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FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE: THE CHURCH, HUMAN GENIUS, AND OUR IDENTITY AS THE IMAGE OF AN ETERNALLY INTELLIGENT BEING

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Abstract

This paper explores the theological and anthropological significance of humanity's creation in the image and likeness of God (Imago Dei). It argues that humans occupy a unique position as the second order in both creation and revelation, endowed with extraordinary intelligence, dignity, and dominion by an eternally intelligent Creator. The study examines how humanity's failure to fully appreciate this divine endowment and intimate relationship with God contributed to the Fall, the entrance of sin, and the subsequent fracturing of the human soul, body, and spirit. This rupture has manifested in widespread social ills—ranging from moral corruption and spiritual alienation to physical manifestations such as inequality, violence, substance abuse, and environmental degradation. Drawing on Scripture (particularly Genesis 1:26–27 and Psalm 8), Kevin Vanhoozer's theological insights, and supporting scholarship, the paper affirms that God adequately equipped humanity with the wisdom, knowledge, and authority needed to govern creation and resist evil. It further identifies the remote causes of humanity's current crises and points toward restoration through renewed understanding of the Imago Dei. Ultimately, the study calls for a recovery of human identity and responsibility before God, creation, and society.

Keywords: Church, Identity, Human Genius, Being, Creator

Introduction

The extraordinary intelligence and knowledge that distinguish human beings from all other creatures have not received the sustained theological and philosophical attention they deserve. Despite remarkable human achievements in science, culture, governance, and ethics, many remain reluctant to inquire deeply into the divine source of this capacity. Kevin Vanhoozer, a leading contemporary theologian, offers a clarifying framework when he states that “The Human creature comes second to God, both in the order of being (namely, Creation) and in the order of knowledge (namely,

Revelation)”) (Vanhoozer, 1997a). This dual secondness defines humanity’s unique status: derivative yet exalted, created yet crowned with glory.

A second and related failure compounds this oversight—the diminished appreciation of God’s intimate relationship with humanity. This relational neglect opened the door to Satan’s deceptive counterfeit knowledge, leading to the Fall of Man (understood generically as humankind) and the entrance of sin into God’s originally “good” and “very good” creation (Genesis 1). The consequences have been catastrophic: spiritual alienation from God, corruption of human nature, and the proliferation of social ills that continue to plague individuals and societies.

Social ills may be defined as the negative expressions of morally defective human conduct that inflict harm on both individuals and the wider society. These ills possess both physical and spiritual dimensions. Physical manifestations include social inequality, discrimination, idolatry, substance abuse, inadequate access to education and healthcare, homelessness, unemployment, environmental degradation, poverty, sexual immorality (including homosexuality, lesbianism, and related practices), murder, armed robbery, organized crime, banditry, terrorism, and various forms of life-threatening violence. At the spiritual level, they reflect the alienation of the human spirit from God, the tainting of the conscience, and the fracturing of the soul. The soul, as the mediating faculty between the physical and spiritual realms, coordinates mind, volition (will), and emotion. Its fracture disrupts all three compartments, producing disordered thinking, weakened moral resolve, and corrupted affections.

At this critical juncture of human brokenness and the collapse of harmonious relationships between God, humanity, and creation, crucial questions arise: Who bears ultimate responsibility for the entrance of sin and the consequent social ills? Who is accountable for the corruption of body, soul, and spirit, and the severance of divine-human fellowship? More pointedly: Did God fail to equip the man and woman He created in His image and likeness with the intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding necessary to live rightly and govern creation? Did He create humanity to navigate existence by chance, without adequate guidance?

This study contends that answering these latter questions adequately addresses the former ones. To ground our response, we turn to the rhetorical question posed in Psalm 8, which echoes the wonder of the angelic host:

“What are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority” (Psalm 8:4–6, NLT).

The Hebrew text of Psalm 8:5 suggests humanity was made “a little lower than *Elohim*” — a term that can refer to God or the heavenly court. The New Living Translation captures this nuance well: humans bear God’s image, have been endowed with dignity, and are charged with rule over creation (cf. Genesis 1:26–27) (New Living Translation, 2008). Far from being insignificant, humanity was fashioned by an Eternally Intelligent Being as mortal intelligent beings, granted a unique identity, abilities, and knowledge surpassing that of other creatures (Peterson, 2016a).

No other created being possesses greater capacity to know God and steward His creation than humankind. This dominion extends not only over the natural order but also, as illustrated in God’s warning to Cain (Genesis 4:7), over sin and temptation. Humanity’s ability to “rule over” evil flows directly from bearing the image and likeness of God.

This paper, therefore, proceeds by examining humanity's exalted yet dependent status, the nature and consequences of the Fall, the root causes of contemporary social ills, and the path toward restoration. By recovering a robust understanding of the *Imago Dei*, we can better comprehend both the dignity of human persons and the gravity of their moral responsibility.

Man Created in the Image of God and Likeness of Eternally Intelligent Being, Second in Creation and Revelation

The seeming unwillingness to inquire into how humans have come to exhibit extraordinary intelligence and knowledge above all other created beings is an area that has long been begging for attention. Kevin Vanhoozer, one of the world's leading theologians whose work serves as a primary reference point, opines that "the human creature comes second to God, both in the order of being (namely, Creation) and in the order of knowledge (namely, Revelation)" (Vanhoozer, 1977b). We shall return to this concept later. Secondly, human failure to comprehend the nexus of God's intimate relationship with humanity has contributed to the humiliating fall of Man (generic) to Satan's deceptive or "counterfeit" knowledge. This rebellion against divine knowledge resulted in the entrance of sin into God's creation. The Fall, however, is not without its attendant consequences.

The combination of the aforementioned factors serves as the genesis of social ills rooted in human spiritual alienation from God. Of the two primary consequences, God's perfect creation became marred by the entrance of sin. Sin has undoubtedly introduced defect and corruption into the body of creation, severing the relationship between God and Man, whom God created in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). Therefore, what are these social ills, and how can they be identified and defined? Social ills are the negative aspects of society engulfed by morally defective human conduct. These actions affect both the collective and the individuals through whom society experiences harmful dispositions, wickedness, pain, and condemnation. These negative aspects possess both physical and spiritual dimensions. Physical dimensions include social inequality, discrimination, idolatry, substance abuse, and lack of access to quality education and healthcare. They also manifest as homelessness, unemployment, environmental degradation, poverty, and attitudinal malaises such as murder, armed robbery, organized crime, banditry, terrorism, and other life-threatening vices. Conversely, the spiritual dimension involves the alienation of the human spirit from God, which taints the human conscience and fractures the soul and body. The soul acts as the "gate" between the physical and spiritual worlds; fracturing it through erroneous knowledge ultimately corrupts the human system and inhibits the ability to hear from God. It plays a sensitive role by coordinating physical and spiritual activities; thus, its fracturing invariably corrupts its three components: the mind, volition, and emotion. Who then is responsible, and to whom shall an account be rendered?

At this juncture of human demise and the collapse of the relationship between God, humanity, and creation, the focus must turn to the remote and proximate causes of this collapse and the potential way out. Having observed the devastating consequences of sin since its entrance into a creation God deemed "very good," the question remains: who is held responsible for the entrance of sin into God's creation? Who is accountable for the social ills in human society, the fracturing of the human constitution, and the ultimate severance of the relationship between the Creator and the created?

The second phase of our inquiry asks: Did God fail to provide the man He created in His image with the intelligence, wisdom, and understanding necessary to navigate the created world? Did God leave man to live by chance, devoid of guidance for earthly challenges? We shall begin by responding to these questions, specifically focusing on the latter two. Given the circumstances that generated these inquiries, answering the latter questions will invariably address all preceding concerns.

For these questions to receive comprehensive answers, we must consider a rhetorical question drawn from the Holy Scriptures, raised by God's angels: "What are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? You made them only a little lower than God and

crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority” (NLT, Psalm 8:4-6). The King James Version of the same passage asks, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:4).

Why would the angels query God for giving such profound attention to human beings and granting them dominion over His creation? In responding to these angelic questions, we must first examine the Hebrew interpretation—which suggests man is "a little lower than Elohim"—and then apply Vanhoozer’s definition regarding the order of human existence in creation.

From the Hebrew perspective, to be made "a little lower than the angels" connotes being made like God; Man (generic) was made a little lower than *Elohim*. The New Living Translation clarifies this: “Yet you made him [Man] a little lower than Elohim. Humans bear God’s image. The Lord has endowed humans with dignity and charged them to rule (Gen. 1:26-27)” (*New Living Translation*, 2008). This explanation presupposes that Man was made by an eternally intelligent Being who created a mortal intelligent being endowed with dignity and a specific identity (Peterson, 2016b). This identity grants abilities and knowledge superior to all other created things. No being, created or imagined, possesses a greater capacity for knowledge of God and His creation than the human being. Vanhoozer captures this by stating that humanity comes "second both in the order of being (namely creation) and in the order of knowledge (namely revelation)." This capacity to rule is further illuminated by Genesis 4:7. Summarily, God informed Cain that he possessed not only mastery over creation but also the potential to rule over temptation. If Cain could rule over evil temptation, he could likewise stand against the devil's wiles because he was of the seed made in God's image and likeness.

Identity and the Imago Dei

Continuing in this vein of the *Imago Dei*, we look not just at the order of being but at identity. Ryan S. Peterson, in *The Imago Dei as Human Identity*, argues that humanity draws its common identity from God. Regarding dominion, he opines: “For humanity to share in God’s dominion over the earth in a creaturely way is paradigmatic for understanding the further ways in which humanity is meant to pattern its being-in-the-world after God’s economic action” (Peterson, 2016c). Peterson suggests that Man was created to act in a capacity mirroring God's own, as an archetype created to function within the "class" of God. Thematically, God would not have created a being outside of His class—even in a finite capacity—to manage, advance, or continue the act of creation. This is evident in Genesis 2:19, where Adam named the animals. Adam could not have named creatures he had never seen before unless God had revealed their nature to him, reflecting a shared intelligence.

God would have run an unavoidable risk by entrusting His creation to a being incapable of receiving revelation or one with an impaired intelligence quotient. To illustrate this, consider the following categories of limited intelligence:

- **Imbecile:** One who is stupified in reasoning, medically certified as having a low intelligence quotient.
- **Idiot:** A person considered foolish in their actions due to obviously low intelligence.
- **Cretin:** A person whose mental and physical development is impaired, often by congenital hormonal deficiencies.
- **Robot:** A mechanically programmed machine lacking rational capacity and the ability to differentiate between moral good and evil.

Since God is an eternal, moral, and personal Being, He would not, in His eternal wisdom, entrust His creation to a robot, an imbecile, or a cretin. He preferred a morally intelligent, knowledgeable, and rational being created "in His class." Such a being is uniquely qualified to be His representative, possessing the capacity to bear authority, speak for Him, and act on His behalf. A moral being of this nature is one sealed with His glory. Any being lacking this character would inevitably lead creation to the precipice of destruction.

God's choice of man as His regent and caretaker—sharing His communicable attributes—may have stirred the angels to query His choice. Yet, it also testifies to the honor and glory lavished upon humanity. The realization of "who man is" often comes at a point of crisis, much like the prodigal son in Luke 15:17: "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself: 'At home... even the hired servants have food enough to spare.'" Human beings often only realize their true identity when the circumstances of life stir their reasoning power. These circumstances of nature become noticeable when humans are confronted by the quest for better understanding or the desire to take dominion over their world. This capacity for reasoning is what fundamentally differentiates humans from all other mammals.

Reason and Reasoning

Before Creation began, God decided to hand over His work to a being He considered adequately competent. This choice was based on the need for a being He could relate to—one who could receive His knowledge because they shared personal attributes. No other creature, not even the angels, shares these essentials in the same manner as human beings. Kenneth Boa writes: "The God of the Bible is infinite, personal, and triune. Because God is a communion of three persons, one of his purposes in creating us is to display the glory of his being and attributes to intelligent moral creatures capable of responding to his revelational initiatives" (Boa, 2001). Boa's description confirms that man shares characteristics with God, albeit in a limited, finite form. For the sake of creation, God endowed man with a high intelligence quotient and sound reasoning capacity.

Reason is a primary function of the human mind, enabling wise and intelligent decisions. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines reason as a justification for an action or the power to think, understand, and form judgments. Sound reasoning cannot be achieved without employing logic and rationality prior to reaching a decision. It is a process of thinking logically and considering principles to make rightful, unbiased decisions that align with the Creator's character.

Reason, by its nature, is complemented by purpose. Purpose points humans toward an intended outcome, providing a vision of the result. Reason points to the "why"—the justification behind the necessity of an action. It allows a moral being to examine abnormal situations and retrospectively establish a justification for change. This justification is often based on a shift from the "normativity" of a thing which reason finds contrary to established truth. Reason identifies behavior not in tandem with the state of nature and initiates a purpose to address the gap.

Reason differentiates humans from other multicellular organisms, providing the power to reflect on self-worth and a shared creational identity. Humans reach self-realization when they retract their self-consciousness. The biblical narrative of the prodigal son (Luke 15:17) shows that his realization was not from external advice but from internal reasoning triggered by his circumstances. He retracted his self-identity, realizing he was a son of royalty with an inheritance. Similarly, the Book of Daniel provides imagery of this synergy. Nebuchadnezzar notes: "At the end of the days... my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High..." (Dan 4:34). His self-boasting ended when he realized his limitations.

From these narratives, one observes three common denominators:

1. Circumstance defines the return to one's senses.
2. Both subjects realized their independence was limited (the son needed his father; the King needed God).
3. Both returned to the Creator upon realizing their failures.

Reason reminds humanity that human logic is not absolute; it must conform to the nature of God. Humans are not independent of their Creator; therefore, God invites man to dialogue. The invitation to "come and reason" creates a picture of mutual trust, even when the relationship has been injured by the human party. This "conference" is an act of parleying to argue out differences through the eye

of reason. God was confident in this invitation (Isaiah 1:18) because He knew man reasoned in a class similar to His own, capable of discerning good from bad.

Vern R. Walker notes that legal reasoning is the basic principle for decision-making; without it, decisions lack merit. Reasoning allows for the interpretation of laws, constitutions, and statutes (Walker, 2026a). According to Walker, logic is “the study of the methods and principles used to distinguish correct reasoning from incorrect reasoning” (Walker, 2026b) enabling society to function. Without this, ethical values would erode, and divine moral boundaries would be breached.

It is logical to conclude that a society devoid of reasoning is a "dead" society, operating without laws to govern moral behavior. Because laws—divine or mortal—must be interpreted rationally. The human anatomy itself is evidence of incredible intelligence. Therefore, the Being that created humans must be an intelligent, moral Being who can interpret His own laws and oppose any reasoning that contradicts His nature.

Wole Olanipekun concedes that while definitions of law vary across schools of jurisprudence, the natural law school defines law as “a product of reason made for the common good of the community” (Olanipekun). Reason is the fulcrum upon which law derives meaning. Good reason is the basis for good laws and arguments. However, a corrupt mind cannot properly apply the laws of a moral God. The effects of sin on the fallen mind inhibit the ability to know God intimately, as the fallen creature tends to "distort, pervert, and confuse truth" for selfish ends (Rom. 1:18-26) (*English Standard Version Holy Bible*, 2008).

Conversely, a divine being can only exhibit moral characteristics if it is an eternal, moral being. Terms like "right" and "wrong" may be irrelevant to a pantheistic force, but they are vital to the God of the Bible, who calls us to obey His moral commands (Exo. 19:5; John 14:21) (*English Standard Version Holy Bible*). God possesses mental attributes (knowledge, wisdom) and moral attributes (goodness, love, justice) which He shares with humans. This shared nature provides the basis for communication and revelation. Understanding this *Imago Dei* is a necessary panacea to the "veil of ignorance" that causes societal ills. A radical enlightenment regarding our shared identity with the Creator is required to deliver humanity from the fall of Adam and Eve.

The Unexplainable Choice of Humans as Carriers of God’s Image and Likeness and as God’s Representatives, Ambassadors, and Regents

The quest to understand the rationale behind God’s choice to create humans—not only in His image and likeness but also as the mortal stewards of His creation rather than spiritual beings—is a central theme this paper seeks to unravel. Spiritual beings have long sought answers to these standing celestial questions (Psalm 8:4-6). Angels, by nature, are spirit beings who, according to the hierarchical order of nature, preceded the creation of humanity. While there is no explicit biblical record confirming the exact timing of their origin, Isaiah 14:12-14 alludes to events that must have occurred prior to the creation of Adam and Eve.¹

Hebrews 2:7 reiterates the sentiments of Psalm 8:4-6, yet in Hebrews 2:8, we observe angels questioning how God has placed all created things—perhaps including the angelic host—under the authority of mortal beings. Even now, humanity often fails to realize the inexplicable power, authority, and dominion they hold over a creation of which they remain largely ignorant. Angelic beings have not yet ceased their inquiry into why such preference was given to humans, who often appear oblivious to the authority at their disposal. Indeed, when evaluating the fallen state of man, the answer appears both mysterious and pitiful. However, this divine choice highlights one of God’s great incommunicable attributes: His immutability. Having chosen Man in eternity, God, in His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge, remains steadfast. No amount of external persuasion or human failure causes Him to retract His preference for humanity; hence, Jesus was sent specifically for the

sake of Man. The "Image of God" serves as a divine "diplomatic credential," authorizing humanity to function as **Ambassadors** (representing Heaven's interests), **Representatives** (reflecting Heaven's character), and **Regents** (executing Heaven's authority) over all the Earth.

Humans as God's Ambassadors

The designation of humans as God's appointed ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20: "God is making his appeal through us; we speak for Christ when we plead...") is a sacred, full-time calling rather than a mere title. This text describes believers as Christ's ambassadors, suggesting that Christians are not merely messengers but authorized representatives of Heaven, entrusted with the task of inviting a broken world back into a right relationship with God. An ambassador is an authorized representative of a sovereign authority residing in a foreign land; similarly, Christians represent the Heavenly Kingdom while living on Earth. They are not only God's mouthpiece but are also tasked with the responsibility of improving creation—adding value to it and ensuring the "security" of the Earth is maintained (Gen. 2:15). Key benefits of this heavenly appointment include divine security, supernatural provision, spiritual immunity from the enemy's destruction, and the authority to represent Heaven's interests. They are empowered to transplant Heaven's culture into the Earth, a distinct gift observable throughout biblical history.

Benefits Attached to a God's Ambassador

Benefit	Description
Divine Authority & Power	Access to Jesus' authority for ministry, including healing the sick and casting out demons.
Diplomatic Immunity	A state of being "invulnerable or unassailable" by the enemy, guarded by God like envoys in a foreign land. Their credentials are "coded" in heavenly language, understood only by those who carry God's image.
Divine Provision	God ensures their needs are met; they are not "beggarly," as the Kingdom sustains its own representatives.
A New Identity	A fundamental transformation from a citizen of the world to a representative of the Kingdom of Heaven.
Surety of Hope	An exemption from the ultimate wrath (Tribulation) destined for the earth, providing internal peace.

Spiritual Significance of God's Earthly Ambassador

- **The Ministry of Reconciliation:** Their primary role is reconciling humanity to God through the Gospel.
- **Incarnational Representation:** They embody Christ, reflecting His character and values in a world that often opposes Him.
- **A Living Epistle:** They are designed to be a living testament of Heaven on Earth.
- **Agents of Light:** Their role is to influence their environment to follow heavenly principles.
- **Intercessors:** They stand in the gap, petitioning for the world while representing God's interests (<https://www.eastwest.org>).

Right and Authority over Physical Creation

This is the enforcement of God's earlier declaration in Genesis 1:28. These iconic commands empower humanity with heavenly constitutional authority to exercise dominion, rule, and subdue. Although humanity—through lust, greed, and disobedience—forfeited these rights, they have been restored through the name of Jesus Christ.

- **Legitimacy to Use Jesus' Name:** The legal right to use the "royal signet ring" (the Name of Jesus) to command circumstances.

- **Dominion Over Nature:** Like Adam, believers possess stewardship over creation, allowing them to bring order out of chaos.
- **Authority to Arrest:** Spiritual authority to "bind" (arrest) evil spirits and hinder the works of darkness.
- **Commanding Resources:** The authority to speak blessings and make declarations that are upheld by Heaven.

Human Beings as God's Representatives

Being God's representative on Earth involves acting as a steward and ambassador who carries divine influence and exercises spiritual dominion. Benefits include the indwelling presence of God, supernatural empowerment, and the authority to effect change through prayer. Humans enjoy a delegated authority that extends beyond the contemporary world into the age to come; they are destined to judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3) and are crowned with glory to rule over creation—a mandate implying a status distinct from that of the angelic host. Acting as God's "acting God" (viceroy) on Earth, the representative gains access to constant companionship, divine wisdom, and the ability to alter environments by reflecting God's character.

Benefits Attached to God's Representative

Spiritual Significance

- **Image Bearers:** Serving as God's hands, heart, and voice in a needy world.
- **Spiritual Stamina:** The call to maintain high standards of purity and righteousness.
- **Authority Over Spirits:** The power to cast out evil spirits and reverse negative spiritual situations.
- **Access to Supernatural Resources:** Empowerment to overcome satanic and occultic opposition.
- **A Mirror of Glory:** Radiating God's glory through a lifestyle of holiness.

Rights and Authority Over Physical Creation

- **Delegated Dominion:** Managing and subduing the Earth according to divine wisdom.
- **Authority Over the Enemy:** The power to tread upon "serpents and scorpions" (Luke 10:19).
- **Decreeing Changes:** As kings and priests, their words carry the legislative power to establish God's plans.
- **Productive Prosperity:** Receiving resources specifically aimed at fulfilling Kingdom purposes.
- **Power Over the Elements:** Commanding situations to align with Heaven's agenda.

The effectiveness of this authority varies based on spiritual maturity, faith, and obedience. While every human created in the *imago Dei* has the right to these benefits, many are hindered by ignorance or a lifestyle of sin that denies them access to their divine inheritance.

Human Beings as God's Regents

To be God's regent (or vice-regent) means to act on behalf of the Supreme King, exercising His authority and managing His creation. Humans were originally created for this regal role to reflect God's loving and wise governance. Based on Genesis 1 and 2, humans are established as regents through their unique status as image-bearers. They do not act as autonomous rulers but as stewards tasked with aligning Earth with the realities of Heaven. When studying the three titles—Ambassador, Representative, and Regent—one notices that their roles overlap. These are not mere repetitions but nuances that connect the multifaceted identity of man in God's eternal plan.

Significance of Humans as God's Regent

- **Human Dignity and Worth:** Every person possesses intrinsic value; an attack on a human (Gen. 9:6) is an attack on the image of God.
- **Responsible Stewardship:** A mandate to care for the environment so that creation flourishes.

- **Reflection of Divine Character:** Rule characterized by "loving nurture" rather than "arbitrary despotism."
- **Partnering with God:** God invites humanity to be active participants in His ongoing care for the world.

Factors Qualifying Human Beings as God's Regent

- **Creation in the Imago Dei:** Denotes both relational kinship (sonship) and kingship (stewardship).
- **The Creation Mandate:** The explicit command to "subdue" and "rule."
- **Unique Creation Mechanism:** Humans were formed with special care and received the "breath of life" directly from God (Gen. 2:7).
- **Male and Female Complementarity:** Both genders jointly reflect the divine nature and share the mandate to rule.
- **Vocation of Cultivation:** The task to "till" and "keep" (Gen 2:15) the Garden.
- **Naming of Animals:** Demonstrates intellectual authority and administrative responsibility.

Created in the Image of God: The Foundation of Man's Divine Mandate

The concept of *imago Dei* is a functional appointment, establishing the ontological basis for humanity's role as the bridge between Creator and creation.

1. **Status (Ambassador):** Carrying the authority of a foreign kingdom.
 - *Divine Correspondence:* Reflecting God's holiness and justice.
 - *Legal Authority:* Exercising "heavenly jurisdiction" on Earth.
2. **Character (Representative):** Acting as the "face" of God.
 - *Moral Mirroring:* Displaying divine attributes through ethical living.
 - *Accountability:* Recognizing that every action reflects the Sovereign's nature.
3. **Function (Regent):** Ruling on behalf of the invisible Monarch.
 - *Mandate of Dominion:* Managing resources as a benevolent steward.
 - *Creative Cultivation:* Bringing order out of chaos.

Causes of Loss of Access to Benefits

- **Loss of Alignment (Disobedience):** Representing self instead of God causes a loss of divine enablement.
- **Lack of Purity:** Sin removes the "shield" of protection and disrupts the power connection.
- **Unbelief or Fear:** Allowing fear to dictate actions diminishes spiritual authority.
- **Neglect of God's Word:** Failure to study the "statutes" leads to a lack of legal standing in the spirit.
- **Ignorance of Identity:** A man can never fulfill God's purpose until he "comes to his senses" and realizes who he was created to be. This implies that man is ignorant of his identity. Man's ignorance ends the very moment he realizes that he was in the image of God and his likeness.

The Unchanging Character of God Sustains His Choice of Creating Humans in His Image and Likeness

God can never stand in contradiction to His promises; He has appointed humanity as the captains of His creation in eternity. Even before the dawn of creation, God resolved that humans would be given charge over all His works. This preference for humanity is unalterable due to the immutability of His nature. Since He remains unchanging—the very definition of His character—the Fall of Man did not nullify His intent to share His glory prodigiously with them. Although the Fall introduced sin and a curse into God's good work, corrupting the human mind and alienating it from the Creator, it did not utterly destroy the *Imago Dei*. While the image of God was distorted, God did not remove His communicable attributes from humanity. Post-Fall, the image of God remains the foundational basis for human dignity, value, worth, and biblical ethics (Gen. 9:6; James 3:8-9). Furthermore, the charge over creation remains upheld, though it can now only be fully realized through Christ, the second Adam.

There are several factors why God's choice of man as His regent—created in His image and likeness—is the sustaining force of His relationship with humanity. God created human beings for unhindered fellowship with Him (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, 2008). In His eternal wisdom, God saw no other creature capable of providing the unique joy that humans offer because of the specific attributes shared at creation. This divine delight is reflected in Scripture: "You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of your God... As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isa. 62:3-5).

This prophetic utterance from Isaiah encapsulates a relationship rooted in the delight of the *Imago Dei*. Looking back at Genesis 1:28 in the light of Hebrews 2:7-8, it is evident that God's original architectural design left nothing outside the scope of human dominion. However, the author of Hebrews observes a tension: we do not yet see all things subjected to humans, who were intended to reign over the earth in harmony with God. Today, the reverse often appears true; the world is characterized by violence, murder, hunger, poverty, strife, and inordinate behavior rather than faithfulness to God's Word.

To be made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-28) is to act as His representative and sub-ruler, reflecting His righteous rule and exercising authority in a manner conforming to His character. Beyond mere function, being in God's image implies an ontological likeness. Like God, we are spiritual and relational beings who communicate and establish bonds; like God, our souls endure eternally (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, 2008). This likeness distinguishes humanity from the rest of the created order, instilling an innate capacity for stewardship and command. As a representative of the Almighty, man acts with a "seal of authority." This capacity was demonstrated when Adam named every creature in Genesis 2:19; his decrees stood because they conformed to his untainted state. Human identity oscillates between "image" (*tselem*) and "likeness" (*demuth*), terms used for things that are similar to and representative of something else. Thus, human beings are like God in various ways and represent Him on earth (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, 2008). The term *demuth* indicates that the "image" is also a "likeness"—an image resembling the Original. Together, they signify that man is a specific, explicit representation of God (Hoekema, 1986a).

Humans exist at the intersection of the physical and spiritual realms. The command to "subdue" involves two phases: first, the governance of physical elements discernible to the mind; second, a spiritual dimension granting humans the power to resist the wiles of the Devil. Human beings follow God in the order of being (creation) and the order of knowledge (Revelation) (Vanhoozer, 1997c). Despite human frailty and the Devil's power, Scripture encourages humans to resist evil, not through personal might but by the Spirit breathed into them. Vanhoozer observes that the rational soul is the superior part of the human constitution; thus, human ranking in creation transcends mere philosophy. Finitude is not a problem to be solved, but a condition of existence. God saw His creation as "very good" (Gen. 1:31), suggesting that the limitations of the created order are not constraints to be rejected but enabling conditions for social and individual being.

Failure to optimize this potential is a matter of choice. Anthony H. Hoekema's work buttresses the idea that the capacity for choice is central to human responsibility. God did not create humans as robots or fools; He endowed them with freedom. Without this, humanity would be a collection of manipulated, unintelligent beings. Instead, God ensures that every decision is a product of a sound mind—either in obedience or disobedience—carrying specific consequences. Hoekema writes:

In sum, the human being is both a creature and a person; he or she is a created person. This is also the central mystery of Man: how can Man be both a creature and a person at the same time? As we have seen, being a creature means absolute dependence on God; to be a person means relative independence. To be a creature means that I cannot move a finger or utter a word apart from God, but conversely, to be a person means that when my fingers are moved, I moved them, and when I uttered

words by my lips, I uttered them. To be a creature means that God is the potter and we are the clay (Rom. 9:21). To be persons means that we are the ones who fashion our lives by our own decisions (Gal. 6:7-8). Being a person means that one has intelligence, which could mean having the ability to respond to issues constructively and meaningfully (Hoekema, 1986b).

Intelligence involves the capacity for logic, reasoning, creativity, and problem-solving. It is a relationship between subject and object based on intellectual rather than merely sensory apprehension; it is the correlation between a comprehending mind and a comprehensible object (Wyatt, 1996a). From a theological perspective, Wyatt states that intelligibility involves human reasoning in understanding revelation based on its logical necessity (Wyatt, 1996b). Wyatt further notes that revelation is received by humans as intelligent moral beings (Wyatt, 1996c). A divine moral Being relates to humanity through these shared personal attributes.

Bruce Waltke et al. contribute to this anthropology by noting that "in the image of God" implies Adam is "theomorphic"—having the form of God. Since God is Spirit, this entails that the human species, in its entire being, faithfully represents God (Hoekema, 1986c). This theomorphic nature allows humans to function in a divine capacity. As Hoekema puts it, mankind was "created to mirror God and to represent God" (Waltke & Yu, 2007a). While we are not God—Jesus Christ alone possesses the "exact" imprint of God (Heb. 1:3)—we reflect Him through shared aspects like perception, intentions, and emotions. Waltke et al. observe:

Human beings reflect God's being as a person, for like God, we have intellect, sensibility, volition, a sense of moral law and a sense of self-identity. Our ability to make decisions according to our intellect and sensibilities and to execute them reflects God's person as seen in the pattern of creation that finds its center in his command. Yet, God's comprehensive knowledge is radically different from human partial knowledge (Waltke & Yu, 2007b).

Ultimately, being theomorphic means humans possess a divine form enabling them to commune with God (Waltke and Yu, 2007c). Without this, it would be impossible to understand divine laws or grasp one's own identity. Without the *Imago Dei*, humans would have remained mere creatures rather than persons.

Choice as the Deterministic Basis for Good or Bad Response

In defining the relationship between God and humanity, the *Imago Dei* serves as the nexus. There is no room to deny that this image provides the basis for sound choice and judgment between right and wrong. The ability to choose between alternatives is traced to being a "person," modeled after God. Unlike the impersonal forces of some world religions, the Biblical God is a personal Being with love, mercy, emotions, and a will.

If God had not endowed humanity with these personal characteristics, humankind would exist only as a "creature"—entirely dependent, lacking rational capacity, and unable to initiate action. Entrusting creation to such a being would have been a "suicidal mission." No intelligent Being would assign governance to a creature lacking reasoning. God, however, chose to hand His creation over to a morally intelligent being who thinks and makes decisions.

The human person possesses all that is required for this stewardship:

- Ability to make wise decisions;
- Ability to choose wisely;
- Ability to make sound judgments;
- Ability to create through intellectual endowment;
- Discerning ability in touch with eternal wisdom.

These characteristics elevate humans above the rest of creation. God placed Adam in Eden to "tend and keep it" (Gen. 2:15) because Adam was a rational being capable of distinguishing between

obedience and disobedience. When Adam named the animals (Gen. 2:19-20), his decisions aligned with the Creator's. Adam was reasoning as God would, and thus no name was rejected.

From the point of commission, Adam performed excellently until the intrusion of sin. Harmony was disrupted by a wrong choice. Eve's failure to choose correctly when approached by Satan demonstrates that choice carries immense responsibility. Choice is the expression of freedom based on personal conviction. Without it, humans are mere robots. God's own choices are governed by His nature—truth, goodness, and integrity. Similarly, humans are expected to make choices that conform to these shared attributes. Whether in Eden (Gen. 2:16-17) or on the plains of Moab (Deut. 30:15-20), God consistently presents humanity with the choice between life and death.

In conclusion, when human reasoning and choice are in tune with God's character and conform to His universal laws, the world experiences harmony and joy.

The summation of the aforementioned characteristics distinguishes the human being from all other aspects of creation. Consequently, God delegated the stewardship of His creation to humanity—tasking them to manage, care for, govern, and establish the very institutions necessary for effective dominion. God's choice of human beings to oversee and control His creation stems from His divine foreknowledge that humankind possesses the requisite attributes to govern, improve, advance, and determine the trajectory of the created order. Because God recognizes that humanity is capable of making rational, constructive decisions and sound judgments, He placed Adam in the Garden of Eden with the specific mandate to tend and keep it. (Gen. 2:15.) This assignment was predicated on Adam's inherent capacity for stewardship. As a rational, intelligent, and moral being, Adam possessed the discernment to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, and obedience and disobedience. It was within this context of moral agency that God granted him liberty while establishing a boundary: "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die." (Gen. 2:16–17). This command underscores that Adam possessed the essential faculties of will, choice, and rational judgment. Furthermore, God brought the various animals formed from the ground—both the birds of the air and the creeping creatures—before Adam to be named. Adam assigned a name to every living creature, and those names were established as their identity. (Gen. 2:19–20). Although Adam was not a witness to their primordial origin, he possessed the cognitive ability to categorize and name them in a manner that received divine approval. This exercise demonstrates that Adam's initial decisions and judgments were perfectly aligned with the Creator's own intent. Because Adam's reasoning mirrored the divine intellect, not a single name was rejected or revised by God.

From the moment Adam was officially commissioned and assigned these responsibilities—as recorded in the creation narrative revealed to Moses—it is evident that he performed with an excellence reflective of God's own nature. Adam's choices were in total agreement with God's will, resulting in a world defined by peace and harmony. This celestial balance remained undisturbed until the introduction of sin. The corruption of creation occurred only when a wrong choice was made through disobedience. Eve's failure to choose correctly when confronted by Satan illustrates that the exercise of choice carries profound responsibilities and inevitable consequences when one fails to choose wisely.

Choice is defined as the human ability to select between alternatives, a process driven and anchored by the faculty of the will. It arises from deliberate and personal conviction, serving as an expression of the freedom inherent in the human experience. Without this authentic freedom of choice, human beings would be reduced to mere robots. Had God not endowed humanity with a free will, critics might have argued that His creation was imperfect or incomplete. Instead, God created humankind and empowered them with the autonomy to choose between right and wrong based on their own convictions. Human beings were not designed as automatons, but as beings gifted with moral

intelligence and a rational disposition—capable of making arguments, decisions, and choices that reflect the capacity of their Creator.

Just as God's choices are governed by His eternal nature—rooted in truth, goodness, integrity, and wisdom—human beings are expected to make choices that conform to these same virtues, which they share in a limited capacity as bearers of the *Imago Dei*. Thus, it is consistent with God's design that He presented Adam with a choice between two alternatives in the Garden (Gen. 2:16–17). This theme of moral agency persists throughout Scripture; in Deuteronomy, God presented the people of Israel with a definitive choice between life and death, a choice that, by extension, is offered to every human being created in His image (Deut 30:15, 19–20)

In conclusion, when human reasoning, choice, judgment, and decision-making are synchronized with God's character and conform to His universal laws—both physical and moral—the world experiences joy and exists in harmony with the Creator.

Wrong Choice Has Always Been by Self-Conviction

The human preference for a wrong choice over a good one has always been rooted in self-conviction. This assumption finds its origins in the early dawn of human life in the Garden of Eden, a narrative with which most world religions agree: the entrance of sin into God's good creation did not leave the world without devastating consequences. The consequential effect of the introduction of sin into creation was the birth of two distinct forms of suffering: moral and natural evil. Within the world's social order, moral evil became an intrinsic part of human life once the human person was corrupted by sin.

Biblical antecedents regarding choice demonstrate that the human preference for wrong over good consistently stems from self-conviction. This premise is rooted in the Garden of Eden, where Eve fell prey to the wrong choice of knowledge despite having every opportunity to adhere to God's virtuous knowledge. Nevertheless, she chose the "Devil's knowledge" over God's, a pivotal decision that marked the entrance of sin into creation and the beginning of evil in human history.

The entrance of sin into God's good creation brought about devastating consequences, which science often identifies through the lens of "causal effect." It is perhaps from these theological foundations that the sciences developed or adapted various causal concepts. The ultimate result of sin's introduction was the birth of two evils: moral evil and natural evil. Moral evil entered the human vocabulary and social order when sin perverted the moral, mortal being. From its inception, sin did not merely produce these two evils; its ultimate end was the perversion of beings made in the image and likeness of God. Consequently, the *Imago Dei* in humankind became corrupted. The inherent "good thoughts" of humanity were defiled, giving way to disordered desires and evil-driven actions. Thus, human conduct and actions ceased to be inherently good.

Moral evil is an attendant consequence of sin—a phenomenon that has now become entrenched in the creational order and the socio-cultural and theological syllabus. As noted in one online publication, Fazale Rana writes: "Philosophers and Theologians recognize two kinds of evil: moral and natural. Moral evil stems from human action (or inaction in some cases)" (Rana, 2003a). Actions associated with moral evil commonly include murder, immorality, and envy. These are further cataloged in Ephesians 5:19: "The acts of sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like" (Rana, 2003b). One might argue that "the like" also encompasses the systemic evil of poverty. Arthur Schopenhauer opines that the reason poverty exists is that human existence precedes the entrance of poverty, which presupposes that poverty was never an original feature of God's creation (Schopenhauer, 2024). Poverty, therefore, is a result of sin—a product of a corrupted and tainted human mind. Martin Kirk holds a similar view,

stating that “poverty is a human-made phenomenon which has moral dimensions; it can be caused by human attitudes toward the creational order” (Kirk & Brewer, 2013a). Kirk and Brewer raise a hypothetical question regarding the locus of poverty: “What would you say if we told you that the biggest obstacle to eradicating poverty is the way we think about it? That the human mind and our common-sense logic about how the world works is where the battle of poverty must first be waged” ((Kirk & Brewer, 2013b).

The other attendant consequence of sin is natural evil. Natural evil occurs as a result of natural processes—earthquakes, tornadoes, diseases, tsunamis, famine, and floods. These are collectively summarized by the world as "natural disasters." However, one must ask: did God’s original world include these myriad phenomenal disasters? The answer is no. Their primary source is the sin committed by Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God’s instructions. Following their transgression, God invoked a "contrary law" by cursing the earth. God said to Adam, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you... Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you” (Gen. 3:17-18). A contrary law is a reversal of what the original law permitted. While God’s creative power brought existence out of nothingness through His spoken word, sin prompted God to institute this contrary law, forming the genesis of natural evil. According to Yusufu Turaki, a contrary law is “a law introduced by God after human sin and fall in the Garden. It is contrary to the law of goodness in creation. God cursed the ground on account of sin” (Turaki, 2022). This law shifted the order of creation, making natural disasters a part of the human experience—a state that can only be reversed if God speaks a new law to supersede the existing one, as seen in Ezekiel 36:13-14.

As previously established, natural evil is not the result of direct human initiative. Humans do not "cause" an earthquake in the same way they commit a moral crime; rather, natural evil is a divine response to human conduct that violates the moral and physical laws of God’s order. When the ground was cursed, the physical order was fractured, resulting in a dysfunction of the harmonious bond that held creation together. The result of this dysfunction is the emergence of catastrophes beyond human control: volcanoes, droughts, the depletion of the ozone layer, and congenital diseases. Natural evil will persist alongside humanity unless God institutes another contrary law to set aside the current one. Natural evil causes immense suffering but lacks direct human agency in its execution, though its roots lie in original sin.

The entrance of sin demonstrates that the human will and the ability to choose determine the state of an individual or community. As one source states, “When people created in the image of God choose to act in defiance of God’s law, the result is moral evil. Moral evil can also be linked to inaction—to purposefully ignore a cry for help is a moral evil.”ⁱⁱ The effect of sin weighs upon both humanity and the environment. For humans, the result is moral evil because they are moral agents; for nature, the result is natural evil because the entire physical order is affected. Jesus came to redeem both (Eph. 1; Rom. 8). Having identified the root causes and consequences of these two evils, we must now critically examine whether the entrance of sin could have been avoided and whether the human person possesses the capacity to make rational judgments toward a "good choice." To explore this, we shall focus on three specific items attributed to moral evil: Poverty, LGBT issues, and Idolatry.

Can Humans Make Rational, Intelligent, and Reasonable Choices?

Poverty: Its Conception and Structure

Poverty, as understood in both biblical and socio-traditional contexts, possesses multifaceted dimensions. Its definition is generally provided from a contextual perspective—contextual in the sense that sociologists, environmentalists, anthropologists, biologists, and other practitioners in the human sciences maintain distinct perceptions of the phenomenon (Townsend, 1973).

In this work, we shall not offer an elaborate commentary on how every specific group defines poverty, having already acknowledged its varied perceptions across human disciplines. However, due to the multiplicity of its definitions, we will cite a select few. From a sociological perspective, as observed by P. Townsend and S. Ringen, sociological interests center on the "culture" of poverty and the effects of geographic location—specifically the urban, central-city, and ghetto aspects—on the experience of indigence (Ringen, 2002). The dual definition of poverty can be categorized into the two main forms of evil that emerged as a result of sin: natural and moral evil.

Ideas begin in the chamber of the human soul, which houses the mind—the faculty where intellect is developed, stored, exercised, and acted upon. Conversely, "place poverty" is situated in the physical world where humans express themselves as mortal beings. Due to human inaction, a dichotomy is created between low-income and high-income earners. Isabell Kampf, writing from an environmentalist perspective, observes that "land degradation contributes to climate change and increases the vulnerability of millions of people, especially the poor, women and children... Mostly, developing countries are trapped in degrading agricultural land, exposed to climate stress, and therefore excluded from wider infrastructure and economic development" (Kampf, <https://www.un.org>). Climate change and environmental degradation are captured under the umbrella of natural evil—phenomena that occur without direct, immediate human involvement, though they ultimately persist as a systemic result of sin.

Oscar Lewis defines poverty from an anthropological perspective. In his discussion, he developed theories to justify the claim that poverty possesses an underlying cultural interpretation. Lewis utilizes the lens of culture, stating that "poverty is a specific syndrome that grows up in some situations," which presupposes that one's environment defines how they conceive of their lack (Lewis, <https://www.study.com/academy>). Lewis notes that poverty requires a specific economic setting: a cash economy, high rates of unemployment, low wages, and a labor force with low skills. In Lewis's culture-based theory, poverty is both an idea of the mind and a definition of a "place economy." People born into poverty adapt to a "poor mindset," which causes them to remain in that state and pass it down through generations. If the mind is involved in the genesis of poverty, it suggests that moral beings have the capacity to decide whether poverty becomes a social norm or is rejected outright. This analysis further affirms that poverty can be treated as both a moral and a natural evil. Poverty, therefore, has two major dimensional perspectives: it can arise through moral evil or natural evil. When famine or environmental degradation strikes a specific region, the local economy is inevitably impacted, resulting in a shortage of basic human needs. The inadequacy of such needs opens a floodgate of structural and social imbalances, triggering food scarcity, unemployment, and a shortage of healthcare supplies.

Structural Theory of Poverty

Structural theories of poverty posit that the organization of the larger socio-economic order is the primary cause of indigence. It is the macro-structure of society that produces inequality and, consequently, poverty (Smeeding, 2002). This perspective addresses both the natural and moral causes of poverty from a sociological standpoint.

Can Poverty Emanating from Moral Evil be Arrested?

In this section, we consider poverty that derives its existence from the human mind; this is a moral-based decision and can be classified as moral evil. Poverty of this nature is predicated on an individual's resolve or choice to accept or decline the mindset that poverty is normative. The question arises: are there individuals who believe in the normativity of poverty as a fixed part of their cultural heritage? If such a mindset exists, who are these individuals? Do they possess the mortal capacity to think, the rational ability to choose between good and evil, or the intelligence to make reasonable judgments regarding the rejection of poverty? This barrage of questions can only be addressed by examining the individual from both creational and epistemological perspectives.

Creational perspectives provide the tools to consider human value, worth, dignity, and rationality from a geomorphic perspective, using Adam and Eve as the basis for all humanity. The evaluation of an individual's choice to accept or decline poverty can be "arrested" (or resolved) if the individual realizes their true identity and the source of their being.

Liberation Comes at the Point of Realization

No individual can be liberated from a mindset that forces them to accept poverty as a social norm without a fundamental shift in perspective. Liberation from the clutches of a "dead belief" begins with the realization that they are made in the image and likeness of God. Understanding that humankind is *theomorphic*—having the form of God (Waltke, 2007c)—entails that humans are representatives of the Divine. Having the form of God in one's nature brings the individual into a specific "class" of being. Ideally, this means thinking, acting, deciding, and creating in a manner reflective of God. While God creates *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), humankind is unique in that God breathed life into a body molded from the dust. Humans became living beings the moment the breath of God (*Ruach*) passed through their nostrils, turning molded dust into a living moral being.

Being made in the image of God means "human beings reflect God's being as a person, for like God, we have intellect, sensibility, volition, a sense of moral law and a sense of self-identity. Our ability to make decisions according to our intellect and sensibilities and execute them reflects God's person as seen in the pattern of creation that finds its center in his commands" (Vanhoozer, 1997d). Following this, God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden and instructed him "to till, to work, or to tend and keep it" (Gen 2:15). God gave Adam land, but it came with responsibilities. The Garden was the arena where Adam was expected to exercise his innate intelligence and managerial ability. God then expected humankind to apply reason, volition, and judgment in obedience to moral laws, warning: "You may eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die" (Gen 2:16-17). At this stage, God brought humankind to a place where their intelligence, speech, and revelatory knowledge could be demonstrated.

Human beings are equipped with everything necessary to avoid a life of poverty. The distinction of humanity from other creatures provides an inherent advantage. Before the entrance of sin, the "form" of the human consisted chiefly of intellectual capacities; human beings bear certain vestiges of the Trinity ("Let *us* make")(Vanhoozer, 1997e) which no other created being shares.

Human creatures rank second only to God, both in the order of being (Creation) and the order of knowledge (Revelation). No other created being has the privilege of receiving direct revelation from God. Can one who is second only to the Almighty live in a state of perpetual impoverishment? This is only possible if the individual chooses poverty. Consequently, poverty can be viewed as an issue of choice, excluding that which results from natural evil. Just as sin is a choice—as seen in Eve's preference for the forbidden fruit, Cain's choice of murder over sacrifice, and Ahab's decision to worship idols (1 Kings 21:20)—sin is a personal exercise of free will. Christopher J. H. Wright notes that Satan has never used force against anyone since the entrance of sin; it remains a choice.

God did not create human beings with rational deficiencies. Humans have the power to reason in a manner reflective of God and cannot afford to reason "less" than their status demands. God created humans in a class where both parties can relate and share reasons. Hence, He said, "Come now, let us reason together" (Isa 1:18). This demonstrates the relational intimacy humans enjoyed with God before the entrance of sin.

Reason provides humanity with the ability to make wise decisions and judgments. Because humans were created by a Rational Being, they can reason on a similar frequency. If a moral being can reason with the Creator, they can likewise think, choose, and operate intelligently. Humans were not made

to live by chance; they were brought into God's class to work toward a common purpose. It is, therefore, the responsibility of every individual to realize the likeness in which they were created.

Human beings are the only creatures to have entered a covenant relationship with God—a relationship seen in Eden that transcends the biblical narrative. Anthony H. Hoekema writes, "Scripture teaches that God saves man by placing him into a covenant relationship with him. Since God is the Creator and man is a creature, it is obvious that God must take the initiative... hence, we say that the covenant of grace is unilateral in its origin" (Hoekema, 1986d).

Note: The narrative in Genesis 3 shows that the spiritual, physical, rational, and social dimensions were all involved in the entry of sin, and each is affected by the consequences of that choice.

As we conclude this treatise on poverty, it is clear that one cannot discuss the subject without viewing it through the lenses of moral and natural evil. Poverty would not be part of the human vocabulary were it not for these two phenomena. Poverty resulting from natural evil is often unavoidable at the moment of occurrence, as it does not always stem from direct human involvement—even though its existence in the world is a result of the fall that "turns the human creature away from its true destiny with God and bends the human creature upon itself" (Vanhoozer, 1997f). Wright notes that when humans rebelled, their disobedience affected the physical environment, as evidenced by the curse upon the ground (Gen 3:17) (Wright, 2006a). However, poverty associated with moral evil is a state an individual chooses in disregard of a better alternative. An individual's choice for poverty can be reversed if they realize their original identity and standing with God.

The Return of Human Senses Triggers Realization of One's Self

Having witnessed the devastating effects of sin and its impact on both the human psyche and the physical environment, one naturally desires to discover how to arrest and avoid its consequences. Beyond merely mitigating social ills, there is a profound need to understand how humanity might return to God's original purpose, plan, and desire for those created in His image and likeness. God created human beings distinctly from other creatures, intended for intimacy with Him by sharing His moral characteristics—communicable attributes—that place humanity in a unique class. These attributes include:

- Thinking like God;
- Reasoning like God;
- Acting like God;
- Understanding like God;
- Controlling like God;
- Choosing like God;
- Discovering like God;
- Loving like God;
- Knowing like God;
- Creating like God (though not *ex nihilo*, as creating out of nothing is a power reserved solely for God, who spoke and the universe began).

The summation of these attributes represents the state of humanity before the entrance of sin. Sin corrupted the very qualities that distinguish *homo* (the ability to feel or sense) and *sapiens* (wisdom) from other creatures: a rationality that subsequently became functionally disabled (Vanhoozer, 1997g). Had these attributes remained uncorrupted, every human being would act responsibly, reflecting God's reasoning on earth. The *Imago Dei* is not merely a possession but the core of our being; to be human is to be the image of God. It is not an auxiliary feature of our species but is definitive of our very existence (Wright, 2006b). However, because the human person has been distorted by sin, redemption and reconciliation are now made possible only through Jesus Christ—our mediator and the exact image of God.

To return to one's senses and realize this divine identity, an individual must pass through two interrelated processes that facilitate a return to divine authority and obedience to the moral and physical laws of the universe. The first level is spiritual; once mastered and understood, it prepares the ground for the second level: the physical. This is the point of realizing one's inadequacies and taking action in obedience to divine authority. Historically, painful circumstances are often the result of human failure. When individuals face trials beyond their control, the resulting misery often brings the transgressor to a point of realization, revealing the despicability of their state. This realization opens the door for divine assistance and submission to God's ultimate authority.

Understanding the interrelationship between existing situations and the return to one's senses serves as a model for addressing social ills. Both moral and natural evils can be addressed when humans acknowledge their failures and the resulting predicaments, leading to reconciliation with God through Christ. Certain biblical texts provide the framework for this model. The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) and the narrative of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4) illustrate how the first level of this approach—the return of sanity and sense—is implemented.

Scriptural Foundations for the Return of Senses

Luke 15:17

- a. **NLT:** "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home, even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say...'"
- b. **KJV:** "And when he came to himself, he said, 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him...'"
- c. **NIV:** "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him...'"
- d. **ESV:** "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father..."

Daniel 4:34

- **KJV:** "And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted mine eyes unto heaven and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever..."
- **ESV:** "At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised Him who lives forever..."
- **NIV:** "At the end of the days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honoured and glorified Him who lives forever..."
- **NLT:** "After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honoured the one who lives forever."

In both narratives, the underlying factor is a circumstance that forces the protagonists to come to their senses. Upon this realization, they recognized the status they held before their predicaments: The Prodigal Son remembered his royal sonship, and Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the Supreme Sovereign whose power superintends all creation.

Circumstance Induces the Return of Human Senses

Situational circumstances often evolve into life-threatening existential problems. These circumstances, which vary by individual, serve as primary catalysts for those created in the image of God to "reason back" to their Creator. A "situational circumstance" is a compound concept. A *circumstance* refers to the facts or conditions connected to an event, while a *situation* describes the

actual experience—positive or negative—befalling an individual. When an action is initiated by a moral agent, the resulting situation is shaped by these prevailing conditions.

Therefore, for an action to be established, it must be initiated by an agent capable of thinking, organizing, and anticipating results. Situational circumstances become life-threatening when individuals fail to realize they are created in the image of God—a status that grants them a considerable advantage over the rest of the created order. By failing to identify the immense knowledge and authority at their disposal, humans allow circumstances that should be under their control to become overwhelming. This failure of judgment opens a floodgate of misery and regret. It is precisely within these products of one's own actions—pains and regrets—that a sense of reasoning typically returns. Human senses are restored when an individual finds themselves in a situation that is irreversible or beyond human intellect, usually resulting from actions that violate the natural order or God's original design. Such wrong actions are a perversion of the very rationality and moral consciousness intended to define the *Imago Dei*. To be in God's image is to possess the power to exercise authority over one's circumstances (Wright, 2006c). Yet, many trade these privileges for mundane things, engaging in practices that demean their divine nature, such as the worship of lifeless idols.

Circumstance, therefore, sparks the consciousness of self-realization. This brings an individual to ask vital questions: *Who am I? In whose image was I created? What authority do I have over creation? Could this situation have been avoided?* Such inquiries help us rediscover our true identity. Once an individual realizes they share a common bond with God from creation, their situation changes, for they realize God has granted them dominion over the earth.

Evaluative Reasoning and the Rejection of Idolatry

Circumstances force humans to evaluate whether their decisions reflect what God would have done in similar instances. Circumstance is the "string" that causes a person to trace back to their roots, igniting conscious reasoning. This reasoning makes one realize the failure to act in accordance with the divine image. For instance, it is inherently absurd for a being created in the image of God to stoop to worship idols made of wood or to engage in behaviors like the trending LGBT practices that demean the person of God. While these are matters of choice, they are choices that diverge from our original design.

When the Prodigal Son's senses returned, he immediately realized his access to the wealth and inheritance of his father's kingdom. If an earthly father provides such security, how much more will the King of Creation provide for those who return to Him, as Nebuchadnezzar discovered when his sanity was restored?

Why God Forbids the Worship of Idols

From the perspective of biblical anthropology, one can see how the human mind—intended to be in the "class of God"—has become so debased since the Fall that it often fails to discern between good and evil, truth and lies, or the genuine and the fake. Human choice has become the deterministic base for social ills. Understanding biblical anthropology helps in addressing these ills, specifically idolatry, LGBT practices, and kidnapping.

Idol worship is perhaps the most intolerable act before God. It is a disgusting practice where humans, who have seen God's invisible qualities through creation, stoop to worship the very things they were meant to manage. Romans 1:19-21 explains that humans are without excuse:

[19] They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. [20] For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So, they have no excuse for

not knowing God. [21] Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.

Creation is sufficient to explain God's nature. Consequently, God holds humanity accountable. Furthermore, as God's representatives, humans are in charge of the created order. The Prophet Isaiah highlights the depravity of the human mind that fails to see its own dignity, instead carving a god out of wood:

[19] The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, "Why, it's just a block of wood! I burned half of it for heat and used it to bake my bread and roast my meat. How can the rest of it be a god? Should I bow down to worship a piece of wood?" [20] The poor, deluded fool feeds on ashes. He trusts something that can't help him at all. Yet he cannot bring himself to ask, "Is this idol that I'm holding in my hand a lie?" (Isaiah 44:19-20).

Isaiah concludes that those who shape idols are nothing (Isa 44:9-10), and the Psalmist observes that those who make them become like them—lifeless and blind (Psalms 135:15-18). Trading the truth for a lie, humans serve the creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1:23-25).

We also see God's plan for humans as beings who come second only to God in the order of being (Creation) and knowledge (Revelation). Scripture emphasizes this intimacy:

- **Isaiah 43:7:** "Bring all who claim me as their God, for I have made them for my glory."
- **Jeremiah 13:10-11:** Humans were created to "cling" to God, to be His pride and glory.
- **Deuteronomy 10:20 / 13:4:** Command to serve, fear, and cling to the Lord alone.

A person ignorant of their identity will continue to carve idols until their senses return. Idolatry is the choice of the "fool" or the "ignorant." The *New Living Translation Commentary* notes the necessity of regularly denouncing idols as unworthy of worship. Revelation 9:20 warns that even after plagues, many still refuse to repent of worshiping demons and idols of gold and stone.

In summary, idols are constructed based on human specifications, involving specific rituals and materials. This process proves that idols are not immortal, divine, or all-powerful; they have a beginning and a location. It remains a tragedy of the human condition that one created in the class of God would stoop to worship a carved image that can neither see, hear, nor save.

Worshipping Idols Is A Choice

From the aforementioned study, we observe that idol worship is fundamentally a matter of choice and conviction. It is a decision an individual or a collective group makes after a calculated consideration of alternatives. The preference to worship an idol over one's Creator is often born from a desire to suppress the truth or act out of willful ignorance regarding one's origins and the genesis of the world. To hold the belief that creation simply evolved without a responsible Creator can be viewed as a form of moral defiance. While such a reality is lamentable, it confirms that God created human beings with the agency to make decisions between two alternatives, even when mindful of the inevitable consequences of a wrong choice. Humanity possesses the opportunity to make the right decision because we are created in the image and likeness of God, having observed and testified to His nature through the acts of creation. God utilizes these same parameters to judge every being, asserting that humanity possesses not only the capacity to reason and rationalize but also five functional senses to engage with His physical creation. Thus, Scripture declares:

"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities, his eternal power, and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing him" (Rom 1:20).

Despite this overwhelming evidence provided by God, some individuals and groups still prefer to serve and worship idols fashioned by their own hands from the very materials God created. They call these objects "gods" rather than honoring the One who created the heavens and the earth. To the "eternal King, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever. Amen" (1 Tim 1:17). These verses provide a concise description of God's nature. In contrast, the following passages illustrate God's righteous anger toward those who defiantly engage in idolatry:

13] The Lord replies, "This has happened because my people have abandoned my instructions; they have refused to obey what I said. 14] Instead, they have stubbornly followed their own desires and worshiped the images of Baal, as their ancestors taught them. 15] So now, this is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: Look! I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink. 16] I will scatter them around the world, in places they and their ancestors never heard of, and even there, I will chase them with the sword until I have destroyed them completely" (Jeremiah 9:13-16).

This scriptural evidence aligns with the position that sin is a deliberate choice. Those who practice idolatry do so by their own volition, not by compulsion. God demonstrates that even when people recognize His existence and His desire for fellowship, they may still choose to create gods suited to their own desires. As the Scripture states:

10] "These wicked people refuse to listen to me. They stubbornly follow their own desires and worship other gods. Therefore, they will become like this loincloth—good for nothing! 11] As a loincloth clings to a man's waist, so I created Judah and Israel to cling to me," says the Lord. "They were to be my people, my pride, my glory—an honor to my name. But they would not listen to me" (Jeremiah 13:10-11).

Throughout human history, God has never treated the sin of idolatry lightly because His holiness abhors evil in every form. He consistently punishes the sin of disobedience. It is important to note that the timing of His judgment—whether immediate or delayed—does not diminish its certainty. For instance, the judgment of the Amorites took approximately five hundred years to reach fruition. This work serves to remind readers that the God who judged the Amorites is the same God today; therefore, one must not abuse His mercy and patience.

Severe Consequences Await Those Who Serve Idols Or Engage In Despicable Acts

God does not take idolatry lightly because it strikes at the heart of His glory. While every sin carries the penalty of death, idolatry is a direct affront to God because it attempts to usurp His unique honor. God will not tolerate any authority that promotes such a diversion. Because idolatry is rooted in falsehood, God exercises His power to judge those who promote this heinous sin. The Book of Isaiah clarifies the motive underlying this sin: "I am the Lord, that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols" (Isa 42:8).

This divine decree explains why He did not spare the Amorites and reveals Him as an impartial judge who applied the same standard to the eastern tribes. Just as He used Israel to displace the Amorites, He later used the Babylonians and Assyrians against Judah and the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The Book of Jeremiah provides a lens into how God dealt with Judah:

8] "And now the Lord of Heaven's Armies says: Because you have not listened to me, 9] I will gather together all the armies of the north under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom I have appointed as my deputy. I will bring them all against this land and its people and against the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy you and make you an object of horror and contempt and a ruin forever... 11] This entire land will become a desolate wasteland. Israel and her neighboring lands will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years" (Jeremiah 25:8-11).

After dealing with Judah, God turned His attention to the tribes east of the Jordan River. These tribes had every opportunity to repent of their idolatry, especially after witnessing Judah's captivity. Yet, they persisted in forbidden acts, attracting a severe judgment. Chronicles records this event:

25] "But these tribes were unfaithful to the God of their ancestors. They worshiped the gods of the nations that God had destroyed. 26] So, the God of Israel caused King Pul of Assyria (also known as Tiglath-pileser) to invade the land and take away the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh as captives. The Assyrians exiled them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the Gozan River, where they remain to this day" (1 Chr 5:25-26).

The Amorites, the original inhabitants of the land, lost their territory due to idolatry and detestable acts. They persisted in sin despite the time God granted for repentance. Thus, the prophecy in Genesis was fulfilled when God said to Abraham: "After four generations, your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction" (Gen 15:16). This prophecy took roughly 500 years to pass, serving as a warning that while people may enjoy the temporary fruits of sin, God's judgment is certain.

The Choice Of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, And Transgender (Lgbt) As A Lifestyle

LGBT is an acronym used to describe a lifestyle chosen by some that is incompatible with creational norms and traditional sexual practices between a male and a female. This lifestyle violates the creational order and, by extension, functions as a denial of God's existence and His wisdom in establishing standard norms for moral beings. Such a choice subverts His eternal power and authority. The term stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons—identities that do not align with a heterosexual or traditional gender binary.

The traditional gender binary is a classification based on a created order of two distinct genders: male and female. This belief holds that one's sex is assigned at birth and aligns with masculine and feminine identities. From this perspective, human sexuality as given at birth is unalterable, and attempting to change it violates the creational order. In contrast, the LGBT concept of sexuality is diametrically opposed to this binary. Each component of the acronym develops its own concept of identity and purpose. However, all four units share a common denominator: homosexuality, or sexual practices that deviate from the traditional male-female union. To understand these units, we must first define homosexuality, as it is the foundation from which these identities derive their meaning.

Homosexuality refers to sexual affairs between persons of the same sex. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines a homosexual as a person—usually a man, though it applies to women—who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex. "Gay" refers to those whose romantic feelings are for the same gender (<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/love-sex/a20730324/lgbt-m>). The biblical definition holds that homosexuality involves "having sex with another man as with a woman" (Lev 18:22). Scripture characterizes this as a detestable sin—a capital offense that violates the order of creation (Lev 20:13). The motive behind such acts can often be traced to "lust."

In the creation narrative, God pronounced His work "good," and upon creating humanity on the sixth day, He declared it "very good." This pronouncement forms the basis for the theology of the created order, where "good" is defined by how God intended things to function (*New Living Translation Study Bible*, 2008). Since the entrance of sin into the world, however, this order has been disrupted, leading to disharmony and disordered human conduct (Rom 1:25-32). Nevertheless, the Fall does not excuse immoral behavior, as God has given every person the consciousness to choose righteousness. Lust can be defined as an intense sexual desire or craving often associated with the "lust of the flesh." It is frequently triggered by a disordered desire for pleasure, whether between opposite or same-sex individuals. Regardless of its form, lust often gives birth to sin. Sin remains an idea until it is appropriated and acted upon; once fully grown, it results in death. As Ezekiel 18:20 states, "the soul

that sins must surely die," and Romans 6:23 confirms that "the wages of sin is death." Thus, sin is a choice, and every choice carries responsibility and consequences. With this foundation, we can now examine the specific definitions and motives underlying each unit of the LGBT acronym.

Worshipping Idols as a Choice

1. From the preceding study, it is observed that idol worship is fundamentally a matter of choice and conviction. It is a decision an individual or a collective body makes after a deliberate evaluation of alternatives. The preference to worship an idol over one's Creator often stems from a desire to suppress the truth or feign ignorance regarding human origins and the beginning of the universe. To hold the assumption that creation simply evolved without a responsible Designer can be viewed as a form of moral defiance. This reality confirms that humanity, as created by God, possesses the agency to make decisions between two alternatives, even while remaining mindful of the inherent consequences of a wrong choice. Despite being created in the image and likeness of God—and having witnessed His handiwork in creation—man often chooses the wrong path. God utilizes these same parameters to judge every being, asserting that humanity possesses not only the cognitive capacity to reason and rationalize but also five functional senses to engage with the physical world. As Scripture declares: "Forever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities, his eternal power, and his divine nature. So, they have no excuse for not knowing him." (Romans 1:20, New Living Translation). Despite this overwhelming evidence provided by God, many individuals still prefer to serve and worship idols fashioned by their own hands from the very materials God created. They choose to call these objects "gods" rather than honoring the One who created the heavens and the earth—the "eternal King, immortal, invisible, the only wise God," to whom belongs honor and glory forever. (1 Timothy 1:17, New Living Translation). While Romans 1:20 and 1 Timothy 1:17 provide a concise description of God's nature, subsequent verses reveal the extent of His righteous anger toward those who defiantly engage in idolatry: The Lord replies, "This has happened because my people have abandoned my instructions; they have refused to obey what I said. Instead, they have stubbornly followed their own desires and worshiped the images of Baal, as their ancestors taught them. So now, this is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says: Look! I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink. I will scatter them around the world, in places they and their ancestors never heard of, and even there, I will chase them with the sword until I have destroyed them completely." (Jeremiah 13:10-11 (New Living Translation) The preceding passage aligns with the author's position that sin is a choice. Those who practice idolatry do so of their own volition rather than by compulsion. God demonstrates that even when people recognize His existence and His desire for fellowship, they may still choose to create gods suited to their own desires. Scripture reinforces this: "These wicked people refuse to listen to me. They stubbornly follow their own desires and worship other gods. Therefore, they will become like this loincloth—good for nothing! As a loincloth clings to a man's waist, so I created Judah and Israel to cling to me, says the Lord. They were to be my people, my pride, my glory—an honor to my name. But they would not listen to me." (Isaiah 42:8, New Living Translation).

Throughout human history, God has never treated the sin of idolatry lightly; His holiness abhors evil in any form. He consistently punishes the sin of disobedience. While judgment may seem delayed—as with the Amorites, whose iniquity took five hundred years to reach full measure—it is inevitable. This work aims to remind readers that the God who judged the Amorites remains the same today. Consequently, the author encourages readers not to abuse the mercy and patience of God.

Severe Consequences Await Idolaters and Those Engaged in Despicable Acts

God does not overlook idolatry, primarily because of His glory. While all sin carries the penalty of death, idolatry is a direct affront to God because it attempts to misappropriate the glory due to Him alone. God will not tolerate any authority that stands in opposition to His own. Because idolatry is rooted in falsehood, God exercises His might to destroy those who promote such heinous sin. The

Book of Isaiah captures the motive underlying this divine stance: “I am the Lord, that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols.” (Jeremiah 25:8-11, New Living Translation).

This singular declaration illustrates why God did not spare the Amorites and reveals His impartiality when applying the same measure of judgment against the eastern tribes. Just as He used Israel to annihilate the Amorites, He later used the Babylonians and Assyrians against Judah and the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The Book of Jeremiah provides a lens into how God dealt with Judah:

“And now the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says: Because you have not listened to me, I will gather together all the armies of the north under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom I have appointed as my deputy. I will bring them all against this land and its people and against the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy you and make you an object of horror and contempt and a ruin forever.” (1Chronicles 5:25-26, New Living Translation).

Even after witnessing Judah being taken into captivity, the eastern tribes of the Jordan River ignored the opportunity to repent. They persisted in forbidden practices, attracting a severe divine penalty. As recorded in 1Chronicles 5:25-26, New Living Translation. But these tribes were unfaithful to the God of their ancestors. They worshiped the gods of the nations that God had destroyed. So, the God of Israel caused King Pul of Assyria (also known as Tiglath-pileser) to invade the land and take away the people of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh as captives.

The Amorites, the original inhabitants of the regions surrounding the Jordan, lost their land due to idolatry and detestable acts. Despite the centuries God granted them for repentance, they refused to heed His warnings. Thus, the prophecy given to Abraham in Genesis was fulfilled: “After four generations, your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.” (Genesis 15:16 (New Living Translation)). This prophecy took approximately 500 years to pass, serving as a warning that while God is patient, His judgment against sin is certain.

The Choice of LGBT Lifestyles

LGBT is an acronym used to describe lifestyles chosen by certain groups as "normal," yet these practices are found to be incompatible with creational norms and traditional sexual practices between a male and a female. This lifestyle violates the creational order and implies a denial of God’s existence and His wisdom in establishing standard norms for moral beings. Such a choice amounts to a subversion of His eternal power and authority. The term encompasses lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, and it excludes those whose identity is based on a traditional gender binary.

The traditional gender binary is based on the created order of two genders: male and female. This belief holds that sex is assigned at birth and aligns with masculine and feminine identities. From this perspective, human sexuality is not a fluid construct but a fixed reality; altering it is viewed as a violation of the created order. Conversely, the LGBT concept of sexuality is diametrically opposed to this binary. Each unit within the acronym has developed its own framework for identity and existence. However, the common denominator across these units is homosexuality—the source of sexual practices that depart from the traditional male-female union.

Homosexuality is defined as sexual relations between persons of the same sex. The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines a homosexual as a person sexually attracted to people of the same sex (*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*). Culturally, "gay" refers to those whose romantic and sexual feelings are directed toward their own gender (<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/love-sex/a20730324/lgbt-m>, 2026). Biblically, homosexuality is defined as “having sex with another man

as with a woman.” (Leviticus 18:22, New Living Translation) Scripture identifies this as a detestable sin—a capital offense that violates the order of creation. (Leviticus 20:13, New Living Translation). The motive behind such acts is often traced to "lust."

In the creation narrative, God pronounced His work "good," and upon creating humanity on the sixth day, He declared it "very good." This pronouncement forms the basis for the theology of the created order, where "good" is defined by how God intended His creation to function (*New Living Translation Study Bible*, 2008). Although the Fall of man introduced disharmony and corrupted human conduct (Romans 1:25-32), it does not excuse lustful actions. God has provided humanity with the moral consciousness to choose what is right when faced with alternatives.

1. Lust may be defined as a strong craving or disordered sexual desire. Regardless of its specific manifestation, lust often gives birth to sin. Sin begins as an idea and remains so until it is acted upon; once appropriated and fully grown, it leads to death. As stated in Ezekiel, “the soul that sins must surely die,” (*New Living Translation Study Bible*, 2008) and in the Pauline epistles, “the wages of sin is death” (Ezekiel 18:20, New Living Translation).

Consequently, sin is a choice, and every choice carries responsibility and consequences. With this foundation, we can now examine the specific definitions and motives underlying each component of the LGBT acronym.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that humanity’s creation in the image and likeness of God (*Imago Dei*) establishes our exalted yet responsible position as second in the order of creation and revelation. Endowed with intelligence, reason, moral agency, and dominion, humans were equipped by an eternally intelligent Creator to steward creation, resist evil, and enjoy intimate fellowship with God (Genesis 1:26–27; Psalm 8:4–6). The Fall resulted not from divine failure but from humanity’s wrong choice—preferring counterfeit knowledge over God’s truth—leading to the fracturing of body, soul, and spirit, and the proliferation of social ills including inequality, violence, poverty, idolatry, and sexual immorality. These ills, whether moral or natural evils, stem from distorted identity and defective choices. Restoration begins with “coming to one’s senses” (Luke 15:17; Daniel 4:34), recovering the *Imago Dei*, and realigning with God through Christ, the perfect image of the invisible God.

This paper offers a robust model for addressing morally defective and corrupt conduct because it grounds ethics in objective creational reality rather than subjective experience or shifting cultural norms. By tracing social ills to the root issue—alienation from God and rejection of divine identity—it provides both diagnosis and cure. It affirms human dignity and agency: people are not victims of circumstance or deterministic forces but morally responsible beings capable of reason, choice, and repentance. This framework equips individuals and societies to confront issues like poverty (as partly a mindset of moral failure), idolatry (as willful suppression of truth, Romans 1:18–25), and LGBT practices (as violations of creational order) not merely as social problems but as matters of identity, choice, and accountability before God. Its practical strength lies in integrating theology, Scripture, and real-life application, moving beyond symptoms to transformation. Pastors, educators, policymakers, and counselors can use it as a holistic template that restores personal responsibility while offering hope through renewed relationship with the Creator.

Biblical anthropology stands as the only sufficient panacea for disordered human conduct because it alone addresses the ontological reality of who we are—persons bearing God’s image, possessing intellect, volition, emotion, and moral capacity. It explains both the grandeur and tragedy of humanity: created for glory yet fallen through choice, redeemable through Christ. Philosophical approaches (e.g., existentialism’s emphasis on autonomous self-creation or utilitarianism’s focus on

outcomes) and sociological theories (e.g., structuralism or cultural relativism regarding poverty and sexuality) offer valuable insights into mechanisms and contexts but remain inadequate. They often lack a transcendent moral foundation, treating symptoms (inequality, identity confusion) while ignoring the spiritual rupture and the need for heart-level transformation. Biblical anthropology integrates these disciplines under God's revelation: it affirms human dignity (contra dehumanizing ideologies), upholds moral absolutes (contra relativism), and provides power for change through the Holy Spirit—something purely human-centered frameworks cannot supply.

In an age of moral confusion and social fragmentation, recovering the *Imago Dei* calls humanity back to its true identity as God's ambassadors, representatives, and regents. This renewed understanding fosters responsibility before God, creation, and society, enabling the defeat of sin's effects and the cultivation of flourishing. As Vanhoozer and Scripture affirm, when reasoning, choices, and affections align with the Creator's character, individuals and societies experience the harmony originally declared "very good." The path forward is clear: return to the Father, reclaim divine identity, and exercise informed, obedient dominion. Only then can the fractured human condition find lasting restoration.

References (drawn from the study): Kevin Vanhoozer, Ryan S. Peterson, Anthony Hoekema, Kenneth Boa, and primary scriptural texts (Genesis, Psalms, Romans, etc.), gave this paper a universal application and the strength it needed in addressing morally based issues from a more positive perspective. This conclusion in doubt distills the paper's core argument into a practical, actionable theological vision, which climaxes in returning humanity back to its creational divine purpose and mission on earth.

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