

Fathom Academy: Christian Theology

WEEK 6: HUMAN BEINGS

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Week 6: The Doctrine of Human Being

[*Anthropology*]

“The human race is just a chemical scum on a moderate-sized planet, orbiting around a very average star in the outer suburb of one among a hundred billion galaxies. We are so insignificant that I can’t believe the whole universe exists for our benefit.”

Stephen Hawking, *Reality on the Rocks* [1995]

- ***Etymology: Anthropos*** [*ἄνθρωπος*] + ***Logos***
- “***What is man [’enosh] that you should take notice of him? Of what importance is the human race [’adam] that you should pay attention to them?*” (*Psalms 8:4*)
 - “***The measure of all things*”?** (*Protagoras*)
 - “***A piece of fate*”?** (*Nietzsche*)**
- **Theological Anthropology** = a *distinctly Christian* account of what it means to be human
 - The “**What**” Question [*Constitution*]
 - The “**Who**” Question [*Imago Dei*]
 - Implications

“... then the LORD God formed the man [’*adam*] of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.”

Genesis 2:7

“So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.”

Genesis 2:21–22

The means of humanity’s createdness:

- **Humans are the product of God’s special creative act**
- **Humans are created by the intimate touch of God**
- **Human are created out of pre-existing material**
- **Humans are unique creatures distinct from animals**
- **Humans are more than dust, infused with God’s own Spirit**

Human Constitution | Classical Views

- **Monism**
- **Trichotomism**
- **Dichotomism**

***Imago Dei* | Biblical Vocabulary**

- **Hebrew: *tselem* (“image”) & *demut* (“likeness”)**
- **Greek: *eikon* (“image”) & *homoiosis* (“likeness”)**
- **Latin: *Imago Dei* (“image of God”)**

Scriptural Touchpoints | Old Testament

Genesis 1:26–27

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image [*tselem*], after our likeness [*demut*] . . . God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.”

Genesis 5:1

“This is the record of the family line of Adam. When God created humankind, he made them in the likeness [*demut*] of God.”

Genesis 9:6

“Whoever sheds human blood, by other humans must his blood be shed; for in God’s image [*tselem*] God has made humankind.

Scriptural Touchpoints | New Testament

Colossians 3:9–10

“Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man [*anthropos*] with its practices and have been clothed with the new man that is being renewed in knowledge according to the image [*eikon*] of the one who created it.”

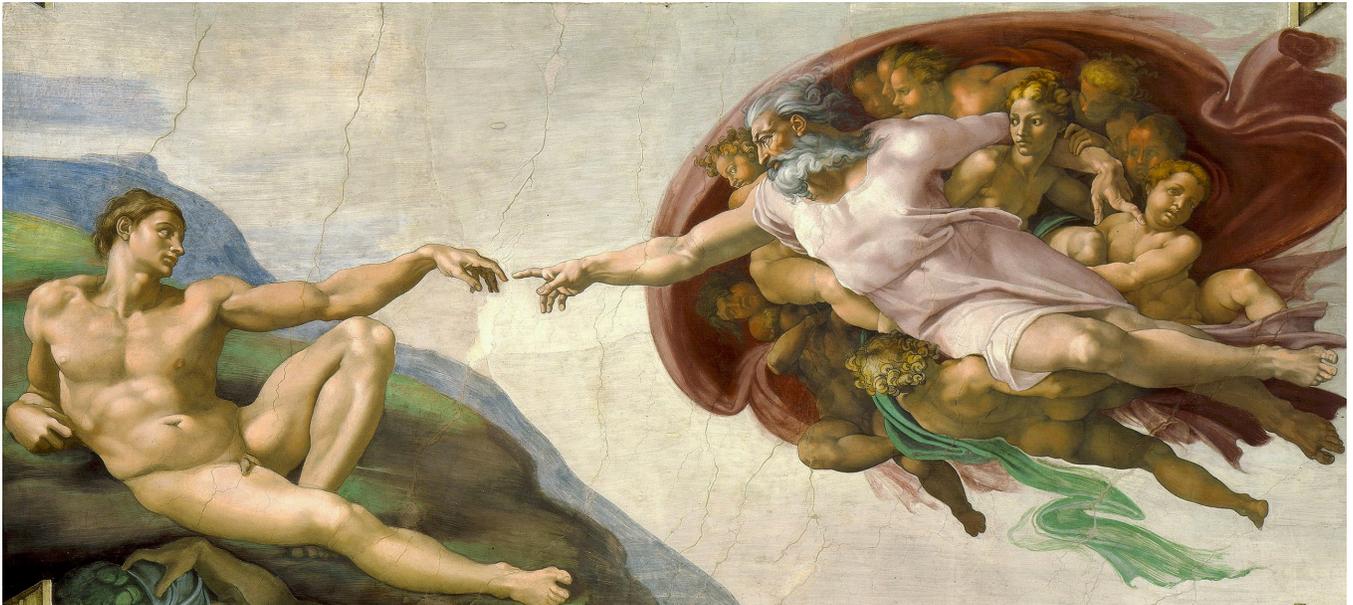
James 3:9

“But with [the tongue] we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God’s image [*homoiosis*].”

“[Humans] have some special standing as the focus of God’s concern. God may covenant with all the earth and its inhabitants (Gen. 9:10–17), but God makes a special covenant with a particular people and, despite their continual failings, remains faithful to them with a steadfast love. . . . The creation of human beings in God’s image (Gen. 1:26) may sum up this distinction. The biblical narrative remains silent, however, about any qualities of human nature that might account for their special standing.”
Kathryn Tanner, “The Difference Theological Anthropology Makes”

Imago Dei | Classical Views

- **Substantival Account**
- **Relational Account**
- **Vocational Account**
- **Holistic Account**





“The reverence I owe to every human person is connected with the reverence I owe to God, who brings them into being and keeps them in being. I stand before holy ground when I encounter another person—not because they are born with a set of legal rights which can be demanded and enforced, but because there is a dimension of their life I shall never fully see; the dimension where they come forth from the purpose of God into the world, with a unique set of capacities and possibilities. . . . The Christian Gospel declares that there is nothing more Godlike and precious than a single human person.”

Rowan Williams, *Being Disciples*