a Wholistic and Social Anthropology,” in *Neuroscience and the Person* (ed. Robert John Russell, Nancy Murphy, Theo Meyering, and Michael A. Arbib; Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action 4; Vatican City State: Vatican

Observatory; Berkeley, CA: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1999), 3–22; “Eschatology and the Nature of Humans: A Reconsideration of the Pertinent Biblical Evidence,” *S&CB* 14 (2002): 33–50; “What Does It Mean to Be Human? Another Chapter in the Ongoing Interaction of Science and Scripture,” in *From Cells to Souls – And Beyond: Changing Portraits of Human Nature* (ed. Malcolm A. Jeeves; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 179–98; “Body and Soul? Questions at the Interface of Science and Christian Faith” and “Resurrection of the Body: New Testament Voices concerning Personal Continuity and the After-life,” in *What about the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology* (ed. Joel B. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 5–12, 85–100; “Body and Soul, Mind and Brain: Critical Issues,” in *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (ed. Joel B. Green and Stuart Palmer; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 7–32; and “Humanity – Created, Restored, Transformed, Embodied,” in *Rethinking Human Nature: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (ed. Malcolm Jeeves; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, in press). Although there is no one-to-one relationship between any previous publication and the chapters of this book, overlap is most noticeable with chapter 5; hence, I am grateful to Denis Alexander, editor of *Science & Christian Belief*, for permission to borrow extensively from “Eschatology and the Nature of Humans: A Reconsideration of the Pertinent Biblical Evidence,” *S&CB* 14 (2002): 33–50.

1

THE BIBLE, THE NATURAL SCIENCES, AND THE HUMAN PERSON

There is a new image of man emerging, an image that will dramatically contradict almost all traditional images man has made of himself in the course of his cultural history. (Thomas Metzinger)¹

The idea that the soul can continue to exist without the body or brain, strains scientific credibility. ... The dualistic approach is also unattractive theologically. (Fraser Watts)²

But someone has testified somewhere, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? You have

¹ Thomas Metzinger, “Introduction: Consciousness Research at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in *Neural Correlates of Consciousness: Empirical and Conceptual Questions* (ed. Thomas Metzinger; Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000), 1–12 (6).

² Fraser Watts, *Theology and Psychology* (ASRS; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 46.

made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor, subjecting all things under their feet.” (Heb 2:6–8)³

Self-assessment is often needed, but not always welcome. In the case of an examination of humanity in the Bible, however, temptations may run in a different direction. Rather than avoiding analysis of ourselves as the human family or members of that family, we risk imagining that the Bible is “about” us. However, as Barth recognized in his 1916 lecture on “The Strange New World within the Bible,” the “stuff” of the Bible is not fundamentally about human history, human needs, human potential, human practices.

The Bible tells us not how we should talk with God but what he says to us; not how we find the way to him, but how he has sought and found the way to us; not the right relation in which we must place ourselves to him, but the covenant which he has made with all who are Abraham’s spiritual children and which he has sealed once and for all in Jesus Christ. It is this which is within the Bible.

Barth concludes, “We have found in the Bible a new world, God, God’s sovereignty, God’s glory, God’s incomprehensible love.”⁴ Recent work in biblical theology has only underscored this insight, insisting again and again that the unity of the biblical witness resides in God’s self-revelation – not the “idea” or “concept” of God but God himself.⁵ Given the human propensity to regard with hyperbole our significance in the cosmos, this is an important opening reminder. On the one hand, we have been reticent to acknowledge the continuity of humanity with all other animals

³ Unless otherwise indicated, biblical citations are from the NRSV.

⁴ Karl Barth, “The Strange New World within the Bible,” in *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1978), 28–50 (43, 45).

⁵ E.g., Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (2 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001–5); Ulrich Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (4 vols.; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002–5); Christopher R. Seitz, *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

and, indeed, the degree to which our lives are bound up with the world we indwell. On the other, we are slow to recognize our creatureliness in relation to God. Consequently, we have found ourselves humbled by scientific discovery – in the modern age, first by Copernicus, who demonstrated that our planet and, thus, we who inhabit the earth, are not the center around which the universe turns; and second, by Darwin and evolutionary biology, which has located *Homo sapiens* within the animal kingdom with a genetic make-up that strongly resembles the creatures around us.⁶ Were we to take Barth seriously, we might entertain a further “humbling” – namely, the realization that the Bible is about God, first and foremost, and only derivatively about us.

Study of the human person in the Bible – that is, a biblical-theological anthropology or, more simply, a biblical anthropology – is thus a derivative inquiry. It is secondary. However, insofar as it struggles with the character of humans in relation to God and with respect to the vocation given humanity by God, it is nonetheless crucial. We are concerned, then, with how the Bible portrays the human person, the basis and *telos* of human life, what it means for humanity, in the words of Irenaeus, to be “fully alive” (*Adversus haereses*, 4.20). Unavoidably, this raises questions about relations within the human family, and about the place of humanity in the world.

Humanity and Human Identity in Biblical Theology

By way of setting the stage, a brief review of key voices in the discussion is in order. Although my chief concern is with more recent directions and emphases, it is impossible to consider study of biblical anthropology without first recognizing the towering and stubborn influence of the perspective on

⁶ Helmut Thielicke lists “three humblings” – Copernicus, Darwin, and Freud (*Being Human . . . Becoming Human: An Essay in Christian Anthropology* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984], 29–32).

humanity developed in Rudolf Bultmann's *New Testament Theology*, published 60 years ago.⁷

Bultmann's work encompassed some six hundred pages, with almost one-third of the project devoted to humanity; this alone belies the importance of this topic in his rendering of NT theology. Another measure of the importance of anthropology for Bultmann is his location of such theological issues as God's righteousness, grace, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the church as sub-categories of a theology of the human person. Although the center of his concern is Paul's anthropology, we quickly discover that Bultmann sees the Pauline perspective as representative of much of the Bible's anthropology and, in any case, as the Bible's determinative witness. Recognizing that Paul provides nothing in the way of a theological treatise on humanity, as one might find among the Greek philosophers, Bultmann turns to the fragmentary and occasional evidence of the seven assuredly Pauline letters with a concern to clarify the peculiarity of human existence.⁸ His approach takes the form of extensive, theologically shaped word studies, the primary of which is concerned with *σῶμα* (*sōma*), often, but for Bultmann problematically, translated as "body." As Bultmann famously remarked, "Man does not *have* a *soma*; he *is soma*."⁹ Indeed, "*man, his person as a whole, can be denoted by soma. ... Man is called soma in respect to his being able to make himself the object of his own action or to experience himself as the subject to whom something happens. He can be called soma, that is, as having a relationship to himself – as being able in a certain sense to distinguish himself from himself.*"¹⁰ The human person does not consist of two (or three) parts, then, but is a living whole. What is more, human lives are oriented toward a purpose; they live always on a quest, though the human creature can find or lose one's self.

⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951–55).

⁸ For Bultmann, the list of Pauline letters includes Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

⁹ Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:194; emphasis original.

¹⁰ Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:195–96; emphasis original.

For Paul, Bultmann observes, “*Man has always already missed the existence that at heart he seeks*, his intent is basically perverse, evil.”¹¹ This “missing” of life is sin, which is a power that dominates everyone completely.

If, until the onset of the twentieth century, Pauline anthropology was understood in dichotomous (body-soul) or even trichotomous (body-soul-spirit) terms,¹² the same could not be said by mid-century or subsequently. Credit for this transformation is due especially to the authority of Bultmann, whose reading dominated subsequent discussion.¹³ Other scholars might wish to nuance his

¹¹ Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:227; emphasis original.

¹² So, e.g., Graham J. Warne, *Hebrew Perspectives on the Human Person in the Hellenistic Era: Philo and Paul* (MBPS 35; Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1995), 157. In fact, the evidence is mixed, though clearly weighted toward a dichotomous or trichotomous view of the human person. For example, in the major reference works edited by James Hastings at the turn of the twentieth century, the human person is conceived by Jesus and/or the Gospels as having “two parts” according to E. Wheeler (“Man,” in *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* [2 vols.; ed. James Hastings; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908], 2:107–10 [110]); a “clear duality” by F. Meyrick and J.C. Lambert (“Body,” in *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* [2 vols.; ed. James Hastings; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908], 1:217–18); as a dichotomy or even trichotomy by J.C. Lambert (“Soul,” in *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* [2 vols.; ed. James Hastings; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908], 1:520); and the NT presents the body in a “clear and constant antithesis to ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’” (J. Laidlaw, “Body, in *Dictionary of the Bible* [5 vols.; ed. James Hastings; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903], 1:309). Yet J.C. Lambert finds no dualism in Paul (“Body,” in *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* [3 vols.; ed. James Hastings; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922], 1:154–56 [155]). The complexity of the problem is seen in the apparent waffling of H. Wheeler Robinson. In his essay on “Man” in *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* ([3 vols.; ed. James Hastings; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922], 2:3–6), he claims that Paul inherits the monism of the Hebrew Scriptures and that, while Paul was influenced by Hellenism, he did not succumb to its dualism. Similarly, in his presentation of *The Christian Doctrine of Man* ([3rd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1926], 104–5), Robinson refers to Paul as “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” who subordinated and assimilated Hellenistic influences to his “Jewish psychology,” but then refers to the “separation of the ‘spirit’ from its present body of flesh, an idea which was not reached in the Old Testament.”

¹³ See the survey in Robert H. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (SNTSMS 29; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 3–8.

work in one direction or another – for example, by querying the subject-object relationship by which Bultmann articulated the person’s relationship with self or by urging a stronger sense of relationality in Pauline anthropology – but this emphasis on the essential unity of human existence seemed to have been established. Paul is “a Hebrew of Hebrews,” as John A.T. Robinson put it, drawing attention to Paul’s wholistic understanding of the human creature.¹⁴ F.F. Bruce echoed this sentiment two decades later, observing that, in his anthropology, “Paul was a ‘Hebrew born and bred.’”¹⁵ Also writing in the mid-twentieth century, W.G. Kümmel observed both that, for Paul, we can speak only of the “complete” person,¹⁶ and that other NT writers share Paul’s view of things as well.

Of particular importance among those who have registered concern about Bultmann’s basic thesis is Robert Gundry, whose monograph on *Sōma in Biblical Theology* appeared in 1976. His primary contribution was to counter the loss of any notion of physicality in Bultmann’s understanding of *sōma* – an argument he grounds in an extensive survey of the use of *sōma* in biblical and extrabiblical literature, an examination of the use of *sōma* within the framework of anthropological duality, and a wide-ranging discussion of the ramifications of his study for central aspects of Christian theology. In the end, Gundry apparently thinks that the semantic reach of *sōma* is limited to the notion of physicality, with the result that the terminology he prefers, “duality,” connotes not simply differences of aspect but of essence – that is, some sort of body-soul dualism.¹⁷ On the other hand, in one of the more

¹⁴ John A.T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (SBT 5; London: SCM, 1952), 11.

¹⁵ F.F. Bruce, “Paul on Immortality,” *SJT* 24 (1971): 457–72 (469); Bruce thus attributes to Paul an OT conception of an animated body over against a body-soul dualism.

¹⁶ Werner Georg Kümmel, *Man in the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1963), 47.

¹⁷ In fact, Gundry identifies his position – which segregates the human corporeal from the incorporeal – with a virtual collage of terms; e.g., the human is made up of “two substances” (*Sōma in Biblical Theology*, 83), and “there is

concentrated treatments of NT anthropology in recent years, Udo Schnelle is able to critique Bultmann on this very point without finding dualism in Paul. Even though “a person has a body and is a body” (a self-evident emendation of Bultmann’s dictum, “man does not *have* a soma; he *is* soma”), Schnelle writes, Paul nevertheless “uses σῶμα as the comprehensive expression of the human self.”¹⁸ And in an extensive examination of *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, published in 1971, Robert Jewett undermined Bultmann’s existentialist approach to Paul’s anthropology by demonstrating that Paul borrowed and recast the anthropological terms of his antagonists. That is, his anthropology emerges in historical settings wherein anthropology is a means for defending the gospel (*pace* Bultmann, for whom anthropology comprised the core of the kerygma). Jewett finds that the coherence in Paul’s view of humanity is found in his usage of καρδία (*kardia*, “heart”), which connotes the human “as an integral, intentional self who stands in relationship before God.”¹⁹ For Jewett, Paul *never* uses ψυχή (*psychē*) in the strict sense of “soul,” and, while acknowledging occasional references to the observable human body in its physicality, he concludes that Paul uses the term σῶμα (*sōma*) especially to emphasize “the somatic basis of salvation” as a counter to “the gnostic idea of redemption from the body and the libertinistic actions which resulted from such an idea.”²⁰

Without embracing Bultmann’s existentialism or his evacuation of physicality from the concept of *sōma*, a number of more recent,

an ontological duality, a functional pluralism, and an overarching unity” (84). Clearly, Gundry is casting about for language appropriate to nuance what he regards as Paul’s position. In doing so, though, he employs terms that have a life of their own – and in some cases that stand in mutual opposition. The distinction between dualism and duality is pivotal in subsequent discussion – see, e.g., Malcolm A. Jeeves, “Human Nature: An Integrated Picture,” in *What about the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology* (ed. Joel B. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 171–89.

¹⁸ Udo Schnelle, *The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 58, 57.

¹⁹ Robert Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (AGJU 10; Leiden: Brill, 1971), 447.

²⁰ Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, 457.

extensive studies have led to verdicts similarly supportive of Paul's essential wholism. In his study of the Pauline expression "the inner person," for example, Theo Heckel underscores Paul's emphasis on embodied life in this world and the next, while combating body-soul dualism.²¹ In his dissertation on "Hebrew Perspectives on the Human Person," Graham Warne argues that "Paul maintains an Hebraic perspective which emphasizes the wholeness of the human person's existence, both in the present life and beyond it." Warne's study is of special interest since it demonstrates how, from within a roughly analogous philosophical and theological milieu, Paul and Philo reach contrasting views of the human person.²²

With reference to the anthropology of the OT, the consensus has continued to support a unified portrait of the human person. Indeed, that the OT does not think of the human being as made up of or possessing "parts" is often passed over quickly, as if it were an unassailable truism, in the service of other theological considerations. Thus, having noted that the OT "is familiar neither with the dichotomy of body and soul nor a trichotomy of body, soul, and spirit,"²³ Horst Preuss goes on to survey the anthropology of each of the major voices represented in the OT, concluding that the basic, common framework of OT anthropology includes the human's basic dependence on God in community with whom authentic life was possible; the covenantal relationship of humanity and God (i.e., the human's dialogical responsibility before God); an egalitarianism of status among persons; the formation of humans for community; God's control over life and death; the framework of life as purposeful under God's providential guidance; and the residence of a person's character in his or her practices.²⁴

²¹ Theo K. Heckel, *Der innere Mensch: Die Paulinische Verarbeitung eines Platonischen Motivs* (WUNT 2:53; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993); idem, "Body and Soul in Saint Paul," in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment* (ed. John P. Wright and Paul Potter; Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 117–31.

²² Warne, *Hebrew Perspectives*, 252.

²³ Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology* (2 vols.; OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 2:110.

²⁴ More fully, see Preuss, *OT Theology*, 2:109–208.

Earlier, Brevard Childs had reminded his readers that, even if the OT views humanity from different wholistic perspectives, the human creature “does not *have* a soul, but *is* a soul” – that is, the human is “a complete entity and not a composite of parts from body, soul and spirit.”²⁵ Moreover, humanity is set within a relational nexus – with God, whose own activity in drawing humanity to himself constitutes the basis of human openness to God; and with other humans, with relationships determined by righteousness. The OT, too, recognizes sin as disruption, alienation, and falsehood among humans and in relation to God. On such points as these, Childs finds basic coherence between the Old and New Testament witnesses to the nature of humanity.²⁶

Walter Brueggemann observes that to speak of humanity in the divine image is to speak especially of the human person in relation to God. Indeed, in his description of “The Human Person as Yahweh’s Partner,” he stakes his claim on a relational, dynamic notion of personhood, eschewing any interest in an essentialist definition of the human creature. As such, the human person is utterly dependent on Yahweh for life, experiences human vitality only in relation to God, is a “living being” that precludes any notion of dualism, and is human only in relation to the human community.²⁷

In addition to Gundry’s work, and more influential than Gundry in subsequent discussion, a key voice in support of an anthropological dualism in the Bible has come from the philosophical theologian John Cooper. The concerns of his book, *Body, Soul and Life Everlasting*, are, as the title suggests, primarily eschatological. More particularly, he argues that the Bible teaches the existence of an intermediate state and that this intermediate state

²⁵ Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 199.

²⁶ Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 566–94. To be sure, he finds points of tension as well, though not on matters pertaining to the issues I have noted. He admits that NT language occasionally adopts a more Hellenized idiom reflecting “a dualistic flavour” (579).

²⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 450–54.

requires an ontologically distinct soul that guarantees personal existence between death and resurrection. As he summarizes in the preface to the book's second edition, "The Old Testament notion of ghostly survival in Sheol, eventually augmented with an affirmation of bodily resurrection, is developed by the Holy Spirit into the New Testament revelation of fellowship with Christ between each believer's death and the general resurrection at Christ's return."²⁸ Cooper articulates his position in terms of a wholistic dualism: though composed of discrete elements, the human person is nonetheless to be identified with the whole, constituting a functional unity. The significance of Cooper's work can be measured by the fact that, not only philosophers like himself,²⁹ but biblical scholars as well have employed it as a foundation for maintaining a dualistic anthropology of the Bible.³⁰ Although his perspective on the biblical data seems not to have changed, in his characterization of the human person Cooper more recently has moved away from the language of wholistic dualism in favor of terminology that makes "unity" the more basic term, in support of his developing view that the soul is neither a substance nor an entity.³¹

By way of drawing this survey of the lay of the land in biblical anthropology to a close, let me turn finally to three recent studies that expand somewhat the range of issues under consideration. Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce have examined issues of "self"

²⁸ John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), xv.

²⁹ E.g., William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

³⁰ E.g., Philip F. Esler, *New Testament Theology: Communion and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 241; Philip S. Johnston, "Humanity," in *NDBT*, 564–65 (565); J. Knox Chamblin, "Psychology," in *DPL*, 765–75 (766–67). See also the combined effort of James Porter Moreland (philosopher) and Scott B. Rae (biblical scholar and ethicist): *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 17–47.

³¹ John W. Cooper, "Response to *In Search of the Soul: 'I Don't Think It's Lost'*" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers, Philadelphia, 20 November 2005).

and “identity” in John’s Gospel and the Pauline letters, emphasizing especially the spatial categories each theologian deploys – in the case of Paul, “inner” and “outer”; in the case of John, “above” and “below.”³² The struggle between these opposing parts constructs a dualism of sorts, but a dialectic rather than an ontological division. To substitute chronological for spatial images, the center of this dialectic is the embodied metamorphosis of the old person into the new, a transformation instigated in “new birth” (John) or “new creation” (Paul) by the work of the Holy Spirit. Destro and Pesce introduce into their analysis a potentially helpful ambiguity when they speak of “the non-bodily parts” of the human, and when they claim that “the Spirit is in contact not only with the mind, but transforms the body, taking over the entire man.”³³ They deny that Paul works with “a radical dualism,”³⁴ but leave open the possibility of other anthropological models; at the very least, they remind us that, for these two early Christian theologians, human capacities cannot be reductively explained by recourse to human physicality. What is more, Destro and Pesce surface issues of personal “identity” by urging that these two NT voices articulate the formation of “self” as a journey from previous self-identity to a new identity arising from the work of the Spirit.

Robert Di Vito has performed an invaluable service by situating OT anthropology, and specifically the construction of personal identity, in relation to contemporary perspectives in the West, the latter most notably sketched by the philosopher Charles Taylor.³⁵

³² Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce, “Self, Identity, and Body in Paul and John,” in *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience* (ed. Albert I. Baumgarten, J. Assmann, and G.G. Stroumsa; SHR 78; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 184–97.

³³ Destro and Pesce, “Self, Identity, and Body,” 193, 196.

³⁴ Destro and Pesce, “Self, Identity, and Body,” 189 n. 24.

³⁵ Robert A. Di Vito, “Old Testament Anthropology and the Construction of Personal Identity,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 217–38; see also his essay, “Here One Need Not Be One’s Self: The Concept of ‘Self’ in the Old Testament,” in *The Whole and Divided Self: The Bible and Theological Anthropology* (ed. David E. Aune and John McCarthy; New York: Crossroad, 1997), 49–88. For Charles Taylor’s construction of the modern self, see his *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Refusing the kind of extreme polarity between “modern” and “ancient” views of the human person one finds in some attempts to employ insights from cultural anthropology in biblical studies,³⁶ Di Vito nonetheless documents clear points of tension. From Taylor, he summarizes the modern sense of the human in terms of the location of dignity in self-sufficiency and self-containment, sharply defined personal boundaries, the highly developed idea of my “inner person,” and the conviction that my full personhood rests on my exercise of autonomous and self-legislative action. Di Vito finds in the OT a very different portrait, one in which the person

1) is deeply embedded, or engaged, in his or her social identity, 2) is comparatively decentered and undefined with respect to personal boundaries, 3) is relatively transparent, socialized, and embodied (in other words, is altogether lacking in a sense of “inner depths”), and 4) is “authentic” precisely in his or her heteronomy, in his or her obedience to another and dependence upon another.³⁷

One of the benefits of Di Vito’s work is its movement beyond the question of “the essence of the human person” to consideration of a wider range of issues in the study of human identity. Of course, one may still inquire, what portrait of the human person (unity, duality, etc.) best supports this way of conceiving of personal identity?

Finally, returning again to a more narrow interest in the NT, Klaus Berger has written an engaging and wide-ranging “biblical psychology,” including discussion of several motifs relevant to our interests: personal identity, the nature of embodied existence, and the notion of an “inner” and “outer” person.³⁸ Of special interest is Berger’s dexterity in drawing out the implications, whether theological or psycho-social, of his observations. Thus, for example, having asserted that NT texts “know nothing of a bifurcation of

³⁶ E.g., Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (rev. ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 63–89.

³⁷ Di Vito, “OT Anthropology,” 221.

³⁸ Klaus Berger, *Identity and Experience in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

the human being into separate categories called ‘body’ and ‘soul,’”³⁹ he goes on to suggest how many of the contemporary questions we pose have no traffic in the world of the NT. In that world, elements of such polarities as visible and invisible, knowledge and behavior, and faith and works resist unambiguous differentiation, with the one merging into the other. Moreover, if the self is experienced as outer-directed, in terms of one’s community, then relationality, freedom, status, suffering, marginality, and even clothing, are cast in a different light. Berger’s historical psychology urges reconsideration of all sorts of taken-for-granted categories, including, for example, Gundry’s emphasis on physicality. In this case, it is not that Berger wants to deny the flesh and bones of human corporeality, but that this emphasis on body-as-physicality undermines what is for Berger the more basic category of embodied relationality endemic to a theological anthropology of the *sōma*.

Perusing the literature on biblical anthropology, one might be forgiven for imagining that at least one aspect of the discussion on the nature of the human person had been resolved by the turn of the twenty-first century. This is the question whether the human creature is a singular whole, a bio-psycho-spiritual unity, as opposed to either a dichotomous (body-soul) or trichotomous (body-soul-spirit) being. However, even if a threefold division of the human person attracts few champions today,⁴⁰ dualism, in its many forms, continues to enjoy widespread popularity. Undoubtedly, this is due in part to the elevated importance of dualism in the theological tradition. So much of Christian anthropology is anchored to a dualist narrative that any other rendering of the human person might seem to shake one of the main pillars of

³⁹ Berger, *Identity and Experience*, 6.

⁴⁰ Outside of scholarly discussion, a trichotomous view is more prevalent. In some popular Christian circles, esp. among charismatics, the influence of Watchman Nee has been enormous; see esp. his *The Spiritual Man* (3 vols.; New York: Christian Fellowship, 1968). Among more recent writers, see, e.g., John C. Garrison, *The Psychology of the Spirit: A Contemporary System of Biblical Psychology* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris, 2001).

Christian faith itself. It is not for nothing that Francis Crick entitles the last chapter of his book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis*: “Dr. Crick’s Sunday Morning Service.” Having dispensed with the soul on scientific grounds, Crick goes on to dispense with the worship of God, substituting in its place a celebration of neurons and the promise that scientific certainty will rid us of the errors of revealed religion.⁴¹ And, in fairness to Crick, I doubt that the Sunday morning sermon announcing, “Sorry, but your soul just died” (to borrow the title of novelist Tom Wolfe’s lamentation of “the neuroscientific way of life”),⁴² is likely to be heard as “good news.”

What is clear, though, is the pivotal importance allocated by students of biblical anthropology to the witness of the Old and New Testaments to the *embodied* existence of humans. A second common motif is the understanding of the human person always in relation to God – a perspective that, since Bultmann, has transformed so as to emphasize relationality within the human community as well. Interestingly, this heightened emphasis on embodiedness and relationality has not led the discussion far in the direction of the human relatedness to the cosmos, though this seems to be an inescapable ramification.⁴³ Where the status of the human creature vis-à-vis the non-human creation has thus far entered the conversation is in relation to debate around the “image of God” in which humanity is created (see below, ch. 2).

A third concern that has surfaced is the issue of method – that is, how best to approach a biblical anthropology. Earlier studies were more dependent on word studies, later studies less so. This shift is due in part to the inconclusive nature of the lexical evidence, itself a demonstration that the Old and New Testaments develop no technical vocabulary to denote human essences, but also to heightened

⁴¹ Francis H. Crick, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 255–63.

⁴² Tom Wolfe, “Sorry, but Your Soul Just Died,” in *Hooking Up* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2000), 89–109.

⁴³ See Michael A. Rynkiewich, “What about the Dust? Missiological Musings on Anthropology,” in *What about the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology* (ed. Joel B. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 133–44.

sophistication in the study of language among biblical scholars portended by James Barr's 1961 shot across the bow of the traditional "word study."⁴⁴

This problem of language is related to the further obstacle that the Bible knows nothing of a speculative or a philosophical interest in definitions of the human person. This means that scholars may struggle with finding the appropriate vocabulary for representing the anthropology of the biblical material. Theologian Ted Peters has complained that, "when philosophers of religion get their intellectual fingers wrapped around an issue such as the human soul, they squeeze out more distinctions than Minute Maid can squeeze out orange juice."⁴⁵ The nuance we find in the biblical materials is far less discriminating – hence, the struggle to represent well the character of the evidence.

Apart from this interest in the "essence(s)" of the human person, other issues have begun to surface, primarily in the service of attempts to hear the voices of biblical texts on their own terms and for their potential challenge to contemporary constructions of the human person and the family of humanity. The character of sin (including the theological problem of "original sin"), the nature of human freedom and responsibility, what constitutes personal identity – these and a host of related issues invite renewed attention. Why these interests? First, theologically, I am interested in the potential of a disorientation or destabilization funded by the juxtaposition of alien perspectives with familiar ones, those promoted by Scripture with those taken for granted today, on such staples as freedom, salvation, Christian formation, and the character of the church and its mission. Given the human propensity to find in the biblical materials a mirror for already-held views, including the

⁴⁴ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). Unfortunately, the confusion between *words* and *concepts* continues in more popular circles, where use of the term "soul" in a biblical text (e.g., Mary's words, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" [Lk. 1:46–47]) is taken as proof of dualism (or, in this case, perhaps even a trichotomous anthropology).

⁴⁵ Ted Peters, "The Soul of Trans-Humanism," *Dialog* 44 (2005): 381–95 (389–90).

contours of theological anthropology, might there yet be probing perspectives and nuance to which we may tune our ears? Second, I am concerned to take seriously the scientific underpinnings of all assessments of the human person – whether those of the biblical writers, those of the tradition of interpretation of the biblical materials, or those of contemporary readers of these materials, including our own. What is the effect of studying biblical anthropology in today’s context of scientific inquiry?

Traditional Theological Anthropology and Contemporary Challenges

My interest in biblical anthropology is not a speculative exercise, but grows out of interaction with perspectives on the human person in biology and philosophy. In particular, the emerging discipline of “neurophilosophy”⁴⁶ – that is, study at the interface of the neurosciences and more traditional concerns of the philosophy of mind – has surfaced questions of genuine interest to persons who turn to the Bible for religious insight and formation. Well-known in the annals of the relationship between scientific innovation and theology are the revolutionary proposals of Copernicus and Darwin. Today, some theologians have rightly seen that the encounter of long-held theological tenets regarding the human person with principled reflection on neuroscientific innovation is a major storm brewing on the horizon, one with the potential to be just as sweeping (if not more so) in its effects among theologians and within the church. As OT scholar Lawson Stone has rightly predicted, given traditional theological views about the human person

⁴⁶ For this neologism, see Patricia Smith Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986); and the user-friendly sequel, *Brain-Wise: Studies in Neurophilosophy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002). For a self-consciously Christian and theological foray into this discussion, see the various publications of Nancey Murphy, esp. now *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (CIT; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

– for example, regarding body-soul dualism and the immortality of the soul – ideas that have become the bread and butter of most strands of neurophilosophy raise serious challenges against the coherence of the Christian vision of human life.⁴⁷

Neuroscientists and philosophers conclude similarly. “Bit by experimental bit,” writes Patricia Smith Churchland, “neuroscience is morphing our conception of what we are.”⁴⁸ Introducing recent work on the origins and nature of human consciousness, Thomas Metzinger observes, “There is a new image of man emerging, an image that will dramatically contradict almost all traditional images man has made of himself in the course of his cultural history.” This new image “will be strictly incompatible with the Christian image of man, as well as with many metaphysical conceptions developed in non-Western religions.” Genetics, evolutionary psychology, computational neuroscience – these and other fields of inquiry are generating “a radically new understanding of what it *means* to be human,” he writes, before going on to index some of our previously secure beliefs that now teeter on the brink of obsolescence: free will, for example, or the locus of one’s “self” in an ontologically distinct “soul.”⁴⁹ Francis Crick, who shared the 1962 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for discoveries concerning DNA and its significance for information transfer in living matter, thought that developments in the neurosciences challenged many widely-held views of the human person. This led him to claim that “the idea that man has a disembodied soul is as unnecessary as the old idea that there was a Life Force. This is in head-on contradiction to the religious beliefs of billions of human beings

⁴⁷ Lawson G. Stone, “The Soul: Possession, Part, or Person? The Genesis of Human Nature in Genesis 2:7,” in *What about the Soul? Neuroscience and Christian Anthropology* (ed. Joel B. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 47–61 (48). Similarly, see John Taylor, “Humanity as a Species among the Species,” in *The Dynamics of Human Life* (ed. Mark Elliott; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 1–33 (2–5); stating that “the soul is under threat from scientific advance,” Taylor adds the corollary of diminished notions of human freedom and, thus, moral responsibility.

⁴⁸ Churchland, *Brain-Wise*, 1.

⁴⁹ Metzinger, “Consciousness Research,” 6.

alive today.” Crick wonders, “How will such a radical change be received?”⁵⁰

Of course, theological reflection on the human person has not been sitting idly by. Jürgen Moltmann, for example, observes that, “from its earliest beginnings, the history of Western anthropology shows a tendency to make the soul paramount over the body, which is thus something from which the person can detach himself, something to be disciplined, and made the instrument of the soul.” Indeed, he observes, “This tendency is an essential element in the history of freedom in the Western world.”⁵¹ Moltmann goes on to develop an alternative approach, emphasizing human embodiment within the biblical tradition, but he is well aware that, in doing so, he is swimming against the tide. For his part, Wolfhart Pannenberg has observed that advances with regard to the close mutual interrelations of physical and psychological occurrences have robbed of their credibility traditional ideas of a soul distinct from the body that is detached from it in death.⁵² Nevertheless, Paul Jewett spoke for many when he insisted that the biblical witness to the essential unity and wholeness of the personal self does not counter a twofold view of human nature that distinguishes body and soul, with the soul an immaterial objective reality.⁵³

Theologians ancient and contemporary have found in an anthropology of body-soul dualism either the necessary supposition or corollary of a number of theological loci, including creation in the divine image, a theology of free will and moral responsibility, hope of life-after-death, and Christian ethics. Even if they would debate the precise *origin* of the soul,⁵⁴ as early as the second century

⁵⁰ Crick, *Astonishing Hypothesis*, 261.

⁵¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (The Gifford Lectures 1984–85; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 244.

⁵² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991–98), 2:181–202.

⁵³ Paul K. Jewett, *Who We Are: Our Dignity as Human: A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (with Marguerite Shuster; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 36–46.

⁵⁴ Are souls created by God *ex nihilo* at the moment of their infusion into the body (Lactantius, Aquinas, Peter Lombard)? Are body and soul formed together (Tertullian, Luther)? Are souls pre-existent (Origen)?

of the Christian era it was nonetheless clear to most theologians, as the *Epistle to Diognetus* (§6) puts it, that “the soul lives in the body, but it does not belong to the body”; indeed, “the soul, which is invisible, is put under guard in the visible body” and “the soul is imprisoned in the body, but it sustains the body.”⁵⁵ That these statements provide the basis for a parabolic description of the place of Christians in the world speaks to their status as widely held presupposition. “Without the soul, we are nothing,” wrote Tertullian, adding, “there is not even the name of a human being – only that of a carcass” (*On the Flesh of Christ* 12). Summarizing in his *Treatise on the Soul*, Tertullian writes, “The soul, then, we define to be sprung from the breath of God, immortal, possessing body, having form, simple in its substance, intelligent in its own nature, developing its power in various ways, free in its determinations, subject to be changes of accident, in its faculties mutable, rational, supreme, endued with an instinct of presentiment, evolved out of one (archetypal soul)” (22). Lactantius observed early in the fourth century that the body, formed from the earth, is solid and mortal – “made up of a ponderous and corruptible element,” “is tangible and visible, is corrupted and dies”; but the soul “received its origin from the Spirit of God, which is eternal” (*Divine Institutes* 12). He observes, “The body can do nothing without the soul. But the soul can do many and great things without the body” (*Divine Institutes* 11). Traditionally, the doctrine of humanity develops the uniqueness of humanity with respect to human creation in the divine image and the human possession of a soul. Often these two affirmations are reduced to one, with the soul understood as the particular expression of creation in God’s image.

It is true that, for persons of faith – Christians included, but many others besides – the idea of a soul separable from the body

⁵⁵ ET in Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers* (2 vols.; LCL 24–25; Cambridge, MA: HUP, 2003), 2:143. Apart from the documents collected by Ehrman, translations of the church fathers are taken from Alexander Roberts et al., eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (10 vols.; Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885–87; reprint ed., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).

has contributed a great deal. A register of what is at stake in the current discussion is as impressive as it may be troubling. For example:

- Given contemporary experimentation and innovation in the area of Artificial Intelligence, can we imagine anything about humans that our mechanical creations will be unable to duplicate?⁵⁶
- If, like sheep and pigs, humans can be cloned, will the resulting life form be a “person”?
- On what basis might we attribute sacred worth to human beings, so that we have what is necessary for discourse concerning morality and for ethical practices?⁵⁷
- What view of the human person is capable of funding what we want to know about ourselves theologically – about sin, for example, as well as moral responsibility, repentance, and growth in grace?⁵⁸
- Am I free to do what I want, or is my sense of decision-making a ruse?⁵⁹
- How should we understand “salvation”? Does salvation entail a denial of the world and embodied life, focusing instead on my “inner person” and on the life to come? How ought the church to be extending itself in mission? Mission to what? The spiritual or soulish needs of persons? Society-at-large? The cosmos?⁶⁰
- What happens when we die? What view(s) of the human person is consistent with Christian belief in life-after-death?⁶¹

⁵⁶ Cf., e.g., Michael Fuller, “A Typology for the Theological Reception of Scientific Innovation,” *S&CB* 12 (2000): 115–25; Paul Mullin, “Can the Image of God Ever Be Artificial?” *Research News and Opportunities in Science and Theology* 3, no. 6 (2003): 7, 27; Noreen L. Herzfeld, *In Our Image: Artificial Intelligence and the Human Spirit* (TSc; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

⁵⁷ Cf., e.g., Kevin J. Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialistic Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 83–117; Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*.

⁵⁸ See below, chs. 3–4.

⁵⁹ See below, ch. 3.

⁶⁰ See below, ch. 4.

⁶¹ See below, ch. 5.

Juxtaposed with study of the portrait of humanity in the biblical materials in the past 70 years, this list of contemporary questions suggests the degree to which biblical studies and the natural sciences have inhabited different worlds. This is unfortunate, since assumptions about the natural sciences are inescapable for students of the Bible, irrespective of whether those assumptions are acknowledged.

Why Science Matters

As I will document in successive chapters, the neurosciences impinge on many of the classical loci of theological anthropology and, at the least, provide a context within which to struggle with biblical-theological claims regarding the human person. Some may be slow to allow these two claims, dismissing the idea that neuroscience might have a seat at the table of theological method. For example, when, as neurobiology and evolutionary psychology increasingly urge, the attributes and capacities traditionally allocated to the human soul are conditioned in every detail by biological processes, on what basis can belief in a soul be maintained? Some might simply exclaim, So much the worse for science! If science and Christian belief stand at odds on the question of the existence of the soul, then Christian belief must trump science. Presumably, the same response would be forthcoming on other issues too – for example, regarding human freedom and responsibility. But this way of thinking begs an important question – namely, whether science ought to be excluded as a source for Christian theology.

Some may grant the former claim but not the latter, presuming that systematic theologians and ethicists might take notice of neuroscientific discovery, but exegetes have no business allowing twenty-first-century data on fMRI's, dendritic plasticity, and Alien Hand Syndrome to inform our interpretive work. The most simple reply is that science *already* informs exegesis; it is only a question of which science or whose, good science or bad.

At the same time, in terms of a biblical anthropology, it is important to recall that the questions I have identified have for the most part not come as alien intrusions into the discipline of biblical studies. The neurosciences may underscore their importance, but the basic questions are already familiar in biblical scholarship. In fact, as we have seen, in the discipline of biblical studies, impulses toward a reconstruction of our understanding of human nature – away from notions of body-soul dualism, toward some form of monism – cannot be tied to the influence of or familiarity with neurological or psychological explorations. Rather, a constellation of issues and concerns has coalesced in biblical studies over the last century with the result that theories of body-soul dualism are today difficult to ground in the Bible.

Should neuroscience have a voice in theological method? In a biblical hermeneutic? In the last century, Karl Barth's voice was prominent in these matters. For Barth, natural science had little relevance for theology, for science comprises a competing ideology. Since faith comes by means of divine encounter, Barth spoke against the possibility of discovering, discerning, or encountering God through natural science. The revelation of God is not available through natural mediation. Although creation makes possible the covenantal relationship between God and humanity, the chasm between Creator and creation disallows humans from making valid judgments about what we may know concerning the Creator on the basis of creation. For Barth, theology and the natural sciences comprise non-interactive disciplines, with each having its own respective magistrate.⁶²

In the history of the interaction of faith and science, however, Barth's is a minority position.⁶³ Indeed, in concert with the rise of the

⁶² See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3: *The Doctrine of Creation*, part one (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958).

⁶³ See, e.g., Denis Alexander, *Rebuilding the Matrix: Science and Faith in the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003); also Edward Grant, *Science and Religion, 400 BC to AD 1550: From Aristotle to Copernicus* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Richard G. Olson, *Science and Religion, 1450–1900: From Copernicus to Darwin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

New Science in the 1600s, the concept of “two books” became a regular fixture in seventeenth-century English natural theology. Science was nothing more than investigation into God’s creation. True, the materialist focus of New Science could marginalize the need for God, but, it was insisted, this was neither a necessary consequence of scientific investigation nor an appropriate use of science. First published in 1642, Thomas Browne’s *Religio medici* insisted that the physician was not doomed to atheism, for the physician’s work leads to God; Scripture and the natural world formed a dual pathway to God.⁶⁴ Similarly, Richard Cumberland’s *De legibus naturae* argued that mechanistic physics need not devolve into unorthodoxy in ethical theory nor into atheism; when atheism was the result, not science but impiety was to blame.⁶⁵ Perhaps most famous was Robert Boyle’s *A Free Inquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature*, which opposed the materialist infidels and insisted that the new, mechanistic science was religion’s invincible ally.⁶⁶ Thomas Willis, who coined the term “neurology,” was a key figure in setting the study of the brain and nervous system on its present course. In his preface to *The Anatomy of the Brain* (1681), Willis likened his dissection table to “the most holy Altar of Your Grace” – Gilbert Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury – and referred to his work as an examination of “the Pandects of Nature, as into another Table of the Divine Word, and the greater Bible: For indeed, in either Volume there is no high point, which requires not the care, or refuses the industry of an Interpreter; there is no Page certainly which shews not the Author, and his Power, Goodness, Trust, and Wisdom.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Andrew Cunningham, “Sir Thomas Browne and his *Religio Medici*: Reason, Nature and Religion,” in *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (ed. Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham; Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), 12–61.

⁶⁵ Jon Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England: Richard Cumberland’s De legibus naturae* (SH ns; Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999).

⁶⁶ Robert Boyle, *A Free Inquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature* (ed. Edward B. Davis and Michael Hunter; CTHP; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1686]).

⁶⁷ Thomas Willis, *The Anatomy of the Brain and Nerves* (trans. Samuel Pordage; ed. William Feindel; CML; Birmingham: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978 [1681]), 51–52.

More recently, Alister McGrath has insisted that the Christian doctrine of creation demands a unitary approach to knowledge. If God made the world, then it is only to be expected that something of God's character would be disclosed in creation. Consequently, for McGrath, there are two modes of knowing God – the natural order and Scripture – with the second clearer and fuller than the first.⁶⁸ As Augustine had written centuries earlier, “Some people read books in order to find God. But the very appearance of God's creation is a great book.” He advised, “Ponder heaven and earth religiously.”⁶⁹

Theologically, science must be taken seriously, first, on account of our doctrine of creation. This means that, for the Christian, inquiry starts not from “science,” but from the Christian tradition in its understanding of nature in its creatureliness. Of course, until the modern era, discussion of science-theology relations was almost unnecessary, since science, philosophy, and religion comprised the same vocation, proceeded from the same intellectual impulses, and focused on the same subject matter. In fact, Galen (129–199/216 CE), the celebrated medic whose writings were to dominate medicine for almost 1400 years, entitled one of his books, *That the Best Physician Is also a Philosopher*. On account of the Christian doctrine of creation, theology is an all-encompassing enterprise, so that the subsequent segregation of science from theology could not mean that science would fall outside the purview of theology. Moreover, in so far as science is present as one of the sources for the theological enterprise, theology remains open to the possibility of reformulation in relation to scientific discovery.

Epistemologically, we cannot bypass the reality that, whether acknowledged or not, natural science is and has always been part

⁶⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology*, vol. 1: *Nature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001). Cf. R.J. Berry, *God's Book of Works: The Nature and Theology of Nature* (Glasgow Gifford Lectures; London: T&T Clark, 2003).

⁶⁹ Augustine, *Sermo Mai* 126; ET in Karlfreid Froehlich, “‘Take up and Read’: Basics of Augustine's Biblical Interpretation,” *Int* 58 (2004): 5–16 (12).

of our worldview – recognizing, of course, that “natural science” takes forms and follows protocols today that in many of its particulars would hardly be recognizable to Babylonian, Egyptian, or Greek scientists and natural philosophers. The question is not whether science will influence exegesis (or vice versa) since the two, science and religion, have interacted and continue to interact in a far more organic way than is typically acknowledged. As a consequence, from a historical perspective, it is virtually impossible to extricate the one influence from the other, or chronologically to prioritize one vis-à-vis the other. This is true in regard to the science presumed of the biblical writers. It is also true of the science presumed of biblical interpreters and theologians from the second century onward. We have before us a long history of interpreters of biblical texts who have engaged those texts on the basis of scientific views of the human person pervasive in the worlds of those interpreters (irrespective of their currency in antiquity or today).

A case is easily made, for example, that the New Science that emerged in the 1600s, characterized by a materialist focus that continues to this day, was a byproduct of innovations in biblical hermeneutics. Peter Harrison has argued that the sort of biblical interpretation championed by the Protestant Reformers, with its focus on “literal interpretation,” opened up the possibility for new ways of viewing the order of nature.⁷⁰ According to the medieval encyclopedia, the universe was “nothing other than an emanative outpouring from the unknowable and unnameable One down to the furthest ramifications of matter,” with every being functioning as “a synecdoche or metonymy of the One.”⁷¹ If the entire sensible world is a book written by the hand of God, then all of nature serves metaphorically to reveal the Divine Author. Exegesis of the cosmos, then, proceeded along the lines of exegesis of the Bible, in accordance with the traditional theory of the four levels of interpretation: the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the analogical.

⁷⁰ Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁷¹ Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (AS; Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984), 103.

When Protestant interpretation countered this fourfold method of exegesis, in favor of the *sensus litteralis*, it followed only naturally that nature, too, would be examined along different lines. “Literalism means that only words refer; the things of nature do not. In this way the study of the natural world was liberated from the specifically religious concern of biblical interpretation, and the sphere of nature was opened up to new ordering principles.”⁷² In effect, Harrison insists, it is not that the New Science urged new interpretations of the Bible, but that new emphases in hermeneutics, worked out with reference to Holy Scripture, pressed for fresh conceptualizations of the world. Even if Harrison has too easily cast Protestant interpretation into a single mold and exaggerated the innovations of Protestant exegetes vis-à-vis their Catholic counterparts,⁷³ his study further underscores the significant degree to which biblical interpretation and science have interacted in ways that are mutually forming and informing.

On the other hand, it is worth inquiring whether a substantive view of the soul in Christian thought is a consequence of unadulterated exegesis (i.e., read out of the text) or a philosophical-scientific assumption read into the text (i.e., eisegesis). Representing Pharisaic views, for example, Josephus catered to the Greco-Roman intelligentsia, formulating a body-soul dualism quite at odds with Israel’s Scriptures but very much at home in the Platonic tradition. The question remains to what degree Josephus has accurately represented, or exaggerated, Pharisaism on this point. And it almost goes without saying that OT views of the human person, death, and the afterlife underwent metamorphosis in some Second Temple Jewish literature under the influence of Greek and later Roman science/philosophy.

In any case, the path blazed by Josephus was taken by early Christian theologians as well, who articulated the faith in culturally relevant terms – so much so that this articulation would

⁷² Harrison, *Bible*, 4.

⁷³ See Kenneth J. Howell, *God’s Two Books: Copernican Cosmology and Biblical Interpretation in Early Modern Science* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

eventually seem to be the core of biblical anthropology itself. Indeed, with the rise of “neurology,” the human soul (or, as Thomas Willis labeled it, the “Rational Soul”) was a given, the existence of which was unassailable; it stood outside the realm of inquiry and yet was left without any real purpose. That is, in the work of Willis, “soul” was delimited in ways that left the doctrine singularly undeveloped: What role any longer justifies its existence in a conception of the human person? If the capacities constitutive of the human being traditionally allocated to the immaterial soul are identified with neuronal processes, then the need underlying the attribution of an immaterial soul to the human being vanishes. In this case, one might conclude that what makes us singularly human is the complexity of our brain – or, better, the properties and capacities that have this complex brain as their anatomical basis.⁷⁴ If human identity is grounded in consistency of memory; if the differentiating marks of the human person are the development of consciousness, individuality within community, self-consciousness, the capacity to make decisions on the basis of self-deliberation, planning and action on the basis of that decision, and taking responsibility for these decisions and actions;⁷⁵ and if these have a neural substrate, then the concept of “soul,” as traditionally understood in theology as a person’s “authentic self,” seems redundant. That is, the “Rational Soul” seems to have been relegated to the status of an epiphenomenon, not involved causally in bringing about the actions attributed to it and so without real explanatory force. It would be too much to say that Willis is responsible for all of this. However, given his emerging view that psychological processes are dependent on neural activity – and, more specifically, his location of thought, volition, perception, affect, imagination, and memory in the various structures of the brain – it is easy to see that Willis’ work set neurobiology firmly on

⁷⁴ See Silvia Helena Cordoso and Renato M.E. Sabbatini, “What Makes Us Singularly Humans?” *Brain & Mind* (2000) [http://www.epub.org.br/cm/n10/editorial-n10_i.htm]; accessed 21 January 2002.

⁷⁵ See Philip Hefner, *The Human Factor: Evolution, Culture, and Religion* (TSc; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 118–19.

this path. This is true in spite of the facts that Willis himself deflected such metaphysical concerns and that, on so many points in his discussions of cerebral localization, Willis' thoughts were often more speculative than data-based and, as it turned out, simply wrong.⁷⁶

To put the question sharply: If the “truth” about the human person were decisively determined by Scripture, what would happen were contravening evidence to surface from extrabiblical inquiry, particularly from scientific observation? Twenty-first-century hermeneuts will recognize the naiveté of the question itself, since “what the Scriptures teach” about the human person is always found in dialectical relationship to the presumptions brought by the interpreter to the enterprise of interpreting those texts. The better question is, then: Will we allow a particular scientific rendering of the voice of Scripture to masquerade as “timeless truth”?

Hermeneutically, then, my point is that deliberately locating our interpretive work in relation to science does not necessitate our reading contemporary science back into the ancient text in a gross form of anachronism, nor that it subject biblical interpretation to the ebb and flow of scientific discovery. We have no need to imagine that the ancients, even the biblical writers, had it right with respect to the role of cerebral spinal fluid or the ventricular cavities. (They were wrong on both accounts.) Rather, doing exegesis in an age of science increases our awareness of the scientific assumptions of the third or fourth or even eighteenth centuries that have already shaped the history of interpretation – and that have the potential to set artificially the parameters for our own reading of biblical texts. As in other forms of “interested” interpretation (whether those interests are defined socially, theologically, racially, economically, or otherwise), situating our exegetical work in relation to the neurosciences has the potential to liberate us from certain predilections that might guide our work unawares and to

⁷⁶ See Joel B. Green, “Science, Religion, and the Mind-Brain Problem: The Case of Thomas Willis (1621–1675),” *S&CB* 15 (2003): 165–85; more extensively, Carl Zimmer, *Soul Made Flesh: The Discovery of the Brain – and How It Changed the World* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

allow questions to surface that might otherwise have remained buried. Reading biblical texts through this prism, what do we find in these texts that would otherwise have remained veiled?

Some Definitions

To many Christians, the range of possible ways of giving an account of the human person may be surprising, and the assumptions and vocabulary that characterize the discussion can be bewildering, if not overwhelming. This would come as a surprise to mid-twentieth-century readers of one of the early histories of neurology, in which Walther Riese confidently asserted that the human soul, a stranger to the anatomical structures of the cerebrum, had been eliminated in the 1800s by philosophers, naturalists, and physicians.⁷⁷ More recently, biologist Richard Dawkins confidently pronounced over the demise of the idea of a human soul, “Good riddance.”⁷⁸ Nevertheless, standard textbooks on the philosophy of mind continue to discuss a range of options for articulating the nature of the relationship between mind and brain, just as neurobiologists admit to the persistence of an “explanatory gap” regarding how the physical correlates of a phenomenal state are related to our subjective feelings of that state.⁷⁹

Unrest around these issues, especially among philosophers, has yielded a plethora of options, including, for example, substance dualism, wholistic dualism, emergent dualism, naturalistic dualism, emergent monism, two-aspect monism, dipolar monism, reflexive monism, constitutional materialism, deep physicalism,

⁷⁷ Walther Riese, *A History of Neurology* (New York: MD Publications, 1959), 19–48.

⁷⁸ Richard Dawkins and Steven Pinker, “Is Science Killing the Soul?” *The Guardian-Dillons Debate*, chaired by Tim Radford, London, 10 February 1999 (*Edge* 53 [8 April 1999] {<http://www.edge.org/documents/archive/edge53.html>}; accessed 2 January 2004).

⁷⁹ Cf. Joseph Levine, “Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap,” *PPQ* 64 (1983): 354–61; Susan Greenfield, “Soul, Brain and Mind,” in *From Soul to Self* (ed. M. James C. Crabbe; London: Routledge, 1999), 108–25.

nonreductive physicalism, and eliminative materialism. With this renaissance in philosophical attention the debate has come full circle, since, in Western thought, its beginnings can be traced to the dualism of Plato (*ca.* 429–347 BCE), the monism of Aristotle (384–322 BCE), and the range of metaphysical permutations aligned along this continuum.⁸⁰ Even as early as the late fifth century BCE, however, the most famous physician of classical antiquity, Hippocrates (and those treatises attributed to him), weighed in on the relation of σῶμα (*sōma*, “body”) and ψυχή (*psychē*, “self,” “soul,” “personality”), and historically the terms of this debate have been correlated with anatomical and physiological factors, especially as these have been related to concerns of a religious sort. That is, the mind-body problem has long been the gathering point for wide-ranging perspectives – philosophy, theology, the natural sciences, and the psychological sciences being among the most prominent.

Some of the language defining the discussion can be off-putting to the non-initiated, so it may be helpful to provide brief linguistic and conceptual orientation. Arranged along a continuum, perspectives championed today can be characterized as more or less materialist, more or less dualist. On the extreme poles are two positions: (reductive or eliminative) materialism and radical dualism, both of which are difficult to square with Christian theological commitments. Dispersed between these two poles are other, generous categories within which the debate among Christians tends to be localized.

Reductive Materialism has it that the human person is a physical (or material) organism, whose emotional, moral, and religious experiences will ultimately and decisively be explained by the natural sciences. People are nothing but the product of organic chemistry. As Francis Crick has famously remarked, “‘you,’ your joys and

⁸⁰ For historical perspective, see John P. Wright and Paul Potter, eds., *Psyche and Sōma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to Enlightenment* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000); Paul S. MacDonal, *History of the Concept of Mind: Speculations about Soul, Mind and Spirit from Homer to Hume* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules.”⁸¹

Radical Dualism advocates the view that the soul (or mind) is separable from the body, having no necessary relation to the body, with the human person identified with the soul. Apart from further qualification or explanation, in this view the soul acts apart from bodily processes and the body is nothing more than a temporary and disposable holding tank (or shell) for the soul.

Wholistic Dualism in its various renditions qualifies as a form of substance dualism, but posits that the human person, though composed of discrete elements, is nonetheless to be identified with the whole which, then, constitutes a functional unity. “The soul and the body are highly interactive, they enter into deep causal relations and functional dependencies with each other, the human person is a unity of both.”⁸²

Various forms of *monism* defended among Christians require no second, metaphysical entity, such as a soul or spirit, to account for human capacities and distinctives, while insisting that human behavior cannot be explained exhaustively with recourse to genetics or neuroscience. Using various models, the monists with whom I am concerned argue that the phenomenological experiences that we label “soul” are neither reducible to brain activity nor evidence of a substantial, ontological entity such as a “soul,” but rather represent essential aspects or capacities of the self.⁸³

⁸¹ Crick, *Astonishing Hypothesis*, 3.

⁸² James Porter Moreland, “Restoring the Substance to the Soul of Psychology,” *JPsyT* 26 (1998): 29–43 (35). Among Christian writers who champion views in this category: Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting* (wholistic dualism); Hasker, *Emergent Self* (emergent dualism).

⁸³ Among Christian writers who champion views in this category: Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) (emergent monism); Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature* (constitution); Murphy, *Bodies and Souls* (nonreductive physicalism); and Gregory R. Peterson, *Minding God: Theology and the Cognitive Sciences* (TSc; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); idem, “Minding Minding God: A Response to Spezio and Bielfeldt,” *Zygon* 39 (2004): 605–14 (open-system emergence or deep physicalism).

Other terms will surface along the way, and will be defined at those points, usually in relation to these four major categories. This is enough, though, to lay the basic groundwork.

In Anticipation

An inductive approach to a biblical-theological anthropology would present its own wide-ranging agenda. This is the path often taken, whether by reference works or in the sort of project undertaken, for example, in Udo Schnelle's "New Testament Anthropology."⁸⁴ Without turning a blind eye to the usual register of anthropological issues that might occupy a biblical-theological study, the framework for this examination is somewhat different. I am particularly concerned about the perspectives on and challenges to either biblical interpretation more specifically or the Christian theological tradition more generally from reflection on modern advances in the neurosciences. If, as is often alleged, neuroscientists have discredited a dualist interpretation of the human person, I want to explore the usual corollary that, in doing so, they have also discredited biblical faith. It will become clear that I take the former claim to be true, the latter to be false. Accordingly, my selection of motifs is somewhat more focused.

Chapter 2 is concerned with what it means to be human in Scripture, focusing particular attention on the problem of "identity," the theological significance of the creation of humanity in the divine image, and, then, the importance of embodied relationality in biblical understandings of the human person. I will begin to demonstrate why I am confident that the history of interpretation in the twentieth century is essentially right in gravitating toward a monist interpretation of the human person – even if, in the end, the biblical materials urge that we resist some of the basic parameters of the discussion of portraits of the human as this is carried out by

⁸⁴ Udo Schnelle, *Neutestamentliche Anthropologie: Jesus, Paulus, Johannes* (BThS 18; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991); translated as *Human Condition*.

neuroscientists and philosophers of the mind alike. My analysis will demonstrate that, at a number of key points, biblical studies and the neurosciences are paths characterized by convergence (in the sense that they reach similar conclusions, though coming at the issues in discrete ways), not competition or contrast.

Chapter 3 takes up potential neurobiological and neurophilosophical challenges to a range of traditional affirmations of sin, original sin, free will, and the nexus between volition and responsibility. For many, in this constellation of motifs we find the chief point of conflict between evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology on the one hand, biblical faith on the other. Without denying the potential of ongoing tension among these disciplines on these issues, it is nevertheless the unfortunate case that much of the concern from the side of Christian theology is grounded in journalistic hyperbole concerning the scope of biological determinism. If ideas of determinism have been exaggerated, however, so also philosophical and, in some cases, theological perspectives on volition and responsibility have overstepped the biblical materials. My analysis will demonstrate that the neurosciences and biblical studies come at these issues from quite different perspectives but end up making a series of complementary affirmations regarding human formation and what theologians refer to as the human condition. I will also suggest that the Bible has little to say about some current expressions of free will, but what the Bible does have to say nonetheless leaves us with a notion of free will worthy of the name.

Chapter 4, in many ways, comprises the crux of an investigation of this kind, since the issues gathered here demonstrate the cash value of a cross-disciplinary conversation like the one I am promoting. How we understand salvation (and the soteriological journey of the “saved”) and the heightened importance of a local community of believers—these are two of the central concerns of this study, and they have far-reaching ramifications for our construal of the mission of the church on behalf of God in the world.

It is here that contemporary philosophical discussion around portraits of the human person comes in for its most thorough-going

critique. Given the strength of Cartesian categories and the experience of many since the Enlightenment, it is perhaps not surprising to see the degree to which humanity has come to be understood “one person at a time,” so to speak. This is not biblical faith, however. Although biblical faith would naturally resist any suggestion that our humanity can be reduced to our physicality, it also challenges those, past and present, who insist that the human person can ever be understood on individual terms. If we would articulate an account of the human person that takes with utmost seriousness the biblical record, we would have far less conversation about the existence or importance of “souls” and far more about the embodied human capacity and vocation for community with God, with the human family, and in relation to the cosmos. These are profoundly ecclesiological, soteriological, and missiological concerns.

Chapter 5 allows me to take up those eschatological questions that have come often to dominate body-soul discussion. The two central problems are interrelated. Given the Christian belief in life-after-death, and given the manifest death and decay of the observable human body, how does the “person” cross the bridge from this life to the next; and how can we be sure that the “person” in the afterlife is in fact the same “person” who lived out his or her years in this life? Here I take up the argument put forward by John Cooper in his influential book, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, as well as other, related issues, in order to demonstrate why I find his rendering of the biblical evidence unconvincing. More importantly, my analysis will demonstrate how the Bible can portray the human person as a single whole or unified being (some form of monism); allow that death is really death, allowing no prisoners, whether people are parts of persons; and nonetheless affirm resurrection of the body and life-after-death. Though I make no promises that the biblical account I will narrate will be satisfying to contemporary philosophers, I will argue that the coherence of the biblical account of the human person as a unified whole extends to its eschatological vision.