

## **Notes on Ch. 6: Human Being as Created and Sinful**

[This is just a **bare outline** of the chapter. Readers needed to be reminded that the whole of the Grammar originated in lecture notes and even now has an inevitably abbreviated character. I am continually confronted with the problematic of how to further condense notes to even fewer notes. It is always best to read the Grammar text as published.]

### **A. Orientation**

It is apparent in contemporary church life and theologizing that *who the human truly is* is as controversial as *who God is*.

This chapter basically focuses on Human being as created and as sinful.

Were we to raise the larger question of what a Christian Anthropology might look like, we would list the following diagnostic categories;

1. Human Being as Created Being: Creature, Person, Spirit
2. Human Being as Sinful Being
3. Human Being as Reconciled Being in Jesus Christ
4. Human Being as Redeemed Being in the Holy Spirit

But this chapter has only the following major topics:

1. Human Being as Created Being
2. Jesus Christ as the True Human Being
3. Human Being as Sinful Being

The basic question of this chapter is: what are the essential and constituent structures and powers of human being—as created by God and without which we would not have the actuality of human being—that Scripture, tradition, and contemporary learning suggest?

### **B. Human Being as Creaturely Being: Creature among Creatures [296-99]**

Human being, as creaturely being, is:

1. created by God the Creator.
2. distinct from and other than God.
3. finite being, existing under the limitations of space and time.
4. a physically embodied being, existing in spatial and temporal location; such bodiliness is essential to being known by others.
5. sexually differentiated into male and female; such bodily sexuality should be distinguished from the *gender roles* that are mostly constructed socially.
6. *living being*, basically distinguished from non-living creatures.
7. is a *center of activity*.
8. interdependent with other creatures, with the rest of the creation. Such creaturely interdependence is: a) microscopic interdependence; b) macroscopic interdependence; c) cosmic interdependence.
9. good and valuable to God.

### **C. Human Being as Personal Being: Person among Persons [300-322]**

1. Personal Being is Embodied Soul/Psyche

While there is a grammar in the Bible of human being as both soul and body, there is no sense of a soul that can be separated from the body and be immortal in its own right.

2. Personal Being is Relational and Social

Notice the distinction between a *relation* and a *relationship*. p.302

As *social*, personal being is always *co-humanity* or *co-personal*.

Personal being is always male and female in their distinction and in their inviolable togetherness.

Radical otherness and differentiation *and* mutual orientation one to the other.

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Persons necessarily stand within some human society/culture.

Note: such societies are, of structural necessity, established and maintained by their *constructed* shared discourses and practices.

3. Personal Being is Linguistic and Communicative

Human being requires language as a medium of its becoming, of its having a world, and its having any relationships, knowledge, emotions, intentional actions, and practices.

4. Personal Being is Epistemic

Refers herein to the multiple ways in which humans are *knowers*—have beliefs and convictions, make judgments about what is the case.

Endowed by God with the power and promise of knowing themselves and the world.

*Christianly understood, all knowing should finally aim at freeing humans from ignorance, falsehood, and sin.*

5. Personal Being is Emotive

Most emotions are aroused, sustained, and expressed by two different but interrelated dimensions of human intentionality: a) concerns, cares, interests, and passions; b) desires, erosic attractions.

It is the *human heart* that is comprised of these various emotive intentionalities.

[Read carefully as these concepts will emerge continually in our further work.]

6. Personal Being is Agential

‘Agential’ is an umbrella term referring to that dimension of personal being in which persons *will* something, make *decisions*, *choose* something, and *enact choices*—persons as *agents*.

See especially the discussion of *finite freedom*. pp. 315-17

Must take account of human agency/decisions/choices as always:

a) as enacted in finite and determinate circumstances, and

b) as often *encumbered* by i) a person’s capacity to construe possibilities as real-possibilities-for-me; and ii) the strength of a person’s willpower to choose and enact a possibility.

7. Personal Being is Vulnerable Being

*Vulnerable* here refers to the ways persons are subject to *being-acted-upon*.

See the six general forms of human vulnerability, which are inescapable for humans. 318

8. Personal Being is Dialogical

*Dialogical* here refers to how the capacities for being linguistic, epistemic, emotive, and agential are *conditioned* and *shaped* by dynamic *interaction* of persons with their social worlds.

In such dialogical interaction, we must recognize the importance of *significant other persons and other communities* in the formation of personal being by virtue of the *fact of being recognized and identified* and the *sort* of recognition and identity conferred.

Note especially the brief discussion of René Girard’s theory of *mimetic desire*. 319

9. Personal Being is Self-Determining

Personal being is an *irreducible subject* with some measure of *self-determination* in all *relationships*.

In the social worlds, the human person is an irreducible *I* in relationships to other persons who are irreducible *I*’s.

Yet, this irreducible *I* or subject is not properly characterized as *autonomous*, if we meant by this that any human is ever invulnerably self-determining.

10. Personal Being is Historical Becoming

All creaturely beings are in time and becoming; persons are unique in having the capacity to have a *relationship to their own becoming*.

This peculiar becoming-in-time of personal being we can call *historical becoming*.

Capacitated with both *memory*—relationship to the past— and *anticipation*—power to envisage future possibilities and assume attitudes toward them.

Persons are to an extent the *narrative or story they embrace, live, and enact, and thereby the narrative conveys and builds an identity and meaning for them*.

**D. Human Being as Spiritual Being: Spirit among Spirits [322-336]**

Personal being, as historical becoming in time, points toward human being as spiritual being—namely human being as created in the *image of God*.

1. Human Being as Constituted by the Spirit of God

Human being as spiritual being is an embodied person constituted by the Spirit of God for openness to God and to God's summons into relationship.

Can call this constituted openness to God the *endowment of the original grace of God*.

2. Spiritual Being is Summoned into Relationship with God

Summoned into obedient relationships with Godself through covenants of mutuality and promissory expectations.

Made accountable to God for the self-determined shape of her life.

Summoned into right relationships with other creatures and with other humans, summoned to moral existence.

3. Spiritual Being is Summoned into Communal Being

Primitively evident in the basic structure of *being-with-another* in the creation of male and female—in the midst of radical otherness there is to be radical togetherness.

Communal being is rooted in covenant, which is rooted in God's covenant.

Humans—as spirits constituted by the Spirit of God—are summoned to embrace the Kingdom of God as that inclusive and ultimate community of loving communion with God and among humans.

4. Spiritual Being is Summoned in Freedom to be Free

Being endowed by God's original grace for openness to God is itself a gift of freedom—to be that sort of creature that can live in self-determined relationships with God and other beings.

Such freedom is power, but power that can be forfeited if improperly used—which happens in the human plunge into sin, into disobedience.

5. Spiritual Being is Life in Destiny

Destiny here refers to the *end of human life*, wherein end is both *telos* or goal and *finis* or conclusion.

Destiny also includes the *route* or *process* by way of which the end of life is realized.

There are two distinct but perhaps interrelated realms of human life that fall under questions pertaining to destiny:

- i) *historic destiny*: the temporal, finite historical route of human becoming and perishing.
- ii) *ultimate destiny*: the ultimate goal and conclusion of human life.

There are three models of life and destiny that pivot around issues of *who* or *what powers are the real determiners of human destiny*:

- i) Model One: accepts that death is the *finis*/conclusion of life, and historic destiny is as such ultimate destiny; there are, then, two possible answers to the question of what powers are the real determiners of destiny:
  - a) human destiny is simply whatever happens to persons in their temporal life;
  - b) human destiny is a matter of *how* a person lives her life—cannot avoid positing some sort of dual destiny, some lives are authentic and others are inauthentic by considerations of criteria pertaining to the nature of the *how*.
- ii) Model Two: accepts that there is life beyond death, and temporal, historic life is the *testing ground* for achieving or earning life beyond death as a reward—basically human self-determination is the real determiner of ultimate destiny.

The most prominent view in church history, though is never quite clear just what sort of self-determination is sufficient to earn ultimate destiny.

Dual destiny under just deserts.
- iii) Model Three: does not accept that death is the *telos* and *finis* of all life, but does not conceive of the relation between historic destiny and ultimate destiny as exclusively a

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matter of human self-determination and therefore does not consider historic destiny as the testing ground for ultimate destiny.

This is the model of human destiny that will be developed throughout this text: the church and the Christian hope in the *triumph of God's grace as the Ultimate Companion of the human spirit*.

6. Spiritual Being is *Homo Religiosus*

A modest attempt to develop a concept of religion/religiousness within the parameters of understanding in the this theology of Spiritual Being.

7. Spiritual Being is Steward of the Creation

Human dominion over other creatures enjoins the human acceptance of responsibility for the care and integrity of the rest of creation in co-partnership with God.

Rejects the notion that dominion conveys on humans the right of total disposal of the other creatures and the whole world—which has been a common assumption of the discourses and practices of the church over many centuries.

Humans are not the owners of the creation—but they are the stewards who can make responsible decisions about the care and use of the creation.

8. Spiritual Being is the Image of God as Enacted Actuality

It is in its *enacted actuality*—its enactment of its creatureliness, its personhood, its spirituality—that humans are in the image of God.

Being in the image of God is both a *gracious endowment* and a *teleological task*—to find fulfillment in loving God, loving the neighbor, and being the loving steward of creatures.

The frenzied history of humanity, however, testifies to the repression, the renunciation, and the forsaking of this endowment and task—yet human beings on their own can never eradicate or destroy on their own their being in the image of God, however much they might *corrupt* the image and their created nature.

Yet God does not withdraw from humanity, but goes in search of human good in Israel and in the Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ is the one human who lives out the power of the endowment and fulfills the task of being and becoming the image of God.

**E. Jesus is the True Human Being [336-343]**

1. Jesus—as the true human being—is most fully what God intended in creating human beings.

*True* herein means *authentic* or *normative* human being.

Jesus' destiny—as enacted in his life, death, and resurrection—reveals human destiny before God.

Yet Jesus as *truly human* is not what would be meant by *perfect in all respects*—not the perfect carpenter nor the perfect knower of geography, etc.

2. Jesus lives for and Loves the Father

*Jesus receives and enacts his life, identity, and destiny through his relationship with his Father—the God of Israel and the motherly Creator of all things creaturely.*

[read this carefully]

3. Jesus Lives for and Loves Others

Jesus enacts love for other humans in their singularity and unity.

Jesus' love for the other does not depend on reciprocity or mutuality—is not love only for those who love him.

Jesus refuses to enact rivalry, enmity, hate, or violence toward others—he summons others to enact a radical love of the *enemy*.

The primary and defining goods of his life, and the goods he summons others to desire, do not deprive others of their proper goods before God.

4. Jesus is the Free Spirit

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Jesus is the singularly free embodied spirit, whose willing, choosing, and deciding is without the encumbrances of the principalities and powers of sin, nor encumbered by infelicities of disloyalty, of ambition, of selfish designs or inordinate fear.

Both as *freedom from* and *freedom for*, Jesus is the truly free human spirit who does not allow the powers of the force fields in which he lives to decide his identity and the meaning of his destiny.

5. Jesus Enacts the Kingdom of God

Jesus announces, brings, and enacts the kingdom of God as that communal reality that fulfills human life.

As the summons of peace with God and other humans, the kingdom is that communal being of love in which the various stations and locations of persons in the human social worlds does not dictate their eligibility for participation.

6. Jesus the Enacted Image of God—*homo theologicus*

As the true image of God, Jesus is also the true human being—in him, in the pattern of how he lived his life, male and female are created, reconciled, and redeemed.

The church claims that Jesus is the unsurpassable, historical enactment, fulfillment, and realization of the human essence in its destiny as created by God.

Jesus is the New Adam who overcomes the corruption of the primordial Adam's sin and who reconstitutes human being's destiny before God.

*It is of this particular Jewish person he was and enacted that we also say in our full christology that his life, death, and resurrection are the very life of God as well.*

**F. Preliminary Observations on Human Sin [343-45]**

The Xn doctrine of human sin is exceedingly difficult to state clearly, especially in the contemporary cultural context in which the word 'sin' has many differing uses and definitions.

It is as though the church must learn anew how to discern and think about sin theologically.

The concept of sin is easily confused with a variety of 'deficiencies', 'shortcomings', 'wrongs', 'evils', and 'inadequacies' that play indisputable roles in every human culture—these are the judgments about what is valuable and valueless, right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable in human behavior and in persons.

Such judgments, and the discourses and practices that embody and perpetuate such judgments, become the source of a *diffuse sense of guilt or shame* as a general human phenomenon.

See further discussions of 'junk guilt' and 'moral guilt', of *bourgeois common sense* that devolves into moral mediocrity, of *enlightenment self-confidence in reason* to make human life safe.

Unhappily as well have been the corruptions that occur when the word *salvation* develops in a grammar dependent on what *sin* means in these varying cultural contexts.

'Sin' and 'salvation' become slot markers awaiting assignment of meaning relative to how these questions are answered: *what are we saved from and to what are we saved?*

**G. Knowledge of Sin in Jesus Christ [345-52]**

1. Kierkegaard helps in making a distinction between a) consciousness of moral guilt and b) consciousness of sin.

Consciousness of sin has the dual awareness of a) one's violation of God's covenantal rule and b) of God's reconciling and healing forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

In short, the grammatical claim is that it is in God's revelation in Jesus Christ that sin comes most truly into view—when understood in grace and forgiveness—as that human condition that is judged, repudiated, and forgiven in Jesus' atoning and gracious life, death, and resurrection.

It is in the encounter with Jesus Christ that sin comes to light as to its *gravity, extent, and self-involvement, and its consequences, defeat, and destiny.*

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Hence, knowledge of or consciousness of sin truly understood is faith's knowledge and therefore is inextricably *confessional, self-involving, and existential knowledge*.

'I am' forgiven, therefore 'I am a sinner'!

*Nota bene*: it is certainly not the case that one first discovers *sin* in others and then comes to the conviction that oneself might be a sinner too.

2. Jesus Christ brings Sin to Light

*Jesus Christ brings to light that I have refused to be the creaturely, personal, and spiritual being I was created to be. In the passions, desires, and decisions of my life—in my heart—I have not wanted to be:*

- a) dependent upon the living Creator of all things;
- b) finite and vulnerable, subject to pain, suffering, and death;
- c) a creature in interdependence with other creatures;
- d) before God in covenant, to be God's co-partner;
- e) personally accountable to God for how I live and become in time, for my enacted actuality;
- f) responsible for and open to the other—to my brother and sister, my neighbor, the stranger, and the enemy;
- g) accountable and fully aware of the existence and destructive harm I inflict on others and on myself.

Jesus Christ brings to light how *uneager and fearful* I am of being the one for whom he lived and died, of being forgiven, of being in need of grace and seeing others as forgiven too.

Jesus Christ brings to light that I have violated and broken all the right relationships, intended in God's creating, with God, with myself, with the human others, and with the whole creation.

Jesus Christ brings to light the universality of God's grace and forgiveness and therefore the universality of sin.

Jesus Christ brings to light that in his life, death, and resurrection God takes upon Godself the ultimate burden of human sin and its consequences—cf. the Work of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ brings to light that we humans are both *doers of sin* and *victims of sin*—both sinners sinning and being sinned against—revealing just how deeply intertwining and consuming sin is in human social life.

Jesus Christ brings to light the perils of a doctrine of sin cut loose from or detached from the forgiveness of sin—when such detachment takes place, sin appears to humans as denunciation without relief, a debilitating shame that can induce a refusal to be-put-down, often irrupting into a Promethean self-assertion at the expense of others: 'I am better than...', 'I am as good as...', 'we are better than...'; or desperate declaration of self-esteem can become vulnerable to hiding from us that we deeply think we deserve all the bad things that happen to us.

**H. The Origin of Sin [352-56]**

1. In Christian grammar there does not seem to be any satisfactory answer to the questions: *why do humans sin? Or why do all humans sin?*

Jesus Christ brings out the fact and universality of sin, but the church has refused to say that sin is an ontological necessity rooted in human nature, or that there is another ontological agent [the Devil] who is the cause of sin.

2. What about Adam and 'Original Sin'?

In spite of Augustine and others, we must *reject* the notion that in the first man and woman—Adam and Eve—sin happened and from thenceforth became a *necessity* of human nature and life. And *reject* the notion that sin is peculiarly rooted in human sexuality and *sexual life* and handed on thereby.

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Rather the church confesses, in the light of Jesus Christ, that sin simply happens in the finite freedom of human persons—*sin is a surd, an inexplicable but permitted irrationality*; it is what God does not will and what should have never happened.

Perhaps Reinhold Niebuhr puts it about right: sin is not a necessity of human life, but it appears as an *inevitability*.

Cf. my invocation of mimetic desire as a primary way in which sinning gets ingressed and perpetuated in human life [354].

Cf. the discussion of human anxiety and sin in Kierkegaard. [355]

**I. Exploring the Multiple Shapes and Faces of Sin [356-61]**

1. The Augustinian Tradition [Augustine, R. Niebuhr, P. Tillich]

a) primary *unbelief*—the primordial turning away from God

b) *hubris or pride*—the primordial turning in upon oneself, becoming self-centered.

c) *concupiscence*—the primordial desire or lust for goods that cannot confer life and blessing.

2. Paul, Luther, and early Barth

The primacy of *works righteousness* as that attempt to bring life under one's own control, often evident in religious striving to find salvation in what one can control and thereby deserve.

3. Later Barth

a) *pride* as that striving to be lord over one's own life and thereby also the lord over the lives of others—rooted in a fundamental *ingratitude*.

b) *sloth* as that refusal to be finitely free, to relinquish the summons-to-be-spirit before God to the powers of others—that despair in the unwillingness to be a self. Cf. also Kierkegaard.

c) *falsehood* as that lying about oneself or ourselves, that self-deception about the truth.

4. Liberation theology and Systemic Sin

Without disagreeing with the previous views of sin, liberation theology in its multiple forms has emphasized *sin as the social systemic domination of a less powerful group by another more powerful group*.

Hence, *sexism*—domination of women by men; *racism*—domination of one race or ethnic group by another group; *classism*—domination of one economic class by another, especially of the poor by the rich; and such as *militarism, nationalism, ecological anthropocentrism, heterosexism*.

Salutary point: threw light on the various ways in which sin systemically infects human social relations, in which the *victims* of the dominating powers ingest within themselves the *identity* the powers infect within them—remember the dialogical character of human beings mentioned earlier and remember the concept of the principalities and powers, the force fields of power in human social worlds.

5. Some Feminist Concerns about the way in which the Augustinian tradition has emphasized pride in

such a way as to undermine over the centuries women's attempt to be assertive, to be *prideful*.

See also the ways in which *sloth* has been a resort forced upon women socially—the powerful will tell the woman who she is and what rights she has.

6. Grammatical Synopsis

Posit the primacy of sin as *unbelief*, but now unbelief understood not primarily as an intellectual denial of God but as a *practical refusal to believe in God, to trust God*, the practical investment of one's heart in that which is not God—a *practical and passionate atheism*, often under the cloak of pretended belief.

Such unbelief issues into the many forms of sin as *pride, concupiscence, sloth, and falsehood*.

These faces of sin are the roots of the systemic sins that afflict humans as doers of sin and as victims of sin—and these sins are transmitted by traditions of our social worlds, thus perpetuating sin as just *the way things simply are*.

**F. The Consequences of Sin and Jesus Christ [362-64]**

1. *Sin corrupts human nature—the human essence—but does not destroy that nature*, even though sin diminishes and thwarts the great potencies with which God endowed human beings.
  - a) sin corrupts, distorts, and fractures the being-in-act of human beings, whereby humans enact lives that are alienated from their own creaturely, personal and spiritual essence and nature.
  - b) sin corrupts the human heart and her personal linguistic, epistemic, emotive, and agential life, rendering her vulnerable to hardness of heart at the expense of her own true good—such corruption of the heart issues into entrenched habits that diminish and subvert human flourishing.
  - c) sin corrupts human social worlds and institutionalizes human fear, discord, enmity, and injustice—the great potencies and structures of human spiritual being are corrupted into instruments of pride, concupiscence, sloth, and falsehood, resulting in and perpetuating fear, mistrust, misery, oppression, *rivalry*, conflict and violence.
  - d) sin fuels the great power of the fear of death, whereby death is given the presumed finality and consuming judgment on human life—death becomes that destined end of life, the avoidance of which becomes the supreme and urgent goal of life individually and socially.
  - e) sin most drastically alienates persons and societies from the reality of the triune God, amidst their practical refusal to be God’s valuable creatures made in God’s image and thereby intend the eradication and death of God—God transformed into the Enemy, the Stranger, the Absent and Silent One, or even perhaps the ultimate Betrayer of the despairing and fearful—this is sin in its primal and practical reality as Unbelief.

In the depths of these consequences of sin, *the human will is profoundly encumbered and enslaved by and in sin, and therefore without the power to overcome the past of sin and the future threat of sin. Left to their own devices—in sinning and being sinned against—human destiny is alienation, conflict, and death.*

2. *Jesus Christ affects the Consequences of Sin*

- a) From the perspective of the self-communicating life of God in Jesus Christ, it is possible to understand that *sin seeks to enact what is finally impossible*—that human decisions, institutions, and social arrangements are the final arbiters of the meaning of human life and the ultimate conferers of human identity and destiny—*sin wills to be the ultimate determiner-of-destiny*. [refer back to the discussion of Spiritual Being as Life in Destiny and the various construals of the various agents who are the real determiners of destiny. 328-31]
- b) In Jesus’ death, God dies a human death at the hands of the principalities and powers of sin and therewith disarms them of their presumed power to crush, control, and determine human life before God—God takes the sins of the world upon and into God’s own Life.
- c) In his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ is established as the Lord of the world and its creational history and sin is defeated as that imperious lord and presumptuous determiner of human life and destiny.
- d) yet, sin—in its massive particularities of power and scope—may continue to dominate the individual and corporate *historic destinies* of persons but its power in history is limited and finally doomed.
- e) it is also apparent that the church in its witness to the world is, in the power of the Holy Spirit, a testimony to the seductions of sin and to sin’s ultimate defeat; yet in the absence of an authentic and courageous witness to the world of the ultimacy of God’s grace, those miscellaneous empirical groups called ‘religions’ and ‘churches’ repeatedly fall into heresies in their futile and misleading discourses and practices.
- f) hence we have the decisive reasons herein as to *why sin is not yet fully understood if it is not understood through Jesus Christ.*