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Scripture and the Human Person: Further Reflections

Dr. David Booth has sketched a number of important considerations for a ‘biblical’ and ‘scientific understanding’ of human nature, and has thus provided a helpful orientation to what is sure to be one of the pivotal issues for the Christian community in the West in coming decades. However, the case for a unitary account of the human person in Scripture does not rest so fully on problematic word studies but actually goes to the heart of what it means in Scripture to be ‘human.’

Keywords: human nature, soul, dualism, monism.

What is the nature of the human person – unitary or fragmented? This is the question Dr. David Booth poses, and in doing so he positions himself within a growing crowd of witnesses who have taken up the issue. Undoubtedly, this crescendo of voices derives in the main from research in the sciences, the effect of which has been to undercut those forms of body-soul dualism that until recently have numbered among the taken-for-granted suppositions of western thought. Dr. Booth helpfully recognizes that many (if not most) western Christians today hold to an assumption about human nature – namely, that the human person is ‘fragmented’ (or, we might add, at least capable of being divided) into two parts, body and soul – that is widely rejected among biological and psychological scientists. His attempts at rapprochement invite appreciation, even if on some matters integral to his project additional and sometimes different work is needed, as I will suggest in this essay.

For Christians, current discussion of human nature is crucial on many fronts. What is authentic human existence? What does it mean ‘to be saved’? Is this a soulish affair only; or does salvation relate somehow to fully embodied existence? What forms of healing and health ought Christians to sponsor? Indeed, on what base(s) might Christians involve themselves in health care? Psychology? What is the nature of human existence in the afterlife? Such questions easily multiply. For many of our contemporaries, however, the more pressing reality is that science has become the new religion to which we turn for life’s meaning, and its understanding of the relevant issues can be and often is communicated in such a totalizing way that alternative, even complementary accounts are simply ruled out as a presupposition. And some, widely broadcast forms of the metanarrative generated and legitimated by the sciences reduces all

dispositions, all practices, all longings, and all prayers to synapticfirings. Taking
on the aspect of a modern, scientific swashbuckler, Francis Crick has thus re-
cently written that, in spite of the widespread belief that ‘people have souls, in
the literal and not merely the metaphorical sense,’ science has shown rather
that ‘you,’ your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions,
your sense of identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a
vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. On the basis of the
scientific evidence, what need have we for a separate entity such as a ‘soul’ or
’spirit’? For Crick, the idea of a ‘soul’ is nothing more than a myth.

What Dr. Booth rightly notices is that, even if Crick has exposed a major
weakness within popular Christian belief since Descartes, Crick has not even
gen begun to address, much less to dismantle, biblical faith or biblical anthropology.
This is because, as surprising as it may seem to many of our contemporaries,
Scripture itself points predominantly in the direction of a monist account of
human nature. Persons do not come in and cannot be fragmented into ‘parts’ –
whether ‘body and soul’ or ‘body, soul, and spirit.’ If not the only, then clearly
the dominant voice in the Bible is that with persons we are dealing, simply (and
profoundly), with ‘human life.’

The burden of this essay is to lay out in a programmatic way a number of key
matters of biblical interpretation bearing on this claim. I will not attempt to be
exhaustive in this respect, nor do I propose to repeat the points Dr. Booth has al-
ready sketched. My agenda, rather, is to offer reflections on several issues raised
by a close reading of Dr. Booth’s essay. We will see that, from time to time, even
when Dr. Booth reaches conclusions that are themselves sound, he has left these
views open to flank attacks at the levels of presupposition and method. The pres-
ent essay, then, is a friendly attempt to advance the discussion by revisiting
some key points. In what follows I will address four points of discussion: (1) In
light of the ‘image of God’ tradition, to which Dr. Booth makes only passing ref-
ence, what is it that makes us ‘human’? (2) Can the question of human nature
in Scripture be resolved with recourse to Hebrew and/or Greek word-studies, on
which Dr. Booth’s essay is heavily dependent? (3) Has Dr. Booth fairly character-
ized the position he opposes; and, thus, is his position as appealing as his discus-
sion seems to presume? (4) Dr. Booth’s brief treatment of so-called problem
passages (e.g., Matt. 10:28; 2 Cor. 5:1–10) is unlikely to satisfy those who do not
already embrace his conclusions; can more be said?

1. Made in the ‘Image of God’

The nature of humanity is not often a topic of speculative concern in Scripture
and it is at least partially for this reason that readers of the Bible continue to de-
bate the question. If we take as our beginning point ‘the beginning,’ the creation
material in Genesis 1–2, the debate is not thereby circumvented, but two

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affirmations are indisputable. First, what makes the human being uniquely human is not the possession of an entity separate from the body, such as a 'soul' or 'spirit.' Second, according to the Genesis account, our embodied existence has this as its singular vocation: to reflect the image of (the Triune) God.

Some may take issue with this first affirmation. After all, does it not say in Gen. 2:7 that 'the Lord God formed the human being of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the human being became a living soul (nephēš)?' Might not one argue reasonably from this text that the lifeless human being is nothing but a mere 'body' in need of a 'soul,' and thus that it is this 'soul' that is necessary for human existence? Discussion of this point might turn for some on the meaning of the Hebrew term employed in the narrative, nephēš – a possibility we will reject below. For the present, it is sufficient simply to observe that, however one translates nephēš in this text, the same term is used only a few verses earlier with reference to 'every beast of the earth,' 'every bird of the air,' and 'everything that creeps on the earth' – that is, to everything 'in which there is life (nephēš)' (1:30). Clearly, then, the possession of nephēš is not a unique characteristic of the human person. What is more, unless one is ready to grant that animals have 'souls' in the same way that humans are alleged to have, then we might better conclude that the Genesis account is referring to the divine gift of life: 'the human being became a living person.'

If the possession of a 'soul' is not the distinguishing mark of the human person, that which separates human beings from the rest of creation, what is? On this issue, the Genesis account is transparent. Unlike other members of creation, animate and inanimate, humanity is created by God 'in his own image':

Then God said, 'Let us make humanity in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, over the cattle, over the whole earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humanity in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' (Gen. 1:26–27)

Of all the creatures, only humanity is created after God's own likeness, in God's own image (imago Dei). Only to humanity does God speak directly. Humanity alone receives from God this divine vocation.

The relative succinctness of this text from Genesis cannot be equated with clarity, however, with the result that the imago Dei tradition has been the focus of diverse interpretations among Jews and Christians – ranging from some physical characteristic of humans (such as standing upright) to a way of knowing (especially the human capacity to know God), and so on. Taken within its immediate setting in Genesis 1, 'the image of God' in which humanity is made

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3 Unless otherwise noted, biblical translations are my own.
transparently relates to the exercise of dominion over the earth on God’s behalf. But this observation only begs the question, for we must then ascertain what it means to exercise dominion in this way – that is, in a way that reflects God’s own style of interaction with his creatures. What is more, this way of putting the issue does not grapple with the profound word spoken over humanity and about humanity, that human beings in themselves (and not only in what they do) reflect the divine image. What is this quality that distinguishes humanity? God’s words affirm the creation of the human family in its relation to himself, as his counterpart, so that the nature of humanity derives from the human family’s relatedness to God. The concept of the *imago Dei* then, is fundamentally relational, and takes as its ground and focus the graciousness of God’s own covenantal relations with humanity and the rest of creation. The distinguishing mark of human existence when compared with other creatures is thus the whole of human existence and not some ‘part’ of the individual. Humanity is created uniquely in relationship to God and finds itself as a result of creation in covenant with God. Humanity is given the divine mandate to reflect God’s own covenant love in relation with God, within the covenant community of all humanity, and with all that God has created.

Outside of Genesis, creation ‘in the image of God’ otherwise plays little role in the Old Testament, though it is mentioned in Deuterocanonical materials (e.g., Wis. 2:23–24; Sir. 17:1–13) and later texts from Hellenistic Judaism. In the New Testament, Paul’s thought is closest to the interpretation of the *imago Dei* expressed in the Wisdom of Solomon, wherein the phrase is used with reference to the actual expression of the ‘image of God’ in a human life rather than to human capacity or potential (as in Sirach). Paul develops the motif of Christ as the ‘image of God’ (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; cf. Phil. 2:6) and, as its corollary, the conformation of human beings into the ‘image of Christ’ (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49; 2 Cor. 3:18). Accordingly, ‘in Christ’ believers have access to the ultimate purpose of God for humanity set forth in the creation of human life. Through his creative and reconciling activity and in his ethical comportment, Christ both reveals the nature of God and manifests truly the human vocation (cf. Luke 6:35–36).

Subsequent Christian theology has emphasized the triune nature of God – that is, the fundamental relatedness of God within the Godhead. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – these constitute the community of the Godhead, from which all revelation flows and on the basis of which all creation exists and has its meaning. It would be easy to imagine that the community of the Godhead is replicated in a tripartite understanding of the human person – body, soul, and spirit. This would be a mistake in category. The human person, understood as an individual, is not a reflection of the Godhead, as though the human person were complete in her- or himself. God’s words at the creation of humankind are spoken not over a human person, but over the human family. In fact, according to the Genesis-text, God (singular) created humanity (singular) as men and women (plural), as ‘them’ (plural). We reflect the community of the Triune God not as individuals but as the human community, whose life is differentiated from and
yet bound up with nature, and whose common life springs from and finds its end in God’s embrace.

The affirmation of human beings as bearers of the divine image in Genesis, together with the interpretation of the imago Dei tradition at the hands of Paul, points unquestionably to the uniqueness of humanity in comparison to all other creatures. This tradition does not locate this singularity in the human possession of a ‘soul,’ however, but in the human capacity to relate to God as his partner in covenant, and to join in companionship within the human family and in relation to the whole cosmos in ways that reflect the covenant love of God. ‘Humanness,’ in this sense, is realized in and modeled by Jesus Christ.

2. The Human Person in Scripture: The Contribution of Linguistics

Until recently, one of the mainstays in the conversation about biblical anthropology has been the contribution of Hebrew and Greek lexicography. Certain words, vested with particular meanings, have been said to point to certain conclusions regarding the make-up of the human person. As in statistics, however, so in linguistics, the same evidence base, in different hands, can lead to sometimes opposing results. This is the case in the discussion of the human person, in which Hebrew terms (such as nephēš, bāšār, lēb, and rūāh) and Greek terms (such as sōma, psychē, pneuma, and sarx) are investigated for their meaning. Unfortunately for this debate, these words are each polysemous, and are capable of a range of translations into English. Thus, depending on context, nephēš might be translated into English as ‘life,’ ‘person,’ ‘breath,’ ‘inner person,’ ‘self,’ ‘desire,’ or even ‘throat.’ Bāšār might be translated with the English terms ‘flesh,’ ‘body,’ ‘meat,’ ‘skin,’ ‘humankind,’ or ‘(the) animal (kingdom).’ Translations of lēb might include ‘heart,’ ‘mind,’ ‘conscience,’ and ‘inner life.’ Finally, rūāh might be taken as a reference to ‘wind,’ ‘breath,’ ‘seat of cognition and/or volition,’ ‘disposition,’ ‘spirit,’ or ‘point on a compass.’ Similar polysemy is found among the relevant Greek terms: sōma is capable of translation into English as ‘body,’ ‘physical being,’ ‘church,’ ‘slave,’ and even ‘reality’; psychē as ‘inner self,’ ‘life,’ and ‘person’; pneuma as ‘spirit,’ ‘ghost,’ ‘inner self,’ ‘way of thinking,’ ‘wind,’ and ‘breath’; and sarx as ‘flesh,’ ‘body,’ ‘people,’ ‘human,’ ‘nation,’ ‘human nature,’ and, simply, ‘life.’

Given this polysemy, we would be mistaken to assume that the word psychē, which someone might wish to translate as ‘soul,’ actually means ‘soul’ or requires an identification with the concept of ‘soul’ defined as the spiritual part of a human distinct from the physical or as an ontologically separate entity constitutive of the human person. Nor should we imagine that in any given utterance psychē refers to ‘inner life,’ ‘life,’ and ‘person’ – or to even one of these possible referents. In the same way, we would not expect native speakers of English to confuse a ‘light blue’ with a ‘blue mood’ or a ‘light switch.’ In the end, studies of the human person oriented toward the semantics of biblical Hebrew or Greek are capable of only limited and primarily negative results. We can show, as Dr.
Booth has indicated, that words like *nepheš* or *psychē* do not necessarily refer to ontologically separate (or separable) parts of the human person. On the other hand, neither can such study show that, in individual texts, the opposite is necessarily the case.

Words take their meaning fundamentally not from etymology nor even from the dictionary, but from usage: what matters most, then, is not how a term originated or is defined in the lexicon, but how it is used in a given utterance, within a given discourse. The idea that one could simply pile up all of the references in Scripture to ‘body’ or ‘soul,’ and from this deduce ‘the biblical understanding of the human person’ is grossly misguided on linguistic grounds.

Moreover, we must face the reality that neither the Old nor the New Testament writers, nor other writers within their sociolinguistic contexts, developed a specialized or technical, denotative vocabulary for theoretical discussion of the human person. And if this is so, then contemporary interpreters ought to exercise care when reading the biblical materials in light of specialized language that has developed subsequently.

3. The Human Person: Options in the Debate

One of the areas in which Dr. Booth’s discussion is least nuanced, and thus most susceptible to accusations of hyperbole, is in its presentation of ‘the opposition.’ Dr. Booth’s choice of words and phrases like ‘fragmented into body and soul’ or ‘mechanical matter and free spirit,’ when contrasted with language affirming a ‘unitary view,’ will leave most persons with only one clear option!

Of course, views such as that held by Dr. Booth are just as often, if not more regularly caricatured in similarly overstated terms. Part of the problem here is how extraordinarily complex these matters become as we grope for appropriate language – especially when we grope for language capable of overturning centuries-old and widespread, popular assumptions. Not many people will queue up to hear the message, “You have no soul!”, and not many pastors are willing to make such claims from the pulpit. Indeed, another aspect of the problem is the attempt on the part of some to rule alternative views out of court by judging them as sub-Christian. Recent caricatures of opposing viewpoints seem often to arise from the erroneous presumption that both Scripture and the classical Christian tradition speak with a singular, unambiguous voice on the nature of the human person. Although Scripture and tradition do place parameters around the range of views that might be regarded as consistent with Christian faith, a singular position does not arise from careful consideration of the evidence.

In any case, one of the most articulate spokespersons for a dualistic account of human nature, John W. Cooper, would hardly recognize his position in the words of Dr. Booth. Cooper defends a ‘functional wholism’ – an ontological dualism that embraces both the functional integration of human life and a disembod-
ied intermediate state beyond death. Perhaps of more interest is the dualism of Thomas Aquinas — a position that eschews Platonic dualism (and is hardly recognizable to Cartesian categories) while building on the groundwork of Aristotelian monism. As A.A. Howsepians has recently summarized Thomistic anthropology, "I am a complete individual thing or "substance." My soul is not. Hence, I am not my soul. Although my (hylomorphic) soul is immaterial and can survive my death, I do not survive my death. At death I as an individual cease to be, although my soul, and in virtue of this my individuality, in one important sense, "lives on." To my way of thinking, if one were to gravitate toward some form of dualistic account of the human person, the position of Aquinas would provide an interesting and helpful point of departure. His position hardly qualifies for the label ‘dualism’ among those of us weaned on Cartesian categories, however, in which one finds driven a firm and essential wedge between the material and non-material. Hence, his view is far better suited to represent human existence as this is articulated in the biblical materials.

More recent forms of body-soul dualism among Christians are typically mandated by misplaced eschatological concerns. Cooper justifies his defense of what he calls ‘traditional dualistic anthropology’ on these grounds: ‘The most obvious [cost of abandoning dualism] is that the beliefs virtually all ordinary Christians have about the afterlife must also be jettisoned. If souls are not the sort of thing which can be broken loose from bodies, then we do not actually exist beyond death and resurrection, either with Christ or somewhere else, either consciously or unconsciously.’ Apart from what appears to be a dubious commitment to popular opinion in Christian theologizing, and apart from the either-or categories into which Cooper invites our thinking about the afterlife, this statement is indicative of the high degree to which Cooper’s own case is motivated at a fundamental level by eschatology: How can I live with God forever when my body is manifestly dead and decomposing, unless some aspect of me, the essential ‘me,’ the ‘soul,’ survives my death? Accordingly, we are asked to embrace an anthropology based on analogistic and speculative language concerning which we have no evidentiary base, and to do so we must eschew the evidence of Scripture and science regarding the human person to which we have far more direct access. When he speaks most clearly of the nature of human existence in the afterlife, Paul himself adopts parabolic language (1 Corinthians 15), with the result that many of our eschatological questions must remain questions — that is, if we want answers from Scripture these questions must be allowed to stand as questions, since the biblical materials are manifestly less concerned with resolution than many of us have become. In any case, it is surely worth noting that the relevant biblical material affirms resurrection to an embodied existence, not immortality of the soul, and nowhere in Scripture does one find support for some sort of ‘soul flight’ following death.

6 Cooper, Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting. 3.
Apart from eschatological concerns, what worries most Christians about a monistic account of the human person is that to embrace monism is to locate oneself on the slippery slope leading to the identification or reduction of human thought processes, emotions, even spirituality to ‘mechanical operations.’ Sans a soul, are we nothing but highly complex, organic computers, robots all? Interestingly, such a view derives from persons whose worldviews are themselves profoundly mechanistic — that is, for persons born in the wake of the Enlightenment, whose early nourishment included healthy doses of Newtonian mechanics, and thus for whom body-soul dualism is already a given. I, robot — this view builds on a mechanistic view of the body, with the soul understood as rescuing us from robotic existence. Cooper’s ‘functional wholism’ overcomes such excesses, of course. If one does not start from the presumption of Descartes-inspired dualism, however, there is less to overcome. And today ‘monism’ comes in many guises, with Francis Crick’s ‘astonishing hypothesis’ — that we are nothing more than the behaviours of a vast number of neurons — only one position. A physicalist view of the person need not lead one to the conclusion that a human being is nothing but the yield of molecular physics.

My own view is that, on the whole, the biblical data are most consistent with the philosophical position known as nonreductive physicalism, which sees the human being as a unitary physical entity without a separate, nonphysical soul, with capacities that are incapable of being reduced to the behavior of nerve cells and their related molecules. In such a view, ‘soul’ is not an ontological entity but an embodied capacity and vocation to relate to others, to self, and to God.

To summarize, if ontological dualism exists on one pole and Crick’s ‘astonishing hypothesis’ on the other, this does not mean that other options are not available. It is better to see these two not simply as two options, but as two ends of a continuum. When debating the value of various forms of evidence, whether from the theological disciplines or the neurosciences or some other, it is important to remember the range of possible positions that might be embraced, as well as to realize that more than one position is capable of the nomenclature of ‘Christian.’

4. Some ‘Problem’ Passages

Although many scientists and philosophers have found it relatively easy to grasp some form of monism, it is nevertheless true that dualism remains for many Christians one of the unquestioned and unquestionable assumptions of human life. When faced with considerations such as those sketched by Dr. Booth or myself, the first reaction of many people in the church is to leaf through the pages of Scripture in order to identify passages that prove that the human being is made up of body and soul. ‘The Bible tells me so’ is a powerful argument, but it is not

without its problems. As I have already implied, sometimes 'the Bible tells me so' because of the particular translation of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts one is using. In this respect, it may be of interest that the English word 'soul' appears more than 525 times in the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible (1611), but only 139 times in the New International Version (1984), and 180 times in the New Revised Standard Version (1989). Beyond this, it is also true that canons of interpretation build up around biblical texts, so that we come to view the meaning of certain texts as 'obvious' and 'clear to all thinking persons.' Canons of interpretation are not always true to the text, however; nor are they necessarily benign in terms of the sorts of worldviews and behaviors they sponsor. On the basis of what were in some contexts 'common sense readings of Scripture,' for example, women have been barred from Christian leadership. Jews have been maligned and murdered, and Africans have been enslaved.

The question I pose in this final section of this essay, then, is neither, Can I prove a monistic account of the human person from Scripture?, nor, Can I disprove a dualistic account? I do hope to show, at least in a preliminary way, that monism is consistent with Scripture — or at least with a few exemplars of what are usually taken to be biblical passages that allegedly prove that humans have two 'parts,' body and soul.

Matthew 10:28

Given the sociocultural context of Judaism in the Second Temple period, we should not be surprised to find in the New Testament texts like Matt. 10:28: 'Do not fear those who put the body to death but are unable to kill the soul; fear rather the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.' This saying echoes the martyr-theology of such Hellenistic Jewish texts as Wis. 16:13–14; 2 Macc. 6:30, in which it is maintained that persecutors have access only to the body, but only God has power over the whole person. Must this saying of Jesus be read in a way that points to anthropological dualism? It is worth exploring whether such texts make use of a metaphorical rather than an ontological dualism, in which the 'inner' and 'outer' aspects of a human being are separated for the sake of mitigating the power of those who would persecute the faithful. The parallel in Luke 12:4 leaves open a further possibility for making sense of Jesus' saying — namely, that he is saying no more than that those who are persecuted should take comfort in knowing that martyrdom is only the end of one's existence in this world, and not the end of one's life.

John 9:2

With respect to evidence for body-soul dualism within Hellenistic Judaism, we can point to a text that speaks with more clarity in John's Gospel, where the disciples ask Jesus concerning a man born blind, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' (9:2). Among the assumptions on which this query apparently rests is the life of the soul prior to existence in this world. In a text that seems to reflect an analogous anthropology, Wis. 8:19–20 reads,
'As a child I was naturally gifted, and a good soul fell to my lot – or, rather, being good, I entered an undefiled body.' Of course, in John 9 the Fourth Evangelist merely represents dualism as the view of Jesus' disciples and neither he nor Jesus confirms this view within this narrative context.

2 Corinthians 5:1–10

Paul writes in 2 Cor. 5:1–3, 'For we know that if our earthly tent is dismantled, we have a house from God – a dwelling not made with human hands, eternal in the heavens. In view of this we sigh, longing to put on our heavenly house, assuming, of course, that when we take it off we will not be found naked.' These words have often been taken to refer to a state of disembodiment between death and the general resurrection. Can such a reading be sustained? It is worth noticing at the outset, that even if some Greeks looked forward to death, for it was followed by the flight of the soul into the desirable goal of immortality, this is not Paul's understanding here. Even if we imagine that Paul is thinking in terms of a bodiless, interim period, then, he looks upon the possibility of this 'nakedness' (gymnos) with abhorrence; within wider Judaism, after all, to be found 'naked' was to suffer humiliation, to lose one's identity as a human.

To press further, Paul's opening comment in 2 Cor. 5:1, 'For we know that...,,' urges us to recognize that he is not charting new territory here, but rather calling to mind former instruction. Even if we might allow for the possibility that, in 2 Cor. 5:1–10, Paul wants to clarify his earlier guidance in these matters, we should nonetheless anticipate that the message of these verses will not substantively depart from his message in 1 Corinthians 15.

In that earlier letter, Paul was concerned with divisions within the Corinthian community – divisions that were both social and philosophical. Those of relative wealth would have had access to itinerant philosophers; following customary practice in the Roman world, persons of high status in Corinth might have extended hospitality to such persons and thus have been exposed to more sophisticated notions about the afterlife. For them, Paul's talk of 'the waking of the dead' would have been reminiscent of fables about the resuscitation of corpses, the stuff of popular myths. Taught to degrade the body, they would have found Paul's teaching about the resurrection incomprehensible, even ridiculous. Those of low status, on the other hand, would have been incapable of welcoming itinerant philosophers into their homes and, thus, would have lived apart from their influence. They would have had closer contact with superstitions and popular myths, including those relating the resuscitation of corpses and the endowment of those corpses with immortality. Since Paul's primary objective in 1 Corinthians is to restore unity (1:10), Paul's challenge is to represent the resurrection belief of early Christianity with enough sophistication to communicate effectively with those of high status while not alienating those of lower status.

It is in 1 Cor. 15:38–58 that Paul discusses the nature of the resurrection, and in doing so he affirms the following: (1) There is a profound continuity between present life in this world and life everlasting with God. For human beings.
this continuity has to do with bodily existence. That is, Paul cannot think in terms of a free-floating soul separate from a body. (2) Present human existence, however, is marked by frailty, deterioration, weakness, and is therefore unsuited for eternal life. Therefore, in order for Christian believers to share in eternal life, their bodies must be transformed. Paul does not here think of 'immortality of the soul.' Neither does he proclaim a resuscitation of dead bodies that might serve as receptacles for souls that had escaped the body in death. Instead, he sets before his audience the promise of the transformation of their bodies into glorified bodies (cf. Philippians 3:21). (3) Paul’s ideas are, in part, rooted in images from the natural world and, in part, related to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. As it was with Christ’s body, Paul insists, so it will be with ours: the same, yet not the same; transformed for the new conditions of life with God forever. (4) For Paul, this has important meaning for the nature of Christian life in the present. For example, this message underscores the significance of life in this world – a fact that many Christians at Corinth had not taken seriously. We should not imagine that our bodies are unimportant, then, or that what we do to our bodies or with our bodies is somehow unrelated to eternal life (cf. Colossians 1:24). The idea of eternal life is not ‘escapism.’ Rather, it provides the Christian both with hope as well as with a vision of what is important to God; as a result, we may look forward to the future while also allowing this vision of the future to help determine the nature of our lives in the present.

Returning to 2 Corinthians 5, we may go on to inquire into the meaning of Paul’s language: ‘earthly tent . . . dismantled,’ ‘a house from God,’ and ‘longing to put on our heavenly house’ (vv. 1–2). The metaphor of ‘tent’ is deeply rooted in Israel’s past, where the tabernacle does give way to a temple, which was itself destroyed and replaced; indeed, for Paul’s audience, the temple had been replaced yet again, this time by the Christian community itself, a temple ‘not made with human hands.’ This language is then correlated with another metaphor – ‘putting on’ or ‘being clothed,’ which refers to baptism (cf. Rom. 13:11–14; Gal. 3:23–29; Col. 3:9–10). Paul’s language is dualistic, then, but not in an anthropological sense. He thinks of an eschatological dualism, contrasting the now and the not-yet: Having put on Christ in baptism, we now yearn for a life that conforms to his, one in which the church is authentically and wholly the dwelling place of God. In this case, our hope that we not be found naked refers to the time of the final judgment (see v. 10), when we will experience the consummation of our new life in Christ rather than the ‘exposure’ that comes in condemnation. As A.E. Harvey paraphrases, ‘But we are confident, because death cannot be any kind of disgrace or disqualification; indeed, death is the transition to the condition of solidarity with Christ in the heavenly church-dwelling which is what we are actually yearning and working for all the time . . .’

Although often read against the backdrop of body-soul dualism, and thus taken as further support for body-soul dualism, 2 Cor. 5:1–10 actually points in

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an altogether different direction. The dualism with which it is concerned is es-
chatological rather than anthropological. When read in relation to Paul’s for-
mer teaching in 1 Corinthians 15 (to which the apostle himself draws attention),
this text is seen to be fully consistent with a monistic account of the human
person.

*Perspectives in Roman Antiquity*

Other examples might easily proliferate, though in this instance not indefinitely.
The list of verses that are typically recruited into this discussion in order to prove
body-soul dualism is actually relatively small. An affirmation of monism does
not depend on disproving the potential appearance of dualism in the New Testa-
ment, however. (1) The New Testament materials were written in a period of sig-
nificant cultural upheaval, and authors of New Testament books were often
themselves standing, sometimes quite self-consciously, at the crossroads of Juda-
ism and the traditions of Israel, Hellenism, and Roman ways of life. As a con-
sequence, we should not be surprised by the probability that the New Testa-
dent documents would reflect something of that diversity in their pages. Requiring
that all New Testament witnesses speak with the same voice typically leads to
the silencing of alternatives within the canon and/or to treating some witnesses
like puppets in the hands of a ventriloquist. (2) More interesting and perhaps
more significant than the counting of verses pro and con is the persistence of
wholism in the soteriologies (or conceptualizations of salvation) in the New
Testament. Salvation is consistently represented in wholistic terms, incapable of
reduction to ‘healing bodies’ or ‘winning souls,’ but articulated within the
framework of the ancient world as the restoration of God’s people in relation to
God and to the community of God’s people.

5. Conclusion

Given the strength of Cartesian categories, it is easy for people to imagine that
the conclusions science has been reaching regarding a monistic account of the
human person constitute a challenge to Christian faith. Indeed, though we have
not sketched the history of Christian thought on the matter of the ‘soul,’ had we
done so we would have seen the central place body-soul dualism has had in
Christian thought from the patristic period on. Body-soul dualism has never
been the only position, however, and a rehearsal of the biblical evidence suggests
the degree to which body-soul dualism has achieved a prominence far out of
proportion to the scriptural basis on which it was alleged to have been built.
Christians who today embrace a monistic account of humanity may do so not
only as ‘good scientists,’ but as persons assured that this position actually places
them more centrally within the biblical material than has usually been granted
over the past two millennia. At the same time, biblical faith would naturally re-
sist any suggestion, such as that put forward by Francis Crick, that our human-
ity can be reduced to our physicality. And biblical faith challenges much of the
current debate among scientists and philosophers regarding the nature of the

62 • Science & Christian Belief, Vol 11, No. 1
human person by insisting that the nature of the human person can never be understood one person at a time, so to speak. If we would articulate an account of the human person that takes with utmost seriousness the biblical record, we would have far less conversation about the existence or importance of 'souls' and far more about the human capacity and vocation for community with God, with the human family, and in relation to the cosmos.

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Science and Christianity: into the new millennium

(CiS/ASA residential conference held in August 1998)

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**Science and Christianity: into the new millennium**  
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<table>
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| S5/1 | Oliver Barclay: God and nature  
      | Sam Berry: The fall |
| M1/1 | Francis Collins: The human genome project |
| M1/2 | discussion after talk by Francis Collins  
      | Gareth Jones: The human embryo |
| M1/3 | Donald Bruce: Ewe, me and God |
| M2/1 | Pattle Pun: Towards an ethic of the human genome project  
      | Nancy Hopkins: Science and the Urban African-American Church  
      | Dormer and Kinoti: Science and development in developing countries |
| M3/1 | Michael Poole: Explaining or explaining away?  
      | Richard Bell: The subject-object relationship in theology and physics  
      | Cook and Bestman: Neo-Lamarckian thought ... (start of talk) |
| M3/2 | Cook and Bestman: Neo-Lamarckian thought ... (talk continued)  
      | Denis Lamoureux: The Phillip E Johnson phenomenon |
| M5/1 | Colin Humphreys: The number of people in the exodus from Egypt  
      | Richard Ruble: Mr Oddity and science  
      | Donald Kobe: Copernicus and Martin Luther (start of talk) |
| M5/2 | Donald Kobe: Copernicus and Martin Luther (talk continued)  
      | Michael Corey: Supernatural agency and modern scientific method |
| T1/1 | Charles Harper: The portraits of human nature project  
      | Warren Brown: Introduction to this symposium  
      | Elving Anderson: A genetic view of human nature  
      | Malcolm Jeeves: Brain, mind and behaviour (start of talk) |
| T1/2 | Malcolm Jeeves: Brain, mind and behaviour (talk continued)  
      | Warren Brown: Cognitive contributions to soul |
| T2/1 | Nancey Murphy: Non-reductive physicalism  
      | Joel Green: Monism and the nature of humans in Scripture |
| T4/1 | Stephen Post: A moral case for non-reductive physicalism  
      | Newton Malony: Counselling body/soul persons |
| T4/2 | Fraser Watts: Comments on the symposium  
      | panel discussion chaired by Malcolm Jeeves |
| T5/1 | Colin Russell: Faraday and the Sandemanians  
      | Paul Marston: Sedgwick and the Scriptural Geologists |
| T5/2 | David Livingstone: Darwinism and Calvinism  
      | Michael Roberts: Design up to scratch? |
| W1/1 | John Houghton: Caring for the Earth |
| W1/2 | John Sale: Biodiversity loss in the developing world  
      | Brian Heap: Towards sustainable consumption |
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RODNEY D. HOLDER
Multiple Universes as an Explanation for Fine-Tuning

I should like to take issue with one point only raised by Phil Dowe in his 'Response to O'Connor: Inference to the Best Explanation'.

Dowe states that the existence of many universes does not provide an explanation, alternative to that of design, for the existence of some universe fine-tuned for life. I quote:

According to one common alternative explanation, there are many, many universes of random configuration spread out 'next to' each other, and so it is quite likely, if not certain, that some universe will be fine-tuned for life. But according to IBE as we have considered it, this does not qualify as an explanation at all because its truth simply does not raise the probability of the evidence.

There are in fact two confusions here. First, Ian Hacking, whom Dowe quotes as support for the above statement, distinguishes two kinds of many-universe scenario. In the first, ascribed to Wheeler, there is an infinite sequence of universes in which the physical constants and initial conditions are re-processed for each member of the cycle. One could treat the sequence as consisting of universes whose fundamental properties are independent of each other. In the second many-universe scenario, the many universes co-exist simultaneously, ie could be regarded as regions of a single space whose properties are chosen independently.

Hacking argues that the second type of many-universe scenario does provide a possible explanation for the existence of fine-tuning. All possible universes exist in the infinite ensemble, so one (indeed infinitely many) which are finely-tuned exists by deduction. However, Hacking believes that those who think that the first, Wheeler-type scenario also provides an explanation for fine-tuning are guilty of committing what he calls 'the inverse gambler's fallacy'. In the inverse gambler's fallacy a gambler is invited into a room just as two dice are about to be thrown. On seeing double six the gambler argues that, since this is unlikely, it is probable that there have been many previous throws of the dice. The argument is fallacious because what happens on this throw of the dice is independent of what has happened on previous throws, if there have been any. Similarly, a finely-tuned universe is just as unlikely if this universe is the latest in a long sequence of universes as if it is the first.

Hacking is right about the second type of many-universe scenario but wrong about the first. The two cases are not as disanalogous as he thinks (or not as disanalogous as is required for his argument to succeed), as has been well demonstrated in the debate following the publication of Hacking’s paper.\(^3\),\(^4\),\(^5\)

Given (as Hacking assumes, but see below) a finite probability that any universe drawn independently in an infinite sequence is finely-tuned for life, the probability that such a universe will eventually turn up is 1. The fact which Hacking overlooks is that \textit{we can only observe such a universe} — this is an ‘observational selection effect’ also known as the ‘Weak Anthropic Principle’. To go back to the gambler, the correct analogy would be with a gambler who slumbers outside the room while the dice are thrown, to be called into the room only in the event a double six is thrown. Such a gambler would correctly infer that probably many throws have occurred before the present one.

There are, of course, many problems with each ‘infinitely many-universes scenario’, which are deserving of further exploration, for example:

(i) Are the infinitely many-universes genuinely physically realizable?

(ii) Is the set of life-bearing universes actually of measure zero in the space of possible universes?\(^6\)

(iii) Is the infinitely many-universes hypothesis testable?

(iv) Is the hypothesis simple, and therefore of high prior probability?

(v) What is the nature of the explanation provided by the many-universes hypothesis? It would seem to be such as to explain literally anything by a shrug of the shoulders — ‘we just happen to be in a universe like that’.

(vi) Why is there, in this universe, more fine-tuning than is required for life? Probabilistically we would expect to be in a universe which had just enough fine-tuning for life.

(vii) Why does the order necessary for life persist in this universe?

These are just some of the problems with the infinitely many-universes hypothesis. However, that it does not provide an explanation for fine-tuning at \textit{all} is not one of them.

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PHIL DOWE
Response to Holder: Multiple Universe Explanations Are Not Explanations

In his response to my paper 'Inference to the Best Explanation' Rodney D Holder takes issue with my claim that multiple world hypotheses do not explain the fine-tuning for life of our universe. My comment was a brief aside, and I am grateful for the opportunity to expand. I will focus on two points.

(1) According to one influential view of confirmation and explanation, evidence confirms, and is explained by, a hypothesis only if the hypothesis raises the probability of the evidence. On this view, reasoning which infers a long series of independent trials as an explanation of a single improbable outcome is fallacious.

Suppose, as I sit in my room in London, I toss a coin 10 times, and get 10 heads. In order to explain this improbable event, I infer that there must be very many people around London sitting in their rooms tossing a sequence of 10 coins, randomly instantiating various of the possible sequences. This inference is fallacious because although the existence of the many rooms makes it more likely that someone will toss 10 heads, it makes no difference to the probability (1/1024) that I will toss 10 heads. Ian Hacking calls this the Inverse Gambler's Fallacy (hereafter 'IGF'). It makes no difference whether the hypothesised coin tossing sessions occur at roughly the same time, spread out spatially about London, or that they occur at the same place in a long temporal sequence. (To infer that I have been or will be here day after day tossing innumerable 10-coin sequences commits the same fallacy.) Equally, it makes no difference whether I hypothesise a set of randomly instantiated sequences, or a set which instantiates at least one of every possible outcome. My chance of getting 10 heads remains 1/1024.

Various Multiple Universe explanations of the fine tuning of our universe commit this fallacy. The most common version is that there are very many randomly configured universes spread out in 'hyperspace', another, identical so far as the relevant reasoning is concerned, is the Wheeler hypothesis that the universe is producing big bang-crunch cycles where the configurations of the subsequent universes are independent. As Hacking pointed out, both of these versions commit IGF.

However, Hacking thought that another version, the Carter hypothesis (sometimes called 'plenitude'), where every possible configuration is instantiated, did not commit IGF on the grounds that the inference is deductive, whereas IGF is a fallacy of probabilistic reasoning. However, there is something strange about this conclusion: the problem is that the probability of a particular outcome is independent of the number of trials, and this remains true, whether
or not the probability that some universe will be fine tuned is high, or equal to 1. Thus I agree with Holder that Hacking is mistaken about the disanalogy, although our reasons differ. (Note that neither I nor Hacking nor Holder are discussing the hypothesis that every possibility is instantiated once and only once.)

(2) Observer selection reasoning brings in a separate fallacy (here we assume that the probabilities in explanations must be objective). According to that reasoning, given that it is likely (or certain) that some universe is fine-tuned, then the fact that we are here means that we must be in that universe. This reasoning is appropriate as an inference (since we are here our universe must have been fine-tuned for life) but not as an explanation (given we are here our universe had to be fine-tuned for life.) Suppose, to modify an example due to John Leslie, coin toss sequences were such that the tosser is killed unless the result is 10 heads. That I am alive does not explain why I got 10 heads – that probability, taken objectively as we must for explanation, remains 1/1024.

The observer selection reasoning seems to suppose either something like Leibniz' identity of indiscernibles, or else that 'we' are disembodied souls floating over universes waiting for a fine-tuned one to appear so that we can find a home. Thus Holder compares the multiple universe argument to the case where 'a gambler slumbers outside the room while the dice are thrown, to be called into the room only in the event a double six is thrown.' Without such recourse, the observer selection reasoning explains nothing, just as the fact that I wasn't killed by my 10 coin toss adventure doesn't explain why I got 10 heads, even in conjunction with the hypothesis that there are innumerable other coin-tossing adventures (mostly with grim consequences) going on around London.

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JOHN W. OLLEY
Further Observations on *Mîn*, ‘Kind’

Recently Seely presented much data demonstrating the flexibility of usage of *mîn* in the Old Testament. Overlooked was the rarity of occurrences of the word, all occurring in the same syntactical combination which can be understood as ‘of every kind, in all their variety’. The focus is not on biological reproduction but diversity and comprehensiveness.

**Keywords:** Genesis, creationism, theistic evolution, ethno-biology, taxonomy.

In a recent article, Seely¹ helpfully discussed wide ranging data on terminology used in the Old Testament to describe a wide range of creatures. He carefully examined various passages to investigate the appropriate taxonomic level of description. The purpose of this note is to provide some supplementary information which enables a different focus to be given.

It is significant that all of the occurrences in the text of the Hebrew Bible are in the syntactical combination, *lî mîn* plus pronominal suffix. The preposition *lî* is wide-ranging in usage and is rendered in English by a variety of prepositions, depending on context: ‘to’, ‘for’, ‘of’, ‘about’, ‘belonging to’, ‘with respect to’, ‘according to’. The issue is what is the appropriate sense in this combination.

Further they are clustered in three contexts: Genesis 1, Leviticus 11 and the similar Deuteronomy 14, and single instances in Genesis 6:20 and Ezekiel 47:10. Before coming to the instances in Genesis 1 it is helpful to discuss the other passages.

The cluster in Leviticus 11 (9 instances; verses 14, 15, 16, 19, 22 [4x], 29) is in a listing of clean and unclean animals. The Authorised Version translated ‘after his/her kind’, following the Vulgate *lucta genus suum* (in verse 15 [omne corvini] *generis in similitudinem suam*). The same pattern is in the similar Deuteronomy 14 (4 instances; verses 13, 14, 15, 18). In this way there is an attempt to follow the Hebrew syntax. Interestingly, the older LXX (translated around 270 BCE and usually quite literal in legal contexts) regularly has kai. ta. o[moia aυτωv/ ‘and things similar to it’.

One may well ask why the phrase is added only after certain animals. Is it simply a recognition that the animal listed exists in a variety of outward appearances, and so the phrase highlights that, no matter what ‘kind’, all are acceptable or forbidden, as the case may be. Thus the NIV consistently has for the

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prepositional phrase, 'any kind of ...' and the NRSV, 'of any kind'. The modern
Jewish translation, Tanakh\textsuperscript{2}, conveys the looseness of the language well, 'of every
variety'.\textsuperscript{1} The phrase is probably used because the names so qualified are ge-
neric.\textsuperscript{4} It allows not only for different 'species' (loosely used) but possibly also for
different stages in the development of a given animal.\textsuperscript{5}

The idea of 'variety' certainly seems to be most appropriate in the only other
instance outside Genesis, in Ezekiel 47:10 in the description of the river that is to
flow from the temple. The life-giving nature will be such that the waters of the
Dead Sea will be fresh with so many fish that fishermen will be using nets. The
statement is that 'лимînâ [the suffix is feminine agreeing with "fish"] will be the
fish, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many'. The point is that there will be a
great variety: hence the NIV 'of many kinds'.\textsuperscript{6} Variety and comprehensiveness
('of every kind') is clearly also to the fore in Genesis 6:20, in the ark narrative.

If one had only these passages (i.e., all outside Genesis 1) there would be no
question that the import of the phrase לֵיתִי plus suffix is on variety, 'of every
kind'. The emphasis is on diversity and richness rather than on questions of
reproductive order.

This meaning, which is clear from every usage outside Genesis, also suits
admirably the context in Genesis. The import of the phrase is then not upon
issues of 'species' (linked with matters of reproducibility) but rather upon variety,
different kinds.\textsuperscript{7} This is most straightforward in verses 21 (twice), 24 (twice) and
25 (twice).

More contentious is the syntax of verses 11, 12:

Let the earth spout sproutage, plant(s)\textsuperscript{8} seeding seed(s), fruit tree(s) making
fruit(s) לֵיתִי in which is its (their) seed upon the earth. And the earth
brought forth sproutage, plant(s) seeding seed(s) לֵיתִי and tree(s) making
fruit(s) in which is its (their) seed(s) לֵיתִי.

At issue is the referent of the suffix of לֵיתִי.\textsuperscript{9} Is it referring to the 'fruit' or 'seed',
and so having primary reference to reproduction, expressed picturesquely by the
medieval Rabbi Samuel Ben Meir, 'the apple-tree produces apples, not dates'?\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{3} The same translation is used by the Jewish scholar, J. Milgrom, in his Leviticus 1–16 (Anchor
\textsuperscript{4} So Milgrom, p. 663.
\textsuperscript{5} Milgrom notes regarding 'locusts' (Lev. 11:22) that 'in Akkadian there are eighteen names for
locusts. Scripture itself uses ten... Some scientists regard four of these names —... in Joel 2:25 — not
as four different species of locusts but as stages in its development, from the larva to its fully grown
form', although he himself dissents from this view (p. 665).
\textsuperscript{6} Surprisingly C. Westermann, Genesis 1–11 (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), p. 126, in discussing
the Genesis instances, states the phrase occurs in Ezekiel 'without any recognizable context; it is
perhaps an addition'.
\textsuperscript{7} So another Jewish scholar, E. A. Speiser, Genesis (Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday,
1964), 'various kinds' (pp. 3–4).
\textsuperscript{8} All of the nouns are singular, with collective meaning, and hence the pronoun is singular. The use
of the singular is shown by putting the more natural English plural in brackets.
\textsuperscript{9} The pronoun suffixes '-ô' and '-eûtô' are both 3rd masculine ('his, its').
Further Observations on *Mîn*, ‘Kind’

Or is it referring to the ‘plant’ and ‘tree’, and so primarily focusing on the diversity?

The first, i.e., referring to the ‘seed’, is supported by the location of the phrase in verse 11, prior to the clause, ‘in which is its seed’, an order interestingly not followed in verse 12. The earliest known Hebrew interpretation of these verses is the LXX which makes verse 11 conform to the phrasing of verse 12:

... herb sowing seed according to kind and according to resemblance (kata. ge.noj kai. kaqV o’moio,tha) and fruit trees bearing fruit with the seed in it according to kind (kata. ge.noj) on the earth.

The LXX order allows for either meaning – the difference can be shown in English by the omission or insertion of a comma before ‘according’! – although the addition of ‘resemblance’ points to a focus on reproductive likeness.

The idea of separation into on-going ‘kinds’ fits the idea of ‘separation’ which is a feature of days 1–3:

All God’s acts so far have been acts of separation. There is separation here too, but in a different way; it is no longer God who divides. The earth is called not only to bring forth, but to bring forth according to kind, and in two basic categories, each comprising those kinds of plants peculiar to it... By the command of the creator, vegetation is a subdivided whole, not an unorganized mass. Just as creation is a subdivided and circumscribed whole, so too are the plants that cover the earth... The most unprepossessing piece of grass or strip of moss is part of God’s coordinated world.\(^\text{11}\)

When one turns to days 4–6 however the emphasis is upon ‘filling’, parallelling the divisions of days 1–3 (various ‘lights’ populate the ‘light and darkness’; various air and sea creatures populate the sea and space below the firmament, and various land creatures and humans populate the land). Here the idea of a rich diversity is to the fore. There is no reference to ‘seed’. (LXX continues to use simply kata. ge.noj ‘according to kind’, which allows either understanding.) The idea of variety and comprehensiveness is seen in the Aramaic Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. In verses 21, 24 and 25, in each instance, ‘after their kinds’ is explained as ‘the kinds which are clean and the kinds which are not clean’.\(^\text{12}\) There are different ‘kinds’ which humans are to keep distinct, as God has.

The translation ‘according to its (their) kind(s)’ (as in NIV) has tended to focus attention on reproductive aspects and is in fact awkward English in contexts other than Genesis 1:11–12. A translation such as ‘of every kind’ (as in *Tanakh* and NRSV, and in NIV outside of Genesis 1) is to be preferred as pointing to diversity, without excluding the fact of the order in the continuity of that

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diversity. Such a translation is suitable for all contexts of the phrase. Further, the word 'kind' itself is not to be taken as a technical term related to specific ancient or modern taxonomic levels, but rather is used in a variety of situations referring simply to the variety of 'kinds' of the actual plant or animal so subdivided.

The use of 'min' with suffix in Genesis 1 points firstly to the fact that God has made everything in the world, in all the richness of its variety. Diversity is part of the intention of creation (reinforced in Genesis 6 and Ezekiel 47). Human responsibility is to respect and enjoy that diversity, whether for Jews in the food laws (as in Leviticus and Deuteronomy) or in the modern era in efforts to maintain the biodiversity on the earth and in the seas, praising God for it.

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