

The Christian Moral Life: Directions for the Journey to Happiness

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The
CHRISTIAN
MORAL LIFE

Directions

FOR THE JOURNEY TO HAPPINESS



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JOHN RZIHA

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Directions for the Journey to Happiness

JOHN RZIHA

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

The books of the Bible are abbreviated as follows:

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis (Gn)	1 Maccabees (1 Mc)
Exodus (Ex)	2 Maccabees (2 Mc)
Leviticus (Lv)	Job (Jb)
Numbers (Nm)	Psalms (Ps)
Deuteronomy (Dt)	Proverbs (Prv)
Joshua (Jos)	Ecclesiastes (Eccl)
Judges (Jgs)	Song of Songs (Sg)
Ruth (Ru)	Wisdom (Wis)
1 Samuel (1 Sm)	Sirach (Sir)
2 Samuel (2 Sm)	Isaiah (Is)
1 Kings (1 Kgs)	Jeremiah (Jer)
2 Kings (2 Kgs)	Lamentations (Lam)
1 Chronicles (1 Chr)	Baruch (Bar)
2 Chronicles (2 Chr)	Ezekiel (Ez)
Ezra (Ezr)	Daniel (Dn)
Nehemiah (Neh)	Hosea (Hos)
Tobit (Tb)	Joel (Jl)
Judith (Jdt)	Amos (Am)
Esther (Est)	Obadiah (Ob)

Jonah (Jon)	Haggai (Hg)
Micah (Mi)	Zechariah (Zec)
Nahum (Na)	Malachi (Mal)
Habakkuk (Hb)	
Zephaniah (Zep)	

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew (Mt)	1 Timothy (1 Tm)
Mark (Mk)	2 Timothy (2 Tm)
Luke (Lk)	Titus (Ti)
John (Jn)	Philemon (Phlm)
Acts of the Apostles (Acts)	Hebrews (Heb)
Romans (Rom)	James (Jas)
1 Corinthians (1 Cor)	1 Peter (1 Pt)
2 Corinthians (2 Cor)	2 Peter (2 Pt)
Galatians (Gal)	1 John (1 Jn)
Ephesians (Eph)	2 John (2 Jn)
Philippians (Phil)	3 John (3 Jn)
Colossians (Col)	Jude (Jude)
1 Thessalonians (1 Thes)	Revelation (Rv)
2 Thessalonians (2 Thes)	

The following works from Thomas Aquinas are abbreviated throughout the text:

Summa Contra Gentiles SCG

Summa Theologiae ST

All translations of the Bible are from the *New American Bible* (Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1970).

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago I was asked to give a lecture on moral theology at a parish. As I prepared my speech, I assumed that my audience would believe that moral theology was all about laws one must follow in order to attain heaven and to avoid hell. Although I knew that these laws were important, I also knew that moral theology was so much more than laws. I was extremely excited to tell them that God was inviting all of them to be his friends for all eternity and that God wanted to share his own happiness with them. I wanted them to see how grace, virtue, wise mentors, and even laws worked together to help people attain this happiness. I did end up giving a lecture on the nature of true happiness to a receptive crowd of *five* people. Unfortunately, this was not the only time I spoke on moral theology to a relatively empty room. However, other lectures on more controversial or trendier theological issues often attracted much greater crowds. What I learned from these experiences is that many people either did not understand the subject matter of moral theology enough to want to come or they simply did not care.

I found the lack of knowledge and interest in the principles of moral theology to be particularly troubling, for the message of moral theology is one of the primary themes of the good news of Christ: we have a wise and loving God who wants us to be happy. Humans are created in such a way that they are fulfilled through loving relationships with God and other people, and the way to develop and cultivate these relationships has been revealed to us by Christ. Over the centuries, many great Christian thinkers, such as Augustine, Gregory the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Therese of Lisieux, and John Paul II, have contemplated the moral truths of the gospel and elucidated many concepts necessary for authentic happiness. This book seeks to build upon the

insights of these and many other great Christian thinkers to uncover the moral wisdom of Sacred Scripture and show people how to be truly happy, both in this life and the next.

In order to build upon these insights, a more precise definition of moral theology would be helpful. Since moral theology is a branch of theology, I will begin with the word “theology.” The word “theology” comes from the Greek words *theos* and *logos*. *Theos* is the word for “god.” The word *logos* does not easily translate into English; however, in this context it is sufficient to simply translate it as “the study of.” Theology is the “study of God.”

Within the Christian tradition, theology has been divided into a number of sub-disciplines. One way of categorizing these subdivisions is based on the belief that all things come forth from God and are created with a natural inclination to return to God by performing their proper actions. Hence, a distinction is made between dogmatic (or systematic) theology, which studies God and all that comes forth from God (such as creation and revelation), and moral theology, which studies how humans return to God by performing their proper action.¹ Thus, moral theology can be defined as “the study of how humans attain eternal happiness through loving union with God by performing their proper actions with the aid of God’s grace.”

To better understand the nature of moral theology, an analogy is helpful. A traditional biblical analogy that helps explain the moral life is that of the pilgrim who is journeying to God.² The response of humans to God is like a journey to eternal happiness. In order to embark on a journey, people must know three things: where they are, where they are going, and how to get there. For example, imagine that you are visiting a large zoo for the first time. You only have a limited amount of time, and you really want to see the pandas. Upon entering the zoo, you come upon a large map. Although you could first look for the panda exhibit, knowledge of its location will not help if you do not know where you are in the zoo. Before you can do anything else, you must first figure out where you are on the map. So you look for the red “X,” which says, “You are here.” Once you know where you are, you can find the location of the pandas in relation to your current location. Finally, you can begin to plan your route of how to reach the pandas and begin your journey. Without knowledge of where you are, where you are going, and how to get there, you could wander aimlessly for hours and perhaps never find your destination.

Moral theology, as our journey to God, requires knowledge of the same three truths as does navigating your way around the zoo. First, we must know where we are—we must determine what type of being we are as human persons. Furthermore, we must determine what type of actions we are created to perform. Second, we must know where we are going—we are seeking a loving friendship with God, who offers us eternal happiness. Third, we must know how to get there: by performing actions ordered to this divine goal with the aid of grace, law, and the virtues. Part I of this book will follow this format.

First, we will briefly analyze human nature. Because this is a theology book, humans will be studied in relation to God and within salvation history as revealed in scripture. I will begin by analyzing humans as created in the image of God before the effects of original sin took hold. Humans are created to perform the actions of knowing and loving that allow them to enter into loving relationships with God and others. Then we will analyze the effects of original sin and the effects of Christ's redemption to see where we begin on our journey to God.

Next, we'll look at the goal—eternal happiness with God. I will show that humans are only perfectly happy when they are united to God by performing their most perfect action: knowing and loving God as he is.

Finally, the bulk of the first part of the book will cover how we get from our current state to perfect happiness by covering the moral principles essential for attaining eternal happiness. First, a brief analysis of the Bible will help determine a proper moral methodology. Then, using many of the best insights within the Christian philosophical and theological tradition, we will construct a more systematic moral theology. Building upon the earlier insight that humans are made to enter into loving relationships with God and others, yet are incapable of doing this without the aid of others, we will demonstrate how natural and human law guides humans to perform their proper actions. Through repetition of these proper actions, humans can form good habits, called "virtues." Virtues perfect the ability of humans to know and love, allowing them to be naturally happy. However, humans do not just desire natural happiness, they desire eternal happiness. But eternal happiness is not an action in accord with human nature; hence, humans need to participate in divine nature through grace to attain eternal happiness. Grace gives humans the theological virtues that allow them to be guided by the divine law to perform divine actions. These divine actions help to perfect the infused cardinal virtues, which allow humans to have supernatural happiness on earth and ultimately attain eternal happiness in heaven.

Whereas the first part of this book studies moral theology in general, the second part looks at the individual virtues and laws. In this part we will analyze the virtues of faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude. Along with each virtue, the corresponding laws and gifts of the Holy Spirit will also be examined.

Although this is an introductory text for moral theology, the order of the subject matter assumes that the reader is seeking a deeper understanding of moral theology than can be found in a mere explication of obligations. For beginners, laws (especially the human laws of parents and teachers) cause them to perform good human actions that will, we hope, gradually develop into virtues. In this early stage of the moral life, the person is primarily concerned with following the law and avoiding sin and temptation. Thus, a moral theology that is focused on beginners is primarily concerned with explaining in detail the law and how to avoid sin. For example, in the case of young children, parents may proclaim the law that their children are not to fight. Only after many times of choosing not to fight will the child finally obtain the

virtue of promptly and joyfully avoiding fighting without being asked (or threatened). As people grow in virtue and seek a more profound understanding of morality, they no longer need the law to constantly guide and motivate them, nor are they plagued constantly with temptation. Hence, they can instead focus on growing in virtue. The law is still necessary, but with their growing virtues of faith, understanding, and prudence, people can determine the law through their reason enlightened by grace, and they are now motivated by their love and proper emotional desire. Consequently, although I recognize the clear importance of the law in the moral life, this book focuses primarily on helping the reader understand how to grow in virtue and treats the law as an aid for this growth.

This text is not meant to be a summary of all the contemporary debates and discussions in moral theology. Rather, it presents a traditional Christian anthropology and moral theology rooted in scripture and developed by the Thomistic tradition, with insights from recent papal writings (especially those by Leo XIII, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI) and further insights from spiritual guides such as St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Consequently, in order to present a more concise moral guide, I will not cover some contemporary discussions within the Catholic tradition that would distract from the overall scheme of the book. Study questions for this book can be obtained by contacting John Rziha at jrziha@benedictine.edu.

Part I

MORAL THEOLOGY IN GENERAL

This first part of the book will study moral theology in general by explaining the various components of moral theology and showing how they all relate to each other. The organizing principle will be the analogy of a journey to God. In the journey to God, travelers must know the beginning point (human nature), where they are going (to share in God's eternal happiness), and how to get there (by entering into a loving relationship with God). Chapters 1 and 2 will study human nature and the natural inclinations that proceed from it. Chapter 3 will study the end of the journey: happiness, and especially the perfect happiness found in God. Chapter 4 will further examine the Bible to help determine the way to proceed on our journey. The important roles of good actions, grace, laws, virtues, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit can be found in the Bible. These foundational concepts for the moral life will be covered in chapters 5 through 9. Chapter 10 will examine the impediments to this journey: sin, temptation, and vice. Chapter 11 will cover how all of these components fit together and discuss the proper meaning of freedom.

1

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Imagine that a family in a remote part of the world received a coffeemaker for a gift in the mail. They had never used a coffeemaker before or had ever seen one used, and, unfortunately, the instructions were lost in the shipping process. After only a little inspection they conclude that it is made to do something. But what is it made to do? And how do they get it to do this? Because they have no Internet access and cannot ask someone else for instructions, they must determine the purpose of this unfamiliar machine by their own investigation. They begin by examining the strange contraption. They look at all its parts and how they fit together. After a thorough analysis, they determine that the machine must heat some type of liquid, cause the liquid to absorb something for flavor, and then pour the flavored liquid into a pot. When they receive coffee beans and a grinder in the mail the next day, they are able to understand the function well enough that after a few tries they succeed in making coffee. Before they were able to figure out how to make coffee, they first had to examine the coffee-maker itself. In other words, to determine the function of the machine, they first studied its nature.

The analogy of the coffeemaker helps identify the starting point for moral theology. When intelligent beings make something, they make it for a purpose; they make it to do something. For example, the manufacturers of the coffeemaker construct it to make coffee. Because God is an intelligent being, he makes humans for a purpose, to do a particular type of action. Chapter 3 will explain how when humans fulfill their purpose, they are happy, but at this point it is sufficient to see that humans are made to perform certain types of actions. Just as the nature of the coffeemaker was examined to determine its purpose, human nature must be examined in order to determine the

purpose of humans (i.e., their proper actions). On a primarily physiological level, in medical school students study the human body in order to determine how it works. However, humans are made to do more than just be physically healthy. They are also made to perform the spiritual actions of knowing and loving. Consequently, we will study the whole person—composed of both a body and a soul. This analysis will give us our starting point in our journey to happiness.

In the coffeemaker analogy, there are two ways to determine its function. One way is to look at the nature of the parts and how they fit together (which is what they did). The other way is to look at the instruction manual (which in the example was lost). When determining the purpose of humans, the philosopher “looks at the nature of the parts,” but the theologian has the “instruction manual” (from divine revelation) given by the “manufacturer,” namely, God.¹ Often, when people have to use a complicated machine or assemble something they buy, they both look at how the parts fit together and use the instruction manual. For example, if a bicycle is purchased with “some assembly required,” one might need to look at how the parts fit together and also at the printed instructions in order to assemble it. Since the moral life can be complicated, a proper understanding of it involves studying both what can be known through philosophy (reason) and also what can be known from theology (divine revelation). Since this is a book on moral theology, the first focus will be on what is found in the Bible (divine revelation), and then some of the best insights of philosophy will be gathered to help explain these biblical truths. Since this chapter seeks to understand the starting point of moral theology—the nature of humans—a good place to start is with the creation stories found in Genesis 1 and 2.

These stories in Genesis 1 and 2 seek to answer some of the most fundamental questions asked by all human cultures: Where do we come from? What is our purpose? In other words, what does it mean to be human? The first story shows that humans, like all creation, come from God and have been wonderfully created. However, unlike the rest of creation, only humans are proclaimed to be created in the image of God (Gn 1:26–27). Hence, to understand how humans are unique and what they are made to do, we will investigate what it means to be “in the image of God.” By analyzing this notion as interpreted within the Christian tradition, a robust answer to the question “What does it mean to be human?” can be found. Since in order to understand an image something must be known about the original, we will first briefly speak about some pertinent attributes of God, and then show how these divine attributes help us to understand what it means to be human.

GOD: THREE PERSONS IN ONE DIVINE NATURE

I once heard a story about Marco Polo’s father and uncle presenting a crucifix as a gift to Kublai Khan upon first meeting him. Without an understanding of the Christian religion, Kublai Khan was extremely puzzled as to the significance of a dead man

nailed to a cross. He simply could not understand why anyone would want to own a statue or a picture of someone being gruesomely executed. A crucifix is an example of an *image* of an actual event. However, unless someone knows the story of God sending his Son into the world to die so that humans can be saved, it can be difficult to understand what the crucifix means. Once someone knows this story, the crucifix becomes an image of the love that God has for all humans and an invitation to enter into a loving friendship with him. The story about the actual event helps us to properly understand the image. Likewise, to better understand what it means to be in the image of God, it is worthwhile to study God, even if briefly.

In the Old Testament, the Lord reveals that there is only one God (e.g., Dt 6:4). However, the New Testament proclaims that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, yet there is only one God. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church Fathers decreed that the one God is a trinity. They explained that God is *three persons in one divine nature*.² To better understand this statement, the terms “nature” and “person” need to be defined. Nature is what something is, and it determines the type of actions that something can do. For example, human nature gives people the ability to perform actions such as reading, writing, and laughing. Although dog nature does not give dogs these abilities, it does give them the ability to do other things, such as finding objects with their acute sense of smell.

Whereas nature is what something is, a person is *who someone* is. Persons are knowing and loving subjects who are *agents* of actions. In other words, although nature determines what types of actions something can do, it is a person who actually does them. For example, Kate (the person) reads a book (an action flowing from human nature). Thus, in reference to God, the divine nature determines the type of action that God does, while the individual persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit actually perform the action. (However, because God is pure act and each of the persons is the fullness of the divine nature, it is more proper to say that each of the persons is the divine action.)

THE DIVINE NATURE

To properly understand how humans are in the image of God, we will examine both the divine nature and the divine persons. The divine nature will be examined first. The divine nature can be described as one infinite act of being. In explaining this description, I will begin by explaining the notion that God is *pure act*. Unlike God, created beings are not pure act; rather, they are a combination of *potency and act*. Potency (or potential) refers to the power that a created being has to act. This power comes from the being’s nature (since nature determines the type of actions something can do). Although potency determines the type of actions something can do, it is not yet an action. For example, all humans are in potency to numerous different actions that they have not yet performed. As they perform more and more actions flowing from human

nature, their potency turns into action. As they fulfill their potency by performing more and more good actions, they are perfected. For example, St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) was more perfect than most other people because she fulfilled her potency by performing the actions of loving God and others. However, God, by his very nature, is and always has been perfect; hence, he cannot move from potency to act. Rather, he is pure act, and he has no potency.³ In other words, since things are perfect to the extent they perform their proper actions, God, who is the fullness of perfection, is also purely action. Unlike created beings, which are perfected when they perform their proper actions, God's very nature is action.

Because God is pure act, he is also infinite. Something is infinite if it is unlimited. When something performs an action, on the one hand, its potency gives it the ability to perform the action, but, on the other hand, its potency limits the greatness of the action. For example, dogs by nature have the potency to do actions greater than those of trees but not as great as those of humans. Dogs can do wonderful actions, such as showing great devotion to their owners, but they cannot perform actions such as writing books or solving complex algebra problems. Angels have a much greater potency, but even their nature ultimately limits their actions. Consequently, they cannot perform actions such as creating things from nothing and knowing everything. Only God is not a combination of act and potency; rather he is unlimited action itself and is thus infinite.

But what does this infinite action consist of? It consists of all pure perfections that exist or even could exist. Because human knowledge is so limited, we cannot know all the different perfections in God, but we can know about some of them because these perfections are found in a limited fashion in creation. Whenever you have a cause and an effect, the effect is always in some way like its cause. For example, children are always in some way like their parents. I have many children, and frequently when my wife was pregnant, we would be asked, "What are you having?" I could always say with certainty that we were having a baby human. Not only could I say with certainty that we were having a baby human, if I knew the genetic structure of my wife and me, I could narrow down the possible traits that my child would have. This ability to predict the nature and certain characteristics of a child is possible because of the assumed principle that an effect is in some way like its cause.⁴ Thus, if there are perfections in creation, these perfections must also exist in God, but in an unlimited manner since God is pure act. For example, if love exists in creation, then God must be a pure act of love. If order exists in creation, then God must be the wisdom that causes this order. The same goes for truth, power, life, happiness, and any other perfection that can be found in creation.

Rather than enumerating all the perfections that are found in God, these perfections can be summed up in the term "being." The word "being" comes from the verb "to be" and refers to the act of existing in a particular mode. In other words, my being refers to my act of existing as a human and all the additional acts (and perfections) that I have attained. For example, Teresa of Calcutta is not only a human *being* but also a

being who knows and loves God.⁵ Since God exists as an infinite action, his mode of being refers to all that *is*. Thus, when God tells Moses his name in Exodus 3:14, he says that he should be called “I AM.” Unlike all created things, which have certain perfections in accord with their nature, God IS. God is all perfections. It is proper to say that “I have love” or “I have being,” but God *is* love, and God *is* being.

If God is an infinite act of being, then by necessity there can only be one God, for there can only be one infinite act of being. A circle can be used as an analogy. Imagine that there is a circle that contains all that exists and all that could exist. Since it contains all that could exist, it would have to be infinite (which would technically make it no longer a circle, but no analogy is perfect). Any other finite circle that I draw would have to be inside this infinite circle since the infinite circle contains all that exists. Even if there was another infinite circle, it would have to be identical to the infinite circle that I already had, for both would contain all that is (in this sense the analogy also prefigures the Trinity, where three persons are one). Hence, there can only be one infinite act of being, for all other acts of being are part of this one infinite act. Thus, there can only be one God. So, although there appear to be many different acts in God, they are really all different aspects of the one eternal act of being. Consequently, God’s nature can be described as one infinite act of being (i.e., truth, love, power, or any other perfection).

THREE PERSONS IN ONE GOD

Although the above description of divine nature is drawn primarily from the Christian theological and philosophical tradition, one does not need to be a Christian to recognize that God is one infinite act of being. What is distinct about Christianity is the belief that this one God is three persons. The divine Son became human in order to reveal this truth to us. This truth is the most foundational tenet of the Christian faith—the truth that all other mysteries of the faith build upon.⁶ God revealed this fundamental truth to humanity for the sake of our own happiness and fulfillment. Hence, studying how humans are in the image of the Trinity illuminates the types of actions humans are made to perform in order for them to ultimately be happy.

At the same time that God is one infinite act, God is also three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A person is a subject, the one that performs an action; it is *who* someone is. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is *who* God is. Persons exist within a particular nature. For example, there are billions of different human persons that all share in human nature. However, the way that humans are part of human nature is very different from the way that the divine persons are divine nature. Unlike humans, where each person is a part of human nature, each of the divine persons is the fullness of the divine nature. Since God’s divine nature is one infinite act of being, the three persons are fully one infinite act of being. In other words, all three have the same infinite knowledge. All three have the same love, the same life, the same power, and so on.

If all three are alike in all of these ways, how are they distinct? Why are they not the same person? They are distinct based upon their relations.⁷ The Father is distinct from the Son because the Father begets the Son. The Father and Son are distinct from the Holy Spirit because they breathe forth the Holy Spirit.⁸ Before I give a detailed explanation of how they are distinct based upon their relations, an analogy is helpful to better understand how they are one but distinct. A famous analogy for the Trinity is the shamrock. There are three leaves, yet one shamrock. However, this analogy is not particularly helpful, for each of the leaves is only part of the shamrock, but each divine person is the fullness of God. Any material analogy like the shamrock will not really help explain the interior actuality of the Trinity, since it compares each divine person to a part of something, and each divine person is the fullness of the divine being. Thus, in order to find a good analogy, it is necessary to look for a spiritual analogy.⁹

One place that a spiritual analogy can be found is within loving, human relationships. These relationships contain a spiritual union that is based on knowledge and love. Imagine that Joe and Kate are united in a loving relationship. Their knowledge of each other begins when Joe and Kate acquire sense knowledge of each other. Joe sees that Kate is beautiful, and Kate is intrigued by Joe. They seek to get to know each other better by spending time together. By observing and listening to each other they begin to know each other.¹⁰

However, in a good relationship, the knowledge of the other person is not just shallow sense knowledge; rather, it is knowledge extending to the very depths of the other's soul. Although the soul cannot be directly sensed, the actions that stem from it reveal some of its inner contents. Hence, by observing each other's actions, Joe and Kate are able to reason to some knowledge of each other's souls. For example, by observing the way Joe interacts with children, Kate is able to determine whether he has the qualities of a good father. Likewise, by seeing how Kate interacts with her friends, Joe is able to determine that Kate is faithful to others. As Joe and Kate spend time together, they are able to observe many actions, and their knowledge of each other grows from sense knowledge to intellectual knowledge. Each person's sense knowledge of the other is united to intellectual concepts, such as "good," "faithful," "responsible," "joyful." Over time they begin to know the very depths of each other's souls.¹¹ They know each other's deepest goals, desires, sufferings, joys, strengths, weaknesses.

When humans know something, generally the knowledge is caused by something outside of them. This knowledge comes *into* their mind through their bodies (the senses). Furthermore, concepts within the mind are considered true when what is in the mind corresponds to reality (generally what is outside of them). For example, suppose Joe observes Kate easily understanding complex theories of quantum physics. Joe quickly reasons to the conclusion that Kate is intelligent. The knowledge that she is intelligent comes into Joe from the outside. And, if she actually is intelligent, then Joe's knowledge is true. The concepts in Joe's mind are both caused by reality and judged to be true by this reality. In reference to Joe and Kate's growing relationship,

both Joe and Kate now have an elaborate concept of the other in their minds—one could even say that in a spiritual way Joe is in Kate's mind, and vice versa.

Knowing someone is just the beginning of the relationship. When humans know something as good, they begin to love it.¹² For example, when Joe begins to know Kate as someone good, he begins to love Kate. Knowledge comes into a person, but love goes *out* and attaches to whatever one loves. This attachment is generally seen in cases of loving other humans; however, it can also be seen in loving other things. For example, many people are attached to their coffee, or their favorite sports team, or their pet. Although this attachment can be physical (as for those who drink coffee), the attachment is primarily a spiritual unity. Among persons, this unity takes place because love causes one person to make the needs, goals, sufferings, and joys of the other person one's own. For example, if Joe knows that Kate has the goal of doing well in biology class, he also now has the goal of Kate doing well, and because of his love he will do whatever he can to help her attain her goal. What was in Kate's soul (her goal) is now also in Joe's soul. The goal is transformed from *her* goal into *their* goal. Because of his love for Kate, Kate has become Joe's other self, and vice versa.¹³ They now share the same goals, sufferings, and joys and are spiritually united.¹⁴ This principle that knowledge causes love that causes unity will come up many more times within the course of this book.¹⁵ It is another way of expressing the biblical exhortation of St. Paul: "Be of one mind and heart."¹⁶

Having shown the development of the human relationship, the analogy can be applied to the Trinity. Imagine that Joe and Kate are married and are spiritually united to the point that they both have the same goal of helping each other, their children, and others get to heaven. You could now say that they share a single action. Although they are both performing the same action, each performs the action in his or her appropriate way based on the relation between the two. They are related to each other as husband to wife, and within this one action, one person acts as a husband, the other acts as a wife. Thus, like in the Trinity, Joe and Kate are persons who are united and are performing a single action. However, unlike the Trinity, the acts of humans are not the fullness of who they are, and hence there is never a complete unity between humans.¹⁷ But imagine if we removed the bodies of Joe and Kate and looked at the overlap of their souls (the spiritual union between them). Their souls contain their knowledge, love, goals, joys, and so on. Hence, to the extent that their love makes the other's characteristics common to both of them (i.e., they share the same knowledge, love, goals, joys), their souls would be united. Of course, even for humans who know and love each other a great deal, there are many things in their souls that are not shared, because of their finite nature.

Continuing this imaginative exercise, suppose the souls of three persons contained infinite knowledge and love, and these acts of knowledge and love are the fullness of who they are. These souls would contain the same knowledge and love and would be numerically one (because there can only be one infinite act). Yet, the persons

would still be distinct based on their relations, just as Joe and Kate are distinct. In other words, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one infinite act of being, but they are three distinct persons. There are certainly deficiencies to this analogy, but it is helpful in emphasizing that God is one perfect act of knowledge and love, yet three distinct persons.

To further understand what makes the three divine persons distinct, it is necessary to look deeper into the eternal act of God. To be Trinity is of the nature of God.¹⁸ In other words, within the one act of God is the act of the Father begetting the Son, and the Father and Son breathing forth the Holy Spirit. To “beget” is literally to “give birth.” However, the term is traditionally applied to fathers begetting sons. For example, Abraham begat Isaac.¹⁹ Unlike in humans where a child is born and then the action is over, God is pure act, so the Father is eternally generating the Son. Another way of saying this is that the Father is eternally giving the divine nature to the Son. Since each person is the fullness of the divine nature, the Father is eternally giving all that he is to the Son. Likewise, the Son is eternally receiving the divine nature of the Father. The same can be said in reference to the Holy Spirit, who is eternally receiving the fullness of the divinity from the Father and the Son. Inasmuch as the Father begets the Son, he is distinct from the Son.²⁰ Likewise, the Father and Son are distinct from the Holy Spirit as the source of the Holy Spirit. In other words, through the act of giving and receiving the divine nature, the individual persons are distinct from each other. For it is from these acts of giving and receiving that they are related to each other as Father to Son and Father and Son to Spirit, and their distinction as persons comes from their relation to each other. The three persons in the Trinity are one infinite act of love, and they are distinct from each other because of their giving or receiving of the divine nature (depending upon the person).

CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Just as in God there are three persons who are perfectly united, humans are made to be united through knowing and loving each other. Furthermore, because the persons in God are distinct based on their relations, humans do not lose their individuality by being united to others through loving relationships, rather, they discover their true identity. As the three persons are made distinct through a complete giving and reception of the fullness of the divinity, humans also discover their true self by completely giving and receiving others in loving relationships. As the Second Vatican Council states, “Man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere gift of self.”²¹ Like the Trinity, we define who we are by a sincere gift of self. In other words, *because God is a loving relationship, and we are made in His image, we are fulfilled by loving relationships.*

This notion that humans are made to be fulfilled by loving relationships with God and others can be expanded upon by looking more deeply into what it means to be in the image of God. Just as God is three persons that are one loving community, humans are in the image of God both as individual persons and as a community.

IN GOD'S IMAGE AS PERSONS

As persons, humans are in the image of God because they are created to know and love God and others. An image is a copy of the original. Since all things are in some way like their cause, all things in creation are in some way a copy of the original. By looking throughout creation, we see all things are like God in that they have being. In other words, they exist in their own particular way. Even things like soil and rivers are like God by participating in his being.²² Some things are even more like God in that they have both being and life (they are living beings). Plants are examples of living beings. Some things have being, life, sense knowledge, and emotions (e.g., animals). However, humans are especially like God in that they have being, life, sense knowledge, emotions, intellectual knowledge, and love. Intellectual knowledge gives them the ability to know and love God and others. Thus, the way that humans are distinctively in the image of God is through their ability to know and love God and others.

Just as each of the members of the Trinity eternally gives the fullness of the divine nature and/or receives the fullness of other members of the Trinity, humans are likewise made to give of themselves to others by knowing the needs, goals, and sufferings of others and lovingly making these their own. By making the needs of others their own, humans give of themselves to others. The Apostle Paul confirms this when he exhorts the Philippians to be of the same mind and love, "united in heart, thinking one thing . . . each looking out not for his own interests, but everyone for those of others." Paul then gives the actions of Christ as an example of someone who made the needs of humans his own: "Who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather he emptied himself . . . coming in human likeness" (Phil 2:2–6). In other words, humans have a desire to share in God's love and happiness but are unable to attain this goal on their own. Hence, God manifests his love for us by sending his Son to become human, die for us, and become exalted, so that we can share in his love and happiness. Humans are fulfilled when they follow this example by entering into loving relationships with others through a giving of themselves.

By entering into these loving relationships with others, humans discover their true identity. Every human has a unique role in bringing God's plan for the fulfillment of the universe to perfection, and each discovers this role by entering into loving relationships with others. Although the way that humans love others will vary based on their distinctive roles, every human shares in God's plan by loving others. Hence, just as the members of the Trinity are made distinct through their relation to the other members, the personal identity of humans is found in relationships.²³ For example, if I am going to describe who I am as a person (not just that my nature is human), all of the most important elements of my description will refer to the relationships I have with others. I am first of all a child of God; second, a husband of my wife; third, a father of my

children; fourth, a teacher of my students—these and other loving relationships describe who I am as a person.²⁴

Another aspect of being made in the image of God as persons is that humans are free. Unlike the animals, humans have the ability to know and love. This ability to know and love gives them freedom. More precisely, humans are able to freely choose something because they can know an end (goal), know at least one way of attaining this end, and out of love for the end they can choose a way of attaining it. For example, Joe has the goal of attending a good college and has learned about many different options. Based on his love for one of these colleges, he freely chooses to attend it. His freedom is based on both his knowledge and love but especially his knowledge. If Joe does not know what a good college is, he cannot freely choose it. (He could accidentally choose it, but then it would not really be a free choice.) Likewise, if Joe does not know his options, he is also not able to choose one of them. Finally, if Joe does not love the idea of going to college and the options presented to him, he will also not choose them. Because freedom comes from our ability to know and love, which is received from God, true freedom to govern oneself and the rest of creation will be in accord with God's divine plan.

Because humans are in the image of God, they are created with the ability to know and love God and others. However, this ability must be perfected by God's aid and the development of virtues. The image of God is especially perfected in people when they are able to know and love God as he is in heaven. Much of the rest of this book explains how the image of God is perfected within us.

CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE AS A COMMUNITY

Not only are humans in God's image as persons, but they are also in God's image as a community. Just as God is three persons who are united, humans are made to be united within loving relationships. Humans are social by nature and can only properly develop within a community. The second creation story in Genesis 2 explains this truth by noting that Adam was incomplete until the creation of Eve. Once Eve is created, Adam is fulfilled, for he has now found a suitable partner. The passage then notes, "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body."²⁵ Because humans are made to be one with God and others, the goal of human life is unity with God (which includes unity with all others united to God). This goal will be explained more completely in chapter 3 of this book.

The means of attaining this unity with others has already been explained. Humans are united to others when they know and love them. Knowledge causes love, which causes unity. The same applies to our union with God. By getting to know God and his goals for each individual, humans can make God's goals their own and participate in the one infinite action of God.

HUMANS WERE CREATED BODY AND SOUL

The ability to know and love God and others is what makes humans distinct from the rest of creation (not including the angels). However, humans are like the rest of creation in that they also share in God's life and being as bodily creatures. A proper understanding of what it means to be human must include an analysis of humans as body and soul. Thus, to fully understand human nature, a deeper investigation of the soul and the body and how they are related is necessary.

Sometimes in popular movies the body is seen as simply a storage container for the soul; whereas the soul is the real you. This "storage container" can be completely changed without actually affecting your soul.²⁶ For example, in the 1959 Disney movie *The Shaggy Dog*, Wilby Daniel's body is replaced with the body of a sheepdog. Despite having the body of a sheepdog, Wilby is able to continue to think and act in the same manner as before his transformation. Although it can seem like one's particular body is not essential to personal identity, in reality, the body is an essential part of one's identity. The body and soul are so closely united that a particular soul is only suited to a particular body and vice versa. In other words, if it were possible to replace a human body with that of a dog, the soul would not be able to function as a human at all. This close union between the body and the soul has traditionally been explained using the philosophical terms "form" and "matter." The soul is considered to be the form, the body the matter.²⁷ A brief explanation of the terms "form" and "matter" can help illuminate what it means to say that "the soul gives form to the body (the matter)."

The philosophical terms of "form" and "matter" have been useful in explaining the nature of reality since the time of Aristotle. Aristotle believed that things are a composite of form and matter. The matter referred to the material that something contained; the form referred to the way that the material was organized. Since matter is interchangeable, the form determines the nature of the entity (i.e., what the thing is). For example, suppose a tree dies and is eaten by termites. Inasmuch as the termites take on the matter of the tree, both the tree and the termites contain the same matter, yet the way the matter is arranged varies between the two. If the matter is arranged in the form of a tree, then the object is a tree; if the matter is arranged in the form of a termite, then the object is a termite. In both cases, the existing thing is a combination of form and matter. So also with the body and soul, since the soul is the form of the body, it uniquely organizes the matter of the body and causes one to be a human. A particular human soul always organizes the matter into a particular human body.

Furthermore, since the form determines the nature of the thing and the nature determines what type of actions something can do, the form also determines the type of actions something can perform. For example, the form of an oak tree gives it the ability to grow in its proper way and produce acorns. So also, the human soul gives the body life, the ability to have emotions and sense knowledge, and the soul

works through the body in knowing and loving. Calling the soul the form of the body emphasizes the intrinsic unity of the body and soul. However, as long as this unity is acknowledged, the soul and body can be examined separately for a more detailed understanding of human nature.

THE SOUL

The soul is the spiritual element within humans. Because it works through the body in all that it does, it is the first cause of all human actions. The capacities within the soul to cause actions are called “powers.” Although there are numerous powers within the soul, the three most pertinent to human actions are the *intellect*, the *will*, and the *emotions*.²⁸ The *intellect gives humans the ability to know the truth*, the *will gives us the ability to love and choose things*, and the *emotions give us the ability to desire the bodily good*. Because these powers are within the soul, an understanding of them will require that humans reflect on the sources of their own actions within their soul. Therefore, before explaining these powers in greater detail, let me give an example manifesting all three powers in an action.

Imagine that Joe, like many other college students, has a great deal of trouble waking up early. However, Joe has an 8:00 a.m. class. Before going to bed (at 2:00 a.m.) the night before class, Joe sets his alarm for 7:15 a.m. By the power of his intellect, Joe knows the truth. The truth is that he needs to attend class to get good grades in order to graduate so he can get a job and support a family. He further knows that he needs forty-five minutes to get ready and get to class on time. However, when his alarm goes off at 7:15 a.m., Joe does not *emotionally* want to get up. Humans have emotions to keep the body alive. Hence, we emotionally desire things that are generally good for the body and dislike things that are bad. For example, humans emotionally desire things like food, drink, shelter, and companionship. Because sleep is necessary for the functioning of the body, humans emotionally desire sleep. However, the emotions are not rational (unless they are trained) and, hence, only desire the bodily good in general. What is good for the body in general is not always good for the body in a particular situation. For example, drinking water is good for the body in general, and the proper emotional response to dehydration is to desire to drink water. However, if someone was stranded on a boat in the ocean with no fresh water, the emotional desire to drink ocean water would go against what the intellect knows to be best. To return to our example of Joe, because Joe has a body, and in general it is good for Joe to get adequate sleep, his emotions desire to stay in bed even though his intellect knows he should get up.

There is now a conflict in Joe’s soul. He knows that he should get up for class, but he really wants to stay in bed. To solve this conflict, the role of the will must be taken into consideration. The will loves the good and always chooses based upon what it loves the most. This might seem to be an easy decision. Surely, Joe loves sleep more

than class. However, recall that Joe knows he must attend class to graduate and eventually get a job to support a family. Hence, the real choice is between the good of getting a job to support a family and the good of more sleep. Of course, the decision can become much more complicated. For example, the emotions can influence the intellect to think that maybe missing one class will not be so bad or to think that maybe Joe can sleep another thirty minutes and still make it to class. However, the example sufficiently shows that the intellect, the will, and the emotions are all involved in human actions by their respective powers to know the truth, love the good, and seek the bodily good.

A good way to further explain the different powers of the soul is by looking at their *natural inclinations*. A *natural inclination* is an interior drive that a being has to perform its proper action. Because God made everything for a purpose, all things have a natural propensity to do certain things. For example, spiders have a natural inclination to spin webs. Humans are made by God to attain unity with God and others based on knowledge and love. Therefore, humans have a natural inclination to these loving relationships and the natural inclinations to all things that are necessary to attain these relationships. To attain these loving relationships, all the powers of the soul must function properly. For example, the intellect must know God and other people. The will must love God and other people, and the emotions must aid the intellect and will in performing these actions. Because the proper functioning of these powers is essential to form a loving relationship with God and others, each of the powers of the soul is naturally inclined to a particular action.²⁹

The intellect is naturally inclined to know the truth. By the power of the intellect humans can know much about the world, intimately know others, and even know God in a limited manner. The human intellect is not powerful enough to immediately know things (like God does), rather, humans must gradually learn about the world by means of sense knowledge. Although intellectual knowledge begins with sense knowledge, because the intellect can reason and understand abstract concepts, it can understand spiritual things (that cannot be sensed) and material things. Furthermore, once the intellect knows the needs and goals of others, it can determine what actions illustrate love of other people. Likewise, it can determine which actions can be done out of love of God and how to perform these actions.

Intellectual knowledge is not the same as sense knowledge. In general, sense knowledge refers to knowledge of particular material things; intellectual knowledge refers to knowledge of universals (abstract or general knowledge of things).³⁰ For example, a toddler, who is still learning about trees, might only have sense knowledge of a particular tree. An adult, who understands what trees are in general, would have intellectual knowledge of trees (and also have sense knowledge of particular trees). Since the adult has intellectual knowledge of a tree (or the general concept of a tree), she can identify any particular tree as being a tree. Although sense knowledge is generally of particular material things that can be sensed, it is much more than just sense data.³¹ It might be described as already-interpreted sense data. For example, sense

knowledge of a friend can include the sense data contained in many different experiences. This sense knowledge could be thought of as an “image,” but an image that also includes sense data from hearing, seeing, touching, and smelling. Sense knowledge also includes images that are imagined and those of past memories. Although a distinction is made between sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge, humans use both simultaneously when they think.³² Hence, an understanding of the notion of sense knowledge is very important since intellectual concepts are derived from it, sense knowledge is used in thinking, and the emotions follow sense knowledge.

The will is naturally inclined to love the true good. Once the intellect knows something as good, the will is able to love it. This love causes a person to seek this good by intending to attain it and by choosing to perform actions in order to obtain the good that it loves. To reflect on the example of the unity between Joe and Kate, Joe’s intellect knows the goals of Kate. His will then loves her and attaches to her by making her goals his own. Based on his love of her, he then chooses a particular action to help her fulfill her goals.

The emotions (also called the “sense appetites” or “passions”) are naturally inclined to desire the bodily good in accord with reason (or are repulsed by the bodily evil that violates reason).³³ As seen in the example of Joe waking up, the emotions are naturally attracted to goods that benefit the body that are known through sense knowledge. The emotions are necessary to keep the body alive and to ensure the propagation of the human race. However, the emotions are not rational, and although they seek the good of the body in general, they can seek something that is bad for the person in a particular instance. Thankfully, the emotions can be trained to seek what is determined to be good by the intellect. (They can also be trained to seek evil.) Because animals also have emotions (to keep their bodies alive), a good example of how emotions can be trained is seen in animals. Imagine a wild alley kitten is injured, and you want to help it. The kitten’s emotional response to you will be either fear or anger, even though you are trying to help it. However, over time you can tame the kitten, and its emotions will no longer have fear of you. The kitten could eventually even be trained to have emotional love for you. Because good parents train the emotions of their children from a very early age, most people’s emotional impulses drive them to do good things (although all humans have some unruly emotions that rebel against what they know is best).

We will give much more detail about the emotions throughout this book. However, to get a better beginning grasp of the emotions, it is helpful to have a list of them. Traditionally, the emotions have been divided into two categories: the *concupiscible* emotions and the *irascible* emotions. The concupiscible emotions desire bodily pleasure in and of itself (or recoil from bodily pain). These particular emotions are love and hate, desire and aversion, and joy (also called “delight”) and sorrow. For example, some people have emotional love for hamburgers. This love causes them to

desire hamburgers, and when they are eating them, they have joy. Conversely, others hate public speaking. They have an aversion to speaking in public, and when they must speak in public, they experience sorrow.

The irascible emotions seek the difficult and distant bodily good. The concupiscible respond to the pleasurable good itself, but the irascible seek the means to attain the good sought by the concupiscible appetite. To go back to the example of the hamburger, perhaps before being able to consume the hamburger, the person has to finish working. The hamburger is now a distant good. The irascible emotions could motivate the person to work hard in order to have the hamburger. The irascible emotions are hope and despair, fear and daring, and anger. There are two categories of emotions because sometimes people have conflicting emotions toward the same object. For example, someone might emotionally love having a major project completed but despair of actually doing the work to complete it.

Because the primary movement of both the emotions and the will is to love, it can be difficult to understand the difference between the emotions and the will. The difference is that the love of the will follows intellectual knowledge, but the love of the emotions follows sense knowledge. Food can be a good example for helping to understand the difference between love of the will and love of the emotions. Suppose that Kate loves the taste of bananas (following sense knowledge) and knows that they are good for her (intellectual knowledge). Inasmuch as she loves them because they are good for her, she has love of the will for them. Her will desires what her intellect knows to be true. Inasmuch as she loves them for their taste (or any other good feelings they cause), she has emotional love for them. Because the emotions follow sense knowledge, the act of recalling memories of time spent with friends, vacations with family, or even eating one's favorite food can elicit emotional joy. Likewise, memories of being treated unjustly can produce emotions of anger.

THE BODY

Thomas Aquinas believed that humans bridge the gap between the material and spiritual world and, hence, have both bodily and spiritual inclinations.³⁴ In other words, because on earth the body is essential for the proper functioning of the soul, the body's proper functioning is essential to the spiritual life. Thus, an elementary understanding of the body and what it is inclined to is essential to understand the moral life.³⁵

The body is the material element of human nature and participates in the image of God through the soul. Because of the union between the body and the soul, the soul works through the body in all that it does. Hence, the body has an essential role in all actions, and because it is formed by a human soul, it is naturally inclined to stay alive and to remain healthy for the benefit of the human person. Because of its natural inclination, the body does not have to be taught to stay alive—it naturally seeks to stay alive, which is its proper end.³⁶

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE SOUL

In this chapter, we are studying human nature in order to better understand what type of actions cause humans to be fulfilled. The powers of the soul are the primary causes of these actions, but these powers work through a body when acting. For example, Joe's soul works through his body to both know and love Kate. Ultimately, both the body and the soul are causes of human actions, and both must be taken into consideration in determining what actions humans are created to perform. When acting, the soul is the primary (or first) cause of all actions, and the body is the instrumental (or secondary) cause of all actions.³⁷ A good example to help explain primary and instrumental causality is that of a piano player and a piano. The player is the primary cause of the music, and the piano is the instrumental cause of the music. Both causes are necessary for the music, but the primary cause moves the instrumental cause and determines what musical notes are actually played. Even though the player moves the piano, the piano also has its proper effect within the action, for the instrument also determines the quality of the music. A piano only makes piano music (not woodwind music), and a tuned piano makes better music than an out-of-tune piano. This analogy illuminates the roles of both the soul and the body. The soul moves the body and determines the type of actions that are to be performed. Nonetheless, the soul can only perform actions that the body is capable of performing, and a defect in the body (e.g., brain damage, hormonal and chemical imbalances, etc.) can greatly impair the functioning of the person.³⁸ For example, even humans with an educated and intelligent soul cannot think properly if they are tired or sick. To more clearly see the role of the body in human actions, let's analyze the relation between the body and the intellect, will, and emotions.

The intellect requires the body for two reasons. First, whenever we think, the intellect uses the brain as an instrumental cause of its thoughts. This truth is demonstrated by the fact that some people are genetically disposed to a higher intelligence than others and that people with brain damage are unable to perform certain intellectual exercises. For example, I once tutored a woman who, because of a car accident, was unable to perform certain logic exercises that she could have easily done before the accident.³⁹ The accident did not cause a change in her soul but rather a change in the body that her intellect worked through.

The second reason that the intellect works through the body is that all knowledge begins with sense knowledge. Unlike angels, who do not need a body to think, the human intellect is weak and requires many experiences and much repetition in order to come to knowledge.⁴⁰ The body, through the senses, provides the experiences that are necessary for the intellect to function. For example, because Helen Keller was unable to see and hear, her ability to learn was seriously impaired. Anne Sullivan taught Helen how to interpret the sense knowledge coming from the sense of touch. Had

Anne not taught Helen words through the sense of touch, it is very unlikely that Helen would have become the educated person that she was. The necessity of sense knowledge is especially seen in the way God reveals himself to humans. The Son came as a human, and he performed actions and proclaimed teachings that could be sensed. The Church continues to hand on this revelation in ways that can be sensed, such as through scripture and the sacraments.

The will also requires the body for two reasons. First, just as the intellect requires the body to think, the will requires the body (especially the brain) to love. Second, although knowledge comes in through the body, love goes out through the body. Humans cannot read each other's minds. The only way that love can be expressed is through bodily actions. These actions can be kind words, hugs, or even serving others. The Willie Nelson song "You Were Always on My Mind" describes how a woman failed to recognize the love that a man had for her because he never showed her that he loved her through physical signs. She may have always been on his mind, but because humans have bodies, authentic love is expressed through physical signs. For humans, love that is not shown through bodily signs is always somewhat incomplete. For example, Joe may say that he loves the poor, but unless he actually does bodily actions of serving the poor, his love is incomplete. Even in relation to God, who can read human hearts, we must still perform bodily acts that manifest love (for our own benefit, not God's).

Since the divine image in humans inclines them to enter into loving relationships through acts of knowing and loving that require the body, the body also shares in the image of God. In fact, the body is the physical element of the sincere gift of self through which humans discover their true self. John Paul II wrote extensively on how the body operates as a gift in his sermons on the "Theology of the Body." Only through the body, both male and female, are humans able to give and accept each other and discover their true selves.⁴¹

The fundamental unity between the body and the soul is especially seen in the emotions. Unlike the intellect and will, which are primarily powers of the soul, the emotions are powers of both the body and the soul. Hence, whenever an emotional response happens in the soul, a corresponding chemical change occurs in the body. For example, a great deal of psychological research has been done on the emotion of love. These studies have shown that multiple chemicals and hormones can be found in the body when someone is in love. Some of the predominant chemicals are adrenaline (which can increase your heart rate and cause you to sweat), dopamine (causing the feeling of great pleasure or ecstasy), serotonin (low levels cause one to focus on one's beloved), and oxytocin (giving feelings of attachment).⁴² In fact, according to the biological anthropologist Helen Fisher, the dopamine-induced pleasurable feeling that people have when they are in love is the same feeling that people have when they take cocaine, nicotine, or morphine. All of these drugs elevate the levels of dopamine in the body.⁴³ The extremely close relation between the body and the soul is seen in the fact

that the emotions cause a chemical change in the body, and a chemical change in the body can cause an emotional response in the soul, such as in cases of drug use or hormonal imbalances.

Another way that the body affects the soul is through the emotional response to sense knowledge. In the example of Joe waking up early, the emotions were able to influence his intellect and will. The emotions have this power because of the close relation between intellectual knowledge and sense knowledge in our soul. Not only does all knowledge begin with sense knowledge, but without sense “images” that correspond to intellectual knowledge, it is also impossible for humans to think.⁴⁴ In other words, humans must associate a sensible sign with a particular concept. For example, the word “bird” could be associated with the concept of “bird.” Humans can then string together multiple sense “images” and form sentences. For example, if someone thinks in words (either spoken or written), they might take the word “bird” and place it with the words “have feathers.”⁴⁵ The key point is that sense knowledge is always involved in our thinking.

Emotions are responses to sense knowledge. Hence, whenever we think, we also have emotional responses. For example, when you think about someone you deeply loved earlier in your life, you immediately have an emotional response within you. (The same thing can happen when you think of someone that made you angry—but with a different emotional response.) The emotions are powerful drives and can sometimes cause the intellect to focus on certain truths and neglect others. In extreme cases they can even blind the intellect. For example, an angry person might only think about how to get revenge or may even act without thinking much at all. The human intellect is very creative, and when under the influence of the emotions, it can find reasons to support nearly any evil action. The will when presented with these false reasons can also be influenced by the emotions to choose the evil act. However, the emotions can also aid the intellect and the will to perform good when the emotions desire the action that has been determined to be good by the intellect. Ultimately, the relation between the emotions and the intellect and the will can be complex because they can sometimes help, hinder, cloud, or even blind these higher powers. The key is that because the soul works through the body in all that it does, the composition of the body also determines what is in the soul. Your body, through physiological structures, chemicals, and sense knowledge, influences your thoughts and loves. Consequently, your body also determines your identity as a knowing and loving person made in the image of God.⁴⁶

BY LOOKING at the biblical notion that humans are in the image of God, we find the starting point of our journey to eternal happiness. Humans as made in the image of God are created to know and love God and all others. Because knowledge causes love, which causes unity, humans are also like God when they enter into loving relationships with others. Furthermore, they find their true identity when they give of themselves in

these relationships and become one in mind and heart with each other, just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have the same knowledge and love. Because the soul works through the body when it knows and loves, the body also shares in the image of God and is an essential element in human relationships. The best insights of philosophy help further explain human nature by noting that the human soul has the powers of the intellect, will, and emotions. These powers give humans the ability to know and love God and others and, eventually, attain true happiness.