

Godliness in the body

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1. What is the theological anthropology that underlies the idea of godliness in the body?

A key text for thinking about the issue of godliness in the body is Paul's injunction to the Christians in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 6:20: 'glorify God in your body.'

What is not generally noticed about this injunction is the implicit anthropology that underlies it. This anthropology tells us about two things, how we exist as human beings, and the purpose of our existence as human beings. To put it another way, this anthropology tells both who we are and what we are here for.

Who we are as human beings

If we take the first point first, 1 Corinthians 6:20 tells us implicitly that as human beings we are creatures with bodies. There would be no point in the Corinthians being told to glorify God in their bodies if in fact they had no bodies in which they could so. It would make about as much sense as telling someone with no legs that they should walk.

What this verse also implicitly tells us, however, is that as human beings we are not just bodies. Paul does not write

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mean that they should not be ordained unless they accept the truth about what constitutes godly conduct and to live accordingly (the same criteria one would apply to all other candidates for ministry).

to the Corinthians 'bodies glorify God.' What he writes is 'glorify God in your bodies, a command that only makes sense if there is a self, a 'you,' that possesses a body, but is not identical with it. This self is clearly not a material entity, because then it would itself be a body, whereas Paul distinguishes it from the body. It must therefore be an incorporeal or spiritual entity, and in order for Paul's injunction to make sense it must also be an entity that is capable of hearing (assuming Paul's letter was originally read out loud), understanding, and then acting on the basis of that understanding. It follows that what we are talking about is a conscious, rational, spiritual entity that is capable of directing the body, what in Christian theology and Western philosophy has traditionally been called a soul.

In summary, what we learn from thinking about what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:20 is what has been taught down the centuries by the Christian tradition, namely, that human beings are what is known as a 'psychosomatic unity' of a material body and an immaterial soul.

This anthropology is based on what the Bible teaches in passages such as 1 Corinthians 6, and on the insights of the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. It was taught by the Early Church Fathers and by the theologians of the Middle Ages, and it continued to be taught by mainstream Protestant theologians during the Reformation.

Martin Luther, for example, in his *Small Catechism* of 1529, explains that the credal statement 'I believe in God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth' means 'I believe that God has created me and all that exists, that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul.'

The Anglican tradition agrees with the Christian tradition as a whole that human beings consist of bodies and souls.

We can see this, for example, in the words of the Holy Communion service in *The Book of Common Prayer*. The Minister gives people the bread and wine so that Christ's body and blood may 'preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.' The people 'offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies' and pray 'that through thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in both body and soul.'

Likewise, in the Burial Service a distinction is made between the soul of the departed 'which it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself' and their body which is committed to the ground, 'earth to earth, ashes, dust to dust.'

So, 'who am I?' Paul, and the Christian tradition following Paul, says that I am a single self, a psychosomatic unity consisting of a body and a soul. I am a material body, including a material brain, but that is not all I am. I am also

his goodness and wisdom has created the human race means that is not right to have sex with people of the same sex, or to reject the sex into which you were born.

d. Christians should be willing to stand alongside those who are struggling in these areas and offer prayer, encouragement, and emotional, psychological and practical support to help believers to live in obedience to God. It is foolish and pastorally disastrous to expect that people with gender dysphoria or same-sex attraction will achieve instant sanctification. For them, as for the rest of us, the path of mortification and vivification is likely to be an oscillating one involving regression as well as progress. Nevertheless, however long, and however difficult, the path people have to travel may be, Christians have to be willing to walk it with them. We cannot give up on people any more than God gives up on us.

e. Out of love for the individuals concerned, and to protect the godliness of the Church as a whole, Christians should also challenge (and when necessary discipline in accordance with Christ's teaching in Matthew 18:15-20, and Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 5:1-12) those who are professing Christians, but who claim that they do not need to live in accordance with God's will in these areas, and nobody should be ordained who is not living in ways that offer a 'wholesome pattern and example' to the Church and to the wider world. This last point does not mean that those who are same-sex attracted, or who struggle with their sexual identity, should not be ordained, but it does

However, it is not enough for the Church of England corporately, and members of it individually, to simply say 'no' in this way. They also have to find a positive way to glorify God in the body by developing an appropriate pastoral response to those who are sexually attracted to those of the same-sex, or who struggle with their sexual identity.

This response needs to involve five elements each of which is an aspect of people glorifying God in the body:

a. Christians are called to treat all people with value and dignity, including everyone with gender dysphoria and same-sex attraction, as those created in God's image and likeness and for whom Christ died. Christians should also understand that this is not a matter of 'them' and 'us.' There are Christians who find it difficult to accept the sex into which they were born and Christians who experience sexual attraction to people of their own sex.

b. Christians should offer unconditional friendship and seek to understand the particular challenges faced in living in obedience to God in these areas. It is wrong to think that anyone is intrinsically less godly because of the desires they experience or the struggles they have about their sexual identity. Temptation is not the same as sin.

c. If anyone is not already living in accordance with God's will in these areas, Christians should be willing, when the time is right, to explain to them why the way that God in

an immaterial, conscious, rational, soul that is aware of God, other people, and the world in general, a mind that acts in and through my body in the light of this awareness. As Nancy Pearcey notes in her book, *Love Thy Body*, there is a tendency in Western thought to regard the soul, the conscious part of our existence, as the 'authentic self' with the body 'demoted to a nothing but a "meat skeleton"' extraneous to who we truly are. This is not the Christian view. The Christian view is that while I am not simply my body, nevertheless, I am my body and my body is me (as when I say, 'I am going to sit down,' or 'I fell off my bicycle'; both acts directly involving only my body but nonetheless involving me as a whole).

One day my material body will die (unless Jesus returns first), but my soul will survive that death, and because disembodiment is not its proper state God will re-unite my soul with a resurrected body in the general resurrection of the dead at the end of time. Although there are reports of out-of-body experiences, for the most part everything that we do as human beings takes place by means of the soul and the body acting together. For example, these words you are reading exist because a soul, aware of these words through a properly functioning body, instructed a body to type them on a computer through the operation of a brain, an arm and a hand.

The fact that human beings have souls as well as material bodies is what enables them to act in a moral fashion. To act morally is to freely choose to do something in response to a sense of moral obligation. In the case of purely material entities there is no element of choice. Thus, a stone hurled at someone's head has no choice in whether or not it will hit them. If the physical forces impelling it to move mean that it will hit that person, then it will hit them. If we hold that a human being is a purely material entity the same point would apply. We would have to take a determinist view of human activity and say that all our thoughts and intentions, and the acts that flow from them, are controlled by physical forces in a way not chosen by us, and that we therefore have no freedom of the will, and consequently no more freedom over our actions than a flung stone has. If determinism were true, it would be difficult to make sense of moral obligation and responsibility.

As James Moreland notes, 'If I "ought" to do something (for instance, glorify God in my body), it seems to be necessary to suppose that I can do it, that I could have done otherwise, and that I am in control of my actions. No one would say that I ought to jump to the top of a fifty-foot building and save a baby, or that I ought to stop the American Civil War in this present year, because I do not have the ability to do either.'

Because this is the case, from an orthodox Christian perspective any church which supports same-sex relationships or gender transition is a church which is in serious error in its teaching and practice. It is giving support to forms of behaviour which involve serious moral error because they involve people departing from the way God created them to live. To put it simply, it is a church which does not love people enough to seek to prevent them from living in ways that are contrary to way God made them to live.

Love does not mean simply affirming whatever choices people wish to make. It means seeking their ultimate good by helping them to understand what the right choices are and then choose them. A church which gives support to same-sex relationships or gender transition is failing to do this.

What this means for the Church of England and individual Christians within it.

What this means for the Church of England as a corporate body is that it should cease to go down the path of accepting and affirming gender transition and that it should say a firm and unequivocal 'no' to same-sex blessings, same-sex marriages and all other forms of support for same-sex sexual relationships, just as Paul said a firm and unequivocal 'no' to them in the first century.

involve a rejection of the necessary implications of the first article of the Creed. People may still sincerely believe in 'God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,' but they refuse to truly accept, or live out, this belief in so far as it relates to the existence of the particular men and women whom God has created.

As Martin Luther explains in his *Small Catechism* of the answer to the question of what it means to confess 'I believe in God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth' is 'I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul, all my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind'.

In other words, the Christian belief in God the creator is not just a vague deistic belief that God is the ultimate source of all that is, but also the very specific belief testified to in Psalm 139 that God made me as the particular combination of body and soul that I am. Both same-sex relationships and gender transition involve in different ways a rejection of that basic truth. They thus involve, ultimately, a failure to say to God 'thy will be done' and to glorify God in the body by living according to this truth, and this, as previously noted, carries the risk of eternal damnation. That is why Paul warns the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6:10 that those who persist in same-sex sexual activity 'will not inherit the kingdom of God.'

Since human morality, presupposing freedom to choose and act on what we choose, does exist, the only reasonable explanation is that, as the Christian tradition has affirmed, human beings have souls as well as material bodies.

The existence of both parts of human nature, bodies and souls, point in their own way to the existence of the God who created them. They tell us that a truthful anthropology needs to be a theological anthropology, an anthropology that understands human existence in relation to God,

In the case of our bodies the intricate design of our bodies, like the intricate design of the material order as whole, point to the existence of God as their designer and creator.

As the American writer Stephen Meyer puts it in his recent book *The Return of the God Hypothesis*:

Not only does theism solve a lot of philosophical problems, but empirical evidence from the material world points powerfully to the reality of a great mind behind the universe. Our beautiful, expanding, and finely tuned universe, and the exquisite, integrated and informational complexity of living organisms bear witness to the reality of a transcendent intelligence – a personal God.

To echo the words of the Anglican apologist William Paley, just as the existence of a watch requires the existence of a watchmaker, so the existence of the physical universe (our bodies included) point to the existence of the God who designed them and called them into being.

Furthermore, the existence of God as the transcendent, immaterial intelligence behind the physical universe is also required in order to explain the existence of our souls.

As C. S. Lewis notes, it does not make sense to say that conscious rational minds are the product of an irrational material universe (what Lewis calls 'Nature'). Rather, they must be 'supernatural' entities originating in a supernatural rational mind outside of Nature; and this is what the Christian tradition calls 'God'. 'Human minds, then, are not the only supernatural entities that exist,' writes Lewis. 'They do not come from nowhere. Each has come into Nature from Supernature: each has its tap root in an eternal, self-existent, rational Being, whom we call God. Each is an offshoot, or spearhead, or incursion of that Supernatural reality into Nature.'

We can thus say both that morality requires the existence of souls and that the existence of souls in turn requires the existence of God as their creator.

In summary, reflection on Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:20 shows us that to be human is to exist as a being who

heterosexual form of sexual activity God has created men and women to engage in (as shown by the way their bodies are constructed).

For Paul same-sex sexual activity is thus a rejection of human createdness which parallels, and points to, the rejection of the creator through idolatry. That is why he cites it as the first example of the consequences of idolatry in human behaviour. As Tom Wright puts it 'the fact that such clear distortions of the creator's male-plus-female intention occur in the world indicates that the human race as a whole as a whole is guilty of a character-twisting idolatry'. Rejecting the creator and rejecting our createdness go together.

Same-sex marriages are a further development of the basic error involved in all same-sex relationships. In terms of Christian theology, they too involve a failure to conform our sexual relationships to our God given embodiment. Marriage as created by God is a sexual relationship between two people of the opposite sex (Genesis 2:18-24). It follows that two men cannot enter into marriage with each other, and neither can two women. Same-sex marriages involve a denial of this truth.

Same-sex relationships, gender transition and the first article of the Creed

What all this means is that same-sex relationships (including same-sex marriages) and gender transition both

... clearly ordered at the biological level towards heterosexual union as the human mode of procreation. It is not possible to negotiate this fact about our common humanity; it can only be either welcomed or resented.

To engage in same-sex activity is sinful because it involves translating resentment against the way we have been made by God into a form of activity which actively goes against the way God has made us to be. It involves saying 'I will live the way I want to live regardless of the way God made me.' This may not be what people consciously think they are doing, but it is what they are doing in practice.

This is the point that underlies the prohibition of sexual relationships between men in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. Like all the other sexual prohibitions in these two chapters, the prohibition of men having sex with other men reflects the teaching contained in Genesis 1 and 2 about how God created the world. According to this teaching, God created human beings as male and female, with men designed to have sexual relations with women within marriage and vice versa. Gay sex is an 'abomination' in Leviticus because it involves a rejection by an individual of this key aspect of the created order.

This is also the point that Paul is making when he describes same-sex relationships as 'unnatural' (*para phusin*) in Romans 1:27. In line with other Jewish thinkers of his time, St. Paul thinks they are unnatural because they violate the

consists of both body and soul, and who has been called into existence by God.

What we are here for

If we turn to the question of the purpose of our existence as human beings, Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 6:20 points us to the truth that our purpose as conscious rational souls is to use our bodies as the means or instruments through which the God who created us is glorified. In the well-known words of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, 'The chief end of Man is to glorify God', and this end is achieved by human souls working through human bodies.

The Hebrew word *kabod*, translated as *doxa* in Greek and 'glory' in English has the root meaning of heaviness and by extension came to be used to describe the 'weight' or 'worthiness' of something, or someone. Used with reference to God, the term means the intrinsic worthiness of the one true creator God because of both his being and his activity. God is glorious because his being and activity are of supreme worth, they are better than anything else is or ever could be. To glorify God is to declare this fact by bearing witness to who God is and what he has done through our words and deeds, and to do this involves our souls and bodies acting together.

If we turn to the creation narrative in Genesis 1, we find that human beings are created by God as the climax of his creative activity and that they are created by God in his 'image and likeness.' 'Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness' (Genesis 1:26). 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27).

If we think about it for a moment, we will see that the term 'image' necessarily involves the idea of someone, or something, being revealed or made known. To say something is an image means that it points to some reality beyond itself and makes that reality manifest to us in some way. Thus, when I see a photograph of my granddaughter I seen an image of her, something that is not my granddaughter but nevertheless shows me what she is like. In similar fashion when Genesis 1 says that human beings are made in God's image that point that is being made is that God has created human beings to make known what he is like. In fact, as Henri Blocher has pointed out, the Hebrew preposition *be* used in Genesis 1:26 and 27 would be better translated by the word 'as' rather than the word 'in'. God has created human beings *as* his image and *as* his likeness in order to reveal his being and hence his glory in the world that he has made.

be for her good. People desire gender transition for the same reason.

Same-sex relationships

In the case of same-sex relationships the rejection of sexual identity, and hence the rejection of the body, may appear to be less obvious, but it still exists. The point is that same-sex relationships involve either a man refusing to accept that as a man he was created by God to have sex with a woman: or a woman refusing to accept that as woman she was created to have sex with a man.

This does not, of course, mean that to be a man or a woman one has to have sex with a member of the opposite sex. Christ and John the Baptist were no less male and no less fully human for being celibate. What it does mean is that a man was created to have sex with a woman rather than a man (and vice versa). To be a man is to be one who is potentially husband-to-a-wife, father-to-a-child and vice versa. To engage in same-sex sexual activity is to reject this God given truth about human sexual identity. It is very similar to gender transition in that it rejects a core aspect of the duty to conform our lifestyle and behaviour to the form of embodiment that God has given us.

As O'Donovan has written, human beings are:

This argument is true as an account of how the people involved view their situation. However, two further points need to be noted.

First, we have to distinguish between how an individual subjectively views their identity and what is objectively true. To be male or female is a matter of biology, it is a matter of the body someone has been given by God and for which and in which they are called to glorify him, and this truth is unaffected by how someone views him or herself. This means that someone who is biologically male or female, and who rejects this identity, is in fact rejecting the sex that God has given them, regardless of how they themselves view the matter.

Secondly, the fact that people with gender dysphoria have a distorted view of their situation, which they then make the basis of sinful actions, is not in fact something which makes them unique. As a result of the Fall, human beings have lost the ability to always see things as they truly are (see Romans 1:21). Acts of sin (of whatever kind) occur when a distorted view of reality resulting from the Fall leads to wrong desires which in turn give birth to wrong actions. As Augustine argues in Book XIV of *The City of God*, 'our will is for our welfare' and this results in acts of sin because, misled in our thinking as a result of the Fall, 'we commit sin to promote our welfare.' This is what is involved in gender transition just as in all other forms of sin. Eve wanted the apple because she thought it would

If we ask how human beings are to perform this function the answer that Genesis gives us is that they are to do it by ruling over the world on his behalf. 'Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth' (Genesis 1:26). God is the world's true king and human beings are called to reflect his kingship by ruling the world on his behalf.

Furthermore, doing this involves human souls and bodies acting together. We can see this in Genesis 2, for example, where Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden with the charge 'to till it and keep it.' As anyone who has ever done gardening will know, tilling and keeping a garden is an activity of the body, but it is also an activity of the soul. It is the conscious rational self, working through the body, which gets the job done.

We can see it also in the various other injunctions in the Bible in which God's people are instructed to fulfil the end for which human being were created though glorifying God by acting in ways that will make him known.

For example, in Exodus 19:6 the commission given by God to the people of Israel is that 'you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' As Chris Wright and others have noted, this is a missionary calling. What it

means is that Israel is called to fulfil the promise of the blessing of the nations given to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 by being the means by which the nations, scattered after Babel, come to know and worship the one true God. Just as priests in Israel were called to make God known to the people of Israel and to bring the people of Israel before God in worship, so Israel as a whole is called to do the same for the world as whole.

Exodus 19:5 tells us that this will take place if Israel obeys God's voice and keeps his covenant, which in turn means living in obedience to the laws of God given to Israel through Moses, laws which can only be fulfilled by the people of Israel acting rightly through their bodies, as, for instance, a study of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:2-17 makes clear. All the Ten Commandments involve doing things, or not doing things, through our bodies, and the same is true of all the other laws given to Israel as well.

For a second example, in the Sermon on the Mount Christ tells his disciples in Matthew 5:14-16:

'You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.'

codes which proclaim them to be male and women the codes which proclaim them to be female because, in the words of Tom Wright in his commentary on this verse: 'God's creation needs humans to be fully, gloriously and truly human, which means fully and truly male and female'.

Such teaching does not mean that Christians should uncritically embrace the gender stereotypes of any given society. What it does mean is that we should glorify God through our bodies by living in a way that proclaims to our society the truth of our creation by God as male or female. We should be saying through our bodies, God has made me male, or God has made me female.

Engaging in gender transition is incompatible with this calling because it necessarily involves refusing to accept and live out the truth of the male or female identity that God the creator has given to us, by deliberately adopting instead an artificially created alternate identity instead. To acknowledge this point is not to minimise the acute distress experienced by people with gender dysphoria. It is, rather, to give a theological account of what using gender transition to relieve this distress entails.

The argument is often made that people who engage in gender transition cannot be said to be sinning since they are not deliberately choosing to go against God's will. They see the identity they are seeking to live out as their true God given identity, their 'authentic self,' and they simply desire to live according to this true identity.

world to come, or we can choose to turn our back on God. If we do this God will respect our decision, but the inevitable consequence will be that in the world to come we will be cut off from God and all good for ever. The fundamental problem with both gender transition and same-sex relationships is that they do involve a rejection, in both theory and practice, of the sexual identity which we have been given by God and thus a failure to say to God 'thy will be done.'

Gender transition

In the case of gender transition, the issue is people who are suffering from a deep discomfort with their sexual identity (the condition known as 'gender dysphoria') refusing to accept the sexual identity of their body as given and seeking some to inhabit some other form of sexual identity instead. By doing this they act in a way that is incompatible with the biblical teaching that we should live in accordance with the sexual identity that God has given to us by the creation of the particular bodies that we possess.

This teaching can be found in Deuteronomy 22:5 which prohibits cross-dressing on the grounds that, as Peter Harland puts it: 'to dress after the manner of the opposite sex was to infringe the normal order of creation which divided humanity into male and female.' It can also be found in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 where St Paul tells the Corinthians that men should follow the dress and hair

As Peter Leithart notes in his commentary on Matthew, in these words:

The world is conceived as a temple, and we are the lampstand of the temple, shining to light up the whole house. The image of light merges into the image of a city – a lighted city raised up to bring the nations to glorify the Father (v.16). Jerusalem was supposed to be that city (cf. Isaiah 2:1-4). Jesus says that his disciples will take over that ancient Israelite role. The city that is going to be raised up as the chief city is not Jerusalem but the new Jerusalem, the Jerusalem above, the Jerusalem that is the church.

Here again we see that human beings are called to make God known. The function of light is to make it possible for things to be seen, and the calling of God's people, under the New Covenant as under the Old, is to enable the nations of the world to know and to glorify God. How are they to do this? Through the performance of 'good works,' actions performed in obedience to God that reveal the truth about God and how he wants his human creatures to live. Because of the way human beings are made, such works are necessarily bodily works, actions performed by conscious rational human souls through the bodies with which they are united. For example, turning the other cheek and giving your someone your cloak (Matthew 5:39-40) are actions of the soul through the body and so with everything that Christ asks us to do.

What follows from all this is that Paul's injunction to the Corinthians to 'glorify God in your body' is not an idiosyncratic demand. Rather, it is a summary of the vocation given by God to his human creatures throughout the whole of Scripture.

Godliness in the body is what we are all called to undertake.

and in relation to that sexual good, which has been given to us because it has been given to humankind.

This means that it is not legitimate either to deny the God-given form by rejecting the division of humanity into male and female, or to deny the particular version of that form that God has given to us by making us either male or female, something that is determined not by our feelings (as many today would claim), but by our biology. As we have noted before, 'my body is me' and this means that 'my biology is me.'

However difficult the forms that God has given us may be for us to accept, to deny it would be sinful because it would involve refusing to say to God 'thy will be done' by refusing to love the self who God has made us to be.

Refusing in this way to say to God 'thy will be done,' in either our thinking or our behaviour, is a very serious matter because it brings with it the inescapable risk of eternal separation from God. As C. S. Lewis writes in his book *The Great Divorce*, there is an inescapable binary choice facing all human beings. 'There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "Thy will be done."' "

Lewis' point is that God has given human beings freedom to shape their own destinies. We can choose to say to God 'thy will be done' and be happy with God for ever in the

dimorphic, male or female, nature of human sexuality. Where they are able to reproduce, and that is often not the case, they do so either as male or female. Their condition is a developmental disorder rather than the existence of a third type of human being and is the exception that proves the rule.

Because this is the case, except in these highly exceptional and biologically distinct cases, believing rightly in 'God the Father who hath made me and all the world' in the words of the Prayer Book Catechism, means accepting with gratitude that I am the particular male or female human being that God has created me to be and living accordingly.

As O'Donovan writes in his book *Begotten or Made?*:

When God made mankind male and female, to exist alongside each other and for each other, he gave a form that human sexuality should take and a good to which it should aspire. None of us can, or should, regard our difficulties with that form, or with achieving that good, as the norm of what our sexuality is to be. None of us should see our sexuality as mere self-expression, and forget that we can express ourselves sexually only because we participate in this generic form and aspire to this generic good. We do not have to make a sexual form, or posit a sexual good. We have to exist as well as we can within that sexual form,

2. Why is godliness in the body a problem for human beings and how has God solved this problem?

Immediately before telling the Corinthians that they should 'glorify God in your body' Paul tells them 'You are not your own; you were bought with a price.' (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). In these words, which evoke the social reality of the prevalence of slavery in the first century world, he is reminding the Corinthians of the change that had taken place in their existence. To quote David Prior in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, what he is saying to them is that:

Before they began to experience the freedom for which Christ had set them free, the Corinthians were in the most servile bondage. They were slaves to themselves, their self-centred desires, self-indulgence and bodily passions. Then came a master with the resources to set them completely free. He paid the necessary ransom. They had been set free from the futility and servitude of their previous manner of life. Their bodies were no longer chunks of flesh up for sale to the highest bidder in the slave market, or available to a cult prostitute for a fee. They had been brought with a price and they now belonged to a new master. His orders now mattered, not their own fancies or foibles. He now intended every physical

faculty they had within them to express the glory of God. So far from despising their bodies, marked as they were by all the degradation and indiscipline of sin, he was committed to working out from within the redemption of their bodies. Flesh and blood, particularly such dissolute flesh and blood, could never inherit the Kingdom of God. But the power of his redeeming love could, and would, complete what the Holy Spirit had already begun.

If this is what Paul is saying, it raises two questions. First, why were the Corinthians in the state of bondage from which Christ has liberated them? Secondly, how had Christ liberated them, given that he had not literally gone to the slave market in Corinth and paid money for them?

The answer to the first question is given by Paul when he writes in Romans 5:12 'sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all because all men sinned.' The 'one man' Paul refers to here is Adam and what Paul is doing is giving an abbreviated summary of the story of the Fall in Genesis 3.

If we turn to the book of Genesis, we find that in Genesis 2:16-17 God gives Adam a very specific limit as to what he can do with the body God has created for him:

The second challenge has to do with same-sex sexual relationships. Here the challenge is whether the Church of England will follow the path taken by other churches, including a number of other Anglican churches (such as, most recently, the Church in Wales) by saying that same-sex sexual relationships can be acceptable in the eyes of God and therefore it is right to bless same-sex relationships, or even to celebrate same-sex marriages.

God's creation of human beings as male and female.

In order to begin to think about how the Church of England should respond to these two challenges we need to return to the issue of God's creation of human beings in his image and likeness which we touched on in the answer to the first question in this booklet.

A central part of what it means to be created by God in his image and likeness is to be male or female. In the words of Genesis 1:27: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.' This teaching is reiterated by Jesus in Matthew 19:4: 'Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female.'

There is a very small percentage of people, some 0.018% of live births (approximately 1:500), who are genuinely 'intersex' in the sense that they combine both male and female elements in their physiology. However, the existence of such people still points to the fundamentally

4. What are the particular challenges facing the Church of England today in relation to godliness in the body and how should it respond to them?

Individuals in the Church of England today are facing a whole range of issues in relation to the call to show godliness in the body. For instance, in many, if not all, congregations there will be individuals for whom the issues of adultery, drunkenness, addiction to pornography, addiction to gambling, the use of abusive language and a tendency towards bullying or domestic violence are challenges which they have to face.

However, as a corporate institution the Church of England is facing two particular challenges at the moment in relation to the call to show godliness in the body, challenges that are likely to become more acute over the next few years as it considers what to do in response to the *Living in Love and Faith* material.

The first challenge has to do with gender transition. Here the challenge is whether the Church of England will continue down the path of saying that it is right for individuals who are biologically male or female to identify as members of the opposite sex, or as having an alternative, non-binary, gender identity such as agender, bi-gender, genderfluid, or polygender, and for the Church to acknowledge these identities before God in its liturgy.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

As we all know, what Genesis 3 then records is how Adam disregards the limit God has laid down by failing to exhibit godliness in the body, but instead eating the forbidden fruit at the behest of Eve who is herself led astray by the Devil manifested in the form of a snake:

Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. (Genesis 3:1-6)

Having eaten of the forbidden fruit, Adam eventually dies, along with Eve, and according to the biblical narrative he bequeaths to all human beings a corrupted nature which leads them to rebel against God in their turn and so suffer the same penalty for their rebellion. It is this state of sin leading to death (the temporal death of the body in this world and the eternal death of the body and the soul in the world to come) from which the Corinthians had been liberated as a result of the work of Christ.

This leads us to the second question which is how Christ liberated them. The answer is that Christ assumed a human nature consisting of a body and a soul at the incarnation ('truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body', as the Chalcedonian Confession puts it) and in the obedience of his soul to the command of God the Father, and in the power of the Spirit, he gave up his body to death on the cross in the supreme example of godliness in the body in order that by so doing sin and death might be defeated for ever in all who believe.

This truth is helpfully summarised by the great Swiss theologian Karl Barth in his commentary on the *Heidelberg Catechism* in which he declares:

In the death of Jesus Christ, God took man's place in order to suffer in his place the destruction of sinful man and, at the same time, to realise the existence of

others.’ And if we look at what Paul thinks this means in practice, we find that it involves a proper disposition of the soul. Thus, the Colossians are told to put off ‘passion, evil desire, and covetousness’ and to put on ‘compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience.’ However, we also find that it involves right forms of bodily activity, forms which are again both negative and positive. Thus, they are told negatively not to engage in fornication or any other kind of sexual impurity, to put away slander, ‘foul talk’ and lying from their mouths, and positively to ‘teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.’

What this means is that when Paul tells the Corinthians to ‘glorify God in your body’ he is expressing in a summary form his basic overall understanding of the nature of the Christian life. For him, to live rightly as a Christian involves bearing witness to God and what he has done by living out the baptismal pattern of death and resurrection in the actions of the body.

To sum up, godliness in the body means living out the evangelical freedom we have been given by God by living according to the universal moral law instituted by God and witnessed to by the Old and New Testaments, and living in this way involves a pattern of mortification and vivification in both the soul and the body.

the new obedient man. The way is therefore open to restore the lost right of man, his right to live as the creature of God. The grace of God against which man sins triumphs in Jesus Christ.

Barth makes two key points in this quotation.

The first is that in the death of Christ on the cross the destruction of sinful man was undertaken by God. That is to say, the death of Christ on the cross was the death of our old sinful nature. This is a point which is underlined by Paul who declares that when Christ died on our behalf, we died with him. Thus, we read in Galatians 2:20 ‘I have been crucified with Christ’ and in 2 Corinthians 5:14 ‘...we are convinced that one died for all, therefore all have died’.

As the great Scottish theologian James Denney observes in his comments on this last verse in his Expositors Bible Commentary on 2 Corinthians:

Is it logical to say, ‘One died for the benefit of all: hence all died?’ From that premise is not the only legitimate conclusion ‘hence all remained alive’? Plainly if Paul’s conclusion is to be drawn, the ‘for’ must reach much deeper than this mere suggestion of our advantage: if we all died, in that Christ died for us, there must be a sense in which that death of his is ours; he must be identified with us in it: there on the

cross, while we stand and gaze at him, he is not simply a person doing us a service; he is a person doing us a service by filling our place and dying our death. It is out of this deeper relation that all services, benefits and advantages flow; and that deeper sense of 'for', to which Christ is at once the representative and substitute of man, is essential to do justice to the Apostle's thought.

If we ask why it was that Christ had to die our death in his body on the cross in order that we might be saved the answer is also given to us by Paul, this time in Romans 6: 6-7

We know that our old self was crucified with him that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin.

That is to say, our fallen nature was slain in the death of Christ, in order that we might have liberation from the domination by sin which our old nature necessarily entails. Christ's death brings together God's judgement and God's love. The cross is an act of God's judgement in that on the cross the death penalty is carried out on us as sinners. Our sinful existence has no right to exist before God and is therefore brought to an end. It is at the same time an act of love since the purpose of this judgement is to destroy

anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

In this passage we see the twin ideas of mortification and vivification present in the forms of Paul's injunctions to the Colossians to 'put off' certain things and to 'put on'

as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

As verses 12-14 make clear the new life that we have in Christ has to be manifested in our bodies, both negatively (mortification) 'do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness' and positively (vivification) 'yield...your members to God as instruments of righteousness.' Opposition to sin and obedience to God is not just a disposition of the soul (although it starts there), but something that is made real in the actions of the body.

We see Paul making the same point in Colossians 3:1-17:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away:

our enslavement to sin in order that we might become free to be the people God intends us to be.

This is a point made forcefully by Martin Luther in his *Lectures on Romans* delivered between 1515 and 1516. Commenting on Romans 6:3 ('Do you not know that all of us who baptized into Christ were baptized into his death'), Luther notes that in Scripture there is alongside the temporal death of the body, a form of eternal death which is a: 'very great evil' in which: 'it is man that dies, while sin lives and remains for ever.' This is the eternal death suffered by the damned. However, there is also a form of eternal death that is a: 'very great good'. This is the form of death that took place in Christ:

It is the death of sin and the death of death, by which the soul is freed and separated from sin and the body from corruption, and the soul is united by grace and glory with the living God. This is death in the strict and proper sense of the word (for in every other death some mixture of life remains, but not in this one, in which there is nothing but life itself: eternal life). It is only this death that the conditions of death fit absolutely and perfectly; whatever dies in it, and in it alone, vanishes entirely into everlasting nothingness, and nothing ever returns from it (indeed it inflicts death also upon eternal death). Thus, sin dies, and also the sinner when he is justified, for sin does not

ever return, as the apostle says here: 'Christ dies no more,' etc. (Rom 6:9). This is the principal theme of the Scripture. For God arranged to take away through Christ whatever the devil brought in through Adam. And the devil brought in sin and death. Therefore, God brought about the death of death and the sin of sin, the prison of prison and the captivity of captivity. As he says through Hosea: 'O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite.' (Hosea 13:14)

It was this death – the death of death and the death of sin – that was undertaken on our behalf by Christ through his death on the cross. Our sins are no longer a barrier between us and God, because in Christ our sinful existence has been brought to an end. It is a closed chapter. That is why in Matthew's account of the death of Christ the curtain of the Temple is torn in two and the tombs of the saints are cracked open (Matthew 27:51-53). The sin and death which barred access to God and kept the saints in their graves have been done away with by the death of Christ.

However, there is more to the work of Christ than simply the termination of our existence as sinners. The work of God in Christ is not simply, or even primarily, a destructive work. It is primarily a work of re-creation. This brings us on to Barth's second point which is that the purpose of Christ's death is to 'realise the existence of the new

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God

acts but the same reality differently viewed. Nor are mortification and vivification themselves distinct acts, distinguishable from other works of the Christian; rather, they are characteristic of all the patterns of activity that comprise the life of holiness. 'Putting to death' and 'putting on' are not acts alongside, or in addition to, other works; they are the character of the whole, seen in all its parts. Mortification and vivification signify the extension of the baptismal pattern into the life of the Christian, so that Christ's dying and rising, in – not despite – all their objectivity and perfection, are the shape of the Christians own personal history. To live in the power and light of his death and resurrection, and under its tutelage, is to seek so to act that, in their own sphere and within their own very real limitations, our human lives give answer to grace.

The biblical foundation of this idea of mortification and vivification is the teaching of Paul in Romans and Colossians.

In Romans 6:1-14 Paul reminds the Christians in Rome that through their baptism they are dead to sin and alive to God on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection and that they are therefore called to live accordingly:

obedient man'. In the words of Peter in 1 Peter 2:24: 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness'.

This purpose was not achieved through the cross alone because if all there was the cross then the story of God's involvement with mankind would have reached its terminus point on Calvary. If we were to have a future our old existence as sinners had to be replaced with a new kind of existence

This new kind of existence is what has been made possible for us by Christ's resurrection on the third day. The resurrection is an act of divine re-creation in which a new way of being human is opened up in which we are not only dead to sin but alive to God. That is why Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 5:17: 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come' and why he writes in Romans 6:10-11 'The death he died he died to sin once and for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.' That is why Christ declares in John 11:25-26: 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die'.

The cross and resurrection together are therefore a twofold divine operation as a result of which, to quote John Stott:

We have died and risen with [Christ], so that our old life of sin, guilt and shame has been terminated and an entirely new life of holiness, forgiveness and freedom has begun.

Or, as John Calvin puts it:

...our old man is destroyed by the death of Christ, so that His resurrection may restore our righteousness, and make us new creatures. And since Christ has been given to us for life, why should we die with Him, if not to rise to a better life? Christ, therefore, puts to death what is mortal in us in order that He may truly restore us to life.

The last point we need to consider is how we enter into what Christ has done for us by his dying and rising. The answer to this question is that it is by faith expressed in baptism. That is to say, it is certainly true that according to the New Testament we enter into a right relationship with God through faith, as verses such as John 3:16 and Romans 3:26 make clear. However, it is also true that in the New Testament perspective acceptance of what Christ has done leads to baptism and it is in baptism that we

contingent, then what is done is not theology, but only history; if the universal does not shine *through the contingent*, then what is done is bad theology, not founded in the narration of God's mighty deeds in saving history, and so inadequately Christian.

Mortification and vivification.

Living in the light of the universal moral order which is reflected in the contingent provisions of the Old Testament law, and which has been finally and fully made known through the coming of Christ, involves what Christian thought has traditionally described as mortification and vivification.

To quote John Webster again:

As mortification, holiness is the laying aside of that which has been put to death at the cross of the Son of God; as vivification, holiness is the living out of that which has been made alive in the Son's resurrection. Mortification is thus a way of articulating how the new active life of the Christian succeeds and corresponds to the slaying of the old, death-laden existence of 'trespasses and sins.' Vivification speaks of the active life as corresponding to the great Easter reality: 'You he made alive' (Ephesians 2:1). Mortification and vivification, probably conceived, are not two separate

If we look at the biblical narrative we find, of course, that there are laws given in the Old Testament which the New Testament teaches that Christians no longer need to literally observe (such as the laws relating to Temple ritual or *kosher* food). However, we need to note that as Christ makes clear in Matthew 5:17-18 these laws are not abolished, but rather fulfilled in a new way as a result of his coming ('Think not I have come to abolish the law and the prophets, I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.'). As Christians we are called to discern how this fulfilment takes place and live accordingly.

As Oliver O'Donovan explains, the law given by God to Israel 'cannot claim us immediately but is part of the historical dialectic through which the gospel of Christ was revealed.' However, this law:

...was also a mediation of the universal good; to understand it is not enough to understand its contingency, but we must understand its relation to the universal good as well. Hence, we detect also within this law a revelation of created order and the good to which all men are called, a 'moral law' by which every human being is claimed and which belongs fundamentally to man's welfare. The theologian's task in expanding the Old Testament is to allow the contingent and the universal to emerge distinctly. If the *universal* does not shine through the

appropriate for ourselves what Christ achieved for all humanity in his death and resurrection.

Thus, Paul tells us in Romans 6:4:

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father we too might walk in newness of life.

and, similarly, in Colossians 2:12:

...and you were buried with him in baptism in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

This, incidentally, is also the perspective from which the historic Anglican formularies view Baptism. Thus, in the Catechism in the *Book of Common Prayer* the correct answer to question of what is the 'inward and spiritual grace' of Baptism is:

A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.

Finally, if we ask how we are enabled to walk in newness of life, the answer is through the power of the Holy Spirit, the

Spirit poured out by the crucified and risen Christ (John 19:30, Acts 2:32-33), the Spirit given to us at our Baptism (Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 12:13), who makes the new life wrought for us by Christ through his death and resurrection an ever increasing reality in our lives and enabling us to relate to God the Father as his obedient children (Romans 8:1-17) thus fulfilling God's original intention that we should live in relationship to him, enjoying the same unity with him that Christ himself shared (John 17:20-23).

The answer to the question of how the Corinthians were set free from their former state of 'servile bondage' is therefore that they were set free from it by their participation in the death and resurrection of Christ through faith and baptism, and that they were likewise enabled to walk in newness of life through the power of the Holy Spirit poured out by the crucified and risen Christ and received by them when they believed and were baptised.

Paul's injunction to 'glorify God in your body' is a call to the Corinthians to live out this new life that they have been given.

Having created the world God 'rested from all his work which he had done in creation' (Genesis 2:3). God preserves what he has made and acts to bring it to the goal he intends for it, but he does not change it or create it afresh. In the words of Karl Barth, 'It is part of the history of creation that God completed His work and confronted it as a completed totality.'

This means that there is an unchanging created order which, to quote Oliver O'Donovan, 'neither the terrors of chance nor the ingenuity of art can overthrow.' This point is generally accepted in terms of the physical laws which govern the material creation. We know, for example, that the law of gravity has always existed and will always exist. We will not one day find out that the law of gravity has been abrogated. What is not always recognised, however, is that the same is likewise true of the moral law which God has laid down for his creation. Thus, we will not wake up one day and find that it is acceptable to lie, murder, or steal.

The Bible teaches that there is a world to come in which human beings will live in a way that transcends their life in this world. However, this transcendent life will be a fulfilment rather than a negation of God's action in creation. The basic order of things is fixed, and we are called to live in the light of it.

into the covenant of grace which is the history of holiness. Abstracted from that covenant, law is certainly in league with sin and death, but within the drama of God's saving work, law is the given order of life, the trajectory along which our moral histories move. That is what is meant by the *usus didacticus* of the law: the law is a teacher, not a magistrate, instructing us in the way of holiness which flows from and corresponds to the goodness of God.

The order placed by God in creation.

If we enquire about the nature of the law to which we are enabled and called to conform, we find that it is none other than the order God put into creation when he called the world into being.

God is infinitely wise and the Bible teaches that creation exists as a result of that wisdom. In the words of the Psalmist, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom thou hast made them all' (Psalm 104:24). God is also infinitely good, so the things he creates are good. That is why at the end of the first creation account in Genesis we are told that 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good' (Genesis 1:31). This truth is reiterated in the New Testament in 1 Timothy 4:4 where we are told that 'everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if received with thanksgiving.'

3. What does godliness in the body look like in practice?

What we have seen in the answers to the two previous questions is that godliness in the body means living out the new life that we have been given by God the Father through the work of the Son and the Spirit.

Evangelical freedom.

As John Webster explains in his book *Holiness*, this ability to live a new life is what he calls 'the strange gift of evangelical freedom.' In his words:

It is a *strange* gift because it can only be known and exercised as we are converted from a lie -the lie that liberty is unformed and unconstrained self-actualization. It is *evangelical* because it is grounded in the joyful reversal and reconstitution of the human situation of which the gospel speaks. We may define it thus: in evangelical freedom I am so bound to God's grace and God's call that I am liberated from all other bonds and set free to live in truth. 'The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death' (Romans 8:2). Freedom is inseparable from the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. That is, in the mystery of the Son's

achievement, present in the Spirit's power, I am faced with a new, incontrovertible and omnipotent reality - the reality of salvation which says that I am *'a/ive'* because of righteousness' Romans 8:10. This reality is law in the sense that it is a given truth which determines my present and future and forms my action. But, as such, it is the ground of my freedom. for in it is established the fact that I have been set free from another law 'the law of sin and death,' emancipated from self-destruction for life in reality.

As he goes on to say, this view of the nature of freedom goes against the misleading idea prevalent in modern society that freedom means unfettered liberty to invent our own way of life:

Modern accounts of freedom identify freedom as unfettered liberty for self-creation, and therefore contrast freedom and nature: freedom is the antithesis of the given, a move over and against any sense that I have a determinate identity. Evangelical freedom, by contrast, does not envisage being human as an utterly original making of life and history. Rather to be human is to live and act in conformity to the given truth (nature) of what I am—a creature of grace, a reconciled sinner and caught up in the movement of the ways and works of God in which I am pointed to a perfection to be revealed in the last times. I am free as

I find myself finally unencumbered by idolatry, false desire and vanity, and therefore enabled to fill out, actively to occupy and expand the role to which I am appointed. In evangelical freedom I am set free for reality, unless for the practises of holiness. From this point of view the polarisation of freedom and obedience which is endemic in modern anthropology is part of the pathology of the modern spiritual history of the self. In the freedom given to me in Christ, I am bound to God's grace. But God's grace is God's call; the holiness with which God consecrates is also a command. And so freedom involves conformity to the law. I am, in short, sanctified for obedience.

As Webster notes, there are understandable reasons why some Christians are wary about the idea that the Christian life involves obedience to law. As he says:

We may fear the use of the law as a means of acquiring righteousness, as it were behind God's back, through 'works of the law;' or we may associate the law with mere formality and externalism in morals and religion that leaves the affections untouched. Law certainly, may be an instrument of self - justification, or of decadent legalism. But properly - that is, evangelically - defined, law is the shape of the life which God commands of the elect. The degenerate use of the law can be counted only by integrating it