A THEOLOGY OF SEXUAL ABUSE:
A REFLECTION ON CREATION AND DEVASTATION

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I. INTRODUCTION: NOT ALL WOUNDED ARE COMING HOME

The Creator's original intention for human beings that combined royal, priestly, and shepherding notions can, paradoxically, appear all the more vibrant when we contemplate its demise. Buried in the profound wreckage of sexual abuse lie the vestiges of a majestic plan that dignifies humankind. But a foundational element of paradise—sexual innocence in community— has been spoiled by, among other things, the treachery of sexual abuse.

Reflecting on the Creator's intentions can help shed light on the crushing effects of sexual abuse. To ignore the sexually broken among us is to reject the ethics of biblical community, a breakdown the abused have already endured. Moreover, turning a blind eye to sexual abuse also sanctions dualisms (body/spirit) and disconnects (sexuality, evil). Yet for a growing number, these are more than philosophical ideas; the abused have lived in these distortions.

Sexual abuse and the propensity to abuse is a larger black plague that spiritual conversion does not stamp out. It is alive in your city and in your church. The abused are the "shrieking silent," the "exit-watchers." One has to know what to listen and watch for, but they are there. But a surprising number of adult victims have already abandoned the Church—they have their reasons.

II. GOALS AND ASSERTIONS: ACKNOWLEDGING THE WOUND

This study is one voice at the table in a much-needed dialogue. The goals are to further educate Christian leaders by normalizing the crisis of sexual abuse, create an understanding that promotes healing for the abused, and foster biblical-theological reflection among biblical educators, pastors, and church leadership, by deepening our insight into foundational creation texts with an eye to sexual abuse. These are texts pertaining to the image of God (Gen 1:26; 9:6), the creation mandate (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:5–8), and human sexuality (Gen 1:27; 2:23–24).

It is hard to improve on Patrick D. Miller's insightful description of a *constructive* theological investigation: "the biblical theologian is after an

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understanding of God and the world *that will make sense of other data* than the Scriptures and so will think in a large fashion about the way specific and concrete texts illuminate *fundamental realities*."[1]

1. *Fundamental realities and profound distortions.* This study considers the fundamental realities of sexual brokenness largely through an exegetical-theological analysis. We begin by admitting the severity of the problem, move to an exegetical overview of key texts, contemplate the nature of sexual abuse in light of these texts, and close with some practical needs for moving forward.

This study argues that sexual abuse damages a spectrum of internal and external aspects of personhood. Creation's vision of the human being, sexual expression, leadership, community, and family are extensively ruined. Healing for victims of abuse seeks to mend profound "fractures" within the victim and the abusing party. This healing helps the abused to reconnect with an empathetic community. Sexual abuse carries a unique devastation factor precisely because sexual abuse distorts foundational realities of what it means to be human: embodied personhood is plundered, delegated authority becomes destructive, sexual expression is perverted, intra-personal trust is shattered, and profound metaphors for God are disfigured.

For theology and ethics, this study argues that elements such as personhood, authority, sexuality, community, and relational trust significantly converge around the image of God (Gen 1:26–27).[2] Understanding violence theologically in sexual abuse has extensive implications. Bringing a fuller biblical understanding of sexual abuse to various ministry contexts will go a long way to create agents of healing.

Sexual abuse is far from a one-dimensional problem. Addressing abuse ultimately means facing layers of trauma.[3] Individuals alone do not molest; dysfunctional family systems abuse by fostering, protecting, and rationalizing the actions of their abusing members.[4] Domestic charades often combine with spiritual deceit. So, taking the abused seriously requires professional intervention, therapy for the victim as an entire person, halting the power monopolies of the victimizer, exposing spiritual hypocrisy, breaking the family's conspiracy of silence, implementing aggressive therapy for the

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[1] Patrick D. Miller, "Theology from Below: The Theological Interpretation of Scripture," in *The Way of the LORD: Essays in Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 299 (emphasis added).

[2] Hilary Lipka explores the religious, communal, and personal aspects of sexual transgression. Hilary B. Lipka, *Sexual Transgression in the Hebrew Bible* (HBM 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006) esp. 18–41, "The Nature of Sexual Transgression."

[3] Trauma occurs when an "individual's ability to integrate affective experience is overwhelmed." Laurie A. Pearlman, Karen W. Saakvitne, *Trauma and the Therapist: Countertransference and Vicarious Traumatization in Psychotherapy with Incest Survivors* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995) 60. See also Bessel A. van der Kolk and Alexander C. McFarlane, "The Black Hole of Trauma," in *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society* (ed. Bessel van der Kolk et al.; New York: Guilford, 1996) 3–23.

[4] Herbert W. Helm Jr., Jonathan R. Cook, and John M. Berecz, "The Implications of Conjunctive and Disjunctive Forgiveness for Sexual Abuse," *Pastoral Psychology* 54 (2005) 32.

victimizer, and the difficult process of reintegration for all into the larger faith community.

Addressing sexual abuse is also larger than one profession, be it pastoral, theological, psychological, or legal. Understanding and implementing healing ministries requires the cooperation of several professional domains.[5] But the empathetic energy, shallow integration, psychological naïveté, and shrouded support programs of the average church make it unprepared to adequately address sexual abuse. Yet every church community needs some who understand and provide a healing environment.

2. *Pressing needs, pressing questions.* At a practical level, my appeal is for various professional ministries to intentionally join hands for a more holistic address to a multi-tiered problem—one that violates us all (1 Cor 10:17; Gal 6:2). The data suggests that one in three girls, and one in seven boys, are sexually abused before their 18th birthday, for a staggering 300,000 new cases each year.[6] According to the National Center for Juvenile Justice, 14% of victims are under age 6.[7] Other studies show that sexual abuse may be as high as 54% for girls and 16% for boys.[8] But the literature also shows that men are reluctant to admit their childhood sexual abuse since society stigmatizes same-sex behavior.[9] Among the consequences of sexual abuse repeated in the literature are: anxiety, anger, depression (i.e. affective consequences); sleep disturbance, headaches, stomachaches, enuresis (i.e. psychosomatic effects); hyperarousal, interpersonal problems, sexualized behavior, and aggression.[10] While descriptive information is crucial, this is not the pressing need. Rather, a theologically integrative study of sexual abuse is needed at various levels of ministry.

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[5] This is all the more true since, as Jennifer E. Beste explains, "Given the prominence of the psychoanalytic tradition's claim that the etiology of psychological disorders lies in intrapsychic conflicts rather than externally caused traumas, the reality of childhood incestuous abuse was seriously minimized in our culture until the 1970s" (*God and the Victim: Traumatic Intrusions on Grace and Freedom* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007] 38).

[6] "Stop It Now: Child Sexual Abuse Facts Sheet," http://www.stopitnow.com/csafacts.html; also NISMART-2 http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/factsheet/pdf/CSA-FS20.pdf.

[7] Beverly B. Lovett, "Sexual Abuse in the Preschool Years: Blending Ideas from Object Relations Theory, Ego Psychology, and Biology," *Child & Adolescent Social Work* 24 (2007) 581.

[8] Helm, Cook, and Berecz, "Conjunctive and Disjunctive Forgiveness" 24.

[9] "Stop It Now: Child Sexual Abuse Facts Sheet," http://www.stopitnow.com/csafacts.html; S. Boney-McCoy, D. Finkelhor, "Prior Victimization: A Risk Factor for Child Sexual Abuse and for PTSD-Related Symptomatology among Sexually Abused Youth," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 19 (1995). Other recent studies suggest the rate of abused males may be far higher, between 20% and 30% (John N. Briere, *Child Abuse Trauma: Theory and Treatment of the Lasting Effects* [The Practice Series; Newbury Park, London: Sage, 1992] 4) or even 76%, based on the prevalence rate ("Child Sexual Abuse and Adult Sexual Risk: Where Are We Now?" in *From Child Sexual Abuse to Adult Sexual Risk: Trauma, Revictimization, and Intervention* [ed. Linda J. Koenig, Lynda S. Doll, Ann O'Leary, and Willo Pequegnat; Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2004] 4).

[10] See F. Ferrara, *Childhood Sexual Abuse* (Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole, 2002); K. Saywitz, A. Mannarino, L. Berliner, and J. Cohen, "Treatment for Sexually Abused Children and Adolescents," *American Psychologist* 55 (2000) 1040–49.

Pressing questions abound. What does "victory in Jesus" mean for victims of incest?[11] What does spiritual maturity look like for the sexually traumatized? What is the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation in cases of sexual abuse? Is "suffering for the gospel" the appropriate perspective for victims of sexual abuse? Do the legal ramifications of abuse trump all address in the church? Sexual abuse can be intentionally pursued only when it is uniquely understood. Paul singles out sexual ethics as a barometer for the believing community (1 Thess 4:3–8). That "no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister" (1 Thess 4:6a, TNIV) is hardly an outdated injunction. Immoral sexual behavior still defiles the believing community.

III. SETTING THE STAGE: GRIEVING OUR WOUNDED

1. *Accepting shared obligations.*   Ministries tend to confuse social information with moral obligation. But an understanding community is also a grieving community. Has the publicity of sexual abuse in the recent decade produced any more advocates, particularly in the family of God? When it comes to the church, we lack adequate answers because we lack adequate discussion.

Too often, the broken lives living these effects are drowned out in a church culture just as prone to discuss the "evils" of counseling as to engage the ancient evil of incest. Pastors and educators share an obligation to understand and advocate for the sexually abused. It goes deeper than sexual harassment policies. Whether in the local church or arenas of theological education, Christian ministries need to be more intentional about addressing sexual offence. The purity talk is important for teens, but can we also admit that the abuse discussion is equally needed for adult victims who were sexually betrayed?

2. *Unbelievable experiences, unbelievable testimonies.*   If there is any insight here, it comes to me with disturbing impact for a topic I never wanted. Like explaining Apartheid government to those raised in a representative democracy, this topic is simply unbelievable for many Christians, or just too ugly for others. Yet there is a growing number for which this abuse is very believable, even in the church. For them, this issue is a toxic cocktail of unimaginable physical and emotional pain. This was not a cup they chose. For this group, I speak as an advocate, in part because their "abuse testimony" needs to be heard. Struggling to grasp the effects and ethics of the sexually molested, church censorship drives the wounded out, those already

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[11] Incest can be defined as "any kind of exploitative sexual conduct or attempted contact that occurred between relatives, no matter how distant the relationship, before the victim turned eighteen years old" (Jennifer E. Beste, *God and the Victim* 39; esp. pp. 40–57, quoting Diana E. H. Russell, *The Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women* [New York: Basic Books, 1986] 41). Sexual abuse is a felony in all fifty states. Because the vast majority of child sexual abuse cases are that of incest, its sociological profile, pathology, and traumatic symptoms are crucial to understand.

suspicious of power. Selective address is yet another layer of silence that makes this discussion long over due. It is ironic since talking is part of the antidote victims desperately need.[12] Churches can do so much more to help victims find their voice. But unbelievable experiences tend to create unwanted testimonies—there are reasons for this, too.

IV. REAFFIRMING FOUNDATIONAL TEXTS:
BEFORE THE WOUNDING

For an issue such as sexual abuse, some seemingly familiar texts may require another reading. Here we will acquaint ourselves with some theological values that contribute to a more holistic anthropology. We believe these texts construct an identity profile of personhood that is mauled through sexual abuse. Each text, in one way or another, is ultimately tied to the image of God, a hub of creation theology and biblical anthropology.

DIRECT DISCOURSE—1st person
Announcement: "Let us make humankind (אדם) in our <u>image</u>" (26a)
Purpose: "so that <u>they</u> may rule (וירדו) over . . ." (26b)

NARRATED DISCOURSE—3d person
    A So created (ויברא) God humankind (האדם) in his <u>image</u> (27a)
Report: *B* in the <u>image</u> of God he created him (אתו, 27b)
      B′ male (זכר) and female (נקבה) he created <u>them</u> (אתם, 27c)
    A′ Then blessed (ויברך) God <u>them</u> (אתם, 28aγ)

(Formal Complex Stem): And God said to <u>them</u> (אתם, 28aγ)

DIRECT DISCOURSE—2d person
Blessing[1] (*endowment*): "Be fruitful . . . multiply . . . fill . . . subdue"
  (כבש, 28aγ)
Blessing[2] (*commission*): "rule (רדה) over . . ." (28b)

1. *The divine intentions.* As the pinnacle of God's eight creative acts, humankind is the trophy of God's good creation (Gen 1:26–28, 31). To highlight this zenith, the author constructs a more elaborate text. Here we find the LORD's role as Creator taking on a new significance as an intimate relationship with the human being emerges.[13] The text of Gen 1:26–28 can be construed as follows.

Semantic and syntactic connections reverberate in the structure of Gen 1:26–28 providing a rich theological basis to better understand biblical

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[12] On the value of letting the traumatized talk, see Doni Whitsett, "The Psychobiology of Trauma and Child Maltreatment," *Cultic Studies Review* 5 (2006) 360–61.

[13] See the substantive treatment of creation and relationship by Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), esp. "Conclusion: Implications of a Relational Theology of Creation" (pp. 269–84).

anthropology and its relationship to the "image (עלם) of God." Three sub-units of this pericope should be noted.

Kingship is God's central image in the OT.[14] As supreme king, God's direct discourse with his heavenly court (Gen 1:26) proves a harbinger of divine intent.[15] The narrated discourse that follows extends the direct discourse with a report on the human stage (v. 27). The inflected verbs (ויברך, ויברא) that begin subunits "A" are followed by the reiterated subject (אלהים); "normal" Hebrew word order.[16] Together (A, A′), ויברא and ויברך reflect paronomasia (*wybr'*, *wybrk*),[17] and underscore the fact that human creation is beyond a simple, neutral cosmogonic event. Human creation is salvific and doxological (cf. Psalm 8).[18] The repetition of "create" (ברא, 3x), alongside "Elohim" (אלהים, 4x), highlights the theocentric significance of humankind. In contrast to the "making" (עשה) of verse 26, the "creating" of verse 27 employs a telic verb (ברא), stressing the outcome rather than the process (cf. Gen 2:7), and helps explain the frequency of ברא in the narrator's report. With mounting intimacy, the third person report of the narrator (v. 27) sets up the second-person blessing of God (v. 28), connecting the exercise of dominion with the function of image. Word order and word play communicate theological weight.[19]

Conversely, topicalization is stressed in subunits "B": "in the image of God" and "male and female" (B, B′). As a chiastic quatrain, this structure coordinates these phrases in atypical word order. By structure, subunits "B" are explicative, yet, in function, they are transitional, moving from the descriptive "him" (v. 27) to the dialogical "them" (v. 28).[20]

2. *Majestic image, true humanity.*   In this discourse, the rhetorical and lexical organization communicates a multi-faceted message. We note four observations.

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[14] J. C. L. Gibson, *Language and Imagery in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998) 121. J. G. McConville calls kingship "the root metaphor" ("The Judgment of God in the Old Testament," *ExAud* 20 [2004] 25). It is the universal kingship of God that animates his national involvement (cf. Ps 5:2, 4; 29:3, 10; 74:12, 14, 17; 95:3–5; 96:10; 103:19–22a; cf. Jud 8:23; Isa 6:5; Zech 14:6–9; Dan 7:10; etc.).

[15] Joüon, §§113e, 136d; *GKC*, §124g, n. 2; J. C. L. Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar: Syntax* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994) §120c; F. J. Stendebach, צֶלֶם, *TDOT* 12.394; cf. Gen 3:22; 11:7; 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Isa 6:8.

[16] Adapted from Jerome T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001) 106.

[17] Paronomasia is a "figure of speech that involves a play on words, often with words that sound similar" (B. T. Arnold and J. H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003] 202).

[18] W. Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament: Case Studies on the Impact of the LXX in Philo and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 28–29.

[19] Walsh, *Style and Structure* 106.

[20] This also concurs with C. Westermann's analysis when he states, "The twice repeated resumption of the imperf. consec. with the inverted perf. ברא is to be understood in an explicating sense" (*Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* [repr. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984] 1.79, n. 27a).

a. *Image as theomorphic*. The human being is made in God's "image" (Gen 1:26a, צלם).[21] Among living creatures, humankind is the "great exception."[22] Humankind is theomorphic (i.e. having the form of God) rather than God being anthropomorphic.[23] The pronouns underscore this perspective, as "our image" (צלמנו) and "our likeness" (דמותנו) fix their point of reference in God, not in "him" or "herself."[24] God's unique image is a precondition for humankind's unique rule.[25] Those who are modeled on the divine are, in turn, to model the divine to the world.[26]

b. *Image as under-king*. Image is tied to "ruling" (Gen 1:26b, רדה), as וירדו ("so that they may rule") following the cohortative (נעשה, "let us make," v. 26a) arguably expresses purpose.[27] In performative utterance, the intimate "Let us make" now replaces "Let there be." An inclusion is struck, as the divine intention for rule (ויאמר . . . רדה ב, 26b) resounds in God's audible blessing to rule (ויברך . . . רדה ב, 28b). Moreover, the "fish," "birds," and "creepers" that God stipulates (v. 26b) distinctly reappear in the realm of human stewardship (v. 28a).[28] The contour of the discourse confirms purposeful rule (vv. 26–28). In this creation context, "subduing" (כבש) is the task for development of the earth, whereas "ruling" (רדה) grants humankind the necessary position to achieve the harnessing of earthly life.[29]

c. *Image as gendered personhood*. Image inculcates a plurality of genders, both "male" and "female" (Gen 1:27c, נקבה, זכר). Genesis 1 emphasizes the uniqueness of *ʾāḏām* (אדם, "human being") as the appointed *agent* of the Creation Mandate.[30] The shift to the articular form האדם ("humankind," Gen 1:27) in parallel to the singular אתו ("him/it," Gen 1:27b) suggests that

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[21] Animals may multiply "according to their kind" (למינה; 1:25), but humans, "according to our likeness" (כדמותו; cf. 5:3).

[22] F. Maass, "אָדָם," *TDOT* 1.85.

[23] Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (OBT; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 11, 104–5; developing an argument of Von Rad (*OT Theology* 1.146); see also Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007) 193, 216.

[24] E. J. van Wolde, "Rhetorical, Linguistic and Literary Features in Genesis 1," in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. L. J. de Regt, J. de Waard, and J. P. Fokkelman; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996) 149.

[25] Phyllis A. Bird, "Theological Anthropology in the Hebrew Bible," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible* (ed. L. Perdue; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005) 260.

[26] Ibid. 261.

[27] So NET, TNIV; similarly REB, NEB. The prefixed verbal form with *wāw* conjunctive denotes purpose/result (GKC §109f; R. C. Van Leeuwen, "Form, Image," *NIDOTTE* 4.645; F. J. Stendebach, "צֶלֶם," *TDOT* 12.394; H. Wildberger, "צֶלֶם," *TLOT* 3.1083).

[28] For a recent discussion of the image of God and its use within the scope of NT eschatology, see Douglas J. Moo, "Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment," *JETS* 49 (2006), esp. pp. 477–82.

[29] J. Oswalt, "כָּבַשׁ," *TWOT* 1.430; Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994) 1.346.

[30] V. P. Hamilton, "אָדָם," *NIDOTTE* 1.265.

זכר ("male") and נקבה ("female") in Gen 1:27c are two types of the same generic human being (cf. אתם ["them"], Gen 1:27c). Thus, it is "male" and "female" that explain אדם ("human being"). While the image grants royal authorization to rule, it is in sexuality that the image bearers differ from their Creator.

The OT does not use אדם to distinguish one individual from another.[31] This differentiation of sex rather than individual is important at two levels: (a) its direct connection to the preceding image of God (צלם, Gen 1:27a, b; cf. 1:26a); (b) and the generative blessing that immediately follows (Gen 1:28a). In the theology of Genesis, image-functional is clearly stressed over image-ontological. In its generative capacity, human sexuality is fundamentally linked to the *imago Dei*, key elements unspecified for the animals.[32] As Phyllis Trible helpfully notes, while "procreation is shared by humankind with the animal world (Gen 1:22, 28); sexuality is not."[33]

d. *Dynamic discourse structure.* Semantic and thematic reiteration closes out the discourse as God's following blessing to "them" (Gen 1:28a, אתם) re-iterates his earlier intention that "they" rule (Gen 1:26b, וירדו). With speech defining the discourse, God remains the unique subject and humankind the gifted recipient (Gen 1:26–30).

3. *Implications that obligate.* The rhetorical structure, syntax, and lexical terms tightly cohere in this text. The narrator reports the fact of human creation (vv. 27a, b), culminating with a depiction of genders in unity (v. 27c). Internally, a chiasm connects verse 27 with verse 28. The gravity of the subject matter is matched by the grandeur of expression. In Gen 1:26–28, אדם (*'āḏām*) refers to collective humankind as "male" and "female." Their difference lies in sexual structure, an assumption celebrated in the blessing that follows (v. 28). Significantly, the terms "male" (זכר) and "female" (נקבה) refer to their capacity as sexual beings, not their social relationship.[34] The social dynamic of "man" (איש) and "woman" (אשה) are terms used later (cf. Gen 2:23; 3:6). Here, the "us" (v. 26) of the *'āḏām* express a relational vibrancy. Humankind is not said *to have* the image of God, but each person is said *to be* in his or her psychosomatic whole the image of God.[35] Their gendered identity embodies the potency for divine blessing.[36] The collective singular "him/it" (v. 27b) culminates in the distributive plural, "them" (v. 27c). The lexical profile emphasizes a couple commissioned more than individuals empowered.

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[31] R. Hess, "Adam," *DOTP* 19.

[32] Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 97.

[33] Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (OBT; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 15.

[34] Waltke, *Old Testament Theology* 221. This is confirmed elsewhere in Genesis 1–11 by the use of "male" (זכר) and "female" (נקבה) when reproduction is the issue (cf. Gen 6:9; 7:9).

[35] Ibid. 215.

[36] William P. Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 48.

According to the syntax, the ruling community anticipated (Gen 1:26b ["they"] וירדו) is formally confirmed through a corporate blessing at the close (Gen 1:28a ["them"; cf. ורדו, 28b]). The creation mandate entails both an endowment for reproduction (Gen 1:28a) and a commission for ruling (Gen 1:28b). Both the narrator's report (third person, Gen 1:27) and the divine blessing (second person, Gen 1:28a) confirm the accomplishment of the Creator's goals (first person, Gen 1:26b). Theirs is not a dominion of power, but power for dominion. The divine image funds the unique relationship between God and humankind; it is intermediacy through divine investiture. It is their image as "under-kings" that gives humankind both the moral vision and functional capacity to achieve an order worthy of its Creator.[37]

V. COSTLY BROKENNESS:
WEEPING WITH OUR WOUNDED

Having established some core theological values in Gen 1:26–28, we are better prepared to contemplate the effects of sexual abuse in the realms of self, community, and God.

1. *Sexual abuse fractures the unity of personhood.* When the LORD speaks to the human beings, he addresses them as persons, not genders (Gen 1:26–28). Only as a whole organism is the term "soul" (*nepeš*) even appropriate in creation theology (Gen 2:7), since the OT knows no dualism of body and spirit (cf. Ps 103:1–2).[38] By contrast, sexual abuse effectively dismembers its victim, it un-creates because it dissects. Through domination, sexual exploitation of a person is characterized by: a sense of helplessness, loss, vulnerability, shame, humiliation, degradation, and other elements of emotional trauma.[39] Contributing to this distress is the controlled secrecy; abuse occurs on the molester's terms. Even the victim's fight or flight response is overridden. Complete powerlessness is an initial isolating result.[40]

Abuse tears apart the *nepeš*-wholeness of a person. It flays the person's constitution, and pieces seem to "split off." As such, sexual abuse de-personalizes not simply because it steals, but because it tears out what is intimately connected to the larger fullness of being. Such abuse dismantles the symphony of human parts. Looted, the victim is abandoned to process the experience— in further seclusion. A terrorizing ritual ensues as the victim helplessly awaits the next encounter. Whether declared or implied, the controlling abuser issues a gag order. For the victim, stillness and silence seems to guarantee

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[37] H. Wildberger, "צֶלֶם," *TLOT* 3.1082.

[38] Used 755x, *nepeš* is adequately distinct to be addressed in the vocative for the totality of the human person (i.e. "my life," cf. Ps 42:5, 11[6, 12]; 43:5), and even a dead corpse (Lev 21:1; 22:4).

[39] Lipka, *Sexual Transgression* 29.

[40] See Linda H. Robinson, "The Abuse of Power: A View of Sexual Misconduct in a Systemic Approach to Pastoral Care," *Pastoral Theology* 5 (2004) 395–404. See also Bruce D. Perry, "Incubated in Terror: Neurodevelopmental Factors in the 'Cycle of Violence," in *Children in a Violent Society* (ed. J. Osofsky; New York: Guilford, 1997) 124–49.

survival.[41] This violation deadens life along a spectrum of security and terror, respect and shame, wholeness and brokenness.[42]

Early and progressive molestation puts the victim's senses on hyperarousal or active patrol: defenses are activated, emotions are electrified, physiology is convulsed, and neurobiological information is "written"—and all without the resources to assimilate a morass of confusing relational dynamics.[43] The victim's natural dependence has bound them. Anger wells up, but the social schema requires the victim to remain "obedient." Trying to manage pain in progressive proportions, the victim's personality fragments; the pieces of the symphony no longer play in harmony.[44] Not surprisingly, disassociation is a common result of sexual trauma.[45] While the degree of destruction varies among victims, as the variables differ, most suffer irreversible damage. A chronic state of alert takes a toll on the body with studies showing that sexually traumatized children are 10% to 15% more likely to suffer from cancer, heart disease, gastrointestinal problems, liver disease, and diabetes as adults.[46]

2. *Sexual abuse impairs sexual expression.*   God roots sexuality within the mandate mission (Gen 1:28). Thus, sexuality has an accountable-function. By divine design, people extend God's creation through proliferation (Gen 5:3; 9:1), but sexual abuse stymies this missional aspect of sexuality. Destructively, victims become hyper-sexualized, many acting out their sexual conditioning or what they have come to associate with love and expectations. In the network of brain cells, neurons that fire together are wired together.[47]

[41] Grant L. Martin notes that a non-abused child will be more agitated during their first full physical exam. A raped child will yell and scream, but the repeatedly abused child will quietly spread their legs or drop their pants (*Counseling for Family Violence and Abuse* [ed. Gary R. Collins; RCC; Dallas: Word, 1987] 156).

[42] Walter Brueggemann, "Death," in *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 48.

[43] Intrusive reenactment of the trauma causes chronic physiological and psychological states of hyperarousal that disrupts the body's regulation of arousal and adaptation to stress. Hyperarousal is the cause of a survivor's common disposition for hypervigilance. Other common forms of hyperarousal include irritability, angry outbursts, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, and insomnia (Beste, *God and the Victim* 43).

[44] Beste writes, "Common mental illnesses include dissociative identity disorder, borderline personality disorder, major anxiety, and depressive episodes. These psychiatric illnesses often lead to chronic suicidality" (*God and the Victim* 53).

[45] Dissociation is a potent defense mechanism used to deny the reality of violence that is overwhelming. Dissociating, or "splitting off" traumatic events from one's consciousness, is the capacity to separate elements of a traumatic experience such as emotions, thoughts, sensations, locations, and time into shattered fragments that can defy integration and remain unconscious; see Beste, *God and the Victim* 41; see also Rita Budrionis, Arthur E. Jongsma, Jr., *The Sexual Abuse Victim and Sexual Offender: Treatment Planner* (ed. Arthur E. Jongsma, Jr.; Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003) 23.

[46] Whitsett, "Psychobiology of Trauma" 355; Kirsten Havig, "The Health Care Experiences of Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse," *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* 9 (2008) 20.

[47] Doni Whitsett, review of Bruce D. Perry and Maia Szalavitz, *The Boy Who Was Raised As a Dog and Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook: What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love and Healing*, *Cultic Studies Review* 6 (2007) 205, citing Donald Hebb.

Quite simply, "the brain is experience dependant."[48] So in reenactment is a sense of control, a grasp for balance.

When sexuality is turned in on itself through abuse, the reciprocal otherness is perverted in selfishness.[49] As a component of embodiment, the Creator's design of sexual anatomy, intended for bonding and reproduction (Gen 1:28a; 9:7), becomes a skewed symbol in exploitation. Such convoluted experience disorients the victim's sense of sexual self. Sexuality that is dignified in the first blessing of humankind is defaced in abuse. Relationally, God's blessing establishes the right to fertility. But what God imbues with life force, abuse quickly crushes. Yet the impairment goes further.

Sexual abuse physically plunders the victim's body. It is a poisonous contact that leaves debilitating physical and psychological toxins to ferment in the mind-body complex. Research shows that victims of human-induced trauma tend to experience a greater degree of trauma.[50] Thus, the damage of sexual abuse also stems from its physical attack-factor.[51] Adding to its horrific nature, sexual abuse is enacted against another image-bearer. This ordeal of "against-experiences" tears at the victim's very constitution. While many catastrophes cause emotional trauma, sexual abuse uniquely undermines the person's sense of self.[52] The victim's personal space becomes a crime scene that shadows them, one of which they cannot speak.

As image-bearers, persons are embodied souls. Consequently the entire composite of embodied personhood suffers. Parts of the victim may developmentally "freeze." Selective amnesia is common.[53] Over time, person is eroded to individual; the individual resigns as an object, until the object of convenience disintegrates.[54] The victim's inalienable "body," their own *sōma* ("body"), can be reduced to a subjugated shell. Held hostage in a violated body; a victim can no longer make meaning of the trauma in their own skin without therapy:[55] "The traumatized carry an impossible history within them, a history the truth about which is often too difficult to bear, since truthful

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[48] Ibid. 206.

[49] The "sons of God" function as the negative thematic counterpoint to the kingly function of the image of God (Gen 6:1–4; cf. 1:26–27). Genesis 6:2 recalls Eden's transgression by God's vice-regents (cf. Gen 3:6). "See" (ראה), "good" (טוב), and "take" (לקח) reappear as the subjects abuse royal power.

[50] Beste, *God and the Victim* 38 (emphasis added).

[51] One is not "confronted" by a car accident and even diseases are passively "contracted."

[52] Lipka, *Sexual Transgression* 30, n. 34.

[53] When victims of incest re-experience their trauma, partial psychogenic amnesia may occur. Symptoms include intense bodily or emotional sensations, terrifying sensory perceptions, obsessional preoccupations, and behavioral reenactments (Bessel van der Kolk, "Trauma and Memory," in *Traumatic Stress* 286).

[54] A person operates in *relation with* other persons, whereas an individual operates in *separation from* other individuals (Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (2d ed; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997) 11. I am leaning on the helpful discussion of personhood by David Rim, "Proclaiming Jesus in a Cross-Cultural Context: Understanding the Trinity as a Model for Declaring the Gospel," in *Proclaiming Jesus* (ed. Thomas H. L. Cornman; Chicago: Moody, 2007) esp. pp. 230–35.

[55] On integrating traumatic memory in healing, see Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 27–28.

memories echo the ripping that created the original would."[56] Without inter-
vention, a victim's self-hatred can reach a crisis point, leading some to cut
themselves, since physical pain can be preferable to emotional anguish.[57]

3. *Sexual abuse distorts delegated authority.* The accountable-function
of sexual expression works along side the derived authority of leadership.
God's royal vice-regents over creation are caretakers (Gen 1:28b).[58] Mandate
mission entails a shepherding and kingly responsibility—a stewardship for
created life.[59] The image fuels a deeply interdependent relationship with all
created life. For this reason, the inclusion of all three domains of creation
(i.e. earth, sea, sky, Gen 1:28) points to the scope of the supervisory role.
So Ps 8:6–8: "You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put
everything under their feet: animals . . . birds . . . fish" (TNIV).[60] The "glory
and honor" of Ps 8:5b extol the royal standing of humankind (Gen 1:26–27;
Ps 21:5).

The expressions of "ruling over" (משל ב, Ps 8:6a) and "dominion" (רדה ב,
Gen 1:28b) are synonymous.[61] The form of משל is causative (i.e. "make one
exercise rulership over"). The caring role of image bearers is limited and
accountable to the Creator from whom their authority is derived.[62] To nur-
ture all life, the task of "subduing" works in tandem with the position of
"ruling." Not surprisingly, the notions of "subduing" and "ruling" are never
used of a king against his own people.[63] All actions are to be in service for
and oriented to God's mandating purpose.

However, sexual abuse in general, and incest by a parent in particular,
may be the most profound illustration of malicious leadership. Child Custody

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[56] Ibid. 75, quoting Cathy Caruth, "Trauma and Experience" 5.

[57] As a symptom of trauma, self-mutilation can be: (1) an attempt to "feel" again; (2) to gain a
sense of control; (3) evidence of profound self-hatred; (4) or a desire to communicate to the coun-
selor that therapy hurts (Briere, *Child Abuse Trauma* 56). Ezekiel 23:34 also refers to "tearing of
breasts," post-trauma.

[58] Following the core charge ("be fruitful and multiply," Gen 1:28a), several secondary charge
elements ("fill," "subdue," "rule," "swarm") begin with reference to הארץ ("the earth") as the domain
identification, but also include the "sea" and "sky." Significantly, the structure of the creation
mandate to humankind in Gen 1:28 envelopes all three created domains of Genesis 1. The archi-
tecture of Noah's boat is a microcosm of creation's order and, appropriately, reflects the same
three domains of creation (cf. Gen 6:16).

[59] Against the backdrop of humankind tending and guarding God's garden-sanctuary (Gen 2:5,
15), there is well-defined "shepherd-king" imagery applied to Israel's own rulers (2 Sam 5:2; 7:7;
1 Chr 11:2; 17:6; Ps 78:71; Isa 40:11; Mic 7:14; see K. W. Whitelam, "King and Kingship," *ABD*
4.40–48).

[60] Psalm 8:6 employs a sequence of imperfect (תמשילהו, "cause to rule") + perfect שתה, "placed."
The perfective use communicates an ongoing effect of the original creation mandate.

[61] The verbs used in Gen 1:28 (רדה ["rule"], כבש ["subdue"]) must be read in this blessing context
of creation and not through their otherwise negative usage elsewhere. Here they work together to
develop notions of abundance and governance: רדה ("rule") is confined to human rule while every
occasion of "subduing" is commissioned by God. While כבש harnesses land potential, רדה adds
the notion of royalty, contributing regal status to human endeavor and the gift of the "crown" (cf.
Ps 8:6[5]; see H.-J. Zobel, "רָדָה," *TDOT* 13.330–36; M. Wagner, "בָּבַשׁ," *TDOT* 7.52–57).

[62] Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) 208.

[63] Frank Crüsemann, *The Torah: Theology and History of Old Testament Law* (trans. A. W.
Mahnke; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 291, n. 75.

Protection Act indicates "that 80% of victims of sexual abuse are abused by family members and that 19% are abused by other trusted adults."[64] Perverting care, sexual abuse sets in motion a campaign of destruction against those who are naturally dependant. Creation's vision of human authority is for the development and benefit of life.[65] In procreation, image bearers cherish and guard a gift (cf. Ps 127:5; Song 4:12). So preying on fellow humans is completely counter to design. For the victim the creative mission is derailed.

In sexual abuse, the divine "coronation" for nurture is exchanged for a reign of terror (cf. Ps 8:5b).[66] Fear and de-moralizing leadership have replaced stewardship and security. Where creation intended a conferred authority for growth, the abusing family epitomizes the corruption of social order through control, perversion, and unpredictability (cf. Eph 6:4). Sexually violating a child is the ultimate betrayal of trust. Judith Herman explains:

> Repeated trauma in childhood forms and deforms the personality. The child trapped in an abusive environment is faced with formidable tasks of adaptation. [The child] must find a way to preserve a sense of trust in people who are untrustworthy, safety in a situation that is unsafe, control in a situation that is terrifyingly unpredictable, power in a situation of helplessness . . . with the only means at [their] disposal, an immature system of psychological defenses.[67]

Not surprisingly, it is common for victims of sexual abuse to struggle with relational trust for the rest of their lives. Healing does not remove suspicion. To some degree, the victim's psychological software may strain to process unilateral orders, unanticipated touching, authoritarian demeanor, physical "gag" jokes, and general power differentials.

4. *Sexual abuse disfigures the "face identity" of others.*   In Genesis 2, human relationships are emphasized on a personal stage; the image of God is now illustrated. While "male" (זכר) and "female" (נקבה) are vital for the sexuality of personhood (Gen 1:27), Gen 2:23 is a benchmark of relational celebration—the "man" (איש) for the "woman" (אשה). We hear exclaimed:

> "This one [זאת] is finally bone of [מן] my bone,
>   and flesh of [מן] my flesh;
> this one [זאת] shall be called 'woman [אשה],'
>   for from the man [מאיש] was taken this one [זאת]."

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[64] Helm, Cook, and Berecz, "Conjunctive and Disjunctive Forgiveness" 25. Lynn Heitritter and Jeanette Vought have identified nine characteristics of incestuous families: (1) shame; (2) abuse of power; (3) distorted communication; (4) social isolation; (5) denial; (6) lack of intimacy; (7) blurred boundaries; (8) dependency/emotional neediness; (9) and lack of forgiveness (*Helping Victims of Sexual Abuse: A Sensitive, Biblical Guide for Counselors, Victims and Families* [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989] 86).

[65] H.-J. Zobel, "רָדָה," *TDOT* 13.336.

[66] Therapy for the abused must address: (1) the *experience* of terror; (2) the *source* of terror; (3) and the ongoing *threat* of terror. The non-abused often confuse a victim's threat-awareness with lack of forgiveness.

[67] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992) 96, quoted by Beste, *God and the Victim* 41.

The first time we hear the man speak is when he meets the woman; she is truly another "suitable for him" (cf. Gen 2:18–20).[68] What the narrator reported in Gen 1:27, the LORD "builds" (בנה) in Gen 2:22, and now gives way to Adam's audible poetry.[69] Uniqueness of personhood has flowered in unity of relationship. His jubilant song does not hide the basis of his joy as his very words highlight their shared unity.[70] The thrice-used preposition (מן, "from") points up a source that unifies them.[71] In addition, the thrice-used near-referring demonstrative (זאת, "this one") underscores the woman's significance—she is both timely (הפעם, "finally") and utterly unique (cf. Gen 2:20b).

Sexual abuse robs what is meant to be protected—sexual particularity. Abuse seizes and celebrates nothing, extracting uniqueness from sexual identity. The self-centeredness of the victimizer sees only a world of pawns to be manipulated at will.[72] The victim, however, has lost Adam's "sacrament of surprise." Sexuality has broken loose from its moorings in another soul mate. When victimization is tied to a guardian figure, as in incest, the poetry of intimacy is doubly shredded. Sexually ambushed, victims cannot help but view the "face" of others with deep suspicion as would-be victimizers. Face-wariness becomes hyper-vigilance just to survive.

Adam's riotous joy stemmed from his experience of "this one"-definiteness. But this sacrament is stolen from the victim's present and future. Intended as bonding and heart forming, various relationships along the intimacy spectrum can be paralyzing for the victim since they must engage another's face, the most important part of a person's body.[73] The Hebrew word *pānîm* ("face") describes interpersonal relationships.[74] Beyond just "losing face" then, abuse introduces a world of shame to nakedness where even Adam and Eve knew none (Gen 2:25).[75] What is awakened in the arena of terror is not easily transferred to the realm of delights (Song 2:7).

[68] So the TNIV. Departing from the MT, LXX-G even reemploys the plural pronoun in Gen 2:18 ("let us"), an intentional connection to Gen 1:26.

[69] Adam's poetry (Gen 2:23) mimics the narrator's (Gen 1:27) in several ways. Contextually, each poetic aside is preceded by God's dialogue of intent (Gen 1:26; 2:18). Thematically, the narrator emphasizes their *uniqueness* with ברא ("create," 3x), whereas Adam underscores their *unity* with זאת ("this [one]," 3x) and מן ("from," 3x). Rhetorically, each poetic flourish closes out the thrust of its respective chapter.

[70] With איש decidedly used of particular individuals (427x), Adam's elation over the woman in Gen 2:23 celebrates their "shared flesh" not their distinctions. In fact, while the narrator elsewhere has defined the אדם ("human") relative to the אדמה ("ground/humus"; Gen 2:7; cf. 3:19; 4:11–12; 5:29), Adam shows his own creativity with a similar paronomasia to define the אשה ("woman") in relation to the איש ("man").

[71] Typically used of relatives ("i.e. bone/flesh of my bone/flesh"), the bond is celebrated in this idiom of unity (cf. Gen 29:14; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:12).

[72] The rate of *recidivism* (i.e. repeat offense) for sexual offenders ranges between 20% and 70%, frighteningly high ("Stop It Now: Child Sexual Abuse Facts Sheet," http://www.stopitnow.com/csafacts.html).

[73] A. S. van der Woude, "פָּנִים," *TLOT* 2.1001. The Hebrew notion of "face" (פנים) functions as a rich relational concept, a *synecdoche* for the entire person (A. S. van der Woude, "פָּנִים," *TLOT* 2.995–1014; Simian-Yofre, "פָּנִים," *TDOT* 11.589–615).

[74] Simian-Yofre, "פָּנִים," *TDOT* 11.606, 607; cf. "Peniel" (Gen 32:30).

[75] This "face-dynamic" defines a vulnerability that is necessary for intimacy and crippling as inappropriate exposure.

Survivors of sexual abuse must learn to live with a host of triggers—conditioned associations to sounds, smells, places, and key times.[76] Innocuous things like dim rooms, crowded spaces, certain perfumes/colognes, clothing items, and even parenting tasks can function as triggers, recalling past abusive acts and igniting visceral fright. "Body memory" is a powerful reality that can haunt victims. From a simple touch to the marriage bed itself—triggers are often discovered unwittingly. Without intervention, explains Doni Whitsett, "the dissociated experiences remain trapped in the limbic system, forever vulnerable to 'triggering' attacks."[77] Even extended therapy may not fully re-particularize the victim's sexual future as something worthy of poetry. Much like the PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) soldiers experience, "flashbacks" are not uncommon for sexual victims.[78] But marriage can also be a place to heal sexual brokenness. The lover's "face" in their spouse will only reappear with painful healing. Full spiritual intimacy in "God's face," however, may have to await another wedding (Rev 19:7).

5. *Sexual abuse isolates the "self" from community.* Human creation resulted from a dialogical act—"Let us make humankind" (Gen 1:26a).[79] Humankind was made in community for community (Gen 2:18). Being human ultimately comprises an individual and communal human being.[80] Organically linked by exchanges of being-for-the-other, persons are parts of relationships.[81] "The two concepts—persons and relationships—are necessarily linked, for where you find a person you must necessarily find another" (cf. Gen 2:18, 23).[82] This truth resonates deeply in creation, for once the declaration is made that it is as gendered male and female that God has created human beings then the story speaks of them only in the plural.[83] Purpose comes in belonging to an "other."[84]

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[76] Triggers engage "flashbacks"—intrusive sensory memories—of the abuse and can be brought on by sexual stimuli, abusive behavior by adults, talking about one's experiences, reading or viewing violent depictions, or other elements tied to the abuse (Briere, *Child Abuse Trauma* 21).

[77] Whitsett, "Psychobiology of Trauma" 365.

[78] Basic trauma shows a correlated four-factor model of PTSD symptoms: (1) re-experiencing; (2) avoidance; (3) dysphoria; (4) and arousal (Ask Elklit and Mark Shevlin, "The Structure of PTST Symptoms: A Test of Alternative Models Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis," *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* 46 [2007] 299–313). PTSD in sexual abuse has enduring intrusive symptoms, manifesting themselves in: (1) a re-experiencing of the traumatic event; (2) response to hyperarousal which includes emotional numbing (i.e. avoidance, dissociation, etc.); (3) and compulsive reenactment of the past trauma. Suicidality, depression, substance abuse, avoidance of care, and cognitive disturbances are well documented (Beste, *God and the Victim* 42; Kirsten Havig, "Health Care Experiences," *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* 20).

[79] Bruce C. Birch et al., *Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999) 49; Terence E. Fretheim, *The Pentateuch* (IBT; Nashville: Abingdon, 1996) 74.

[80] Cherith F. Nordling, "The Human Person in the Christian Story," in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology* (ed. T. Larsen and D. J. Treier; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 75.

[81] Rim, "Proclaiming Jesus" 230.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Patrick D. Miller, "Man and Woman: Towards a Theological Anthropology," in *The Way of the LORD* 311 (emphasis added).

[84] Nordling, "Human Person" 75.

A core tenant of human creation is being-in-relation.[85] To be human is to be embodied in time and space, relating to God and others.[86] As Cherith Nordling summarizes: "Thus, to be human is essentially to be a 'who' (a personal, intellectual moral agent) called forth into existence as a unique embodied 'what' (a biological entity)."[87]

Abuse, however, poisons a person against community. It severs relational ligaments connecting the "who" of personhood to the "what" of embodied life. The links to one's place in community, and the ability to read social interaction, are cut. Disoriented, and with limited ability for protection, the abused "can barely imagine themselves in a position of agency or choice."[88] Sexual abuse strips the orientation of being from "being-in-relation." Miroslav Volf observes, "The self, however, is always a social self, and a wrongdoing intertwines the wrongdoer and the wronged as little else does. For the mistreatment consists not just in the pain or loss endured, but also in the improper relating of the wrongdoer toward the wronged—and remembering it not just with our mind but also with our body."[89] Sexual abuse operates by seclusion with creeping isolation.[90] Through debilitating shame and self-hatred, a victim undergoes a crushing alienation; the affirmation they desperately need they can no longer risk.

Inability to foster nourishing relationships brings further estrangement. Post-traumatic symptoms of startle response and emotional volatility can make the victim ashamed of their behavior; and attempts to control these lead to a life of suppression and avoidance.[91] The victim is reduced to an incidental self. Therapy for the violated helps "reconnect" image to reality, reality to self, and self to community. Unless these nerves are reattached, healthy orientation to others is blunted at best and becomes toxic at worst. However, relational estrangement can be exacerbated by an overly privatized faith.

Western Christianity as a whole has emphasized an individual-existential salvation. Eschatologically divorced from creation and community, salvation, as it has traditionally played out, has scorned the physical world and with it human embodied sexuality. In practice, it has been part of Christian pietism to associate sexuality with the "world, the flesh, and the devil"—all

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[85] Ibid. 72.

[86] Ibid. 71.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Beste, *God and the Victim* 51.

[89] Volf, *End of Memory* 83–84.

[90] Through dissociation, affect is split from experience and mind from body. This allows the child to assume the "bad aspect" and assign the good to the abusing parent (Lovett, "Sexual Abuse" 584). Thus, the abused child remains attached to their abuser through dissociation, amnesia, and self-blame. The child simply cannot bring him or herself to believe that their parent or relative could be so cruel. The result, however, is that the abuse is not exposed, further isolating the child from someone who could bring safety and protection (Beste, *God and the Victim* 42). The reason many sexually abused voice their experience only later in life is because (1) childhood defense mechanisms prove inadequate for adult pressures; and (2) the growth of their own children force protective measures to be implemented.

[91] Whitsett, "Psychobiology of Trauma" 367.

bound to sinful humanity.[92] A truncated soteriology can result in a truncated anthropology. In the pietistic worldview, purity and self is lodged in the depths of interiority rather than integrated into a larger relational world.[93] An exaggerated transcendence along with a minimization of the physical realities of life can loom so large in this worldview that there is little basis for physical and relational consequences of sin. God can become so sovereign that no one is accountable. When this happens, biblical healing can fall through unbiblical cracks.

Abusers "act out" from their own distorted anthropologies. It is hard to respect another's body when one's own sense of the physical and relational world is skewed. "The transgressor, by breaching the boundary between form and formless, order and disorder, thus endangers the entire community by threatening its order."[94] Inadequately accountable to community, the victimizer can move easily from "my salvation" and "my Jesus" to the displaced notions of "my home" and "my sex life"—an ethical oxymoron. Intoxicated by their narcissism, the victimizer has already spurned accountability. This connection is important: in part what allows the victimizer to victimize—lack of community intimacy—in turn, deprives the victim of the same.

Unfortunately, the victim's religious context may offer little to reconnect a disembodied view of sexuality to personhood and self to community. Community may be functionally lost to the victim because the trauma of victimization has effectively "depersonalized" them; community appears neither nourishing nor safe. Shockingly, community may side with the victimizer. Maintaining the façade, the victimizer is often embedded in a social context of carefully managed images; a context that looks disbelievingly at the "mess" the victim has made. So healing for the victim includes re-actualizing their personhood toward community.[95] Learning to integrate the care and critique of community back into their life is a difficult but healing antidote.

6. *Sexual abuse destroys family relationships.*   Genesis 2:18–25 not only revels in family ties, the LORD himself is pictured in Semitic fatherly concern: a son's need is observed (Gen 2:18); an appropriate woman is sought (Gen 2:21–22a); she is brought to the man (Gen 2:22b); ostensibly "presiding" over Adam's excitement in familial and covenantal language (Gen 2:23; cf. Hos 2:14–23). As the narrator's aside, verse 24 touches on the shift in loyalty from one's parents to spouse. Family language then, saturates Gen 2:18–25. The kinship idiom of "flesh and blood" extols the foundation of human society (2 Sam 5:1).

That they were "both naked" elevates familial virtues of innocence and trust (Gen 2:25). Post-fall, however, nudity is sheer vulnerability. That Adam

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[92] Nordling, "Human Person" 71.

[93] Robert A. Divito, "Anthropology, OT Theological," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, A–C* (ed. Katharine D. Sakenfeld [Nashville: Abingdon, 2006] 1:172).

[94] Lipka, *Sexual Transgression* 26–27.

[95] Rim, "Proclaiming Jesus" 234 (citing M. Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998] 83).

and Eve knew no "shame" seems inconceivable.[96] More than polite embarrassment, shame implied the danger of physical exploitation and humiliation.[97] In the theology of creation, Adam's shame soon festers in Noah's exploitation.

Nakedness and exploitation mark the earliest characters in Genesis. While God renews his mandate blessing to Noah (Gen 9:1–7), events in his family life are intentionally structured to reenact the stewardship, eating, nudity, covering, and even judgment in Adam's life. A pathetic scene of sexual exploitation greets the reader after the flood (cf. Gen 9:20–23). For eerily similar reasons, Noah's family suffers relationally just as the first couple (Gen 3:7, 9–13; 9:24–27). Through Noah, creation is recalibrated for sin, but it is never called "good" again (Gen 8:21–22; 9:6).

Sin may be a relational toxin; but the effects of sexual abuse work like a ravaging cancer with no simple cure. From the nudity and fear between Adam and Eve to the blatant voyeurism of Ham toward Noah, there are well-worn themes of nakedness, shame, and exploitation; these continue to reign in families.[98] The literature shows that abusing families have a fairly predictable pattern revolving around the victimizing male. Grant L. Martin writes:

> many incest offenders have rigid beliefs and authoritarian manners. They want to be the head of the household and in control. For some, this is accompanied by strong alleged religious beliefs which are very opinionated and divided into clear but simplistic compartments . . . there is a tendency for offenders to be strongly opinionated, and with an outspoken view of right and wrong, regardless of their behavior in private.[99]

Sexuality is rooted in the biblical prescription for marriage, one that celebrates and guards the nuclear family (Gen 2:24; Prov 5:18–19). Incest, however, the most common form of sexual abuse, wrenches a family apart.[100] Intact families require sexual fidelity, so an incested child begins to wonder if their abusing father, mother, or older sibling is their guardian or lover. The fact that it is usually a trusted family member only compounds the devastation done against the victim's body.

Incest further counters the creation design because a child cannot give or receive as an equal. A son or daughter who represents the union of their mother and father, is not sufficiently "other" to be an object of their parent's

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[96] The *Hitpolel* imperfect form of Gen 2:25 (יתבששו) is not only rare, its force in 2:25 is customary in the personal-subjective realm, "to be ashamed before one another" (F. Stolz, בוש, *TLOT* 1.206).

[97] Particularly illustrative is Hab 2:15–16a: "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies! You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and let your nakedness be exposed."

[98] As sexual voyeurism, Ham's action falls under the category of *noncontact* sexual abuse, which includes exhibitionism, voyeurism, coercion to view or participate in child pornography, obscene sexual language, obscene sexual phone calls, and other intrusive behavior such as not allowing a child to undress or use the bathroom in privacy (Andrea Parrot, "Incest," in *Human Sexuality: An Encyclopedia* [ed. V. L. Bullough, B. Bullough; New York: Garland, 1994] 298).

[99] Martin, *Counseling for Family Violence and Abuse* 158, 159; see also *Preventing Violence in America* (ed. R. L. Hampton, P. Jenkins, and T. P. Gullotta; New York: Sage, 1996) 214, 216.

[100] Andrea Parrot, "Incest," in *Human Sexuality* 298.

sexual love.[101] Incest destroys families because it disregards created boundaries.[102] Like a body attacking its own vital organs, incest destroys "relational tissue," collapsing family structures.[103] As an extension of the parent's selfish will, the child is forced into premature autonomy yet deprived of autonomy at the same time. The abused child will sacrifice their own sense of self in order to find safety within the relationship, creating a trauma bond.[104] Inasmuch as creation was a series of structured separations, incest rolls creation back toward chaos. It was "violence" that despoiled God's creation (Gen 6:11, 13) and pained his heart (Gen 6:6).[105] The ability of sexual abuse to obscure internal and external relationships makes it a cosmic affront to the Creator and the order of his creation (cf. Gen 6:1–3).[106]

In the home, an internalized guilt keeps many victims quiet lest the family disintegrate on their account. However, should the incested child manage to come out and find an advocate, the victim is often punished by the family for "breaking it up" and dishonoring the parents.[107] Re-victimization is a common occurrence in sexual abuse. For the family to acknowledge the victimized member(s), that family must accept the abusing systems in the home that produced it. It is not uncommon for the abusing family to scapegoat the truth-teller, since the victim has stepped out of their dysfunctional role that facilitated their victimization in the first place. Church friends and extended family may struggle to understand why the victim cannot simply return to family fellowship.

Without proper counseling and accountability, many victims, trained in the rationale and rituals of abuse, will in turn abuse their own children. While the abuse scrambled their relational software, it remains the language they understand: leadership is about control, the spouse proves their loyalty by support, and the children must "obey," again. But competent intervention

[101] G. C. Meilaender Jr., "Sexuality," in *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (ed. David J. Atkinson and David H. Field; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995) 77.

[102] Leviticus 18, 20 and Deuteronomy 27 contain the strongest incest prohibitions. What Israelite society could not control, God oversaw. In Lev 18:6–23 ("B Section"), the entire unit moves gradually from incestuous unions to other illicit expressions (Nobuyoshi Kiuchi, *Leviticus*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary [ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007] 329).

[103] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Sex and Sexuality," *ABD* 5.1145.

[104] Lovett, "Sexual Abuse" 583; citing the work of J. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

[105] The "violence" (חמס) and "corruption" (שחת, Gen 6:11a) refer to cruelty, oppression, and moral perversion; see H. Haag, "חָמָס," *TDOT* 4.478–87.

[106] See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966 [repr. London: Routledge, 1984] 5).

[107] Susan Forward outlines the hostility many truth-telling victims face:

If your siblings react negatively to your confrontation, they may put a lot of energy into letting you know how much you've upset the family. You may receive many letters, phone calls, or visits from them. They may become your parents' emissaries, delivering messages, pleas, threats, and ultimatums. They may call you names and do all they can to convince you that you're either wrong, crazy, or both ("Confrontation: The Road to Independence," in *Toxic Parents: Overcoming Their Hurtful Legacy and Reclaiming Your Life* [New York: Bantam Books, 1989] 247).

and community support can create a "hinge parent," parents willing to say: "Sexual abuse and its destructive ways of relating will die with me!" Such parents have learned that remembering wrongs truthfully is to act justly.[108]

7. *Sexual abuse mars connecting metaphors for God.* In the garden sanctuary, God is portrayed as cosmic king, master artisan, attentive father, gracious provider, and just protector. The imagery of creation creates a profile of God with metaphorical force "writ large."[109] As metaphors transcend time and culture, the reader is invited to look for a correspondence of relations in their own world.[110] It is the reader's personal experience that keeps metaphors fresh as worlds merge. God has a rich profile of archetypical images that reverberate throughout Scripture. God is a parent (Hos 11:1), midwife (Isa 66:7–9), mother (Isa 66:13), and protective fortress (Ps 31:2). These are high correspondence metaphors between God, humankind, and community, fueled by the two-way traffic of the image of God.[111]

For the sexually abused, their bridging metaphors have also been violated—particularly the nurturing metaphors for God as father and protector. With sober insight, Terence E. Fretheim speaks of controlling metaphors. Like "metaphors among metaphors . . . they are able to bring coherence to a range of biblical thinking about God; they provide a hermeneutical key for interpreting the whole."[112] When these controlling metaphors are marred, the supportive skeleton bridging divine promise and human experience is crushed. For an abuse victim, their operative metaphors are radically distorted. Healing requires finding a new fund of metaphors that reconnects God to his creation and human community.[113]

The loss of controlling metaphors amounts to losing the navigational compass. The overwhelming dissonance between the earthly and heavenly father causes many abuse victims to abandon their faith altogether. Victims routinely ask: "What kind of heavenly father does not lift a finger to help a terrified youth when their earthly father rifles through their body?" "How can I possibly explain a mother, the paragon of care, who refused to intervene—even when I confided in her?" These are more than common scenarios, they are crushing realities. For the abused, God as loving parent can be a terror-making analogy. If God exists for some survivors, his loving intimacy has been drained off leaving a dry and inaccessible old man.[114] The fact that

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[108] Volf, *End of Memory* 70.

[109] Cf. Deut 4:32; Ps 148:5; Isa 57:16; Mal 2:10; Mark 13:19; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; Heb 12:27; Rev 4:11.

[110] Ian Paul, "Metaphor," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. K. J. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005) 509.

[111] Fretheim, *Suffering of God* 10.

[112] Ibid. 11.

[113] Claiming that "only a suffering God can help," Dietrich Bonhoeffer stressed a cruciform immanence (*Letters and Papers from Prison* [London: Collins Fontana, 1953] 164).

[114] Christine A. Courtois also discusses this spiritual impasse, noting that the emotions derived from incest can "block personal and spiritual growth" (*Healing the Incest Wound: Adult Survivors in Therapy* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1988] 202).

other believers can pray "Our Father . . ." only adds to the suffocating blanket of frustration of those for whom God never showed up! Fretheim admits, "The meaning of a metaphor varies from culture to culture, and even from individual to individual within a single culture. A child, for instance, with a brutal or incestuous father will hear the word 'father' for God with far different ears than I will."[115] When the church does not plan for this dissonance, it could be ignoring a terrifying reality for up to 20% of its congregation—if they are still there.

Controlling metaphors *do* something. They structure life and serve as "grids." They reach into the future, making meaning of the present. Through metaphor, propositional truth becomes a nourishing ethic as life is filtered and configured.[116] Thus the marring of bridging metaphors is the loss of blueprint and hope. Once marred, dignity and spiritual reality is forced to limp in a victim's life—life-giving associations are gone. The heavenly "father" and his "guardian" angels can be a cruel joke.

With relationships severed socially and spiritually, healing moves a person back toward creation's design, reconnecting internal spaces and external communities. The sense of the sacred is mediated through the body.[117] So bodies, minds, and souls can become sanctified spaces again. Adopting the relational view of the image of God, Douglas J. Moo acknowledges the intact image in humankind alongside the believer's restoration in Christ, two theological realities (Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). Moo states, "If we view the 'image of God' as having to do *primarily with the power to form appropriate relationships*—between humans and God, among humans, and between humans and creation—justice can be done to both perspectives."[118]

In sum, the acute damage of sexual abuse stems not only from the denial of the victim's will but also from the violation of the body's physical boundaries.[119] When the shepherds of creation are themselves exploited, they can struggle to extend a dignity they were denied. Because of this trauma, an avalanche of consequences undermines the victim's sense of personhood, involving (1) self; (2) social relationships; (3) and spiritual communion with God. Tied to the image of God, the infrastructure for the productive stewardship of God's creation is severely damaged. The sexually broken have unique needs in the areas of personhood, relationships, and faith.

VI. CONCLUSION: CARING FOR OUR WOUNDED

Where there is inadequate reflection on the glory of creation and God's design for human relationships, there will not be appropriate grieving of sin's

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[115] Fretheim, *Suffering of God* 11.

[116] William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 6. Image of God and metaphor is also addressed by Stephen P. Greggo, "Biblical Metaphors for Corrective Emotional Relationships," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 35 (2007) 153–62.

[117] Marilyn Gottschall, "Embodiment," in *Handbook of Christian Theology* 156.

[118] Moo, "Nature in the New Creation" 481 (emphasis added).

[119] Lipka, *Sexual Transgression* 200.

devastation. There must be more in the church and Christian ministries willing to show up for the pain of the sexually abused. To emphasize the reality of consequences only an "insider" would know I have used the word "victim." "Survivor" can also be appropriate to describe healing as a journey, since not all make it. To face this challenge, several needs can be identified.

1. *There is a need for interdisciplinary research and dialogue.* Cooperative work has been done for stem cell research, physical disabilities, and numerous addictive issues—why does sexual abuse lag so far behind? Legal and privacy concerns apply to all these issues so that is an excuse. Silence particularly needs to be broken for sexual abuse; survivors have endured it long enough.

In addition, it is time for the trained disciplines to stop sniping at each other (e.g. counselors and pastors) and band together to salvage lives, guide the Church, and foster maturity. In both the church and theological education, there is a desperate need for a more generous dialogue, one open to learning from other disciplines. Various professionals need to step across fences for much-needed networking.[120] In the church and academy, serious integration is vital at the theoretical and practical levels. We have reached a juncture in sexual abuse so that if ministry is to be ethical it must also be integrative. The progress toward normalization of sexual abuse will only occur when the disciplines that largely operate in isolation from each other make greater strides together to help the sexually broken in their communities.

2. *There is a need for a robust theology of personhood in general and the reality of embodiment in particular.*   Victims somatize their trauma.[121] The abused body will communicate what the mouth cannot verbalize.[122] Thus, there is a dire need to tie sexual abuse and its physical effects to a full-orbed theology of embodiment—the seamless whole of mind, body, and spirit.[123] Marilyn Gottschall states, "Religious experience is shaped by and interpreted through profoundly material means . . . the sensations, intuitions, feelings, and experiences of our corporeal selves . . . the medium through which we enact the presence of the divine within us."[124] Ultimately, the unitary anthropology of the OT is reaffirmed in the theology of the resurrection. Stanley Grenz correctly observes, "The resurrection offers the ultimate critique of all

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[120] In the medical setting, one study found that 89% of abuse survivors felt that their physician could help them if he or she had knowledge of the abuse, and 61% of survivors said they were willing to volunteer information about their history of sexual abuse (Havig, "Health Care Experiences," *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* 24).

[121] Cornelius T. McQuillan, "What Every Priest, Religious and Bishop Should Know About Pedophilia," *The Journal of Pastoral Counseling: New Explorations, Old Grounds* 39 (2004) 37.

[122] See the insights of Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul: A Guide for Cultivating Depth and Sacredness in Everyday Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004), esp. pp. 155–76 ("The Body's Poetics of Illness").

[123] Marilyn Gottschall, "Embodiment," in *Handbook of Christian Theology* 157.

[124] Ibid.

dualist anthropologies, for it declares that the body is essential to human personhood."[125]

Significantly, we can no longer confine sexual abuse to applied ethics, a rule-based description of acts a person does. Sexual personhood is inextricably related to embodied life, community, and creation.[126] Sexual abuse, therefore, is not an isolated deed, a lapse in an individual's moral judgment strictly between them and God. Rather, biblical embodiment corrects physical minimalism, viewing sexuality and its abuse in terms of an accountable ethic between embodied persons in relationship. Neither the abuser's confession nor the forgiveness of the abused simply mends such wounds. Greg Jones warns, "When forgiveness is seen primarily in individualistic and privatistic terms, we lose sight of its central role in establishing a way of life *not only* with our 'inner' selves *but also* in our relations to others."[127] The church has been slow to grasp this.

Traditional views of sexual abuse as an external and isolated act of sin falls far short of recognizing the embodied milieu between the abuser and the abused—a corporate aspect of sin.[128] For a molester to ask for forgiveness for their "sinful acts" by privately praying through Psalm 51 may be an important component, but it is woefully inadequate to address the embodied harm foisted on the victim's realms of relationship. "Our ineradicable human dignity lies in the whole human person."[129] So, to speak of embodiment means that we have foresworn dichotomies and stepped beyond simplistic polarities of self and other, bodies and spirits, brokenness and victory.[130]

3. *The need to support victims of sexual abuse is ignored to the peril of us all*.   Both the pain and needs of the abused are complex. Those who understand this must be proactive. But shallow questions, dualistic theology, underground support groups, and simplistic notions of forgiveness and reconciliation show that, by and large, the church is in over its head. Christian organizations have been the most reluctant to accept that a confessing abuser does not heal the abused, anymore than a forgiving victim means the relationship is reconciled. In sexual abuse, forgiveness may be granted, but reconciliation is usually stymied due to the deep erosion of trust and respect.[131]

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[125] Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990) 25. It should go without saying that believers await a resurrection of the body, not *from* the body.

[126] Christine Gudorf, "Sexuality," 459, 460; also Bruce E. Birch, "Ethics in the OT," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 2.345.

[127] Greg Jones, "The Judgment of Grace: Forgiveness in Christian Life," *Theology Matters* 3 (1997) 9 (emphasis original).

[128] Samuel M. Powell, *A Theology of Christian Spirituality* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005) 177.

[129] Lisa Fullam, "Sex in 3-D: A Telos for a Virtue Ethics of Sexuality," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 (2007) 165.

[130] Marilyn Gottschall, "Embodiment," in *Handbook of Christian Theology*, 156–57.

[131] Ray S. Anderson warns against using forgiveness as a shortcut to reconciliation (*The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001] 293). Forgiveness is not forgetting, reconciling, condoning, excusing, tolerating, or dismissing the pain.

In their study of sexual abuse and forgiveness, Helm, Cook, and Berecz conclude, "[T]he role of reconciliation may be unrealistic in cases of sexual abuse. The implication for individuals working with sexually abused clients is that trying to shape their emotional experiences into a traditional reconciliation model may be inappropriate or harmful for these individuals."[132]

Churches may push for reconciliation of parties largely because the family turmoil and emotional pain defy description. Forgiveness among the victimized has been misunderstood due to an overemphasis on legal definitions to the exclusion of unique relational dynamics. However, the nature of anger in sexual trauma has been understood even less, and is often confused with hostility by the non-abused.[133] In particular, the "victory only" spirituality views anger and sorrow as signs of spiritual weakness.[134]

For the abused, forgiveness is not an event to be logged, but a process to be nurtured, one that emerges as the toxin is absorbed. As for anger, it has horizontal and vertical dimensions. Horizontally, the abused utilize anger to identify the perpetrator and muster words capable of resistance. This is a courageous action, a protest stage, and often misunderstood. Vertically, anger is more than a grieving stage, "it is an act of profound faith to entrust one's most precious hatreds to God, knowing they will be taken seriously."[135] Hostility, however, has destructive intentions.[136] Therapy helps identify the abuse of power, isolate the causes of anger, and channel them toward a healing end. Christian ministries need to be ready to help survivors with their jobs, mental health, and domestic relationships. Let other survivors to participate—they understand.

Reconciliation always seems spiritual, but if churches are going to help redeem the tragedy of abuse, there are unique dynamics that must be respected when ministering to the abused. Ray S. Anderson explains, "We cannot lay the burden of forgiveness on the victim of abuse as a moral or spiritual obligation apart from a context where there is healing and hope of recovery through an experience of God's Grace. In some cases, forgiveness in a formal sense simply may not be possible."[137] Sadly, much re-victimization can occur to the abused due to a truncated understanding of the social

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[132] Helm, Cook, and Berecz, "Conjunctive and Disjunctive Forgiveness" 32; see also Dan B. Allender, "'Forgive and Forget' and Other Myths of Forgiveness," in *God and the Victim: Theological Reflections on Evil, Victimization, Justice, and Forgiveness* (ed. Lisa Barnes Lampman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 199–216.

[133] Anger for the sexually violated functions like yellow police tape: it cordons off the crime scene, pleas for justice, and bars all but the most trust-worthy from entering. See Lytta Basset, *Holy Anger: Jacob, Job, Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), esp. "Anger Censured" (pp. 21–36); James B. Gould, "Spiritual Healing of Disrupted Childhood," *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 60 (2006) 263–73; E. Jones, *Working with Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse* (London: Karnac, 1991).

[134] Doug Manning, *Don't Take My Grief Away from Me* (Hereford, TX: Insight Books) 78.

[135] W. Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalter* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) 77. Of course, many victims can no longer acknowledge God at this point.

[136] D. G. Bagby, "Anger," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 38.

[137] Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology* 300, also citing James Leehan, *Pastoral Care for Survivors of Family Abuse* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989) 90.

dynamics of sexual abuse and their entailments in forgiveness. At its core, the contemporary rush to reconciliation masks an unwillingness to face complex layers of damage to the whole person. Healing requires safe time, spiritual support, and moral affirmation—defined by the needs of the victim. Restitution, even symbolic, may be necessary for reconciliation.[138] "In the end, reconciliation as well as forgiveness is a divine gift of grace *that we receive bit by bit and grow into.*"[139]

Among the host of things people can do are some things that should *not* be said. Telling a victim "Move on to victory," "All things are new in Christ Jesus," "So, are you ever going to reconcile with that person?" or the ever pious "All things work together for good" are further traumatizing and actually function to divert rather than embrace another's pain. Victims need to hear "Thank you for telling me. How can I help?" It is not about "victory"; it is about healing. The abused need safety and compassion, not timetables, suspicious questions, and theological adage—from the non-abused! If the abused can risk speaking, the non-abused can risk an empathetic silence.

4. *There is a need for spiritual formation programs to address sexual abuse head on.* Since being human involves sexual personhood, formation programs have a unique opportunity to foster a theological healing in the lives of future leaders. Here they can face complex questions regarding the relationship between spiritual brokenness and sanctification, a person's sins and community, trauma and alertness to the Spirit.

In addition, these programs can explain the reality of embodiment to spiritual maturity, a holistic view of sexuality, and the patterns of its abuse within believing communities. Issues in contemporary sexuality are rising steeply. Here, formation programs need to emphasize "moral community" as much as "personal morality."[140] This is vital instruction for men and women who need integrated skills to move holistically into the lives they will face. Acknowledging sexual brokenness in formation programs also enables would-be leaders to face personal abuse issues and triggers that they may have. In fact, the need to write a personal sexual history that is reviewed by a psychologist trained in sexual abuse may be just around the corner.[141]

The shift from authoritarian leadership in church and home along with greater fluidity in gender issues makes healing for men and women an issue of transformation, not just recovery. When anthropology naturally opens into soteriology there is a rich opportunity for healing to occur.[142] But an

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[138] Eloise Thomas, Kelley White, and Geoffrey Sutton, "Clergy Apologies Following Abuse: What Makes A Difference? Exploring Forgiveness, Apology, Responsibility-Taking, Gender, and Restoration," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 27 (2008) 18.

[139] Anderson, *Practical Theology* 302 (emphasis added).

[140] Robert A. Divito, "Anthropology, OT Theological," *NIDB* 1:173.

[141] Cornelius T. McQuillan, "What Every Priest" 39.

[142] Mark L. Taylor, "Anthropology," in *Handbook of Christian Theology* 34. A healed humanity in turn, also opens anthropology into the "second Adam" of Christology—Christ as humanity was designed to be, the perfect expression of the image of God (cf. Rom 5:12–21).

inadequate biblical anthropology tends to demonize social constructs, compare scars, and minimize relational connectedness and Scripture's celebration of creation. Approaching brokenness in sanctification more as a journey toward wholeness can be meaningfully pursued in formation programs. Theological healing means a moral sufficiency can come when God is drawn close in areas of deep pain, redeeming the suffering.[143]

5. *There is a need for some wounded within leadership.*   In the academy and church alike, we desperately need some "wounded healers" in the highest places of leadership. There is a special credibility in ministering with experiential brokenness. Mobilizing this kind of leadership for the abused may be a key step in solving basic misunderstandings. Wounded healers take empathy and insight to deeper levels; they can sympathize with the sexually abused because they've faced their own humanity. There are some wounded that have been uniquely matured because of their pain (cf. 1 Tim 3:6a). They have learned to live out a cruciform brokenness that victims need to see. Ray S. Anderson puts is well:

> We begin to trust only a person who can share our pain. The sympathy of those who recognize our hurt and wish to help is not sufficient. Those who are vulnerable at the level of their own pain create access to our pain and thus to the very core of our being, without requiring a commitment or a promise. Without the experience of shared pain, those who have had trust shattered cannot find a point of beginning.[144]

Wounded healers are always horrified, but not surprised. Ministering to the sexually traumatized requires a leadership style of vulnerable partnership rather than control. Such leaders draw the broken toward healing through an incarnational empathy (2 Cor 1:3–11).

6. *There is a need for honest preaching on sexual abuse.*   Ironically, there are some healing sermons that are being avoided. Like the awareness brought to abortion, churches should consider dedicating one Sunday a year to the full spectrum of abuse in their congregations—including sexual abuse. Miroslav Volf argues, "To struggle against evil, we must empathize with its victims. And to empathize with victims, we must know either from experience or from witnesses' stories what it means to hunger, thirst, shiver, bleed, grieve, or tremble in fear. The memory of past horror will make us loathe to tolerate it in the present."[145]

In part, bearing the burdens of the abused seems strange because we've not adequately heard their testimonies, and so struggle with too many myths. However, public reading of Lament psalms and sensitively communi-

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[143] Eleonore Stump, "Narrative and the Problem of Evil: Suffering and Redemption," in *The Redemption: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Christ as Redeemer* (ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 232.

[144] Anderson, *Shape of Practical Theology* 306.

[145] Volf, *End of Memory* 31.

cated sermons on texts of exploitation and incest can help change this (e.g. Genesis 38; 2 Samuel 13).[146] There is healing community drama in collective grief. Redemptive memory occurs in the church by speaking for the silent wounded, acknowledging their embodied pain, generating solidarity, and protecting victims from further abuse.[147] Let an abuse survivor read a prayer they have written to God. This can be remarkable evidence of God's whole-making grace. Redemptive memory is a form of *doing*, not just knowing.[148]

Pastors and educators must be better equipped on the basic issues. Recognizing sexual trauma, disassociation disorder, PTSD, and narcissism would be a significant advance.[149] Leaders must understand that relationships to the victim can be like navigating a "house of mirrors"—misshapen images are everywhere. Frankly, unending public battles over the appropriateness of psychological theories is an insult to victims.

When pastors and Christian leaders address sexual abuse they engage in a prophetic ministry to help cleanse lives and mend relationships, preparing some for questions they may hear from the LORD.[150] Prophetic teaching is "consciousness-raising and advocacy."[151] Teaching on sin, maturity, and biblical personhood may need some retooling. Family ministries need to address some darker issues and employ the insights of survivors. But these ministries are not a substitute for counseling. Clearly, the pain of the sexually broken does not fit easily in the clichés of "suffering for gospel ministry." Have the wounded heard their leaders puzzle over horrendous evil and the cross? The abused can more meaningfully celebrate the victorious embodied resurrection of Christ when they can identify with the horrendous victimizing of the cross.

Healing the broken requires *enacted* as well as textual theology. Churches can contribute a sacramental salve to the lives of their wounded through meaningful rituals, ceremonies, prayers, and symbols; many churches already employ such things for the childless on Mother's Day.[152] Emphasizing the

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[146] 2 Samuel 13 presents a stunning lexical profile of sexual transgression: כן לא יעשה ("such a thing is not done," 2 Sam 13:12); נבלה ("outrage," 2 Sam 13:12); ענה ("debase," 2 Sam 13:12); שכב + החזיק ("to seize" + "to lie" [= force], 2 Sam 13: 14); שכב את ("to lie with" [את = illicit], 2 Sam 13:14; see Lipka, *Sexual Transgression* 248–54). Further, because the story is portrayed through Tamar's eyes, 2 Samuel 13 provides an insightful analysis of sexual trauma that includes: manipulation, force, violence, negation of the victim's will, emotional trauma, debilitating loss of sense of self, display of grief and mourning, crushing shame, degradation, and prolonged social isolation with desolation. Tamar's social and personal boundaries are clearly violated (ibid. 200–23).

[147] Volf, *End of Memory* 24–32.

[148] Ibid. 67.

[149] For a discussion of narcissism, see Hessel J. Zondag, "Unconditional Giving and Unconditional Taking: Empathy and Narcissism Among Pastors," *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 61 (2007) 85–97.

[150] To be silent on this topic is to neglect justice, and who is hurt more by silence, the victim or the victimizer? Consider Luke 17:3; Eph 5:11; and 1 Tim 5:20.

[151] Powell, *Theology of Christian Spirituality* 182. Powell also speaks of the church's role of prophetic witness in justice (pp. 174–82).

[152] See the insightful suggestions for healing rituals in James B. Gould, "Spiritual Healing of Disrupted Childhood," *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 60 (2006) 263–71, esp. 268–71; also Logan C. Jones, "The Psalms of Lament and the Transformation of Sorrow," *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 61 (2007) 47–58.

brokenness of the sacraments and the pain of Passion Week can be a healing foray for the abused when remembrance is opened up to include human suffering. Intentional enactments communicate the "living brokenness" back toward the community, on behalf of the wounded, and in offer to Christ, whose body was broken for us all. This speaks to the abused.

Between the slumber of inattention and the silence of indifference, the problem of sexual abuse has gone woefully unaddressed. Disturbing the arenas of deepest vulnerability, sexual abuse is comprehensively diminishing to personhood, relationships, and the creation design. Like other social ills before, it is going to take time for the image-conscious expectations of church and various ministries to engage these dark realities at the level of victims' needs. Then we shall build healing communities for our sexually broken out in the open light of acceptance where the warm comfort of wholeness and safety can overshadow the painful traditions of silence and "victory."[153]

[153] I want to thank some friends, who shall remain unnamed, for their empathetic reading and critique of this study. Though nameless to others, they have become more real to me as I have to them.