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# STRIVING FOR JUSTICE, PEACE, AND DIGNITY

## 2. Living as God's Own People

## *God's Own People*

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

— 1 Peter 2.9-10



## REVIEW: THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

- BELIEVING
  - God as creator (Father, Son, and Spirit)
  - God as redeemer (Father, Son, and Spirit)
  - God as sanctifier (Father, Son, and Spirit)
- BELONGING
  - Abiding in teaching and fellowship
  - Abiding in a sacrifice of thanksgiving
  - Abiding in prayer
- BEHAVING
  - Resisting evil and the need for continual repentance
  - Proclamation in word and deed
  - Striving for justice, peace, and dignity



- THE WITNESS OF THE CHURCH IN TODAY'S WORLD
  - Can the church offer a constructive vision of justice, peace, and dignity?
  - What is the relationship between the church's vision and alternative accounts?
  - How should our answers to these questions inform our faith and practice?



- WHERE ARE WE, AND HOW DID WE GET HERE?
  - Strains on political discourse
  - Strains on civil discourse
  - Strains on ecclesial discourse
  - Fundamental disagreements about human identity and flourishing



- AN EVER-EXPANDING RANGE OF QUESTIONS
  - War
  - Immigration
  - Health care
  - Technology
  - Family
  - Education
  - Work
  - Economics
  - History
  - Pluralism
  - Jurisprudence



- THE HEART OF THE ISSUE: ANTHROPOLOGY

“Unless we have a coherent model of what sort of humanity we want to nurture in our society, we shall continue to be at sea over how we teach, how we vote, how we save and buy and sell, how we entertain ourselves, how we think about the beginning and the end of life.”

— Rowan Williams, *Being Human* (2018)



- A PROLIFERATION OF OPTIONS

- Stevenson (1974), *Seven Theories of Human Nature*
- Stevenson & Haberman (1998), *Ten Theories of Human Nature*
- Stevenson, Haberman, & Wright (2012), *Twelve Theories of Human Nature*
- Stevenson, Haberman, Wright, & Witt (2017), *Thirteen Theories of Human Nature*



- ANTHROPOLOGY AS A POLYCENTRIC PROBLEM
  - The nature of the universe
  - The nature of humanity
  - Diagnosis of human ills
  - Solution to human ills



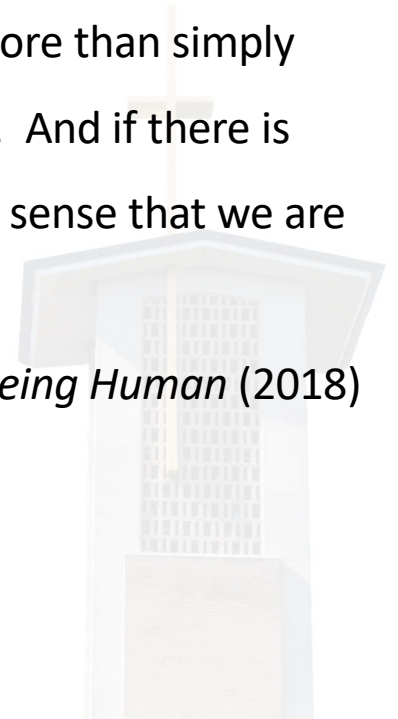
- COMPETING ANTHROPOLOGIES
  - Confucianism
  - Hinduism
  - Buddhism
  - Plato
  - Aristotle
  - The Bible [eliding Judaism and Christianity]
  - Islam
  - Kant
  - Marx
  - Freud
  - Sartre
  - Darwin
  - Feminism
  - A possibility for the next edition: transhumanism



- A TWO-SIDED PROBLEM

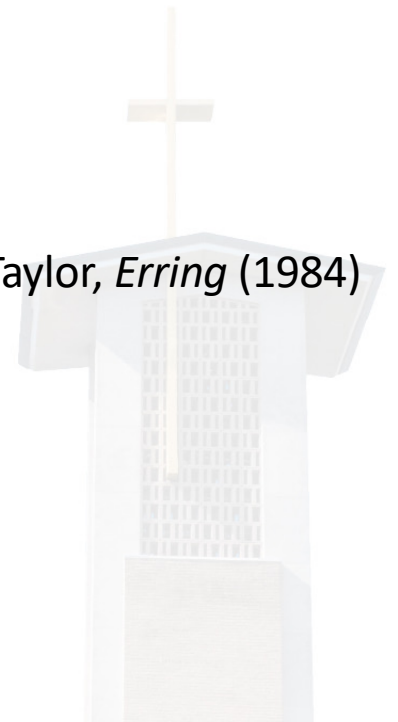
A “loss of the sense of the sacred, a loss of the sense of being answerable to an intelligible gift, from beyond ourselves, in the long run entails more than simply the loss of God; it may entail the loss of the distinctively human. And if there is one great intellectual challenge for our day, it is in the pervasive sense that we are in danger of losing our sense of the human.”

— Rowan Williams, *Being Human* (2018)



- A FOUR-SIDED PROBLEM
  - The death of God
  - The disappearance of the self
  - The end of history
  - The closing of the book

— Mark C. Taylor, *Erring* (1984)



- WHAT DOES THE CHURCH TEACH ABOUT HUMAN NATURE? (BCP, 845)
  - We are part of God's creation, created to enjoy it and care for it
  - We are made in the image of God (choice, creation, love, reason, relationship)
  - We have misused our freedom and made "wrong choices"
  - We have tried to put ourselves in the place of God
  - Our help now is in God alone
  - God first helped us by revealing himself through nature, history, and Israel
  - God then helped us by revealing himself through Jesus and the Spirit



## BACK TO THE COVENANT: A WITNESS TO A WAY OF BEING HUMAN

- BELIEVING
  - Friends with God (Jn 15.14-17; Rom 10.6-10)
  - Born of flesh, born again of Spirit (Jn 3.5-8)
  - Living not according to our own wisdom or power (1 Cor 1.27-31)
- BELONGING
  - A community grounded in the life of God (Rom 6.3-4; 1 Cor 10.16-17)
  - A community shaped by prayer, learning, serving, and giving (Acts 2.43-47)
  - A community supported by the work of every member (1 Cor 12.4-28)
- BEHAVING
  - A people who exist for the sake of others (Mt 5.13-16)
  - A people that testify to the sovereign grace of God (Mt 28.18-20)
  - A community open to all (Eph 2.13-22; Gal 3.27-29)

## *God's Own People*

- A PEOPLE IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD
  - The life of the community itself a sign to the world (Jn 13.35, 15.12-14)
  - A community dedicated to reconciliation (2 Cor 5.16-20)
  - A community familiar with weakness (2 Cor 4.16-5.10)



- KEEPING LAST THINGS LAST

- The “last things” (eschatology): consummation, judgment, eternal life
- The hazards of “moral inversion” (Polanyi)
- A life now hidden with Christ (Col 3.1-4)
- A community marked by eager longing (Rom 8.18-27)
- A community guided by hope (Heb 12.1-13)
- A community inspired by glory (Rev 21.1-7)



“It is the essence of the Church to be different from the world, and her mission is to proclaim that difference. Whenever [we] try to sanctify the world by raising it to the level of the Church, [we] commonly succeed only in lowering the life of the Church to accommodate it to the practice of this world.”

— John Neville Figgis, *Churches in the Modern World* (1913)



- HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?
  - Living in faith: rehabilitating reason
  - Living in hope: bearing witness to the goodness of creation
  - Living in love: the reality of persons (vs. individuals or collectives)
  - Testifying in word and deed to the presence and activity of the living God



FOR FURTHER READING

Pierre-Marie Emonet, *The Greatest Marvel of Nature* (2000)

Tomer Perisco, *In God's Image* (2025)

Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual* (2014)

