

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

THE IMPASSIBLY PASSIONATE GOD
AN APOLOGY FOR AN EMOTIONAL GOD; AN APOLOGETIC FOR SUFFERING AND EVIL

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ABSTRACT

The Problem of Suffering and Evil causes believer and unbeliever alike to question whether God (if there even is a God) is all-loving. This theodicy prompts a twofold question pertaining to God's ontology: *can we properly predicate 1) emotions and 2) suffering to the ontology of God?* This thesis offers not only an apology of an Impassibly Emotional God but, in turn, provides an apologetic that speaks powerfully to *The Problem of Suffering and Evil*.

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I. PROLEGOMENA: “FOR GOD’S SAKE, WHO IS GOD?”

The year was 1944. Fifteen-year-old Elie Wiesel stood among thousands of other branded onlookers as they witnessed the hanging of three convicted Jewish prisoners. This was not the first time in the concentration camp of Monowitz that Wiesel could recall witnessing the Germans hanging Jewish prisoners. This *was*, however, the first time a *child* was one of them. The boy stood pale before the onlookers, “biting his lips as he stood in the shadow of the gallows.” Their verdict was read, and the three, at gunpoint, mounted their chairs. The nooses were fastened around their necks in unison. Every prisoner’s eye, including Wiesel’s, was on the boy. Would a stricken conscience stay the hands of these Nazis from executing a *child*? Wiesel could hear one of the spectators behind him asking, “*Where is merciful God, where is He?*” The chairs were kicked from beneath the prisoners. Silence fell over the entirety of the camp.

The two adult prisoners hung lifeless, their tongues “hanging out, swollen and bluish.” But not the child. As the onlookers were forced to march before the gallows, Wiesel could see that “...*the third rope was still moving: the child, too light, was still breathing...*” The branded were forced to watch until the child’s writhing was done nearly thirty minutes later, all the while that same spectator kept asking that *same* question: “*For God’s sake, where is God?*”¹ Unlike that small boy, Wiesel *would* emerge from those concentration camps, yet wrapped in trauma from the abundant death behind him. François Mauriac, a dear friend of Wiesel’s, recalled the day he met young Elie—that poor man who walked out of the death of the Holocaust looking

1. Elie Wiesel, François Mauriac, and Marion Wiesel, *Night: With Connected Readings* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 65.

like “Lazarus rising from the dead,” still wrapped in those horrific memories like burial linens.² Who *would not* walk away from such atrocity unscathed? Who *would not* ask that spectator’s question as he saw that suspended boy writhe in the gallows? “*For God’s sake, where is God?*”

The Intellectual Problem of Suffering and Evil

This question strikes at the heart of arguably the *greatest* obstacle to belief in the existence of God: *the Theodicy of the Problem of Suffering and Evil*. This question led Greek Philosopher Epicurus to posit a logical challenge against God’s alleged ontology: 1) If God is willing to prevent evil, but not able, then he is *not* all-powerful; 2) if God is able to prevent evil but not willing, then he is *not* good; 3) if he is both willing and able, then how can evil exist? 4) if he is neither able nor willing, then why call him God?³ The argument of Epicurus is otherwise known as *The Intellectual Problem of Suffering and Evil*. It is employed in one of two ways. The first manner, the *Logical* version, argues it is *logically impossible* that an all-powerful, all-loving God and the abundant suffering and evil in the world could coexist due to a perceived incompatibility. The *Probabilistic* version, which concedes that it is not logically *impossible*, argues that such coexistence is *extremely unlikely* given the degree of evil and suffering in the world; it seems *improbable* that God would have morally sufficient reasons to permit evil to such an extent.⁴ Such arguments *appear* compelling, so much so that even Christians, to ‘rectify’ this theodicy, qualify or jettison God’s attributes—or jettison the idea of God all together.

2. Ellen S. Fine, *Legacy of Night: The Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1982), 28.

3. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1776), 134.

4. William Lane Craig, “The Problem of Suffering and Evil: Part 1” (Aalborg University, Denmark, 17 April 2012), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Q5zQC2BEVY>.

Is there implicit or explicit incompatibility between *premise A*, “An all-loving, all-powerful God exists” and *premise B*, “suffering and evil exist”? The answer is *no*. Anyone who says otherwise is *imposing* hidden assumptions onto the ontology of God: *assumption A* being, “If God is ‘all-loving’ he would naturally prefer a world without suffering” and *assumption B*, “If God is ‘all-powerful’ he can create any world he prefers”. Let us start with *assumption B*.

Could a truly omnipotent God create *any* world of his choosing? Working backwards from God’s verdict in Genesis 1:31, God *could not* have created any world, in principle, *more good* than the one he already created. Sin was not a concrete reality.⁵ There was neither *moral* nor *natural* suffering, nor was there *death—neither spiritual nor physical—*prior to the fall into sin. To say otherwise would undermine God’s verdict. Could not God have created other realities or worlds that also would be “very good”? The answer is *no*. There were not multiple blueprints on the divine architect’s drafting table. “*Very good*” uniquely communicates both a physical and spiritual reality of exactly how God desires things to be. This logical, scriptural assertion is *not* undermined by the promise of heaven, let alone the Savior of the world set aside from all eternity to *redeem* the world and bring his people *to* heaven. After all, the “new heavens and [the] new earth” will be, in principle, the same physical and spiritual reality as the intended eternal Paradise described in Genesis 1:31, however in a *new* eternal setting. Thus, *assumption B* fails.

What about *assumption A*? “If God is ‘all-loving’ he would naturally prefer a world without suffering.” This can be properly understood as true; however, the critics of God inject this statement with additional false assumptions: 1) God could not have morally or spiritually sufficient grounds for *allowing* evil and suffering, nor is God able to work good from evil; 2) they, as God’s critics, lack no pertinent background information for making such a critical

5. The *ability* to sin was a concrete reality, while sin, suffering, and *death* were *contingent* realities.

evaluation; 3) *happiness* is the meaning of life and that the material world is all there is (ascribing *eternal* value to *temporary* material); 4) there are *eternal* limitations on God *based on temporary* acts of evil; 5) God has yet to address or offer a solution for *The Problem of Suffering and Evil*; 6) God bears ultimate blame for evil, *not man*. Such arguments that criticize God's moral and ethical character become *particularly* ironic when they assume an 'objective' moral framework *apart from* a *necessary* eternal, immaterial, transcendent anchor to leverage against an eternal, immaterial, transcendent being. This burden of proof is simply too heavy to bear. Ultimately, both versions of *The Intellectual Problem of Suffering and Evil* intellectually fail.

The Emotional Problem of Suffering and Evil

It is when the intellectual scaffolding crumbles that the *real underlying* argument surfaces—an *emotional* one.⁶ *The Intellectual Problem of Evil* merely provides a rational exterior for the beating heart of the objection: *The Emotional Problem of Suffering and Evil*. People are emotionally incensed by the pain, evil, injustice, and suffering they see and experience. At its essence, "The Emotional Problem of Evil is not a matter of refutation [of God], but a matter of *rejection*."⁷ Any God, they feel, must be complicit in or complacent towards such suffering and evil, and any solution that is not *now* is neither powerful nor loving. They *do not like* a God who operates according to a moral, judicial schema other than theirs. Any God who would allow suffering and evil must be cold, callous, and dispassionate. For the atheist, any 'God' who defines himself as both all-powerful and, more importantly, all-loving is completely ludicrous; rather, in the worldly abundance of suffering and evil, it would seem to them more apparent that

6. Craig, "The Problem of Suffering and Evil: Part 1."

7. Reasonable Faith Video Podcast, *A Viral Video on the Problem of Evil*, n.d., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XG35_ZJP0BM.

any ‘God’ would be more accurately characterized as “a capricious, mean-minded, stupid God” who bears ultimate responsibility for a world “full of injustice and pain.”⁸ Not everyone will voice their objection as militantly, but *The Emotional Problem of Suffering and Evil* has left all asking the question of Elie Wiesel at one point or another: *if God is all-powerful and all-loving as he claims, then where is he?* The greatest answer to this question does not dismiss such emotion. In fact, the greatest answer to Elie Wiesel’s question *intimately entails emotion*.

A God of Emotion? A God who Suffers?

That question could be heard at the funeral of Lazarus. In fact, the essence of this question was asked by Lazarus’s own sisters, Mary and Martha. They began their dialogue with Jesus nearly the exact same way, suggesting they both were, at least, a little disappointed he did not arrive sooner.⁹ There was widespread expectation that Jesus could have saved Lazarus from his illness as he had proven countless times before. Why didn’t Jesus show up on time? Where was he when they needed him most? Yet at the tomb of Lazarus, there we find him—*weeping*.

Why did Jesus weep? John Schaller presents John 11:35 as emotional expression strictly attributed to Christ’s *humiliation* or *exinanition*.¹⁰ Likewise, he states, Christ *passively* underwent “strong emotions” only to share in man’s “common infirmities.”¹¹ John Calvin suggested the simplest interpretation of John 11:35 is that the Person of Christ, “having clothed himself with our flesh, of his own accord clothed himself also with human feelings, so that he

8. Gay Byrne, “Stephen Fry on God,” *The Meaning of Life* (RTÉ, 28 January 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-suvkwNYSQo>.

9. John 11: 21, “Κύριε, εἰ ἦς ὧδε οὐκ ἂν ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός μου.” John 11:32b, “Κύριε, εἰ ἦς ὧδε οὐκ ἂν μου ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός.”

10. John Schaller, *Biblical Christology: A Study in Lutheran Dogmatics* (Milwaukee, Wis: Northwestern Pub. House, 1981), 88–89.

11. Schaller, *Biblical Christology*, 93.

did not differ at all from his brethren, sin only excepted.”¹² Calvin believed that these emotions, at least those expressed in John 11, do not properly belong to God, but the divine nature *participated* in the experience of human emotion through the person of Christ for the sake of God’s people knowing our High Priest is ‘sympathetic.’ David Mathis, the executive editor of the Reformed blog *desiringGod.org*, writes on John 11:35 similarly. He writes, “God himself has taken on our humanity in this man. And with it, our feelings. And with them, even our sorrows. We are finite and frail. But God gave us mighty emotions. We celebrate. We grieve. We rejoice. We weep. And we do so with Jesus as one of us.”¹³

These and many more examples Christologically emphasize the apparent emotional dimension of the *human* nature in John 11:35—be it compassion, grief, sorrow, rage, or anger—but distance themselves from arguing any reflection of or predication to the divine nature. Which invites the question: is the divine nature *not* concretely found in the few words of John 11:35? Lutheran author and theologian Chad Bird would say it *is*, that Christ, the image of the invisible God makes visible an authentic, ontological, emotive quality of the divine:

“If you could possess just one snapshot of Jesus, what would it be? For me...it would be when he was told his friend Lazarus was dead. And ‘Jesus wept.’ Jesus wept. Two simple words, the significance of which heaven and earth are too small to contain. Here is God, shedding tears over the death of a beloved friend. No Stoic divinity with a heart of flint. No shrugging at the harsh realities of life. No actor faking composure for the evangelist’s camera. The Creator cries. That picture would be worth a thousand words, for it would proclaim a thousand truths. We need to know that God cried. We need to know that he felt pain and loneliness and heartache. We have a God who has been tempted, betrayed, hated, forgotten, rejected, stabbed in the back, and spit in the face. He’s been through hell on earth, quite literally. He doesn’t just know intellectually what people suffer; he knows existentially. And he has scars to prove it.”¹⁴

12. John Calvin, *Commentary on the The Gospel According to John*, trans. William Pringle, vol. XVII of *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), 440.

13. David Mathis, “Jesus Wept,” *DesiringGod*, 16 April 2015, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/jesus-wept--2>.

14. Chad Bird, “A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Lies,” *Christ Hold Fast*, n.d., <https://www.christholdfast.org/blog/a-picture-is-worth-a-thousand-lies>.

Chad Bird argues that those who gravitate away from the divine nature when discussing the “anthropological character of God”—particularly here, God’s emotional expressions in Scripture — “actually have it backwards.”¹⁵ Bird posits that such passages imply a God who concurrently “suffers, hurts, grieves, and rejoices alongside his people.”¹⁶ Jon Bloom, another writer from *desiringGod.org* comments similarly:

“But sin grieves God deeply, and so do the wages of sin: death (Romans 6:23). And ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, he had endured sin’s horrific destruction. Death had consumed almost every human being he had created (all except Elijah and Enoch). It had taken Lazarus, and it would take him again before it was all over. Tears of anger and longing were mixed with Jesus’s tears of grief.”¹⁷

Theologian Jürgen Moltmann would agree with both Bird and Bloom, but would make his case even stronger, stating that “any other answer would be blasphemy.”¹⁸ In his assessment of the horrors of Auschwitz, Moltmann asserts that “to speak here of a God who could not suffer would make God a demon. To speak here of an absolute God would make God an annihilating nothingness. To speak here of an indifferent God would condemn men to indifference.”¹⁹ For Moltmann, the tears shed at the tomb of Lazarus would reflect not only Jesus as true Man who suffers, but Jesus as true God. A God who co-suffers, he would attest, gives the sufferer comfort.

This disconcerting variety of interpretations of John 11:35 is symptomatic of a far larger doctrinal discussion, one anchored in historic philosophy and Church antiquity. This discussion, however, resurfaced anew with vigor in the 19th and 20th century and has garnered significant

15. Chad Bird, “Divine (Im)Passibility,” 23 October 2018.

16. Chad Bird, “Divine (Im)Passibility.”

17. Jon Bloom, “Why Jesus Wept,” *DesiringGod*, 19 April 2011, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/why-jesus-wept>.

18. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 273–74.

19. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 273–74.

attention as of late from many contemporary theologians.²⁰ The questions, by no means trivial, are these: *can we properly predicate 1) emotions and 2) suffering to the ontology of God?*

Habitus Practicus: Know God ⇨ Know Myself; Know Love

We primarily approach these questions practically for the sake of knowing who God is. The study of who God has revealed himself to *be* is not some vain speculative exercise, especially because such revelation is often, if not, *always*, in practical reference to our salvation. Thus, this discussion cannot be isolated to doctrines of theology alone, as they invariably imply or explicitly include doctrines of anthropology; however, such implication necessitates not an anthropocentric hermeneutic, but a theocentric one. Knowing God—our Creator and Redeemer—is the *only* way one can truly know oneself.

The importance of knowing God is an evident motif in the Apostle John’s first letter. Traditionally, it is believed that it was written to combat an early form of Gnosticism, which taught that God is ontologically emotionless, *wholly other*, hidden, and inaccessible. Any real knowing of God was contingent on acquisition of *secret knowledge*. Contra Gnosticism, John assured first century Christians that the God they worship actually dwells inside of them (Ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ μένομεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν).²¹ Moreover, it must have been comforting to not only hear how frequently John utilized emotional language like “love” to describe God but how often the Apostle used some form of the Greek verb γινώσκω.²² Knowing what love is and who God is are intimately tied together.

20. Robert Thompson, “Process Theology and Emotion: An Introductory Exploration,” *The Journal of Pastoral Theology* 15.1 (2005): 20.

21. 1 John 4:13

22. 1 John 2:3–5; 2:13–14; 2:18; 2:29; 3:1; 3:6; 3:16; 3:19–20; 3:24; 4:2; 4:6–8; 4:14; 4:16; 5:2; 5:20.

“According to the Bible,” Glen Scrivener writes, “it’s actually love ‘all the way down’.

The firmest, most foundational reality in the universe is the love of God.”²³ Knowing who *God* is, as Scripture tells us, precedes a true knowledge of *love*, because God essentially identifies as love. “He is a Father forever loving his Son in the intimate bond of the Spirit. Love is not simply what he does, it is who he is and who he has always been.”²⁴ So, is God’s love simply his salvific actions that unfold in time, or an *eternal quality* present before time began? Is God’s love an action, or an emotion? If, as Luther said, “truth cannot survive where love is absent” then *we should know* the answer.²⁵ God’s love is not only our model but our motivation for *our* love.

An Apology for An Emotional God; an Apologetic for Suffering and Evil

As the onlookers of Auschwitz III asked of God, “*Where are you?*” Wiesel answered to himself, “*Where is he? He is here. He is hanging there on the gallows.*”²⁶ For Wiesel, any confidence he had in a God who is just and loving *died* on the gallows that day. Nevertheless, Wiesel rightly understood the question under scrutiny in times of suffering is not *where is God*, but *who is God?* When *we* ask God that question, the first place to look is not the “gallows” of the world—even the “gallows” of our own lives—but the words and gracious promises of our God—the one true God. There in his Word, our God reveals his character to us, and with it an apologetic that sets him powerfully apart from all other gods and philosophies. There in his Word, God *himself* tells us exactly *who* he is: the God of emotion who *also* suffered.

23. Glen Scrivener, *321: The Story of God, the World, and You* (9D Centurion Court, Farington, Leyland, PR25 3UQ, England: 10 Publishing, 2014), 51.

24. Scrivener, *321: The Story of God, the World, and You*, 62.

25. Martin Luther and John F. Brug, “Where There Is No Love, Doctrine Cannot Remain Pure,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 108 (n.d.): 3.

26. Wiesel, Mauriac, and Wiesel, *Night*, 65.

II. HERMENEUTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIVINE ONTOLOGY

As we approach this subject matter, it is good to imagine ourselves as Israelites at the foot of Sinai. “You may approach me, but on *my* terms, not *yours!*” the God of Israel declares. “We will do what the LORD has said!” the people replied—only to fashion a golden calf not even two months later. Such actions evoke an audible sigh of disappointment from modern readers, but to think the golden calf business died at Sinai is naive. We may laugh as false gods are fashioned by the very material their creators use to keep warm or wear as jewelry, but is that the only ‘material’ man uses to shape the one true God in *man’s* image? Are gods of wood and gold any less idolatrous than those fashioned by ideological, cultural, and personal projection onto one’s interpretation of Scripture? Instead, we approach God *on his terms with his terms*.

A Hermeneutic of Humility

God truly is a *hidden* God (*deus absconditus*), certainly by virtue of the exclusive means through which he reveals himself and pours out his grace, but also by virtue of God’s *divine simplicity* and his *immensity*. The Bible abundantly communicates a *vast* chasm in ontology between man (a *composite* being) and God (a *non-composite* being). Sinful man can neither see God and live, nor fully contain the magnitude of his thoughts and ways. This tremendous dissimilarity between man and God rightly humbles us as we try to speak meaningfully and authentically about him; yet, it was *the LORD* who invited Moses to approach him on Mount Sinai to see his glory, and this same gracious invitation is given to people today. Through God’s Word, by the working of faith through the Holy Spirit, the *hidden* God is *revealed*; however, despite God’s desire to shape

and mold all of mankind in his image, sinful mankind would rather shape God in theirs. The *finite* projects onto the *infinite*, the *flawed* onto the *flawless*, the *time-bound* onto the *timeless*, the *created* onto the *Creator*. Instead of letting God speak for himself, Christians and non-Christians alike approach God like one would a Rorschach test—an utterly ambiguous inkblot painting, whereby the observer *projects* onto the ‘uncertainty’ of the painting to make the image ‘certain’. This projection onto God’s ontology is generally seen through the imposition of extrabiblical models, cultural values, or personal biases.

The Projection of Extrabiblical Models

The most problematic of all projections are that of extrabiblical philosophical or rational models. The Stoics, for example, strove to live *emotionless lives*, as they philosophically considered emotions “a disease of the soul.”²⁷ Naturally, the Stoics postulated an impersonal, emotionless deity. The Platonists would concur, arguing that predication of emotions to God is nonsensical, that nothing but anthropomorphic projection that should never belong properly to God.²⁸ The emotion of *love*, the Platonist argued, implies *need*, and so reasoned that “a God who needs nothing cannot love.”²⁹ They emphasized the *divine absolute*, “the inferiority of man’s ability to perceive the spiritual” and the acknowledgment that “those who emphasize the spiritual emphasize this kind of unknowability, the mystery...of the supernatural.”³⁰ Aristotelianism is similar; like the Platonists, Aristotle did not believe in a personal deity who was concerned with

27. Robert Thompson, “Process Theology and Emotion: An Introductory Exploration,” 19.

28. Stephen Voorwinde, “Does God Have Real Feelings?,” *Vox Reformata* 67 (2002): 34.

29. Michael Scott Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2011), 244.

30. Paul Freedman, “The Christian Roman Empire” (Yale University, 5 April 2012), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzibwdsI_Sl&t=922s.

the plight of mankind; his god was the removed and Unmoved Mover. These philosophical groups portrayed a god of *wholly other*; this god was *not* immanent and invested in his created world, but is infinitely transcendent, shrouded in mystery, and unable to be truly known by the natural world, the human conscience, or by revelation.

This philosophical *depersonalization* of the deity even crept into the teachings of Christian theologians. Karl Barth and Thomas Weinandy defend a God who is ontologically “*wholly other*.”³¹ Similarly, Thomas Aquinas and Paul Tillich refer to God not as *a being*, but simply *being*.³² Such depersonalization of God empties the *personal* language he employs of any possible proper ontological predication in the name of “mere linguistic condescension.” Such equivocism can be found in Reformed circles as well, where God’s universal grace and *univocal* desire that all be saved is *equivocally* defined—all in the name of God’s absolute sovereignty.

While Orthodoxy tends to treat God’s affectionate language *equivocally*, Evangelicals tend to lean univocally, even anthropocentrically in some cases. Extreme Arminianism (i.e. Open Theism and Process Theology), negatively qualify God’s classically defined attributes (i.e. aseity, perfection, infinity, omniscience, et al.) in order to fashion a more relational God of real reciprocity that corresponds with their doctrine of *man’s absolute free will*—because, the argument goes, if God knows what a person will do before he does it, is he really free? Thus, the God of the Process Theologian *is becoming* with all of Creation in time, a God who *learns, changes, and is never the same again*. Open Theists argue the future is ‘open’, not fixed or

31. Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935), 74.; “Thus, the very act of creation that assures the wholly otherness of God is the very same act that assures creation’s immediate, intimate, dynamic, and enduring relationship with God as God truly is in all His transcendent otherness.” Thomas Weinandy, “Does God Suffer?,” *First Things*, November 2001, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2001/11/does-god-suffer>.

32. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (The University of Chicago Press, 1951), I:156, 205, 237. This commitment of Aquinas and Tillich that God is not *a being*, but *being* is a philosophical, not scriptural conclusion.

known to God; thus, God can be surprised and *univocally* change his mind. Consequently, for the Open Theist, Jesus as Savior of the world is demoted from *Plan A* from all eternity to *Plan B*.

The Projection of Culture

The projection of one's immediate culture also poses a threat in how we engage God's ontological language. Christian philosopher and apologist, William Lane Craig, alludes to this danger, giving an example of a Muslim whose "cultural prejudices" negatively influence his understanding of God's morality. He argues,

"A person raised in a Muslim culture in which the view of God is of a person whose love is conditional and must be earned is apt to have his moral intuitions skewed by such a culturally dominant view of God... The God of Islam is thus just as morally defective as a parent who withholds love from his children unless they deserve it... The person who has earned love has no reason to be grateful, since he has merited it. It is precisely love that is undeserved that issues in thanksgiving and praise."³³

Such dispassionate views of emotions and their associated values such as "relationship, community, caring/support, and mutual respect" are characterized as "touchy feely crap" even within the Christian community.³⁴ "When I was a new believer in the early 1980s," recalls Pastor Brian Borgman, "...I read and heard that emotions are just the caboose; the engine is fact. The coal car is faith, and the caboose is feelings. The train will run fine on fact and faith; feelings are optional."³⁵ Emotions are misconceived as wholly temperamental, unreliable, subject to significant skepticism, even void of value—nothing but the dog on the end of rationality's leash.

Inversely, a culture may *over-invest* in emotions so much that *reason* and *facts* are overwhelmed—even obliterated. Paul Helm argues that "[The modern church] desperately

33. William Lane Craig, "#534 Is an All-Loving God Better?," *Reasonable Faith*, 9 July 2017, <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/is-an-all-loving-god-better/>.

34. Thompson, "Process Theology and Emotion: An Introductory Exploration," 31.

35. Brian Borgman, "Nothing More Than Feelings," *Modern Reformation* 27.5 (2018): 25.

seek[s] reassurance that God is like us — that he is accessible to our imagination, and especially ... that he is our emotional peer.”³⁶ Outside of the church, this overemphasis on emotions is particularly apparent in many *post-modern* societies. Emotion is the only guiding light where philosophically “there is no objective truth, no sure and certain right and wrong, no way of ever being sure about anything, other than what brings personal pleasure and appeals to one’s personal interests and tastes.”³⁷ In some ways, American culture in the 21st century not only is post-modern, but *post-rational*, where *emotions* are what drive arguments and discussions, not facts. An abundance of worldviews and philosophies preys on this cultural component, manipulating people’s emotions in lieu of truth, or teaching them the evaluation of ‘truth’ is contingent on their emotional response, because “if it *feels* good, then it must be.”³⁸

The Projection of Personal Biases

Projection, however, can also originate internally from personal biases, such as a disproportionate prioritization of reason, and a dispassionate view of emotions. Such biases certainly stem from individuals who have not only forgotten that God *made* humans as emotional creatures but that emotions are intended to be a crucial part of the Christian’s sanctified life. August Pieper argues that arriving at a theology of a “*wholly other*’ God begins when individuals utilize only half of their ability to perceive things, not their *total* ability. He continues:

“[This error] works only with reason and sets aside emotion, intuition, and inner perception. It will decipher the secret of existence purely with mathematical axioms and logical arguments, as if existence consisted only of mathematical and logical relationships. However, the most important

36. Paul Helm, “Divine Impassibility: Why Is It Suffering?” (University of London, n.d.).

37. Steven C. Degner, “Not Ashamed of the Gospel in a Postmodern Age” (WELS Arizona-California Pastoral Conference, 1999), 2. Quoting former President of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Dr. Al Barry

38. Leon Bridges, *If It Feels Good (Then It Must Be)*, vol. GOOD THING, n.d.

thing in the world is by no means an objective, lifeless, and heartless existence but one that is personal, feeling, and perceptive.”³⁹

Emotions are to be *cleansed, not quenched*.⁴⁰ Emphasizing intellect at the expense of emotion is perceptually disastrous. These biases often originate from a substitution of the basic science behind emotions for a misleading caricature. “I had been advised early in life,” writes neuroscientist and psychologist, Antonio Damasio, “that sound decisions came from a cool head, that emotions and reason did not mix any more than oil and water.”⁴¹ This statement is not only unbiblical, but, as modern psychology and neuroscience has proven, is unscientific.⁴²

The inverse problem, however, is equally dangerous. The ‘God’ who *never* violates your *feelings*, your *likes* and *dislikes*, whose moral ontology validates *your* every emotional intuition is more likely a projection of “an idealized version of yourself.”⁴³ Martin Luther comments specifically on the dangers of letting *feelings* or *emotions* dominate our understanding of God. “Therefore,” he writes, “if conscience accuses you of sin, if it sets the wrath of God before your eyes, if it tears Christ, the redeemer, from you, you must judge against your conscience and feelings that God is not angry and that you are not damned. For Scripture says that the kingdom of Christ lies beyond (*extra*) the domain of feeling.”⁴⁴ Our *feeling* of being redeemed from sin does not *precede but proceeds* from the objective reality that we *are*. Thus, reason *and* emotion take ministerial position, and we allow God to paint his own ontological portrait in Scripture.

39. August Pieper, “The One Great Thought of God,” trans. Jason D. Oakland, *Theologische Quartalschrift* (1915): 215.

40. Martin Luther and Ewald Martin Plass, *What Luther Says: An Anthology* (Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 510.

41. Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (London: Penguin, 2005), xvi.

42. See Appendix 1 for a brief survey on modern neuroscience and psychology of emotions

43. Timothy Keller, Twitter Account, @timkellernyc, 12 September 2014.

44. Luther and Plass, *What Luther Says*, 512.

A Hermeneutic of Confidence

God is no Rorschach test. True, God is unable to be known *wholly*, but he is not *wholly unknowable*. The *hidden* God is simultaneously the God *revealed* authentically in Scripture. If God's Word is sufficient in communicating truth that saving faith is contingent on not simply knowing *but believing*, then God *must remain* sufficient as communicator as he speaks of *himself*. "True theology," as Dennis Ngien states, "must be concerned with God as He has chosen to reveal Himself, not with some preconceived notions of God."⁴⁵ If *all* of Scripture is God-breathed, it is *he*, the Divine Painter, holding the brush that paints *his* ontological portrait. Thus, biblical portrayal of an emotional God is not "because we are projecting onto God things that we understand, but because God has chosen to reveal this about his own nature."⁴⁶

God's Sufficiency as Communicator

David Kuske states that "in interpreting written symbols of any kind, the interpreter's purpose must always be to *determine the meaning that the original writer intended for the original reader*—nothing more, nothing less."⁴⁷ However, there are many contemporary linguists, theologians, and philosophers who argue that language is wholly inadequate to communicate absolute truth. Such arguments are particularly common from theologians who argue for a Barthian ontology of God; an entity who is "*wholly other*" and utterly transcendent could not purely or authentically communicate himself via appropriation of *human language*, as that would

45. Dennis Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's "Theologia Crucis"* (Vancouver: Regent College Pub., 2005), 51.

46. Marc Alan Schelske, "Myth #1: God's Not Emotional," *Marc Alan Schelske: Life at the Intersection of Grace and Growth*, March 2015, www.marcalanschelske.com/myth-1-gods-not-emotional/.

47. David P. Kuske, *Biblical Interpretation: The Only Right Way*, Impact Series (Milwaukee, Wis: Northwestern Pub. House, 1995), 13.

be an “unfit vehicle” to communicate “infallibly a message from God to man.”⁴⁸ Karl Barth states that, “The Bible, further is not itself and in itself God’s past revelation, but by becoming God’s Word it attests God’s past revelation and is God’s past revelation in the form of attestation.... Attestation is, therefore, the service of this something else, in which the witness answers for the truth of this something else.”⁴⁹ This *something else*, Barth contests, is *real* revelation of truth (*quoad formam*), and the language of the Bible (*quoad materiam*) is *not* that. For Barth, the distance between human letters and divine reality is merismatic. “The Bible cannot be revelation,” Barth argues, “It can only serve revelation. To claim anything more for human language, for the Bible, is to dishonor God, to elevate something finite and human to divine status.”⁵⁰ The implications of Barth’s statements are *devastating*. If the Bible only *serves* divine revelation but is not revelation itself, God would be guilty of idolatrizing his own being.

Contra Barthian theology, the Bible does not assault its own integrity or reliability by presenting itself 1) separate from divine revelation, nor 2) authoritative apart from God himself. God’s Word *is* truth, because God’s Word *is* divine revelation. It is not merely historic revelation to others. It does not *become* God’s Word when we might hear it, read it, or believe it as Barth suggests.⁵¹ It is revelation—regardless of reading or believing. God’s Word *is* God’s Word. The Bible has no problem affirming it is a human document (Gal 6:11). Simultaneously, it attests that the human writers were but the pens that the Divine Writer used to record his words, thoughts,

48. John M. Frame, “God and Biblical Language: Transcendence and Immanence,” *FRAME-POYTHRESS.ORG*, 4 June 2012, <https://frame-poythress.org/god-and-biblical-language-transcendence-and-immanence/>.

49. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, trans. G. T. Thompson (New York: Scribner, 1936), I:125.

50. Frame, “God and Biblical Language: Transcendence and Immanence.” Quoting Karl Barth.

51. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker et al. (New York: Scribner, 1957), II:156ff.

feelings, and his plan of salvation (2 Pet 1:21). Every word from Genesis to Revelation was written so that we may believe Jesus is our Savior and have life in his name (John 20:31). If it is sufficient means for our eternal salvation, it is sufficient means for God to communicate who he authentically is. In fact, there are biblical doctrines pertaining to God's nature that not only are possible for us to comprehend, but necessary for us *to believe* in order to be saved.⁵²

There *is* a distance between the spoken or written word (*quoad materiam*) and the *reality* or *truth* (*quoad formam*), but not the one logically posited by modern linguists, philosophers, and theologians mentioned earlier. Any *distance* between the divinely written "symbol" and the unwritten divine reality logically is one that can be *pedagogically cleared*; to say otherwise is to call Christ, the God-Man, a bad teacher. "Though God, [Jesus] was fully human and spoke human words that were fully capable not only of adequately communicating God's meaning, but of shaping our world as he uttered them."⁵³ Yet, comprehension is one thing; *belief* is another.

The distance that more desperately needed to be cleared, however, is a *spiritual* one, the "inbred bias of unbelief."⁵⁴ The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:14, writes, "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (NIV78). The distance between *reading or hearing* God's Word *quoad materiam* and *believing* God's Word *quoad formam* is not one that the Holy Spirit, through the creation of faith, cannot rectify. Through the gospel, God bridges the gap not only by working saving faith but growing us in spiritual discernment. The external essence of Scripture, the *words* (*quoad materiam*), are

52. J. P. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage I*, ed. Lyle W. Lange and G. Jerome Albrecht (Milwaukee, Wis: Northwestern Pub. House, 1991), I:475–522.

53. Paul Wendland, "An Overview of Lutheran Hermeneutics," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 110.3 (2013): 193.

54. Wendland, "An Overview of Lutheran Hermeneutics," 192.

“merely the vehicle” that carry and convey the internal essence of Scripture, the *meaning (quoad formam)*, to people.⁵⁵ God’s Word is not *divine* by accidental association, but *direct* association. If we want to know who God *truly* is, we have *every* reason to confidently turn to Scripture, for God himself deemed that “language is a capable and fit bearer of the Spirit’s truth.”⁵⁶ This truth is then received and believed *as truth* by Spirit-worked *faith* (ὄργανον ληπτικόν).

The God of Cataphatic Description

There exists a presupposition, or analogy, of *faith* when we approach Scripture: we believe *all* Scripture *is* cohesive in both content and centrality: all Scripture centers in Christ, and all Scripture is verbally inspired and inerrant. Proceeding from this analogy, the general hermeneutical principle for interpreting the language of Scripture is *SAYS=MEANS*. This basic equation “must govern all communication; otherwise, what people said or wrote to one another would obviously be confusing at best.”⁵⁷ To veer away unwarranted from the univocism of *SAYS=MEANS* firstly flies in the face of the analogy of faith, but it introduces skepticism, reader response theory, an undermining of the authority of Scripture, and ultimately doubt that inevitably rob readers of author-intended comfort. Even when we arrive at *non-univocal* language (i.e. metaphors, similes, parables, et al.), the principle *SAYS=MEANS* is *not* obliterated. Be it the parables of Jesus or God’s emotive language employed in Scripture, there is *always* an intended meaning: these are the Scriptures that testify about *who* God *positively* is.

When dealing with such emotive passages, we must appeal to both the immediate and the broad context throughout which “God has voluntarily and graciously condescended to make

55. Earle Treptow, “The Word, #1,” 13 September 2018.

56. Wendland, “An Overview of Lutheran Hermeneutics,” 192.

57. Kuske, *Biblical Interpretation*, 18.

relationship with him possible in the first place.”⁵⁸ When one arrives at sections that are obscure, difficult, or figurative, a good hermeneutic interprets “the figurative in the light of the literal, the difficult in the light of the simple, and the obscure in the light of the clear.”⁵⁹ We must also be careful not to give certain passages, such as “I the LORD do not change” unintended or disproportionate weight. John Frame, to this point, argues that “metaphysical statements” that denote God’s immutability are vastly outnumbered by passages where God describes himself with “mutabilist” language—language employed by God within the economy of salvation that, at face value, presents God relationally changing states of being. He writes, “One can argue that the metaphysical statements should take second place to the mutabilist ones in a legitimate hermeneutic.”⁶⁰ Frame rightfully concedes that “frequency” of such *mutabilist* language “does not equal primacy” but his point stands. *All* of God’s employed emotional language is taken into consideration—not reducing any emotional expression to “non-fundamental” lesser status to *apophatic, negative* descriptions of what God is *not*. While there is utility to apophatic language, to speak *meaningfully* about God cannot be limited to apophatic description (i.e. trying to describe a painting simply by stating which painting it is *not*). The entire corpus of Scripture is given to us so we can speak of God in cataphatic, positive descriptions, where there is real predication and affirmation of his attributes. He is The Great *I AM*, not The Great *I AM NOT*.

58. Rob Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2013), 195–96.

59. Kuske, *Biblical Interpretation*, 126.

60. John M. Frame, “Scholasticism for Evangelicals: Thoughts on All That Is In God by James Dolezal,” *FRAME-POYTHRESS.ORG*, 25 November 2017, <https://frame-poythress.org/scholasticism-for-evangelicals-thoughts-on-all-that-is-in-god-by-james-dolezal/#fn2>.

III. *DE ANTHROPOLOGIA*: ESTABLISHING THE LESSER REFERENCE

The Great *I AM* who has revealed himself cataphatically in Scripture is the same God who made man, a composite *physical* and *spiritual* being built for eternal communion with God and fellow man. All throughout Scripture, the revealed God *constantly* relates himself to man via comparison, moving from the *familiar domain* of man (the reference) to the unfamiliar domain of God (the referent) so man can draw meaningful inferences from the unfamiliar domain.⁶¹ God's frequent use of *man* as a reference point cues us to begin with anthropology as well.

The Emotive Ontology of Man

The essence of man is *dichotomous*: body and soul. When God fashioned man, Adam and Eve were made in the image of the Triune God. This image was a non-essential attribute given to man as a gift that was to *powerfully and positively* impact the very *organs of the soul* that collectively constitute man's *activity* and *passivity*: the intellect, will, and emotions. Thus, we do not *possess* emotions, as if they are a non-essential attribute. By personality, we *are* emotional.

The word *emotion* did not come into prominence in the English language until the 19th century. The word, as its Latin etymology suggests, denotes a feeling that transitively *moves* from within a subject to *without*. The more historically theological term used to describe the affective domain of persons was the word *passion*. To *be passionate* about something or someone can denote an intense, active emotive interest. *Compassion*, *sympathy*, and *empathy* are words etymologically derived from *passion* (*pati*, πάσχω), each emotively describing a positive

61. D. Gentner and L. Smith, *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior: Analogical Reasoning*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Elsevier Inc., 2012), I:130.

pathos (πάθος) within a subject towards another. These words, albeit sharing etymological roots from *pati* and πάσχω, are represented scripturally with *different* vocabulary. The Church Fathers reflected this theological distinction between such emotions and *passions*.⁶² Thus, *compassion*, *sympathy*, and *empathy* are to be delineated from what the Church Fathers defined as *passions*.

The Patristics would primarily use the term *passions* to denote “inordinate motions, or motions contrary to nature, reason, and morality.”⁶³ In other words, *passions* are intense emotive expressions that *negatively* denote an impulsivity and lack of self-control. Similarly, the Greek verb πάσχω, as it appears in New Testament Scripture, overwhelmingly denotes the undergoing of *change*, or enduring something bad, such as suffering or pain. On the flipside, the Fathers, such as Augustine, upheld a *positive* side of *passions*.⁶⁴ Even in English, such passionate expressions like “falling in love” and “being smitten” denote a positivity to *passion* in some circumstances. Both positive and negative *passions* share one thing in common: *passivity*.

The theological sense of *passion*, anthropologically speaking, shares terrain with *emotion*, but they are *not* synonymous. Whether the passion is positive or negative, *passions* cause the patient *to be* in some new way, a mode of “receiving actuality.”⁶⁵ To experience *passions* implies a *necessity* for *passive potency*, or “the potential to be affected and undergo change.”⁶⁶ While *passion* necessarily implies *emotion*, this is not inversely true. Many

62. Gerald Bray, “Suffering Servant, Sovereign Lord: Can God Suffer?,” *Modern Reformation* 8.2 (2007).

63. Ronald S Baines et al., *Confessing the Impassible God: The Biblical, Classical, & Confessional Doctrine of Divine Impassibility*, 2015, 442.

64. Amy M. Schmitter, “Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Theories of the Emotions,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, n.d., <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/LD1Background.html#Aug>.

65. James Dolezal, “Panel Discussion on Divine Impassibility,” 17 April 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut4qIgf9Hik>.

66. Baines et al., *Confessing the Impassible God*, 442.

theologians, to articulate that distinction, use the word *affections* to describe positive, *active* “motions of the mind and will” towards an object.⁶⁷ This definition works, but it *could* be misconstrued as simply movements of a person’s intellect and will, but not *feelings*.

Likewise, forcing this strict trichotomous delineation “easily overlooks and forgets the unity of the entire life of the soul, and leads to a diminution of this marvelous life.”⁶⁸ The intentional interweaving of emotion with the human intellect and will is not only affirmed scripturally but scientifically. Emotions are intended to not only ensure human relationships would be healthy, but also that human *reason* would be healthy. Neural constructs intimately associated with emotion not only assist rationality and critical thinking but are crucial for the formulation and adherence to moral values and ethical behavior. In addition, modern science affirms humans are not just passively emotional, but *actively* emotional. Emotions can be controlled, conditioned—even *created* by the subject.⁶⁹ Thus, for this discussion, *emotion* will be defined as *a category of feeling within a person towards another person or thing*.

The Primary Emotion

Modern psychology breaks up the affective domain of humans into *moods*, *secondary emotions*, and *primary* emotions. Primary emotions are the *basic* foundation for categorizing our feelings. All emotional expressions are manifestations of *primary* emotions, either as prolonged variants (moods) or composite mixtures (secondary emotions).⁷⁰ Psychologist Robert Plutchik theorized there are *eight* basic primary emotions, grouped up into four opposing pairs: joy and sadness,

67. Baines et al., *Confessing the Impassible God*, 440.

68. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage I*, I:181.

69. See Appendix 1 for a brief survey on modern neuroscience and psychology of emotions

70. Robert Plutchik, *Emotion: Theory, Research, and Experience*, ed. H. Kellerman (New York: Academic, 1980), I:3–33.

anger and fear, trust and distrust, surprise and anticipation. Paul Ekman, Wallace Friesen, and Phoebe Ellsworth postulated *six basic emotions*: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise. Jaak Panksepp proposed *seven*: seeking, rage, fear, lust, care, panic, and play.

Ironically, the emotion considered “one of the most prototypical emotions” among lay psychologists, *love*, does not make the cut in any of these models.⁷¹ These and many other prominent theories on emotion exclude love as a primary emotion, arguing that love is “a mixture of other emotions such as joy, anxiety, and jealousy...that it is a sentiment or attitude rather than an emotion...that, unlike happiness, sadness, and irritability, it cannot occur without an ‘object’...” et. al.⁷² Professor of Psychology Phillip R. Shaver would disagree, contesting that to deprive the emotion that is “the subject of so many emotional poems, songs, and life stories” of ‘basic’ status seems highly problematic, if not counter-intuitive.⁷³ Shaver, along with his associates Hillary Morgan and Shelley Wu, believes that their conducted studies affirm not only a *universality* to love, but that love meets the scientific criteria for a basic emotion. W. Gerrod Parrott, a Professor of Psychology at Georgetown University, would concur, and includes love in his model of primary emotions.⁷⁴ Psychologist Richard Lazarus included *love* as well.

Similar disagreement on the nature of love can even be found in the Christian church. In fact, some theologians have insisted on defining love as an *action*, not as an *emotion*, but is this a scripturally tenable position? Matt Perman, a writer from *desiringgod.org*, would say *no*:

“That love involves not only the will, but also the affections, is born out in everyday experience. Imagine a husband who seeks the welfare of his wife, but doesn't enjoy doing it. Would his wife feel loved? We doubt it. Even if the husband did not *dislike* serving his wife, but simply was

71. Phillip R. Shaver, Hillary J. Morgan, and Shelley Wu, “Is Love a ‘Basic’ Emotion?,” *Personal Relationships* (1996): 81.

72. Shaver, Morgan, and Wu, “Is Love a ‘Basic’ Emotion?,” 81.

73. Shaver, Morgan, and Wu, “Is Love a ‘Basic’ Emotion?,” 81.

74. W. Gerrod Parrott, ed., *Emotions in Social Psychology: Essential Readings*, Key Readings in Social Psychology (Philadelphia: Psychology Press, 2001), 36.

indifferent in doing it, she still would not feel loved. This is because we intuitively recognize that emotions are an essential part of love. Love includes not just willing, but also preferring and wanting and delighting.”⁷⁵

The Apostle Paul would affirm in 1 Corinthians 13:1–3, that acts of ‘love’ not actually flowing from a heart of faith-filled love are the equivalent to garbage. Even among the ancient Hebrews, love was perceived as an action *and* as an emotion. Professor John Brug illustrates this very point with the second table of the law presented in Leviticus 19:18, “Love your neighbor as yourself (וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּאָהַבְתָּ אֶתְּמוֹתְךָ).” Often the verb אָהַב has the accusative object marker אֶת immediately after it to denote the object of the affection; in Leviticus 19:18, however, the אֶת is not found, but rather the לְ preposition (לְרֵעֶךָ). The incorporation of a לְ may simply draw attention to the object that one is loving, but Brug appends that all the instances that the verb אָהַב and the preposition לְ are found together strongly indicate a love that takes action towards something. Love as affection and love *that takes action* are “two sides of the same coin.”⁷⁶ It not only includes “a conscious act in behalf of the person who is loved” but presupposes “a concrete inner disposition” towards the one who is loved.⁷⁷ *That* love is at the *heart* of faith, just as it is at the heart of righteous anger, righteous zeal, righteous grief, and righteous joy.

Augustine considered love the *sole primary emotion*.⁷⁸ He writes, “Love which strains after the possession of the loved object is desire; and the love which possesses and enjoys that object is joy. The love that shuns what opposes it is fear, while the love that feels that opposition

75. Matt Perman, “Is Love an Act of the Will, or an Emotion?,” 23 January 2006, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/is-love-an-act-of-the-will-or-an-emotion>.

76. John F. Brug, “Exegetical Brief: Show Love To Your Neighbor” (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2015), 2.

77. Brug, “Exegetical Brief: Show Love To Your Neighbor,” 2.

78. See Appendix 9 and 10 for an Emotion ‘Wheel’ for Image-Bearing Man and God

when it happens is grief.”⁷⁹ Even *anger* “can and will arise precisely because we love.”⁸⁰

Augustine’s premise of love as *the* primary emotion provides a sufficient conceptual framework moving forward, not only for discussing the emotions expressed by the image-bearing Christian, but understanding the emotions and emotive language that God expresses in Scripture.

Emotional Realism

Behind the neuroscience and physiology of emotions lies an *objective*, romantic underpinning that even the atheist Antonio Damasio, an accomplished neuroscientist and Darwinian theorist, is compelled to acknowledge. He correctly states that “understanding the biological mechanisms behind emotions and feelings” does not prevent us from ascribing *objective quality* to our emotions but remains “perfectly compatible with a romantic view of their value to human beings.”⁸¹ Damasio, however, would argue that emotion’s romantic, ‘objective’ underpinning is a product of emotively evolved human beings, as he would for our sense of morality.

This conceptualization, however, is not viable. Science can only explain what *is*, not what *ought* to be. Darwinian theory is not able to speak *romantically* about what, by its own postulation, are strictly biological mechanisms for survival, albeit ‘more evolved’. Likewise, while it *is* a fact that similar emotive qualities can be studied and observed in animals, to impose animal ‘*emotive*’ ontology univocally onto man would be *just as ridiculous* as imposing man’s moral ontology onto animals. Is a female shark put on trial for *infanticide* after eating her young? Is the cat who *kills* the mouse guilty of *murder*? No. Because there exists an *ontological, metaphysical distinction* between man and animals, not only evident in our moral values and

79. Augustine, *The City of God (de Civitate Dei)*, (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1909), II:30–31.

80. Scrivener, *321: The Story of God, the World, and You*, 87.

81. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error*, 164.

duties, but how such values and duties converge with emotive ontology. What *by nature binds us* epistemologically to morality is not only human reason, but human *emotion*.

Like morality, this objective universality of emotions has been studied *across* cultures. While it *is* true that culture, even language, plays a part in mitigating and influencing emotive expression, studies have shown *strong* cross-cultural consensus, albeit some subtle cultural nuances, when it comes to facially expressing and recognizing emotions, “about what constitutes [a facial expression of] happiness, sadness, disgust, and so forth.”⁸² Damasio, to this point,

“We all have with a certain programmed nature, that is modified by our experiences, so individually we have variations on the pattern, but in essence your emotion of joy and mine are going to be extremely similar. We may express them physically slightly differently, and it is of course graded on the circumstance, but the essence of the process is going to be the same.”⁸³

The materialist would argue it is erroneous that ‘cognitive being’ (including emotion) could possibly exist outside of material anatomy.⁸⁴ The Church Father Thomas Aquinas employed a similar materialist argument, contesting that God could not possibly be emotional because, “[emotion] takes place through some bodily change. None of this can take place in God, since He is not a body.”⁸⁵ Thomas Aquinas believed that real emotional ontology is contingent on physical, *material* anatomy, thus reasoning only Christ according to his *human nature* has emotions. The materialist can only present emotive expression as psychological phenomena that is to ensure the well-being of the given organism, teleologically defined as *psychologism*; however, emotion’s inherent intersection with morality inhibits psychologism out of the gate.

82. Phillippe Goldin, “The Neuroscience of Emotions,” 13 October 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tShDYA3NFVs>.

83. Antonio R. Damasio, “Big Think: How Our Brains Feel Emotion,” 14 June 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsSv1KzdiWU>.

84. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error*, 249–50.

85. Roberto Sirvent, *Embracing Vulnerability: Human and Divine* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 23.

Such materialist argumentation comes to a screeching halt when we turn to Scripture. Consider this: when we die and our bodies rest in the ground and our souls in heaven, does that then mean we, while we sit in heaven, are void of personality because our physical bodies are rotting in the ground or resting in an urn? *Of course not!* People remain beings of personality—beings of intellect, will, and emotion—after we die, either to experience total bliss or total turmoil. To say otherwise would make Christ out to be a *liar* as he speaks of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus, or as he *univocally* promises imminent eternal bliss to a dying thief. Instead, as Scripture clearly presents, emotionality and intellectuality are *metaphysical* components of the human soul. God *will* reunite soul and body one day, but for God’s saints in heaven, the bliss of paradise is not contingent on their glorified body: that bliss is already theirs. Biblical language strongly indicates that *emotions*, while nested in *material*, are not *bound* by material, but rather exist as *concrete, immaterial, mental realities* that can exist even absent of a physical body.

Glen Scrivener, in response to the *materialist*, argues *objective immaterial* is necessary in any meaningful conversation about human norms and behaviors on this side of heaven:

“...the critical factors will be things like reason, truth, rhetoric, emotion, personality, and so on. Yet what do you notice about these factors? None of them are material. The materialist—even while proclaiming materialism—depends decisively on immaterial realities to do so. They are very welcome to make these appeals to reason and the like, but every time they do, they bear witness that mindless matter is not ultimate. We all defer to immaterial realities like logic, language and love, but those realities make best sense on the Christian view since, for Christians, minds and hearts go ‘all the way down’.”⁸⁶

Thus, there is an apparent *emotional realism* that exists—an ultimate ontological *perfection* outside *of man’s anatomy*, that transcends, yet unifies cultures in desired emotional expression. If man is compelled to objectively value and *romanticize* love, then *love exists (realism)*. Love does not exist as some uncreated abstract object (*Platonism*) nor as a created abstract object (*absolute*

86. Scrivener, *321: The Story of God, the World, and You*, 57–58.

creationism). It exists *cognitively*, as a concrete mental object; however, the objective nature of *love* suggests that emotional teleology is anchored in something *beyond psychologism*. Our continual selfishness and failure to love others perfectly beckons us to look beyond ourselves for love's ontological foundation. Thus, even philosophically we can argue that God is the anchoring point for emotive ontology (*divine conceptualism*).⁸⁷ This only affirms what Scripture already says: the reason why so many *feel* that love is the “greatest thing” is because *God is love*.⁸⁸

Imago Dei

The Triune God's one great thought from all eternity was to distinguish mankind from every other thing he created not only by creating them body and soul, but by fashioning them in his image.⁸⁹ The Hebrew words for *image* used in Genesis 1:26 are תְּמוּנָה and צֶלֶם, the former stressing a similarity, an “exact replica”, the latter stressing the idea of representation.⁹⁰ This was not merely authoritative representation, but *visual* representation of the invisible God, as God is spirit (John 4:24). This non-essential attribute was *innately* given to man, not only as a means of representation but as authentic reflection who God is, “corresponding in [man's] entire way of thinking exactly to God's mind.”⁹¹ This representation and reflection of God is effected by seating his image in the human personality.⁹² Johannes Gerhard writes:

“Man was created in the highest innocence, in the highest purity of soul and body, so that in him as in a kind of living mirror the image of God shone forth. Thus the image of divine wisdom shone in the intellect of man; the image of goodness, patience, gentleness, and tolerance in the

87. See Appendix 4 on *Emotional Realism* for further illustration.

88. Scrivener, *321: The Story of God, the World, and You*, 62.

89. J. P. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage II*, ed. Lyle W. Lange and G. Jerome Albrecht (Milwaukee, Wis: Northwestern Pub. House, 1991), 191.

90. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage II*, 179.

91. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage II*, 180.

92. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), I:521.

soul of man; the image of divine love and mercy shone in the feelings of the human heart; the image of divine righteousness, holiness and purity shone in the will of man; the image of friendliness, kindness, and truth in man's deeds and words.”⁹³

Original holiness and righteousness is the *essential core* of the image, which was given to man by God, as man did not possess it *essentially*; the *shell* of God's image, however, *does* essentially belong to man, that being the organs of the human soul: the intellect, will, and emotions.⁹⁴ God created man to be *relational* beings of personality. Through the human personality's intimate possession of the *core* of God's image, the *shell* in turn is powerfully and positively impacted: they can authentically reflect the very personality of God. W.H.T. Dau comments to this point,

“[Mankind] was righteous because his essence and actions were in perfect conformity with the will of his Maker. His human intellect, will, and affections were at no point out of harmony with the divine intellect, will, and affections. God had put the attributes of holiness and righteousness which exist in Him as His very essence into man as created gifts and as reflections of that perfection which exists in him essentially.”⁹⁵

It was by virtue of *imago Dei* that *perfect harmony* existed between God's personality and man's.⁹⁶ Man could carry out God's will with perfect diligence. Man could intellectually examine the thoughts of God. Such harmony with God's personality implies a harmonization of *affective* domain, too; with the giving of the image of God, a “harmony of man's emotions with God's emotions was also given...”⁹⁷ This is not to say that Adam and Eve's personalities were univocally equivalent to that of God's. On the contrary, man's intellect and emotions are limited,

93. Johann Gerhard et al., *On Creation and Angels: On Providence ; On Election and Reprobation ; On the Image of God in Man before the Fall*, Theological Commonplaces VIII–XI (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 267.

94. Daniel M. Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds: The Splendor of Christian Doctrine* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015), 169.

95. C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel: Thirty-Nine Evening Lectures*, trans. W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1897), iii.

96. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage II*, 183. It should be noted that this was *not* a reflection by virtue of *faith*, nor is *imago Dei* synonymous with *faith*: *faith*, as fallen humanity knows it, was “foreign” and unnecessary to pre-fall humanity.

97. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage II*, 181.

particularly by time and space. God’s personality is *vastly higher* than man’s, yet *imago Dei* afforded authentic relation between God and man; this authentic relation was intentionally designed by God so man would be his authentic reflection as man carried out his vocations.

After the fall, however, the image’s core was *completely* lost, and harmony devolved into dissonance. The limitations of man’s intellect, emotions, and will were compounded as a result of man’s *new* non-essential attribute—the sinful nature—which negatively impacts his intellect, will, and emotions. The intended harmony of the organs of the soul devolved into dissonance, too. We daily rationalize our coldness. We perceive *emotion* as weakness. We let *feelings* impulsively drive decisions. We treat the people around us as props and pawns—not people. We feed our jealousy, anger, and hate. We are *passionate* about sin and sate such sinful hunger.

But let not the fall into sin convince us that God’s once “very good” creation was never good at all. Even after the fall, there remains a *sufficiency* to man’s intellect, will, and emotions. The natural knowledge of God (intellect) and the human conscience (emotion) bear witness to this cognitive sufficiency; it is by them that invisible attributes of God are known, just as it is by them that men have no excuse (Rom 1:20; 2:12–15). This sufficiency is reiterated as God himself *speaks* to man’s intellect, will, and emotions through his Word. It is in God’s Word we discover that we have grossly fallen short and do not have a righteousness before God to call our own on our own; however, it was for that very reason that Jesus, the *essential image of God*, came.

Through the creation of faith in Jesus by the working of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is *subjectively* justified, and the image of God, referred to in the New Testament as the *new man* is *objectively* renewed and restored.⁹⁸ The restored new man now even fellowships in the nature of

98. Ephesians 4:23–24, note the Aorist, “τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον κτισθέντα”

God.⁹⁹ This renewing and restoring continues into the believer’s sanctified life as the believer *grows* in knowledge of the God who created and saved us.¹⁰⁰ By the Holy Spirit’s working through the means of grace, we are *tuned in* and *tuning in* to God’s emotion: our anger can be righteous (Eph 4:26); we delight in God’s law (Ps 119:97); we mourn with those who mourn (Rom 12:15); we detest wickedness (Ps 26:5); we love like he has loved us (1 John 4:19). The new man strives “to become in life what we already are by faith (i.e., holy and righteous).”¹⁰¹ Only in heaven will this image be fully restored—made perfect like Jesus.¹⁰² Nevertheless, image-bearing man, though flawed, is used by the invisible God to communicate his flawless nature visually in their thoughts, words, and acts, including those of emotion.

Because of the *imago Dei*, we can posit that the emotive language employed by God is not *anthropomorphic*, but *theomorphic*. God created man’s personality to be sufficient means to model his very own personality. The incarnation of Christ only affirms this sufficiency, for in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form (Col 2:9). He is the visible image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). As God’s image-bearing children, “what we reflect in our emotions is a human form of divine life. Rather than speaking of anthropomorphisms in relation to God we should talk of how we embody characteristics of God.”¹⁰³ Other than God and apart from God, *no one* can produce his divine agape love; the image-bearing Christian, however, *can*. Because of *imago Dei*, a *linguistic bridge* has been opened for ontological discussion: as we *properly* predicate emotion to man, *imago Dei* allows us to posit emotion *properly* predicated to God.

99. 2 Pet 1:4, note the Aorist, “γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως”

100. Col 3:10, note the Present Passive, “τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακαινούμενον”

101. Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds*, 208.

102. 1 John 3:2, note the Future, “ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα”

103. Chad Bird, “Divine (Im)Passibility.”

IV. THE ONTOLOGICAL BRIDGE OF ANALOGY

In the Old Testament alone, there are over 840 references of God employing emotional language, with nearly another hundred in the New Testament.¹⁰⁴ That said, it would be rather difficult to read Scripture and walk away with the impression that God is emotionless. Our hermeneutic states this language *has intended meaning*, so what do such emotional comparisons to man *meaningfully* say about God? Or are these better understood as *mere* anthropopathisms?

Equivocism and Univocism

One option is to translate such language *equivocally*—that the emotive language God uses and the emotive ontology of man would be completely disassociated (i.e. trees have *bark* and dogs *bark*). Subscribers of equivocism contend that God uses emotional language *strictly* to communicate something about his transcendent being we can never understand—*merely anthropopathic condescension* due to complete ontological dissimilarity. *Wholly other* theology, a God *beyond* understanding and authentic relation, leans, if not falls, in this category.

Univocism, however, argues that the emotional language of God is the exact same as mankind (i.e. a “delicious” cake and a “delicious” dinner). Proponents of univocism argue the emotional words employed by God reflect something not just authentically real, but near or wholly synonymous to man, citing the incarnation, *imago Dei*, and *sola Scriptura*. Open Theists, Process Theologians, and many contemporary Evangelicals subscribe to this understanding.¹⁰⁵

104. Voorwinde, “Does God Have Real Feelings?,” 1.

105. See Appendix 5 for diagrams illustrating Univocal, Equivocal, and Analogical Interpretations

The Hermeneutical Necessity of Analogy

Equivocal and univocal interpretations of God’s emotions, while each bearing emotional and logical appeal, nevertheless are *logically* and *scripturally* untenable. Consider man, who is a being who moves from *potentiality to actuality*, and God, in whom is *no* potentiality—just *pure actuality*, “pure uncreated active potency, or power unmixed with any passive potency or potentiality.”¹⁰⁶ The following line of logic further illustrates man and God’s difference of being:

- 1) Actuality is real; that is, it has being;
- 2) potentiality is real; that is, it has being;
- 3) potentiality is really distinct from actuality;
- 4) if potentiality had being in the same, univocal sense in which actuality does, then it wouldn’t be really distinct from actuality;
- 5) if potentiality had being only in an equivocal sense, then it wouldn’t have being at all.¹⁰⁷

Not only are univocal and equivocal interpretations logically unsound, they present more doctrinal problems than they solve, pitting God’s attributes against each other to resolve the perceived tension which leads to a qualification of God’s attributes or their abandonment.

The self-portrait painted by the biblical God *positively* distinguishes himself from all other gods and philosophical bodies. To those who would pit other conceptions of divinity against him, he simply says in Isaiah 46:5, “To whom, then, can you compare me; To whom can I be likened—says the Holy One.” How peculiar, then, that the God who can never be compared to *man-made gods* emotively relates himself to man! If equivocal and univocal means are unviable, then the *only possible sense* remaining is one of *analogy*. Human beings (who constantly move from potentiality to actuality) have ‘being’ in a sense that is *analogous* to that which God has it (who is *pure actuality*). This argument needs little pushing in light of Scripture, because God *constantly* relates himself to people via literary mode of analogy.

106. Baines et al., *Confessing the Impassible God*, 442.

107. Edward Feser, *Five Proofs of Existence* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2017), 180.

The language of analogy is “the affirmation of a similarity between two different things.”¹⁰⁸ As mentioned earlier, analogy moves from a familiar domain (the reference) to an unfamiliar domain (the referent) in order to draw inferences from the unfamiliar domain.¹⁰⁹ This affords us a framework for speaking not just meaningfully but *properly* about God. There are two modes of analogy that are employed in Scripture: *analogy of attribution* (*extrinsic* and *intrinsic*), and *analogy of proportion* (*proper* and *improper*).¹¹⁰ The former mode, analogy of attribution, postulates that due to God being the uncaused cause, that which is caused must logically bear analogical similarity to its causative agent. Because God is the self-sufficient primary analogate, it is no surprise that “in him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).” The second mode, analogy of proportion, focuses on *scaling up* the comparison, typically in the form of *lesser-to-greater* relationships. The types of analogy within those two modes can be sorted into two descriptive categories: analogy of improper predication and analogy of proper predication.¹¹¹

Analogies of Improper Predication

Improper Predication is a category of analogy where the predicated thing “exists figuratively in one of the analogates.”¹¹² This is also known as *metaphoric* or *figurative* analogy. The two types of improper predicative analogy are *extrinsic analogy* and *analogy of improper proportion*. Such predication is *non-real* or *non-literal*, thus *improper*.

108. Baines et al., *Confessing the Impassible God*, 440.

109. Gentner and Smith, *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior: Analogical Reasoning*, I:130.

110. Philosophy and Ethics, “The Concept of Religious Language as Analogy,” 12 January 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHW4sbHYEyg&t=186s>.

111. See Appendix 11, 12, 13, and 14 for diagrams illustrating Improper and Proper Predication

112. Baines et al., *Confessing the Impassible God*, 442.

Extrinsic Analogy

Extrinsic attribution describes a *non-real, non-literal* relationship of ontology in terms of *cause* and *effect*. For example, health is *caused* by medicine, but medicine does not need to possess health as a characteristic for it to *cause* health. Medicine has a *relationship* to health, but health cannot be *properly predicated* to medicine. Thus, to the question at hand, extrinsic attribution could only say that God's relationship with *emotion* is one of *causative agency* imposing a characteristic upon the *effect*, like a foot impressing its print in the sand; however, the relationship between the foot and the print is not one of ontology, but of cause and effect. The effects *do* allow the observer to note characteristics of the cause (via the natural knowledge of God and the human conscience); however, to the task at hand, extrinsic analogy is significantly limited in its ability to speak concretely about God's ontology. This type of analogy is closely associated with *improper analogy of proportion*.

Improper Proportion Analogy

Analogies of proportion, both proper and improper, deal with lesser-to-greater comparisons. In both analogies of proportion, the predication is always scaled *up* from the lesser reference to the greater referent. In the case of *improper* proportion, a concrete quality is *abstracted* from the reference and then concretely predicated to the referent, however to a greater degree. For example, God comparing himself to a rock is *not* saying he is made of stone, but rather the *concrete* qualities of stone, such as strength or reliability (*concrete quality A*) is framed as an *abstraction* which God possesses *concretely* but in a significantly different way (*concrete quality B*). The qualities are *not* the same; there remains a relationship, but it is not a *real, literal* one. A common example of analogy of improper proportion is *anthropomorphism*, where God describes himself with human anatomy. When *eyes* are *improperly* predicated to God, an *abstracted*

quality of *eyes* (i.e. seeing, knowing) is *concretely* then predicated to God to a higher degree (i.e. omniscience, omnipresence). The second example of such analogy is *anthropopathism*.

Analogies of Proper Predication

The second category of analogy is that of proper predication. Proper predication is analogical predication where the quality which is being predicated exists *properly* or *formally* in both the reference and the referent—*both* analogates.¹¹³ This category of analogy is also known as *literal analogy*, because it predicates *literal likeness* between two analogates of similar internal or causal structure.¹¹⁴ Analogies of proper predication describe a *real* relationship between the analogates where concrete, literal predication takes place. The two types of analogy in this category are *intrinsic attribution* and *proper proportion*. These two types of analogy allow us to “make literal, positive statements about God and his nature” via proper predication.¹¹⁵

Intrinsic Analogy

Intrinsic attribution describes a *real* relationship in terms of *cause* and *effect*; however, the *cause* is both the *cause* and the *effect*, like an artist painting a self-portrait.¹¹⁶ The artist (the cause) paints a picture of the artist (the effect *and* the cause). Scripturally, intrinsic analogy is affirmed by the doctrine of *imago Dei*. God the Holy Spirit (the cause) creates and strengthens faith through Word and Sacrament. Faith is worked in the heart of man, and the image of God is renewed and restored (the effect *and* the cause). Thus, the image-bearer’s wisdom is that of

113. Baines et al., *Confessing the Impassible God*, 443.

114. Gentner and Smith, *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior: Analogical Reasoning*, I:130.

115. Feser, *Five Proofs of Existence*, 183–84.

116. Philosophy and Ethics, “The Concept of Religious Language as Analogy.”

God's. Our *goodness* is also that of God's. Even our righteous acts belong to God.¹¹⁷ Similarly, the love which God brings about in the hearts and minds of people, albeit a flawed impression, is a genuine reflection of *his* love (2 Tim 1:7). We could say the same then for other righteous emotive expressions, such as delight, zeal, compassion, and joy. Thus, intrinsic attribution is describing a *real* ontological similarity between the cause (God) and the effect (image-bearing man), because characteristics of the cause are *worked* in the effect by virtue of *imago Dei*. Intrinsic attribution *would* properly predicate emotions to God; this predication to God's ontology is scaled up from image-bearing man by analogy of proper proportion.

Proper Proportion Analogy

Where analogy of *improper* proportion articulates a *nonliteral, non-real* relationship between analogates, analogy of proper proportion articulates a *real, literal, ontological* relationship between analogates in a manner proportionate to the ontology of each analogate. An example of this would be predicating *life* to man and God: "...life exists formally (i.e. essentially) in both [God and man], though always in a manner proportionate to the mode of each being."¹¹⁸ *Wisdom* is properly predicated to image-bearing man and God; however, God's wisdom, in proportion with his being, *must* be scaled *up* from the wisdom of man. Similarly, proper predication *would* affirm that God's emotional language *is* properly predicated to himself; however, it would scale such emotions *up* in proportion to God's being. God's emotive quality is *vastly greater* than ours. It is pure, perfect, eternal, and relentless.¹¹⁹

117. Lyle W. Lange, *God so Loved the World: A Study of Christian Doctrine* (Milwaukee, Wis: Northwestern Pub. House, 2005), 360.

118. Baines et al., *Confessing the Impassible God*, 443.

119. See Appendix 11, 12, 13, and 14 for diagrams illustrating Improper and Proper Predication

Analogies of proper proportion, through the avenues of *lesser-to-greater comparisons* and *greater-to-lesser imperatives*, open a two-way ontological bridge. This bridge allows us to not only talk meaningfully—even properly about God’s emotional language in Scripture, but to talk *purposefully* (teleologically) about our own emotions, too. In both modes of analogy, our personal God associates his being with other personal beings—either to be a source of comfort, or to serve as a model and motivation.

The Lesser-to-Greater Comparison: Upward Movement

The lesser-to-greater comparison moves *upward* from man to God. Consider this analogy Jesus shared with his disciples in Luke 11:11–13:

“Which of you fathers,” Jesus says, “if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

If our emotions are *univocally* that of God’s, why would Jesus bother to make a distinction? If we are to understand such language *equivocally*, the lesser-to-greater comparison sinks, and Jesus would be *guilty* of crafting a false representation of God! Jesus is speaking *analogically*. Even sinner-saint Christian dads operate *lovingly and compassionately* in the best interest of their children. Yet, *how much more* (πόσω μᾶλλον) is our God’s love for us!

One might contest that Jesus is using the analogy *improperly*, especially in light of describing earthly fathers as *wicked* (εἰ οὖν ὑμεῖς πονηροὶ ὑπάρχοντες); this, however, is an untenable position for a number of reasons: 1) the audience of the parable are *disciples*, believing Christians who want to know how to pray; 2) the existence of the sinful nature does not change the fact that the Christian is a *new creation*; 3) the restoration of *imago Dei* warrants us to see such language as *proper predication*; 4) the comfort in this analogy would be substantially

emptied if it were *not* speaking in terms of a *real, literal* relation of ontology. This parable, via proper predication, affirms *real* comfort—not in the similarity of emotive ontology, but in the *dissimilarity*; the *real* similarity, however, is linguistically necessary to get us to that comfort.

The Greater-to-Lesser Imperative: Downward Movement

Just a chapter earlier in Luke 10:25–37, Jesus employed *another* analogy to indirectly illustrate the amazing, unconditional love of our God: the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus then tells us, to “Go and do likewise,” literally “Go and love *exactly the same way*” (Πορεύου καὶ σὺ ποιεὶ ὁμοίως).¹²⁰ This greater-to-lesser imperative is stated in no uncertain terms when Jesus commands his disciples in John 13:34, “Love one another *just as I have loved you*” (καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς).¹²¹ This is not an *equivocal* command; the image-bearing Christian *can* model the very love of Christ—our model and motivation. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love because [God] first loved us (ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν, ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς).” This chiasmic parallelism between the love we show and the love we are shown from God reaffirms that our righteous emotive expressions bare God’s very heart. By the creation of faith, the restoration of *imago Dei*, and God’s indwelling in the heart of believers, we can *go and do likewise*. The Christian *loves* not just that the world would know we are Christ’s disciples (John 15:35, ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκονται πάντες ὅτι ἐμοὶ μαθηταὶ ἐστε), but that the world would see us and see God (Matt 5:16). Authentic reflection requires authentic relation. It is *scriptural* to predicate emotion to God.

120. Some argue Paul’s use of ὁμοιοπαθεῖς as he relates himself to those in Lystra and Derbe in Acts 14:15 is affirming he is *not emotionally* like God. In response, the word ὁμοιοπαθεῖς *similarly* means “like-natured”, hence the NIV’s translation of “We too are only men, human like you.” Likewise, the majority of the other recorded occurrences of the word are in the context of being of similar nature, being human. If Paul *were* arguing that he emotionally was not like God, Jesus’ use of ὁμοίως in Luke 10:37 would cause direct conflict.

121. See also John 15:12, “αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ ἣ ἐμή, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς.”

V. DE THEOLOGIA: ESTABLISHING THE GREATER REFERENT

We have affirmed the following theses: 1) it is by *faith* that we *trust* all of Scripture to be God-breathed, thus *sufficient* for communicating *properly* about God's ontology; 2) emotions are not contingent on material physiology; 3) *imago Dei* warrants us to use analogical language to properly predicate emotion to God. How, then, do we articulate such predication of emotion?

"God is Love"

Out of all the emotional language God uses in Scripture, *love* is the emotion he uses the most.¹²² God's affection (ἀγαπάω, אָהַבָה, אָהַב, *amor*) is a deep emotion without regard to the worthiness or unworthiness of his love. God's mercy or compassion (ἔλεος, οἰκτιρμός, σπλάγχνον, רַחֲמִים, *miser cordia*) is a love moved by mankind's misery. God is not *like* love. Love is *concretely* anchored in God because he *essentially is love*. Some theologians argue God's sovereignty must sit tantamount to God's love. Yet, it is *God* who gives *love* hermeneutical predominance for understanding who he is. Glen Scrivener, to this point, says, "If God is defined by supremacy then *we* must be defined by submission. Our 'place' with this God could never be 'at his side'. . . . The only place we could fit would be *beneath* his almighty rule."¹²³ All of God's attributes are not vehicles of his sovereignty, but his love.¹²⁴ God abundantly pours out his *general* love to the world, because he truly desires to also pour out his *special* love to them as believers in Christ.

122. Voorwinde, "Does God Have Real Feelings?," 1.

123. Scrivener, *321: The Story of God, the World, and You*, 60.

124. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage I*, I:475–522.

The Trinity, Divine Aseity, and Immanent Love

The love of the Triune God *did not need* the world as an object. As the *only* necessary being, the Triune God was the sole-sufficient object of his love. Gerhard describes this divine *perichoresis*: “In the deity the Father loves the Son as his own substantial image. The Son loves the Father since he was born of his heart from eternity. The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from both, is the essential love of the Father and of the Son.”¹²⁵ The Triune God *could* have existed independently of creation, hence the doctrine of *divine aseity*, from the Latin *a se*, ‘from oneself’. Everything God is, he is of himself from eternity. All created things depend on *him* for being. Thus, the freely given *love of agape* is the reason *anything* outside of God exists.¹²⁶ We were *not* created out of necessity of God’s being, but out of his freely given grace to be a *reflection* of his being. God’s love *moved* him to create a world *ex nihilo* so he could share everything that is him.¹²⁷ Thus, “all of God’s relational displays of love toward the creation are grounded on...the eternal intra-Trinitarian love of God.”¹²⁸ Yet, the God who is *jealous* for our hearts to be his is not jealous out of necessity, as if he would be empty without us; he is jealous for his *name’s sake* and for *our* eternal sake, because *we* are empty without him. This immanent, divine love is foundationally crucial in helping us understand the perceived “fluctuation of God’s covenantal displays of responsive love” that manifest transitively in time within the economy of salvation.¹²⁹

125. Johann Gerhard et al., *On the Nature of God and on the Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity: Exegesis, or A More Copious Explanation of Certain Articles of the Christian Religion (1625)*, Theological Commonplaces Johann Gerhard. Transl. by Richard J. Dinda; [Vol.] Exegesis 2-3 (St. Louis, Mo: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 211.

126. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 74.

127. Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics* (Milwaukee, Wis: Northwestern Pub. House, 1999), 89.

128. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 197.

129. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 199.

God's Transitive Love and Grace

It is the *transitive* love within the economy that *proceeds* from this emotive ontology of perfect, eternal love within the Trinity.¹³⁰ When speaking of God's *transitive love*, we mean God's love as it takes an *object*. In the Greek text of John 3:16, the conjunction ὥστε introduces that *transitive* love was made manifest in time (ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν) as the *result* of God's preceding love for a fallen world (Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον...). This love of God manifests itself through the enacting God's plan of salvation, but God's emotion preceded the action. This *feeling* for creation existed even before creation—God *loved* the fallen world before it even fell, even before the world even loved him! God *loves* and zealously desires regardless if that love is reciprocated. This transitive love manifests not only in God's daily providence for the entire world, but in his unfolding of the entire world's salvation.

“Pure Personality”

The biblical portrait of God is not that of an *impersonal, unrelative God* nor *merely* the ground of *our* being: he is *a being* of “pure personality.”¹³¹ The center of the universe is not a divine algorithm, but “a being who thinks, chooses, and feels.”¹³² *Persons* think, not their intellect or wisdom.¹³³ And the *persons* of the Triune God are perfectly pure in their personality. God is, as John Goldingay states, “not an idea, nor merely the ground of my being,” but *a being* of pure relation and personality who *truly* joys and delights, who is jealous and zealous, who loves and

130. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 199.

131. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage II*, 180.

132. Ross Anderson, “Does God Have Emotions?,” *PursueGod.Org*, 2 October 2015, <https://www.pursuegod.org/does-god-have-emotions/>.

133. Frame, “Scholasticism for Evangelicals: Thoughts on All That Is In God by James Dolezal.”

cares.¹³⁴ A God who is eternally personal affirms he is also eternally loving.¹³⁵ This very personality of God becomes manifest in our lives as image-bearing Christians: when people see our good deeds, they see the very ontological character of God (Matt 5:15–16).

Immanence and Transcendence

R. Reed Lessing, in his comments on Isaiah 40:27, notes that “just because Yahweh is transcendent and holy does not mean he is aloof and uncaring. To the contrary! His majesty is employed in compassion.”¹³⁶ *Deus revelatus* is *immanently present*—not just *operationally*, but *essentially*. God is immanent, penetrating and permeating both time and space, not by volition but *by necessity*; in other words, *all* of God’s attributes are essential. The *visibility* of God’s immanence was certainly contingent on creation (i.e. Michael Jordan’s dunking ability being contingent on there being a hoop and a basketball), but there is no change within God. God was *Creator even before* there was a creation. There is *no space* at *any time* God cannot be found. He *fills* the heavens and the earth. This immanent permeation of time and space does not make him bound by them.¹³⁷ This “entering of time” of God takes on additional meaning as God takes on flesh and enters time as *true Man*. Not only does Jesus as true God *and* true Man promise to be with us always, but he promises he *is* immanently present *sacramentally* in the Lord’s Supper. “*This is my body...this is my blood...for you.*” The Holy Spirit, in Word and Sacrament, is *always* immanently at work where these means of grace are present. God *freely* uses means not out of limitation of his divine power, but so that *we* would know with certainty where this

134. John Goldingay, *To the Usual Suspects: One Word Questions* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 47.

135. Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 220.

136. R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 40-55*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia Pub, 2011), 181.

137. Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, I:440.

immanent God could be found. The *same* God who is immanently active in essence and operation in his means of Grace is immanently active in essence and operation in those in whom he dwells by faith (*unio mystica*). The greater-to-lesser imperative is not an impossible task for image-bearing man through whom God works, in whom God dwells. Certainly, God transcends the relationships in which he graciously invests. Yet, God, in Word and Sacrament, *personally* presents himself not as a God who is distant or dispassionate, but a God who is *personally near*. He is immanently committed to calling *all* to repentance and bringing his people home.¹³⁸

Omniscience

Contra extreme Arminianism (i.e. open theists and process theologians) God *can* be a God of *absolute* omniscience—possessing *free knowledge, middle knowledge, and natural knowledge*—and be a God of relationality and personality.¹³⁹ This objection of extreme Arminianism is likely a result of projecting *human* cognition onto God. For us, knowledge *does* influence our emotional expression. If a wife knew with absolute certainty that her husband would cheat on her in two months, it would negatively impact her emotional expression towards him during those two months. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for her to love him. Not so with God! The *literal* analogy to be embodied by Hosea and Gomer was not one of anthropopathic nature.¹⁴⁰ The prophet's commanded love and faithfulness were properly and proportionately predicated to

138. R. Reed Lessing, *Isaiah 56-66*, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 224.

139. God's natural knowledge is knowledge about what is necessarily true (i.e. exhaustive knowledge of his own nature or of creation), but also all possible realities that *could* be. God's free knowledge is knowledge about what *will* be, both in respect to what he has willed to happen or by what actions of man he allows. God's middle knowledge is knowledge of all contingent realities that *would* be based on man's freedom in non-sanctified matters (this definition of middle knowledge has been soteriologically redefined from Luis de Molina's definition).

140. John C. Peckham, "Theophatic or Anthropopathic? A Suggested Approach to Imagery of Divine Emotion in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of the NABPR: Perspectives in Religious Studies* 42.4 (2015): 347, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/theology-christian-philosophy-pubs/79>.

God, even in spite of knowledge of future unfaithfulness (Hos 11:8–9). Future covenant breaking did not invalidate God’s sincerity in re-ratifying the Sinaitic covenant, nor did it invalidate God’s desire to give them the blessings he originally promised (Deut 31:14–29). Knowledge of future sin does not validate withholding love and forgiveness from the contrite in the present (Matt 18:21–22). Nor does knowledge of future rejection invalidate God’s desire for real relationship as he calls people to be his disciples (Mark 14:21). When we are faithless, he remains faithful, even in spite of knowledge of future faithlessness, because God cannot disown himself.

Not only is this comforting in relation to God’s *faithfulness*, but this is also comforting that the omniscient God remains emotionally present with us in times of suffering. Rob Lister, to illustrate this point, recalls a time when he and his son were on the way to the doctor’s office to give his son a vaccination. Lister knew his son was going to cry. “In a sense,” he comments, “I foreknew my son’s pain.” When they arrived, the nurse informed him that he would have to hold his son’s legs still—meaning he would have to look at his son face-to-face while the shot would be administered. “And though I knew exactly what was coming, the moment his tears began to flow, mine did too.”¹⁴¹ For a God who exists unbound by time, “foreknowledge” is but present knowledge to him.¹⁴² A God whose omniscience is exhaustive never learns, never is caught off guard, nor is surprised into an emotional reaction. Similarly, God knows the outcome of every conceivably possible event. Yet God’s love, contrary to that of man’s, goes essentially unabated by any mode of his divine knowledge. We see this at the tomb of Lazarus, where the omniscient God, who had broadcasted only a few days earlier that he would raise Lazarus, weeps.

141. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 241.

142. Augustine, “*De Divers. Quaest Ad Simplic. II*,” n.d.

God's Will

Jesus was never *Plan B*: he was *always Plan A* (Col 1:13–20). Not only was Jesus appointed as Christ before the foundation of the world, but the Bible, in Revelation 13:8, declares him *slain* before an uncreated world even needed saving. This is *truly* a mystery, but it is a mystery *clearly* presented in Scripture. August Pieper, to this point, writes:

“Christ is the one great thought of God from eternity. Just as nothing is in the revealed Word that does not relate to Christ in some way, so there was and is nothing in the eternal thoughts of God that does not relate to him...All feelings and desires, wishes and wills, plans and conclusions, impulses and movements in God also have Christ as their object and focus.”¹⁴³

This does not mean that God desired nor willed Adam and Eve to fall into sin, nor does this mean that the clear doctrine of predestination dominates our teaching of justification. Where God's will is hidden, we leave it hidden. Yet, God reveals his *antecedent will* to be that all men be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. Conversely, it is God's *consequent will* that he would condemn rejection and unbelief. Those who deny *gratia universalis* and teach *particularism* blatantly deviate from the clear, biblical doctrines, namely universal objective justification and God's universal grace. God's knowledge of future rejection does not change these two doctrinal realities nor qualify the absolute fact that God desires that all men be saved.

Time, Eternity, and God's Primary Emotion

While God is not subject to the passage of time, nor undergoes succession of events, all of God's actions in time are immanent, temporal manifestations of his immanent, eternal ontological qualities. Because God is all being and no becoming, there are *certainly* “contingent emotions” that are only “rightly expressed in the context of fallen creation” (i.e. anger, grief); such *contingent* expressions are *improper predications* that nevertheless are a window into God's

143. Pieper, “The One Great Thought of God,” 217.

“eternally, fixed emotional properties.”¹⁴⁴ However, there are several emotive expressions that could *properly* describe God’s eternal, emotive ontology. God’s joy, bliss, and peace are immanently eternal. Even God’s zeal, jealousy, delight, and compassion could also be properly understood as eternal, all eternally met in the intra-Trinitarian communion.

This *eternality* to God’s personality further reinforces the point that man cannot causally elicit an involuntary response from God in time, as he is not subject to outside coercion; however, this should not be unsettling. There does not need to be such reciprocity between us and God for him to be loving, personal, and relational. God was *all* those things towards us before we were any of those things towards him. He does not “fall in and out of love” with the world he desires to save. The God of eternal personality loves undividedly, perfectly, and incessantly. God’s emotive expressions recorded in Scripture’s chronology are manifestations of a *real*, eternal primary emotion: love. That love may present itself properly or improperly in time, but it nevertheless reflects God’s *love* that is both “timeless and timely.”¹⁴⁵ Likewise, God’s compassion, his zeal, his jealousy, his joy, his delight—even if we can predicate such things properly to God’s eternal emotive ontology—they are still anchored in divine love.

Divine Immutability and Pure Actuality

Divine immutability (*immutabilis*) is a changelessness in both God’s immanent and transitive attributes, naturally including his properties, place, perfections, purposes, and promises.¹⁴⁶ God’s essence and decrees—be them volitional, intellectual, or emotional—are all immutable. There is

144. Bruce A. Ware, *God’s Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 151.

145. Daniel Leyrer, “The Ethics of the Pastoral Epistles” (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 16 January 2019).

146. Baines et al., *Confessing the Impassible God*, 151.

no passivity in the living God's personality, be it matters of God's intellect, will, or emotions. God does not undergo, nor improves or declines in his already eternal awesomeness, otherwise the promise of "*I AM who I AM*" would be obliterated. Likewise, we need not ask irrational, Socratic questions such as "If God's omnipotence implies an ability to change himself, is he truly immutable?" God is *bound* in a sense, but not by *inability*: he is bound to himself by his faithful, loving commitment towards goodness, holiness, and saving his creation. God operates *purely* and *perfectly* in line with his personality, never actively nor passively changing states or modes of being. Philosophically stated earlier, immutability implies God is *pure actuality* (*purus actus*). Thus, God's emotions, according to Johann Gerhard, are neither passive nor accidental. He argues, for example, "Anger in humans is a disturbance of the mind because it is a passive emotion. But God's anger is not a disturbance because it is an active emotion."¹⁴⁷ This lack of passivity in God means his undeserved love remains universally unwavering. Nothing can deter the immutable God's eternal love from taking action in time.

Divine Impassibility

We have inductively arrived at what is indisputably the *beating heart* of this discussion—the doctrine of *divine impassibility*. Impassibility (*impassibilis*) is a hyper-contextualized subset of immutability, pertaining specifically to *God's being as he relates with his creation in time*. Among Evangelical theologians, this doctrine is subject to significant contempt and is thus widely rejected as unscriptural.¹⁴⁸ Such is the case for open theist Clark Pinnock, who believes that the classical doctrine of divine impassibility is derived from the philosophical attribute of

147. Gerhard et al., *On the Nature of God and on the Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity*, 155.

148. See Appendix 8 for critique of impassibility's most common objection: the Hellenization Hypothesis

apatheia (ἀπάθεια), which would render God as unfeeling and unemotional—a “metaphysical iceberg”¹⁴⁹ The wide majority of misunderstandings of this doctrine stem from the assumptions that, for God to be truly loving, personal, and relational, or if emotions are to be predicated concretely to God, there must be a specific reciprocity to God which would require a mutability either in God’s will or his being—that *he must be passible*.¹⁵⁰ As we have seen in this chapter, a God of pure personality, relationality, and emotion is *by no means* inhibited by this doctrine; in fact, *divine impassibility* safeguards each and every one of those divine attributes.

The impassible God is *not impassable nor impassive*.¹⁵¹ Impassibility does *not* exclude authentic divine emotional dimension *in the slightest*. God *is* scripturally affirmed as a God of emotion. *Impassibility* is strictly focused on safeguarding God’s being from any and all inward *change, be it active or passive*, in relation to creation. It *is not necessary* for God to be *subject* to time or *passible*, nor is it necessary to jettison his perfections, his purposes, his immutability, or his aseity for him to be emotional. Any and all emotional affections or impassionedness recorded scripturally in time are gracious manifestations of emotive quality properly predicated to God’s *perfect, eternal* being. Impassibility means that God, in relation to his creation in time, neither actively nor passively changes emotional states of being. In other words, if God’s *primary emotion* is love, then impassibility affirms that God’s love is *unrelenting*, it is *eternal*, and it is freely, fully given. The analogical understanding of emotive language God employs is *not* that God condescendingly adorns himself with anthropic emotion, but that an eternal, ontologically emotional God expresses emotive ontological qualities towards his creation in time.

149. “An Interview with Clark Pinnock,” *Modern Reformation* (1998): 37.

150. See Appendix 7 for a summation and evaluation of other offered definitions of divine impassibility

151. Paul Helm, “Aquinas on Divine Impassibility,” *Helm’s Deep: Philosophical Theology*, 30 November 2010, <http://paulhelmsdeep.blogspot.com/2010/11/aquinas-on-divine-impassibility.html>.

VI. “LOVE NECESSITATES SUFFERING”: DIVINE IMPASSIBILITY AND THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING AND EVIL

We have established not only that emotions are properly predicated to God, but also that divine impassibility safeguards, not nullifies, God’s impassioned personality towards creation; however, *The Problem of Suffering and Evil* compels many Christians to reject the doctrine.¹⁵² They argue for a divine ontology they consider not only more scriptural but more comforting for people in the midst of suffering. Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, a professor of Philosophical Theology at Yale Divinity School, in the wake of losing his own son, rejected divine impassibility as “grotesque”.¹⁵³ The *passibilist* conceives of God, according to the founder of process theology, Albert North Whitehead, as “the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands.”¹⁵⁴ A God who *cannot* suffer, they argue, is a “loveless being.”¹⁵⁵ William Lane Craig and Alvin Plantinga would agree, that a God “who hurts along with his creatures and shares in their suffering” by no means diminishes God’s greatness but enhances it.¹⁵⁶ Why, they argue, deprive people of this antidote to human despair—that God suffers alongside his people *in time*? The passibilist argues that a suffering God communicates God is deeply concerned with and intimately cares for his world—*that to love anything in a sinful world necessitates suffering*.

152. Weinandy, “Does God Suffer?”

153. “Does God Suffer?,” *Modern Reformation* (1999): 45.

154. Thompson, “Process Theology and Emotion: An Introductory Exploration,” 25.

155. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 324, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=4396258>.

156. Craig, “The Problem of Suffering and Evil: Part 1.”

Defining the Analogy of *Anthropopatheia*

They leverage this argument with passages such as Genesis 6:6, “It grieved the LORD (וַיִּנְקַם) that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain (וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֱלֹהִים לְפָנָיו).” What then is the interpretive course when we arrive at language that suggests God is neither omniscient nor immutable? When dealing with passages like Genesis 6:6, the theologian need not resort to univocism and qualify God’s absolute, *classical* attributes; nor does the exegete need not *equivocally* sail around the topic, nor equivocally dismiss the language using *true* statements as “God is in a perpetual state of bliss.”¹⁵⁷ God’s language of grief, anger, and suffering is *analogical* language. Analogy of *improper proportion* guides us through such passages, otherwise classified as *anthropopatheia*. Even though *anthropopatheia* is *improper predicative analogy*, predication is still taking place. Thus, we must be careful as we navigate between Scylla and Charybdis, 1) neither assaulting God’s impassibility, 2) nor assaulting God’s personality and emotive ontology. Jenson, to this point, says:

“That we take God’s personality seriously is vital to the religious life demanded by the gospel. The Bible’s language about God is drastically personal: he changes his mind and reacts to external events, he makes threats and repents of them...If we understand this language as fundamentally inappropriate, as “anthropomorphic,” we do not know the biblical God. Persons do all these things, precisely to be personal...”¹⁵⁸

If *anthropopatheia* is to remain an ecclesiastical term within the church, we need to use it correctly. The improper proportionate analogy of *anthropopatheia* is linguistic condescension employed by God where, 1) for the sake of giving man the dignity of causality as time-bound creatures who, unlike God, *undergo* in time throughout sequence of events, 2) for the sake of

157. The Septuagint translators seemed uncomfortable with a literal translation, so they pivoted *equivocally* from the Hebrew. The LXX renders Genesis 6:6, *καὶ ἐνεθυμήθη ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἐποίησεν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, καὶ διενόηθη*, literally “Then it caused God to consider that he had made man upon the earth, and he deeply pondered it.” See also the LXX for Deut 32:27. See Appendix 6 for other dismissive approaches to *anthropopatheia*.

158. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 222. Jenson is correct, yet the rest of the quote suggests he is a *passibilist*: “...and in that the true God is personal [anthropopathisms] are ontological perfections, not deficiencies.”

affirming his *real* relationality and personality, and 3) for the sake of communicating that he *cares* not only about human activity but has *real* compassion for the people themselves, God *improperly* predicates to himself cognitive limitations *properly* predicated to humans. The abstracted quality from *anthropopatheia*, which is *concretely* predicated to God, is that he is a personal, relational, emotional being. This definition allows us to call *anthropopatheia* metaphoric while simultaneously affirming—not gutting—the language of its intended ontological freight: beneath the contextualized dressing of the metaphor is a personal God of emotion. This definition will guide our study on predicating grief, anger, and suffering to God.

God's Language of 'Grief' and 'Anger'

Several prominent translations render the passive Nifal נִחַן in Genesis 6:6 as “God *regretted/repented* that he had made man.” This legitimate interpretive decision seeks to properly highlight *God's changing his course of action (opera ad extra)*.¹⁵⁹ Let it be restated that God *truly does not regret, relent, nor change his mind (opera ad intra)*.¹⁶⁰ The translation of נִחַן as *regretting* or *relenting* certainly affirms God's change of plans (*opera ad extra*); speaking critically, however, that translation jettisons some intended emotional freight (*opera ad intra*).

A comprehensive look at the onomatopoeic verb נִחַן reveals it is inescapably an emotion-laden verb. In the Piel conjugation, the verb nearly exclusively translates *to comfort, to console, to sympathize, or to extend compassion* towards someone.¹⁶¹ In the more nuanced Nifal conjugation, it is frequently rendered *to pity, to grieve, to be comforted, or to feel compassion*.¹⁶²

159. Amos 7:3; Exod 13:17; Zech 8:14; Exod 32:12; Jer 4:28; 42:10; Jonah 3:9

160. Compare 1 Sam 15:11 (נִחַן) with 15:29 (נִחַן)

161. Isa 49:13; 52:9; 61:2; Ps 86:17

162. Ps 90:13; Jer 31:15; Judg 21:6, 15; Gen 38:12; Ps 77:3; Gen 24:67

Translating יָנַחַם יְהוָה “It *grieved* the LORD” indicates a displeasure with the current situation and that a change of course is imminent; yet, it *also* analogically upholds the compassionate, loving personality of God. God *grieving* is necessary language for God as he communicates himself within the economy; however, God’s self-described grief over a world that has rejected him is not because *he* has lost something, but because *the world* has lost something.¹⁶³ We anchor God’s affection of grief, albeit *improperly predicated*, in the *primary emotion* of God’s eternal love and compassion, because at the heart of *grief* is love, not suffering.¹⁶⁴

Similarly, the heart of *anger* is not suffering, nor is it even *anger*: it is love. Like the affection of grief, God’s anger is an emotive state *improperly predicated* to God within the economy of salvation; yet, like grief, even God’s temporal displays of ‘anger’ are emotive manifestations concretely rooted in his eternal love—God’s *sole* primary emotion. For modern readers of Genesis 6, an entire world wiped clean by eviscerating flood waters may seem extremely difficult to anchor in a divine, eternal, compassionate, loving personality. Yet, even from an anthropological perspective, anger and love are *intimately* connected. A woman, who loves her husband, rightfully burns with anger when he has an affair. How much more for the LORD whose jealousy is a consuming fire which burns for our hearts to be wholly his!¹⁶⁵ True justice exists because God loves what is good.¹⁶⁶ That eternal love of God is not just expressed by *delivering* people eternally from evil, but conversely expressed *through eternal judgement and punishment of evil*—because love *hates* what is evil.¹⁶⁷ Calvary is proof of this.

163. Ravi Zacharias, “Does God Care About Our Happiness?” (Columbia University, 15 February 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vtUQ1BksGQ>.

164. Weinandy, “Does God Suffer?”

165. Deut 4:23–24; See also the Hebrew of Ezek 21:3; Song 8:6, “שֶׁלֶתֶתֶה” “*Yahweh-flame*”

166. Scrivener, *321: The Story of God, the World, and You*, 148.

167. Lange, *God so Loved the World*, 110–19.

On the cross, God’s love burns *for* sinners and *against* sinners: 1) the love of God is shown inversely by not only hating what is evil, but exacting justice upon it; 2) likewise, the love of God is shown by not only punishing someone else in our place but *being that someone else*. We are not sinners in the hands of an angry God. God prefaces this chapter of cataclysmic judgment in Genesis with his *love* as he, for 120 years, graciously and patiently endured the callous rejection of mankind whose “every inclination...was only evil all the time.”¹⁶⁸ The LORD defines himself as the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness.¹⁶⁹ God’s judgements “always stand in the service of his grace.”¹⁷⁰ The flood of righteous judgement that would soon proceed was not the artist dispassionately throwing away the canvass, but lovingly preserving his divine plan to save it.¹⁷¹

God’s Language of ‘Suffering’

We apply the same hermeneutical principles with passages describing God’s suffering. In Genesis 6:6, the Hebrew verb God uses to express *hurt and pain* (עָצַב) harkens back three chapters earlier, when God declared that *pain and suffering* had entered the world as consequence of *man’s* sin, accompanying the lives of every earthly creature. For Adam, the work that was to evoke joy would now be *painful toil* (בְּעִצְבוֹן תֵּאֲכָלֶנָּה).¹⁷² For Eve, the once *painless* gift of bearing children would now include *tremendous pain* (הַרְבֵּה אֲרֻבָּה עִצְבוֹנֶיךָ).¹⁷³ The world has

168. Gen 6:3,5; 1 Pet 3:20

169. Neh 9:31; Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Ps 86:5, 15; Joel 2:13

170. Carl J. Lawrenz and John C. Jeske, *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (Milwaukee, Wis: Northwestern Pub. House, 2004), 236.

171. 1 Pet 3:20,21; 1 Cor 10

172. Gen 3:17

173. Gen 3:16

been *groaning* in pain ever since.¹⁷⁴ This suffering had not existed from all eternity, nor will suffering remain in the new heavens and the new earth.¹⁷⁵ So, it seems *odd* to posit proper predication of an obvious, temporal imperfection to an eternal, perfect God. In addition, *properly* predicating to God movement into and out of new actualities that contingently require the existence of a sinful, broken world undermines God's eternity and aseity. Certainly God, who is spirit, does not possess a physical heart in which to feel pain. Yet, like anger and grief, this language is not *merely* anthropopathic. The word for 'heart' used in Genesis 6:6 (לֵב) was considered the seat of all thought, will, and emotion. God is not "eternally anguished" nor undergoes concurrent suffering; however, God's language of suffering affirms a God of real personality is immanently with us amidst our suffering: *he knows, he cares, and he will fix it.*

Savior > Solidarity

The prospect of a God who *concurrently* suffers in time certainly has emotional appeal at face value, but such proper predication proceeds from *theodicy*, not *theology*. It adversely *robs* people *substantially* of intended gospel comfort. Consider this *proper proportionate analogy* of a doctor and patient. If a person is deathly ill and goes to see a doctor, does the patient request that the doctor contract the same deathly disease? Does the patient ask the doctor to hop on the hospital bed next to him? To moan and groan *in solidarity*? Of course not! We want our doctors to be the operator, not the patient.¹⁷⁶ We want our doctors 1) to *know* us, our symptoms, and our pain, 2) to *care* about us, and 3) to ultimately *fix it*. How this analogy pales in comparison to God!

174. Rom 8:22

175. Rev 7:16–17

176. James Dolezal, *Reformed Forum: Divine Impassibility*, Christ the Center, n.d., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlvmHtGnSck>.

In respect to knowledge, even the best doctor cannot comprehensively *know* the patient. He knows the nature of the patient's disease, but even the best doctor cannot fathom every aspect of the patient's life impacted by that disease. He cannot know the exact depth of the pain, the emotional grief, nor the suffering. The only way a doctor could even come close to such comprehensive knowledge is if he or she got that same disease and then *experienced* it so as to acquire the knowledge in order to more completely understand. Even if that doctor had comprehensive knowledge of the disease, there is no guarantee the doctor can do anything about it. In respect to *the will*, even the best of doctors have limitations. The best doctor is limited in ability and availability: he maintains office hours, he goes on vacation, he has other patients that divide his time and attention, and even he may request a sick day.¹⁷⁷ Yet, even if the best doctor had full, comprehensive knowledge of the disease and was not limited in his ability or availability, that does not mean he will compassionately work for the patient's well-being. It does not mean the doctor even remotely *cares* about the patient.

None of this applies to God. The Creator of all things does not need to *experience* my pain for him to *intimately know every dimension of it*—even more comprehensively than I do (Ps 139). Nevertheless, the Creator of all things took on human flesh to suffer and die, so *I* would know he intimately knows it. The omnipotent God is not locked in some dualistic struggle where he, too, is a perpetual victim to sin and suffering. The Creator of time itself is never strapped for time. He is never out of the office, nor does he take sick days. He is *always* ready to listen. How do I know he is willing and able to answer my prayers? How can I be certain that his comprehensive knowledge of me is working for my eternal good? Because God *cares*. The God of pure personality knows, cares, and is always working for our eternal good (Exod 3:7–8).

177. Gerald Bray, "Suffering Servant, Sovereign Lord: Can God Suffer?"

The Passion of the Impassible God

That is why Jesus, the Son of God from all eternity, came into the world: to make a once-very-good creation very good again by suffering and dying in our place—not because he was *lacking* in compassion and needed to learn about that which he loved, but because our God already was infinitely *rich* in compassion. Yes, Jesus is our brother in suffering, but solidarity is not primarily why he suffered and died. Why? The passibilist is not far from the answer: because “*to love anything in a sinful world necessitates suffering.*” Because the wages of sin is death, God’s plan of salvation would intimately entail suffering and death (Isa 53:10). Solidarity is not what delivers us eternally from sin, death, and the powers of hell, but *sacrifice*. It was the love of God for damned sinners that led Jesus to the cross so that he, once and for all, would suffer and die to forever liberate a fallen world from suffering and death.

The Incarnation & the Communication of Attributes

For this atoning sacrifice to *truly* be infinitely sufficient for all, a *real* communication between the divine and human nature needed to take place. To say otherwise, as many Christian denominations do, would disallow us from saying of Jesus “that God is man and [that] man is God.”¹⁷⁸ According to the *genus idiomaticum*, all attributes of either nature are ascribed to the person of Christ, designated either by a personal name, or by a concrete of either nature. Thus, the emotional ontology of the divine nature would be properly ascribed to the person of Christ. In the same way, the essential emotive ontology of essential man would be properly ascribed to the person of Christ. Both *concretely* (the natures as they appear united in the person of Christ) and *abstractly* (each nature by itself, *per se*) can we predicate emotion to Jesus. This hypostatic

178. Paul Timothy McCain, W. H. T Dau, and F Bente, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions : A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2006), 492.

union does *not* mean the emotive ontology of the divine nature overwhelmed or absorbed the emotive ontology of the human nature (i.e. Apollinarianism). The humanity is not “converted into deity,” nor did the essential properties of the human nature “become the essential properties of the divine nature.”¹⁷⁹ Both natures *per se* supply emotive ontology to the person of Christ. Yet, as the incarnate, essential image of the Triune God, he did *not* embody two personalities.¹⁸⁰ The intellect, will, and emotions attributed to his human nature were in *complete harmony* with the Father’s—*no dissonance* whatsoever. Thus, Christ is “the very visible expression of who God is!”¹⁸¹ Brian Borgman summarizes this perfect emotive harmony between the natures,

“When the Second Person of the eternal Godhead became man, he became man in a way that reflected his deity: he was *God* in human flesh. Consequently, when our Lord Jesus showed emotion or expressed his feelings, we can assume he did so in perfect harmony with his deity. In the incarnation, however, Jesus is also perfect humanity without sin or defect. This means that not only is there a reflection of the divine nature in Jesus’ emotions, it also means the Lord Jesus had a perfect human emotional constitution and perfect emotional expressions.”¹⁸²

Certainly, in respect to Christ’s humiliation, there was uniqueness in his emotive experiences:

Christ, according to his human nature, was *passible*; nevertheless, according to his human nature, his compassion, his joy, his grief, his anger, even his sufferings were *sinless* and *perfect*.

The second genus, the *genus maiestaticum*, states that the essential divine perfections of the divine nature are communicated to the human nature as a gift. This is *not* a reciprocal genus: while divine attributes are predicated to the human nature as a gift, attributes peculiar to the human nature (i.e. the ability to suffer and die) are not reciprocally predicated to the divine nature *at all*. Scripture affirms the ability to suffer clearly belongs essentially and uniquely to the human nature. This is *why* the Second Person of the Trinity took on a human nature, so he *could*

179. Lange, *God so Loved the World*, 260.

180. Meyer, *Our Great Heritage II*, 186.

181. John Brenner, “Anthropology II and Christology” (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1 May 2017).

182. Borgman, “Nothing More Than Feelings,” 28.

suffer and die as vicarious atonement for the world. *To love a sinful, broken world necessitates suffering*; because God truly, passionately loves us, he took on flesh to shed his own blood!

It is the *final genus* that impacts this discussion the most: the *genus apotelesmaticum*.

This affirms that Christ performs all official acts according to *both natures*, each nature in intimate, inseparable communion with the other. The divine and human nature contribute that which is peculiar to each nature, yet every official action is performed respectively as one, undivided act. To those who object by virtue of “God cannot suffer or die,” Luther responds:

“That’s true; yet because in Christ deity and humanity are one person, the Scripture ascribes also to deity everything that happens to humanity, and vice versa. Although deity does not suffer, yet the person who is God suffers in His humanity. In truth God’s Son has been crucified for us, i.e., the person who is God.”¹⁸³

The divine nature of Christ did not *physically* suffer or die as that belongs uniquely to the human nature; however, the divine nature, by virtue of the hypostatic union with the human nature that was “assumed into his personality and whose experience he appropriated,” *suffered and died*.¹⁸⁴

The divine and human nature inseparably passed through the totality of suffering and death—the human nature supplying the ability to suffer and die, and the divine nature sustaining the human nature and giving the suffering and death infinite value. If only the human nature suffered and died, then the person of Christ has not suffered and died, and we would still be dead in our sins.

Theologia Crucis

Clarifying *who* it was who suffered on Good Friday addresses much of the passibilist’s pining for a God who suffers; yet, there is dire need to clarify *what* he suffered. Lack of clarification leads to *depreciation*. Many passibilists, such as Jürgen Moltmann, reverse engineer the *Theology*

183. John C. Jeske, “The Communication of Attributes in the God-Man Christ Jesus” (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1974), 5. Quoting Martin Luther.

184. Schaller, *Biblical Christology*, 68.

of the Cross, contesting it is a temporal window into the *eternal* solidarity or struggle of a passible God who suffers—thus turning the *Theology of the Cross* into a *Theology of Glory*.¹⁸⁵ This *devastatingly depreciates* the cross of its intended gospel comfort. The cross of Christ is radically redefined—no longer a sign of God’s triumph *in time*, but the sign of his *eternal struggle with suffering*, where God “is overcoming it in himself and the world simultaneously.”¹⁸⁶ This depreciation of the cross happens elsewhere in Christendom:

“...many other sects minimize the intensity of Christ’s suffering. Applying their peculiar distinction between the higher and lower phases of soul life, Papists assert that Christ suffered only in the latter, but not in his intellect, nor in his will—an impossible separation of soul activities. This leads them also to deny that Christ suffered the torments of hell, in which the Arminians agree with them. Socinians deny the *reality* of Christ’s suffering *in toto*.”¹⁸⁷

It is true that to love anything in a sinful, broken world necessitates suffering, but by emptying not only 1) the *one* who suffered, but also 2) *what* he suffered, the passibilist then looks for a God who suffers elsewhere—and rob themselves of the everlasting comfort found in the cross. So, what was that suffering? Certainly, the physical suffering and death was a part of drinking the cup the Father had given the Son, for “without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness.”¹⁸⁸ Yet, the suffering and death of the God-Man entailed *far more* than bloodshed. Christ bore the weight of every single sin. The brokenness, sin, suffering, and evil of billions and billions of people was thrown on Calvary’s altar: the hanging trees of America, the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge, the famine of the Great Leap Forward, the gas chambers of Auschwitz. The totality of sufferings and evils past, present, and future converged onto the Crucified God. The skeletons of every closet, the wounds of every sin, the weight of all grief was carried by Jesus.

185. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 252.

186. Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 245.

187. Schaller, *Biblical Christology*, 94.

188. Lev 17:11; Heb 9:22

Certainly, Christ's very *soul* suffered, intellectually and emotionally, testing the very fortitude of his will.¹⁸⁹ He was scorned, ridiculed, rejected, and abandoned; yet, *none of that* compared to his hell he experienced not only by *becoming sin*, but being *rejected* by his own Father. Anthropologically, the severity of pain when relationships end corresponds with the *length* of that relationship. A break-up of two months hurts, a break-up of two years is crushing, and a divorce after two decades “unmakes a man.” Such pain is *trivial* compared to the infinite pain experienced in time by Christ on Calvary, as his Father in heaven rejects him.¹⁹⁰

Did the Father *take pleasure* in the punishing of his Son? Certainly not, for God takes no delight in the death of the wicked—even if that *wickedness* be the convergence of every single sin in the world on his only Son. Nevertheless, a God who loves what is good inversely hates what is evil, and unrelentingly punished sin in sinful man. Did the Father *love* his Son as his Son suffered on the cross? Most certainly, but his love for his only-begotten Son did not stop the Father from punishing him—because of his unrelenting love for *you*. “The reason the Father loves me,” says the Son, “is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again (John 10:17).”

Theodicy certainly does *not* disprove a passionate God, nor does theodicy require us to throw our God back on the cross. Why make God ‘victim’ to *The Problem of Suffering and Evil again?* God's greatest *heroic* act of compassion is *not* solidarity, but sacrifice. Just as our own suffering is to be seen in the shadow of the cross, so must our understanding of God's love. Loving a broken, sinful world meant God would suffer and die for it, because *love necessitated suffering!* That was the cross God *had* to carry, but the victor carries that cross *no more*. In the shadow of that empty cross we carry ours, knowing we, too, will one day wear a crown instead.

189. August Pieper, *Isaiah II: An Exposition of Isaiah 40-66*, trans. Erwin E. Kowalke (Milwaukee, Wis: Northwestern Pub. House, 1979), 391.

190. Jonathan Hein, “Church Management and Metrics” (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 11 January 2019).

VII. “SEE HOW HE LOVED HIM!”

In a world full of suffering and evil, “*Where is God?*” When François Mauriac pointed Elie’s tearful, hollowed eyes to the Crucified Christ, Wiesel responded, “Mr. Mauriac...I [saw] children, hundreds of Jewish children who suffered more than Jesus did on his cross, and we do not speak about it.”¹⁹¹ *Where is God* when little children hang by a noose? Mauriac recalls,

“What did I say to [Elie]? Did I speak to him of that other Jew, this crucified brother who perhaps resembled [the hanging child] and whose cross conquered the world? Did I explain to him that what had been a stumbling block for *his* faith had become a cornerstone for *mine*? And that the connection between the cross and human suffering remains, in my view, the key to unfathomable mystery in which the faith of his childhood was lost? ... All is grace. If the Almighty is the Almighty, the last word for each of us belongs to Him. That is what I should have said to the Jewish child. But all I could do was embrace him and weep.”¹⁹²

We have every right and reason, like François Mauriac, to weep. We have every reason, like Elie Wiesel, to be incensed by such senseless acts of malice and cruelty. A world full of suffering and evil was *never* part of God’s design. All of mankind certainly falls victim to *The Problem of Suffering and Evil*, but the human conscience bears witness that we are *not just the victims*: we are also the perpetrators. In the international wake of the horrors of Auschwitz, Glen Scrivener comments that there was “the outrage of the pointed finger but also the remorse of the contrite heart. This is a common human experience in the face of evil: we feel its power but we also know ourselves—somehow—to be complicit in it.”¹⁹³ The sinful nature sees the vocational pain

191. Elie Wiesel, “Elie Wiesel Interview on Writing,” 1996, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDFS8z5ilkA>.

192. Wiesel, Mauriac, and Wiesel, *Night*, xxi.

193. Scrivener, *321: The Story of God, the World, and You*, 143.

of cross-bearing as *loss*, not *life* (*incurvatus en se*); even worse, our sinful nature would convince us the evil of Auschwitz is beyond any of us—when it already *exists* in our hearts.

Long before the horrors of Auschwitz, Elie Wiesel’s question, “*Where is God?*”, was asked by *another* Jewish audience as the *blameless* Lamb of God hung on a cross between a sinful world and a righteous God. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” There on the cross, we find our answer to Elie Wiesel’s question. There we find our God—*dying*. His greatest act of love and compassion towards a fallen world is found wrapped in suffering and evil: to redeem a world from sin, suffering, and death, God took on sin, suffered, and died.

The Passion of the Impassible God gives us an apologetic that affirms *who* God is and powerfully answers *The Problem of Suffering and Evil*: 1) we can define *what* evil is and *where* it is found; 2) we can affirm that *love* is the greatest thing; 3) God is *relentlessly passionate* about his creation; 4) because of God’s *passionate love* for a sinful world, it was necessary that he *suffer* and *die* to save it; 5) the Christian does not suffer because of his moral failings, nor is God withholding his love—because the punishment that brought us peace *was placed on Jesus*; 6) the God who worked tremendous, eternal good from the tremendous suffering and evil of Christ’s Passion continues to work good from suffering and evil every day, all to bring us safely home.

You can ask “*why*” in times of suffering. You can, like Mary and Martha, even get *angry* at God.¹⁹⁴ But do not let theodicy rob you of the comforting truth of “*who*” *God is* (Job 40:8). The God of personality knows, cares, and will fix it—just as he already has! God *has* addressed *The Problem of Suffering and Evil*. God *has* saved the world from sin, death, and the devil, and he continues to work all things—even suffering—for our eternal good: he has, and he will! He

194. Ps 38:15–16; Job 38:14–15; Jer 39:9

wears a crown that will soon be yours! In the present, such suffering is painful; but our finite sufferings lie in the infinite shadow of “It is finished!” From the scope of eternal bliss in the presence of our loving God and Savior, such suffering is but a breath, a blink of an eye. Nevertheless, our loving, compassionate God does *not* dismiss our grief and pain. Jesus did not scold the disappointed, grieving sisters of Lazarus as they ached in the absence of their brother, for “to preach law at [their] tears would be illegitimate.”¹⁹⁵ Instead, he cuts to the heart of their question, and affirms *who* God remains in the midst of our suffering: he is a God of love and compassion, the resurrection and the life who has triumphed over sin, suffering, and death *for us!*

As those tears burst forth from Jesus face, the Jews around him could not but say, “See how he loved him (John 11:36)!”¹⁹⁶ Those few words of John 11:35 are a window into the eternal heart of the God of emotion, whose love for you was so undying it would even *move* Him to take on flesh and die! Pain *is* the price we pay for loving anything in a sinful world, but because God loves that sinful world, pain *was* the price *God paid*. The God who wept at the tomb of Lazarus, only moments before raising him back to life, is the same God who holds our hand on the hospital bed, who carries us through the chemo, who gives *true* peace and rest to those broken by sin, who sustains us as we model his very love in our own cross-carrying, whose love abides with us in our present sufferings until he takes us home. There, in the new heavens and the new earth, God “shall wipe away every tear from [our] eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain (Rev 21:4).” Until then, know that your God truly loves you—so much so, he *suffered and died* to give you life forever.

195. James Tiefel, “Preaching Law and Gospel” (presented at the Senior Homiletics, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, September 2018).

196. While some render the proceeding δὲ in 11:36 as adversative (τινὲς δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν εἶπαν), you can legitimately understand this δὲ to be coordinative in function; there is nothing inherently present in that statement that adversely disagrees with the first statement. Unbelievers can still make accurate observations (John 11:50).

APPENDIX 1. THE NEUROSCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN EMOTIONS

Emotions are a significantly nuanced and complex part of human cognition. A significant biological component of emotions within the brain is in the detection of *threats* and *rewards*.¹⁹⁷ If we are in a situation that is *dangerous*, adrenaline and cortisol are released, as part of the *fight or flight* response. If a *reward* is detected, our brain releases dopamine, oxytocin, and serotonin. Dr. Phillippe Goldin states that the function of emotions is strongly associated with: 1) directing our attention; 2) enhancing our memory and how we encode and consolidate personal information; 3) organizing our social behavior and orientations; 4) driving social approach and avoidance; 5) developing moral and ethical values; 6) and enriching our everyday lives.¹⁹⁸

The leading theories on emotion can generally be divided into two categories: cognitive and physiological. Physiological theories (i.e. the James-Lange theory) postulate emotions *proceed* from our *physiological* responses (*external stimulus* \Rightarrow *physiological response* \Rightarrow *emotional reaction*).¹⁹⁹ Other theories (i.e. the Cannon-Bard theory) suggest that the physiology and the emotional experience happen simultaneously.²⁰⁰ However, the theory that *physiological* response precedes *emotional experience* has been challenged, as not all *physiological* responses

197. "Emotions and the Brain," *Sentis*, n.d., <https://www.sentis.com.au/brain-animation-series/>.

198. Goldin, "The Neuroscience of Emotions."

199. Jeffrey Walsh, "Theories of Emotion," *Khan Academy*, n.d., <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/health-and-medicine/executive-systems-of-the-brain/emotion-lesson/v/theories-of-emotion>.

200. "Theories of Emotion," *Lumen*, n.d., <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-psychology/chapter/theories-of-emotion/>.

prompt emotion (i.e. a fast heart rate when scared and a fast heart rate after a 4 mile run).²⁰¹ Similarly, the *emotional experience* often is instantaneous, with the *physiological* effects to follow after.²⁰² Cognitive theories, however, argue that human cognition plays a vital role in formulating emotions. Some cognitive theories (i.e. the Schachter-Singer Two-Factor Theory) postulate that *physiological response* only leads to emotion after a patient has *cognitively* labeled or identified the reason for the physiological response (*external stimulus* \Rightarrow *physiological response* \Rightarrow *interpretation* \Rightarrow *emotional reaction*).²⁰³ Other theories (i.e. the Lazarus Theory) argue that *cognitive appraisal* comes *before emotional reaction* and accompanying *physiological response* (*external stimulus* \Rightarrow *cognitive appraisal* \Rightarrow *physiological response and emotional reaction*).²⁰⁴ *Appraisal* is the cognitive evaluation—conscious or unconscious—of a given event: 1) *primary appraisal* attempts to arrive at the significance of a given event, whether or not it is beneficial or rewarding (*positive appraisal*), or if it is dangerous, harmful, or has negative consequences (*negative appraisal*); 2) *secondary appraisal* follows only if *primary appraisal* values an event as *negative*, and then proceeds to evaluate options for managing or coping with the consequences of said event. Such *appraisals* are contingent on the patient’s past experiences, culture, values and beliefs. Thus, the Lazarus Theory suggests a degree of not only controlling but shaping and creating emotional experiences. Our thinking *can* influence emotions, and this

201. Walsh, “Theories of Emotion.”

202. Walsh, “Theories of Emotion.”

203. Walsh, “Theories of Emotion.”

204. “Theories of Emotion.”

can be unhelpful (in the case of self-generating fear, thinking of a threatening situation), or helpful (through thoughtful regulation).²⁰⁵

Considering the growing popularity of such *cognitive* theories (not to mention, revolutionary studies on the neuroplasticity of the brain, even in middle-aged adults) it is evident that we are not *purely passive* or *victim* to our emotions, but rather consciously play a massive *active* part in their formulation—even controlling them.²⁰⁶ When emotions originate from the Limbic System (the left and right amygdala particularly), the prefrontal cortex regulates them. In addition, we possess an active capacity to link positive or negative emotions to persons or things, which in turn influences our behavior.²⁰⁷ Emotions are not only shaped by inherited biology, but also by our thoughts, our culture, our concepts, and our language.²⁰⁸ In fact, “we can actually turn on emotions by turning on specific portions of the brain.”²⁰⁹ Instead of seeing emotions as “primitive impulses”, emotions are more accurately understood as cognitive construals that can be changed, cultivated, and assist in our formulation of morality and our ethical perspective.²¹⁰

To prove this point, that emotion and reason are intimately enmeshed together, Damasio cites a peculiar case of a man by the name of Phineas Gage who, in a railroad accident, shot a three-foot iron rod through his skull. He survived, but Gage had *changed*. “Gage’s example

205. “Emotions and the Brain.”

206. Lisa Feldman Barrett, “You Aren’t at the Mercy of Your Emotions,” 23 January 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gks6ceq4eQ>.

207. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error*, 161–62.

208. Tiffany Watt Smith, “The History of Human Emotions,” 31 January 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-3qnZrVy9o>.

209. Jaak Panksepp, “The Science of Emotions: Jaak Panksepp at TEDxRainier,” 13 January 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65e2qScV_K8.

210. Matthew A Elliott, *Faithful Feelings: Rethinking Emotion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids MI: Kregel, 2006), 54.

indicated that something in the brain was concerned specifically with unique human properties, among them the ability to anticipate the future and plan accordingly within a complex social environment; the sense of responsibility toward the self and others; and the ability to orchestrate one's survival deliberately, at the command of one's free will."²¹¹ Gage had lost no rationality, motor function, recollection, or use of language.²¹² However, the damage done to Gage's frontal lobe is a *significant* region involved in emotional processes, intuition, and social behaviors strongly associated with "emotional awareness, social reasoning, and decision making."²¹³

"Somehow, there were systems in the human brain dedicated more to reasoning than to anything else, and in particular to the personal and social dimensions of reasoning. The observance of previously acquired social convention and ethical rules could be lost as a result of brain damage, even when neither basic intellect nor language seemed compromised."²¹⁴

Our emotions are not "primitive" components of our cognition to be ignored, but cognitive perceivers or that assist us in perceiving ourselves and our world (i.e. emotional intelligence), assisting with value propositions and judgments. Gage became a social mess. The absence of the region associated with emotion left his *reason* significantly flawed.

"The instruments usually considered necessary and sufficient for rational decision making were intact in him. He had the requisite knowledge, attention, and memory; his language was flawless; he could perform calculations; he could tackle the logic of an abstract problem. There was only one significant accompaniment to his decision-making failure: a marked alteration of the ability to experience feelings. Flawed reason and impaired feelings stood out together as the consequences of a specific brain lesion, and this correlation suggested to me that feeling was an integral component of the machinery of reason."²¹⁵

What is clearly deduced from the case of Phineas Gage is that "emotion and feeling, along with the covert physiological machinery underlying them, assist us with the daunting task of

211. Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 10.

212. Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 6.

213. Goldin, "The Neuroscience of Emotions."

214. Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 10.

215. Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, xvi.

predicting an uncertain future and planning our action accordingly.”²¹⁶ The same region of his brain damaged in the accident is strongly associated with what is commonly known as emotional intelligence, the ability to recognize and articulate one’s own emotions and the emotions of other people.²¹⁷ The concept, a fairly new one, was put forward by Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer in the 1990s as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.”²¹⁸ Interpersonal intelligence (the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people) and intrapersonal intelligence (the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one’s feelings, fears and motivations) are closely associated with emotional intelligence.²¹⁹

“I had been advised early in life,” writes neuroscientist and psychologist Antonio Damasio, “that sound decisions came from a cool head, that emotions and reason did not mix any more than oil and water.”²²⁰ This statement is not only unbiblical, but, as modern psychology and neuroscience has proven, is unscientific. The case of Phineas Gage illustrates that emotions are *enmeshed* in the networks of reasoning, assisting with ethical evaluation, formulation of judgement, morality, memory, and reason itself.

216. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error*, xvii.

217. Smith, “The History of Human Emotions.”

218. Goldin, “The Neuroscience of Emotions.”

219. Goldin, “The Neuroscience of Emotions.”

220. Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (London: Penguin, 2005), xvi.

APPENDIX 2. THEORIES OF PRIMARY/BASIC EMOTIONS

Reference	Basic or Fundamental Emotions
Ekman, Friesen, & Ellsworth (1982)	anger, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise
Ekman (1992)	anger, disgust, fear, sadness, and enjoyment (which may include several distinct positive emotions), and perhaps contempt, surprise, guilt, interest, shame, embarrassment, awe, and excitement
Izard (1991)	anger, contempt, disgust, sadness, enjoyment-joy, fear, interest-excitement, surprise-astonishment (and possibly guilt, shame, and shyness)
Lazarus (1991)	anger, fright-anxiety, guilt-shame, sadness, envy-jealousy, disgust, happiness-joy, pride, <i>love-affection</i> , and relief
Oatley & Johnson-Laird (1987)	anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness
Panksepp (1992)	expectancy, fear, rage, panic (and possibly joy, lust, nurturance, greed, and dominance)
Roseman (1994)	anger, contempt, disgust, dislike, distress, fear, frustration, guilt, hope, joy, pride, regret, relief, sadness, shame, surprise, <i>love</i>

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221. Shaver, Morgan, and Wu, "Is Love a 'Basic' Emotion?"

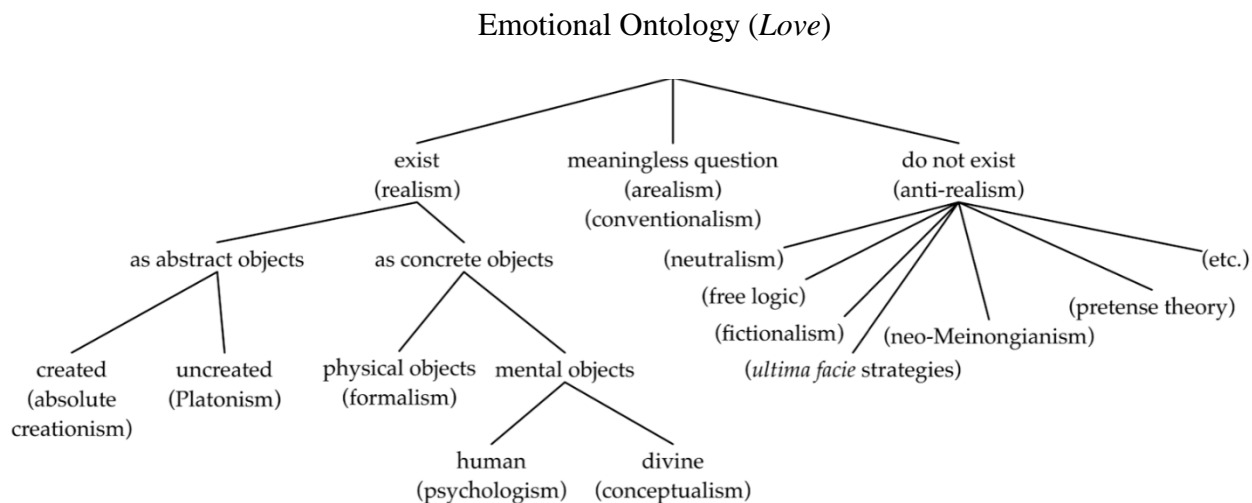
APPENDIX 3. PLUTCHICK EMOTION WHEEL



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222. Plutchik, *Emotion: Theory, Research, and Experience*, vol. I.

APPENDIX 4. EMOTIONAL REALISM



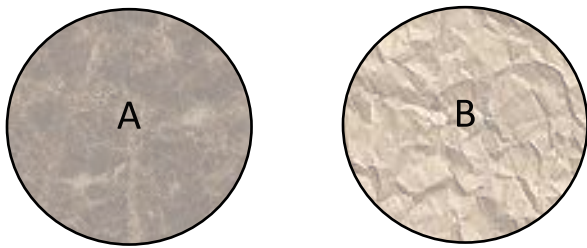
The materialist would argue it is erroneous that ‘cognitive being’ (including emotion) could possibly exist outside of material anatomy. The materialist can only present emotive expression as psychological phenomena that is to ensure the well-being of the given organism, teleologically defined as *psychologism*; however, emotion’s inherent intersection with morality inhibits psychologism out of the gate. *Objective immaterial* is necessary in any meaningful conversation about human norms and behaviors on this side of heaven

There is an apparent *emotional realism* that exists—an ultimate ontological *perfection* outside of *man’s anatomy*, that transcends, yet unifies cultures in desired emotional expression. If man is compelled to objectively value and *romanticize* love, then *love exists* (realism). *Love* does not exist as some uncreated abstract object (*Platonism*) nor as a created abstract object (*absolute creationism*). It exists *cognitively*, as a concrete mental object; however, the objective nature of *love* suggests that emotional teleology is anchored in something *beyond* the material—beyond *psychologism*. Our continual selfishness and failure beckons man to look beyond ourselves for love’s ontological foundation. Thus, even philosophically we can argue that God is the anchoring point for emotive ontology (*divine conceptualism*).²²³

223. Diagram taken from William Lane Craig’s course, “Doctrine of God Part 4: Anti-Realism Views”. The causal value/attribute “Emotional Ontology (*Love*)” is supplied by the author for illustration.

APPENDIX 5. UNIVOCAL, EQUIVOCAL, AND ANALOGICAL LANGUAGE

Figure 5.1 – Equivocal Predication



Equivocal Predication is the predication of a word to two beings in an unrelated way (i.e. computer ram, battering ram). Thus, if *Circle A* is the ontology of man and *Circle B* the ontology of God, the emotional language God employs predicated *equivocally* to God means such language is not only different but bears no ontological similarity in sense and meaning.

Figure 5.2 – Univocal Predication

Univocal Predication is the predication of a word to two beings in an identical way and with the same sense (i.e. a student is a human in the same way a professor is human). Thus, emotional language God employs predicated *univocally* to God means such language is exactly identical and bears complete ontological similarity in sense and meaning.

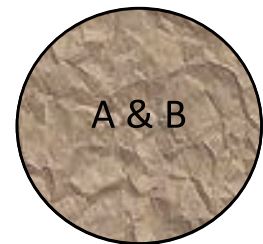
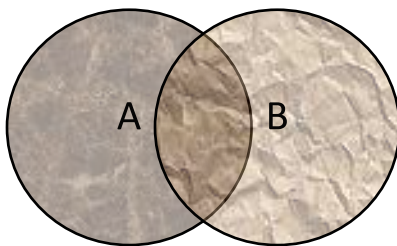


Figure 5.3 – Analogical Predication



Analogical Predication is the predication of a word that affirms a similarity between two different beings. Analogical predication does not imply an identical sense for both things, but neither are they unrelated. Via improper and proper predication, analogy allows to speak concretely about common attributes shared between two analogates. Such predication may be *non-literal* and *non-real* (improper) or *literal* and *real* (proper). In either proper or improper predicative analogy, predication to the *referent* is taking place. By virtue of *imago Dei* coupled with proper predicative analogy, emotive ontology is *properly* predicated to God, denoting a *real, literal* relationship with man's emotive ontology; however, the emotive ontology of God is *scaled up* in proportion with his being.

APPENDIX 6. EVALUATION OF JOHN CALVIN’S DEFINITION OF *ANTHROPOPATHEIA*

Clumsy navigation through verses such as Genesis 6:6 is one reason why many reject impassibility; an example of such clumsiness can be found in John Calvin’s commentary on Genesis 6:6. Calvin states, “Certainly God is not sorrowful or sad, but remains forever like himself in his celestial and happy repose.”²²⁴ Such emotive language, Calvin argues, is not true of God, but rather he is merely clothing himself with human affections.²²⁵ Calvin elaborates,

“Now the mode of accommodation is for him to represent himself to us not as he is in himself, but as he seems to us. Although he is beyond all disturbance of mind, yet he testifies that he is angry toward sinners. Therefore whenever we hear that God is angered, we ought not to imagine any emotion in him [*imaginari non debemus aliquam in ipso motionem*], but rather to consider that this expression has been taken from our human experience; because God, whenever he is exercising judgment, exhibits the appearance of one kindled or angered.”²²⁶

Calvin rightfully avoids predicating certain *unique* aspects of the human emotional experience to God, such as mental disturbance, loss of control, relenting as a result of unforeseen turning of events, regretting out of self-displeasure, or suffering.²²⁷ Yet, he avoids speaking *cataphatically*. He certainly associates the word ‘affection’ with his descriptions of God.²²⁸ However, context

224. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1979), 249.

225. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1950), 400–401.

226. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), I:195.

227. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 117.

228. “...there is no inversion of [God’s] counsel or will, no change of his affection. What from eternity he had foreseen, approved, decreed, he prosecutes with unvarying uniformity...” Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I:196.

would indicate any *real* affective freight has been conveniently dissolved into the divine will.²²⁹ Calvin may refer to Genesis 6:6 as *anthropopatheia*, that is, analogical language, but Calvin's working definition suggests he actually interprets *anthropopatheia* as *equivocal* language: 1) Calvin argues the language of Scripture is *accommodated* to comply with and compliment human thought patterns; 2) emotions, according to Calvin, imply change, and *no* change can be properly predicated to God; 3) emotional language in Scripture is often accompanied by anatomical imagery, and since God is incorporeal, the emotive language must not actually correspond to God as he really is.²³⁰ By treating such language *equivocally*, Calvin succinctly answers both the questions of predicating emotions and predicating suffering to God in the *negative*; his arguments, however, are more dismissive than compelling and inevitably leave one wondering if *any* of God's emotive language hinges on even a modicum of ontological reality.

In response to Calvin: 1) *all* language in Scripture is human language, and so the argument to dismiss the "exegetical force" of human language because it is human language not only assaults God's sufficiency as communicator, but the argument is logically self-defeating;²³¹ 2) Calvin's argument assumes God's hypothetical emotive ontology could never rise beyond the level of humans;²³² 3) implied in Calvin's definition of *anthropopatheia* is an assumption that emotions are *contingent* on physical anatomy, which, as proven earlier, is scripturally *false*;²³³ 4) by making no delineation between *anthropopathic* and *anthropomorphic* language, therein lies

229. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 118.

230. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I:196.

231. Peckham, "Theophatic or Anthropopathic? A Suggested Approach to Imagery of Divine Emotion in the Hebrew Bible," 355.

232. Voorwinde, "Does God Have Real Feelings?," 24–25.

233. Peckham, "Theophatic or Anthropopathic? A Suggested Approach to Imagery of Divine Emotion in the Hebrew Bible," 341, 350.

an implication that if *anthropomorphism* is to God being incorporeal, then *anthropopathism* is to God being unemotional; 5) finally, metaphor is analogical language, not equivocal language. If the hermeneutical solution was to equivocally dismiss God's anger and grief as *mere* literary condescension, consider the risks of doing likewise with God's joy, compassion, his mercy, and love. In his attempt to safeguard God's transcendence and sovereignty, Calvin gravitates apophatically from an actual definition of *anthropopatheia as analogy* and upends *the personality* of God.

APPENDIX 7. INADEQUATE DEFINITIONS OF IMPASSIBILITY

The word *impassible* (*impassibilis*) literally means “without passions.” The close relationship between the classical definition of *passions* and the more modern word *emotions* has certainly contributed to some of the confusion on this doctrine; however, most of the confusion stems from assumptions about what *impassibility* means. As a result, confusion compounds when theologians offer a variety of definitions of the doctrine, all bearing subtle differences.

Evangelical Christian apologist William Lane Craig defines *impassibility* to mean, “that God is in no way affected by creatures.”²³⁴ Wayne Grudem similarly, in his *Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, states, “Of course, God does not have *sinful* passions or emotions. But the idea that God has no passions or emotions *at all* clearly conflicts with much of the rest of Scripture.”²³⁵ Like Craig, Grudem *rightly* rejects the idea that the biblical God is neither impassioned nor emotional; however, the classic doctrine of divine impassibility does not reject those premises. Craig and Grudem, like many other contemporary Evangelical theologians, reject a caricature of *impassibility*, but not the definition. Such Arminian frameworks that exert the ‘sovereignty’ of man’s ‘free’ will require a *cooperative response* from God; point being, their prior theological commitments do not allow for the classical definition of the doctrine to exist anyway, as *impassibility* properly defined denies the reciprocity their framework requires.

234. William Lane Craig, “#213 Divine Impassibility and the Crucifixion,” *Reasonable Faith*, 16 May 2011, <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/question-answer/P10/divine-impassibility-and-the-crucifixion>.

235. Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England : Grand Rapids, Mich: Inter-Varsity Press ; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 166.

The Stanford definition of *impassibility* asserts, “nothing external can cause God to be in any state, and in particular can cause him to feel negative emotions like grief.”²³⁶ In other words, nothing *outside* of God can make God *change emotional states of being* or cause him to feel “negative” emotions. G. L. Prestige, from the Anglican tradition, defined *impassibility* thusly:

“It is clear that impassibility means not that God is inactive or uninterested, not that he surveys existence with Epicurean impassibility from the shelter of a metaphysical isolation, but that his will is determined from within instead of being swayed from without. It safeguards the truth that the impulse alike in providential order and in redemption and sanctification come from the will of God.”²³⁷

Prestige correctly renders *impassibility* as a *positive* attribute that protects God’s saving will from any and all deterrence; however, both of these definitions leave out any prohibition towards any change that may precipitate actively or voluntarily within God.

This active, volitional change is included in Rob Lister’s model of impassibility, which he believes to be the Patristic understanding of *impassibility*, that “God is invulnerable to emotional fluctuation that would be involuntarily precipitated by members of his creation.”²³⁸ He continues, “In this sense, God is impassible, so long as his emotional engagement with creation is voluntary and proceeds from his initiative.”²³⁹ Lister is *correct* in affirming that God is both *impassible and impassioned*. He is *also* correct in asserting that God’s emotional engagement with his creation originates from God’s divine freedom and grace; however, his proposed voluntarism model that necessitates a *change* within God, albeit volitional, is 1) arguably *not* what the Patristic writers upheld, 2) assumes a qualified immutability that denies *pure actuality*, 3) nor is this framework necessary to uphold the impassible and impassioned personality of God.

236. Brian Leftow, “Immutability,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1 July 2002, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/immutability/#2>.

237. G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1969), 7.

238. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 150.

239. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 150.

APPENDIX 8. CRITICISM OF THE HELLENIZATION HYPOTHESIS

Many modern theologians contest that *divine impassibility* is an unbiblical product of the Patristics influenced by Greek philosophy. This theory of such philosophical infiltration is known as the *Hellenization Hypothesis*, “the long-standing modern claim that Patristic theology was overwhelmed by the extrabiblical influences of Hellenistic philosophy.”²⁴⁰ This theory finds prominence among many Evangelical theologians today, who argue God’s classically defined attributes are not nearly as scriptural as they are Aristotelian. So, how legitimate is this claim?

Such philosophy found commonplaces in many middle eastern religions, including Judaism. Philo of Alexandria was a Hellenistic Jew who, like the Greek philosophers before him, theorized that God’s essence is “hyper-transcendent” and “utterly unknowable,” thus futile to try and learn anything about God’s essence.²⁴¹ Philo believed you could only learn about God from his existence, or his *causes*, like studying a rock by the splash and ripples it would make if thrown, but the rock itself you cannot see or discern. Nevertheless, Philo simultaneously tries to speak *positively* of God in terms of God’s expressed love, anger, kindness, and happiness.²⁴² What seems apparent in the case of Philo is that he, albeit employing allegory and enmeshing Platonic philosophy, desired to speak in the language of the Hebrew Scripture when speaking

240. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 42.

241. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 52.

242. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 54.

ontologically about God, in spite of “tension” between God’s emotional expressions recorded in Scripture and Platonic philosophical framework.²⁴³

Another later example, the medieval Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, openly embraced the teachings of Aristotle as well as the Aristotelian conception of God. In the writings of Maimonides, he talks about a God that has feelings or emotions would suggest a “deficit...like there is a vacuum inside of God. God is always full and sufficient, so how could God have this kind of deficit?”²⁴⁴ For Maimonides, for God to have anything remotely considered “emotions” would be to rob God of his infinity and his perfection. The emotional language employed in the Tanakh is to be taken figuratively, not to be properly predicated to God’s ontology.

The premise that Greek philosophy would infiltrate Christianity, then, is not entirely inconceivable. Traces of Greek Philosophy can certainly be detected in the works of *some* Christian Patristic writers. The works of Gregory of Nyssa and early works of Augustine, for example, are considered by some historians ‘Platonists’ in nature.²⁴⁵ Likewise, the works of Thomas Aquinas *heavily* appropriated Aristotelian terminology as well as many of its philosophical conclusions about God’s nature (to a fault). However, to discredit the Church Fathers as wholly unreliable is simply saying too much. Rob Lister, upon surveying the works of the Church Fathers on the doctrine of impassibility, maintains that the Fathers were not so easily deceived by Greek philosophy, but rather they were “both critical and selective in their stance toward the philosophy of their day. In the end, although terms and concepts were imported from Greek philosophy, they were fundamentally subject to the framework of a different

243. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 55.

244. Jon D. Levenson, *OnScript*, The Love of God, n.d.

245. A.H. Armstrong and R.A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960), 51–58.

worldview.”²⁴⁶ The Church Fathers were not oblivious to the inherent dangers of an overdependence on Greek philosophy when speaking about God. As a matter of fact, many of them actively anticipated being accused of corrupting “a pure biblical doctrine of a loving, personal God through introduction of Greek speculative philosophy.”²⁴⁷

Clement of Alexandria, for example, in his take on Christians at *his* time, said they would “prefer to block their ears in order not to hear the sirens” of Greek philosophy.²⁴⁸ In fact, Clement outright acknowledges the limitations and ultimate insufficiency of Greek philosophical logic when discussing matters of faith. “If our faith (I will not say our *gnosis*) is such that it is destroyed by force of argument, then let it be destroyed; for it will have been proved that we do not possess the truth.”²⁴⁹ Like any good apologist or evangelist, the Patristic writers appropriated conceptual vocabulary that *could* be effectively used to defend and spread the gospel.²⁵⁰ Many theorize this type of apologetic resistance is seen in the Gospel of John, who is suspected to be combatting Gnostics, Stoics, and Platonists not only by his use of the word *λόγος* but the abundant emotive expressions ascribed to Jesus throughout his gospel.²⁵¹

There were certainly those, like the Church Father Theodoret, who contested that those who “ascribe passions to the divine nature” (perhaps including *any* emotive ontology) are “wild

246. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 63.

247. Amos Winarto Oei, “The Impassible God Who ‘Cried,’” *Themelios* 41.2 (2016): 241.

248. Oei, “The Impassible God Who ‘Cried,’” 241. Quoting Clement of Alexandria.

249. Oei, “The Impassible God Who ‘Cried,’” 241. Quoting Clement of Alexandria.

250. Oei, “The Impassible God Who ‘Cried,’” 241.

251. Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg, eds., *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 82–83.

and blasphemous.”²⁵² Anselm of Canterbury sensed a similar tension between speaking of a God who is *changeless* and a God who is *love*; he concluded that such compassion, as biblically described by God, is phrased only in terms of human experience but is not to be concretely attributed to God’s actual being. In other words, God only *appears* to be compassionate.²⁵³

Nevertheless, the predication of emotions properly to God is not unheard of among the early Church Fathers. Tertullian, while arguing against anthropocentric theology, also sees *imago Dei* as key to this discussion. Rob Lister writes that according to Tertullian, “[the] finite and fallen experience of emotion” of God’s image-bearing children “is tainted by a corruption which God’s emotions have never known.”²⁵⁴ In other words, Tertullian is arguing that God possesses emotions in a divine manner.²⁵⁵ Tertullian himself states,

“These sensations in the human being are rendered just as corrupt by the corruptibility of man’s substance, as in God they are rendered incorruptible by the incorruption of the divine essence.... [I]t is palpably absurd of you to be placing human characteristics in God rather than divine ones in man, and clothing God in the likeness of man, instead of man in the image of God.”²⁵⁶

For the Church Father Irenaeus, he saw God’s act of Creation as a means of navigating through this doctrinal discussion, maintaining that “God is of a different ontological order than his creation” while simultaneously affirming that God is “providentially and intimately involved with—as opposed to being locked out of—his creation, on the other.”²⁵⁷ Likewise Augustine, while upholding the classical doctrines of God, argued for a God of emotion. He postulated, by

252. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, vol. 3 of *2nd* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892).

253. Thompson, “Process Theology and Emotion: An Introductory Exploration,” 19–20.

254. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 73.

255. Oei, “The Impassible God Who ‘Cried,’” 240–41.

256. Tertullian, *Marc*, n.d., para. 2.16.

257. Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned*, 68.

logic of causality and analogy of being, if heaven is perpetual *bliss* for man, God must certainly be perpetually blissful. After all, how could mankind “experience their supreme good in relationship with someone (God) who is not perfectly happy?”²⁵⁸

Defenders of the classical doctrines of God contest that such contemporary critics of the Patristic writers are not *neutral* at the start of their evaluation: they have an interpretive agenda. Thomas Weinandy contests that *the Hellenization Hypothesis*, as leveraged by these contemporary critics, “is driven, at least in part, by an already preconceived understanding of the philosophical issues involved and the philosophical answers that must be given.”²⁵⁹ Certainly the early Church Fathers appropriated *what they could* from Greek philosophical terms and incorporated into *biblical* discussions of theology, but they never appealed to Plato’s eternal forms or the “Unmoved Mover.”²⁶⁰ The majority of Patristic writers upheld divine impassibility not as a result of Greek philosophical influence, nor did they understand divine impassibility to imply God does not have emotional qualities. “Almost all the early Fathers,” Weinandy argues, “attributed impassibility to God in order to safeguard and enhance His utterly passionate love and all-consuming goodness, that is, the divine fervor and zealous resolve with which He pursues the well-being of His cherished people.”²⁶¹ The majority of Church Fathers never perceived God to be “static, lifeless and inert, and so completely devoid of passion.”²⁶² Rather, “The Fathers were merely denying of God those passions that would imperil or impair those biblical attributes

258. M. Sarot, “Divine Suffering: Continuity and Discontinuity with the Tradition,” *Anglican Theological Review* 78 (1996): 226.

259. Weinandy, “Does God Suffer?,” 84.

260. Oei, “The Impassible God Who ‘Cried,’” 240.

261. Weinandy, “Does God Suffer?”

262. Weinandy, “Does God Suffer?”

that were constitutive of His divine being.”²⁶³ Certainly there were occasional missteps, but it is faulty to assume these writers only spoke of God in terms of “their own philosophical acumen” and not “their faith in the biblical God.”²⁶⁴ Thus, the Hellenization Hypothesis, more accurately, is a *strawman* argument that originated out of liberal theology of the nineteenth century.²⁶⁵

263. Weinandy, “Does God Suffer?”

264. Weinandy, “Does God Suffer?”

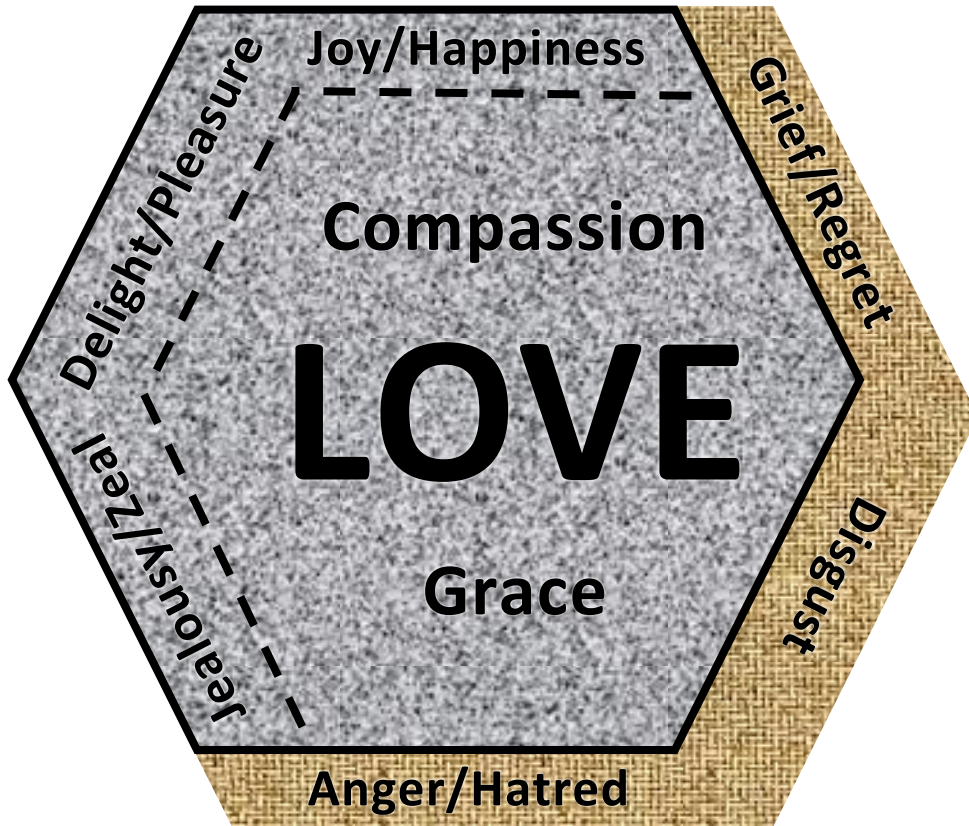
265. Jordan Cooper, “A Review of Confessing the Impassible God,” *Patheos*, 13 February 2016, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/justandsinner/a-review-of-confessing-the-impassible-god/>.

APPENDIX 9. EMOTION 'WHEEL' FOR IMAGE-BEARING MAN



= Properly predicated to the subject

APPENDIX 10. EMOTION 'WHEEL' FOR GOD

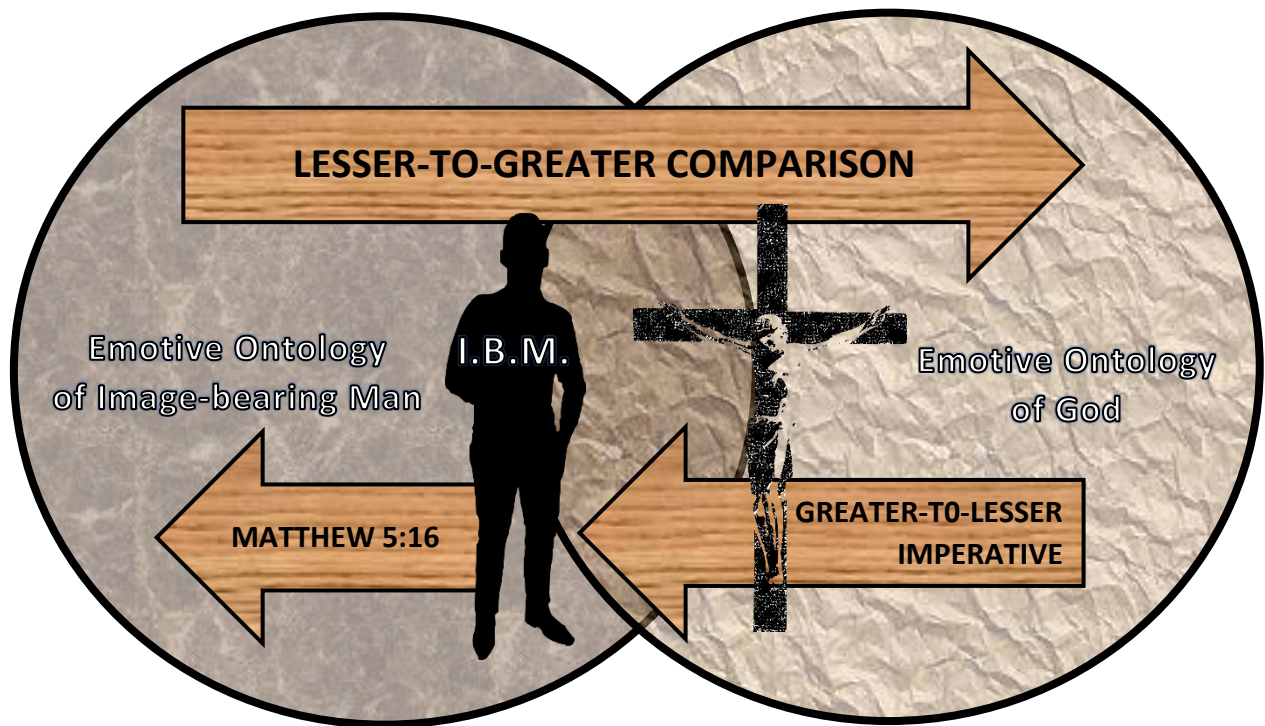


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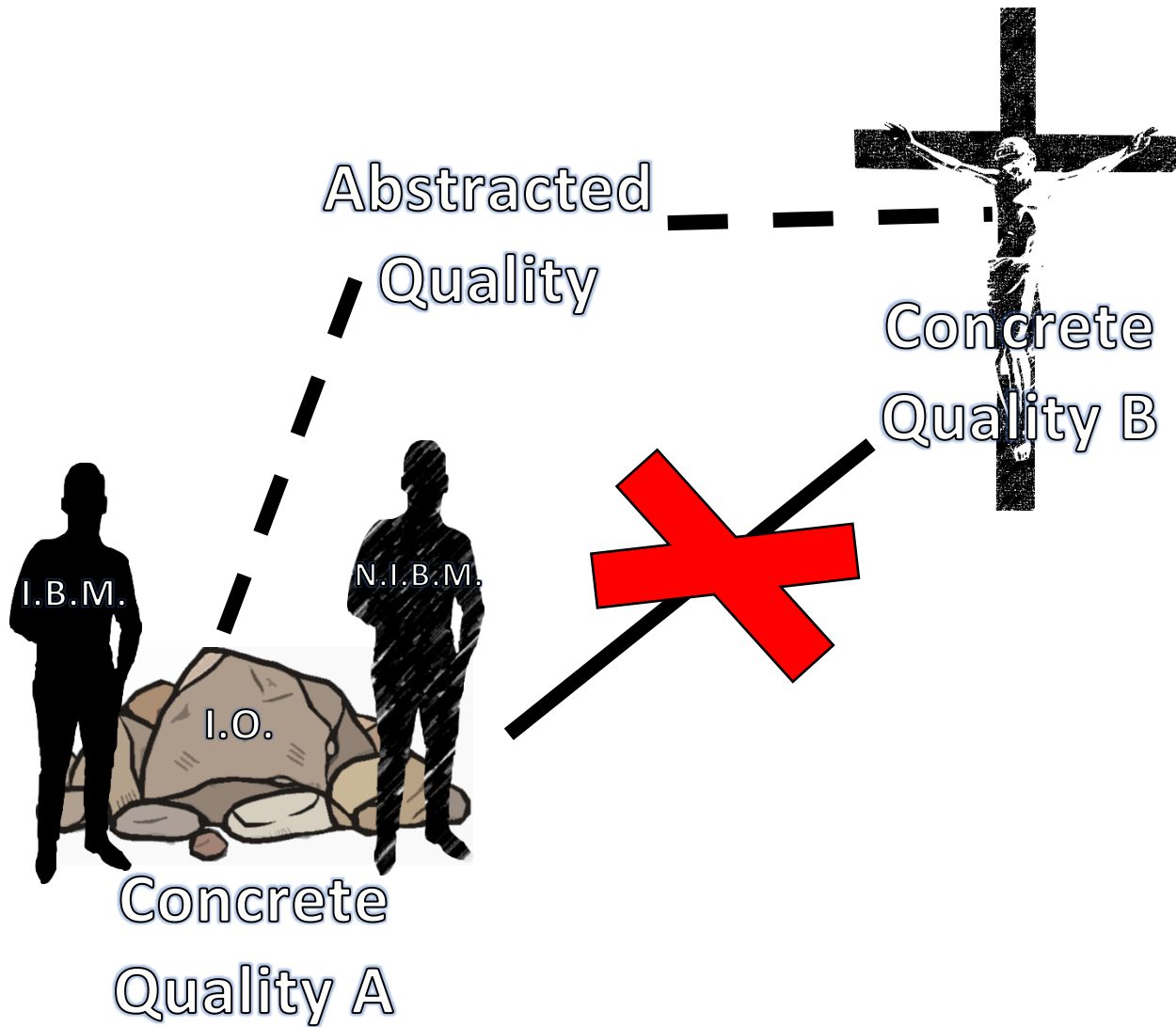
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APPENDIX 11. LESSER-TO-GREATER COMPARISON & GREATER-TO-LESSER IMPERATIVE



I.B.M. = Image-bearing Man

APPENDIX 12. ANALOGY OF IMPROPER PROPORTION

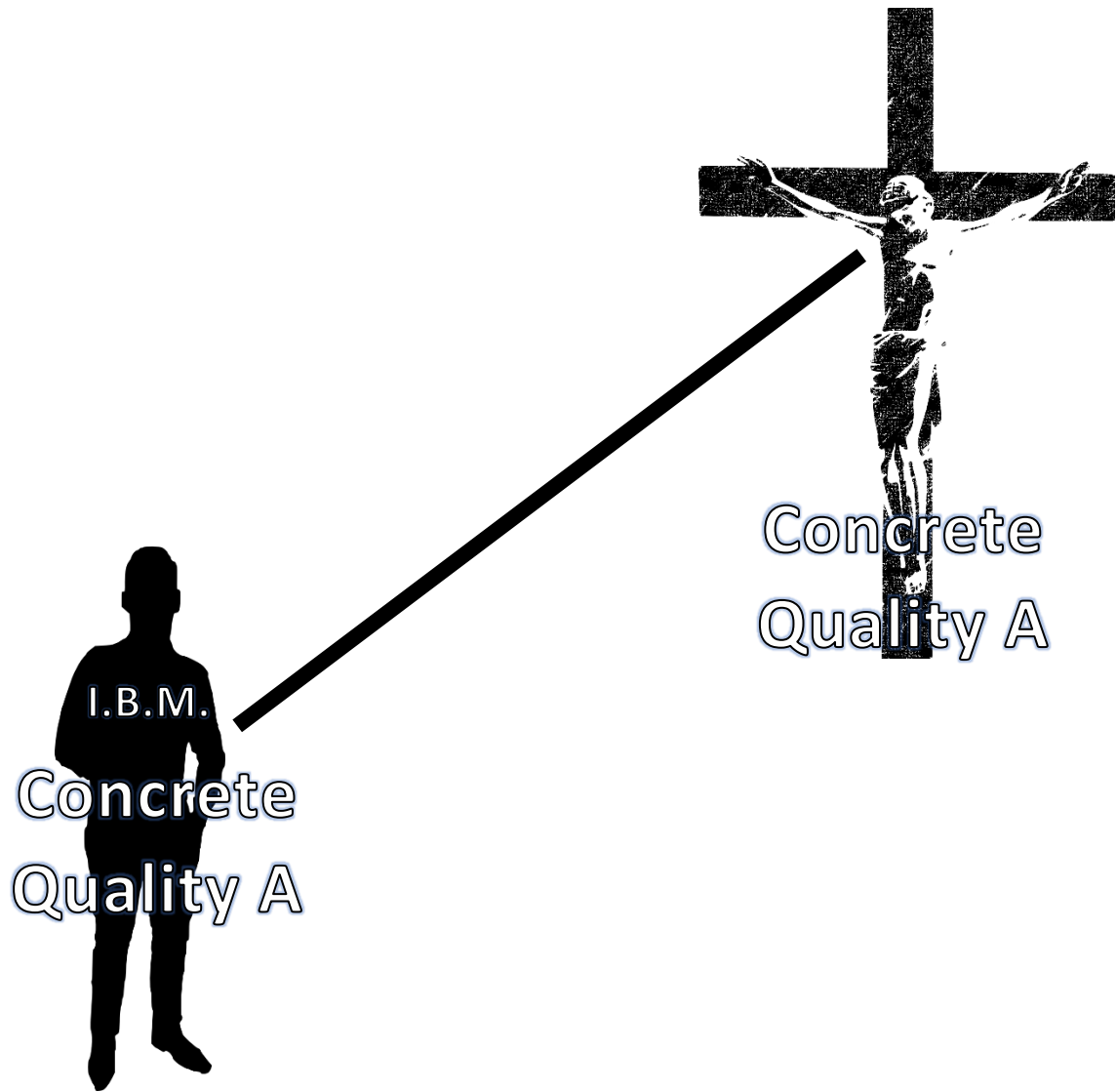


I.O. = Impersonal Object

N.I.B.M. = Non-image-bearing Man

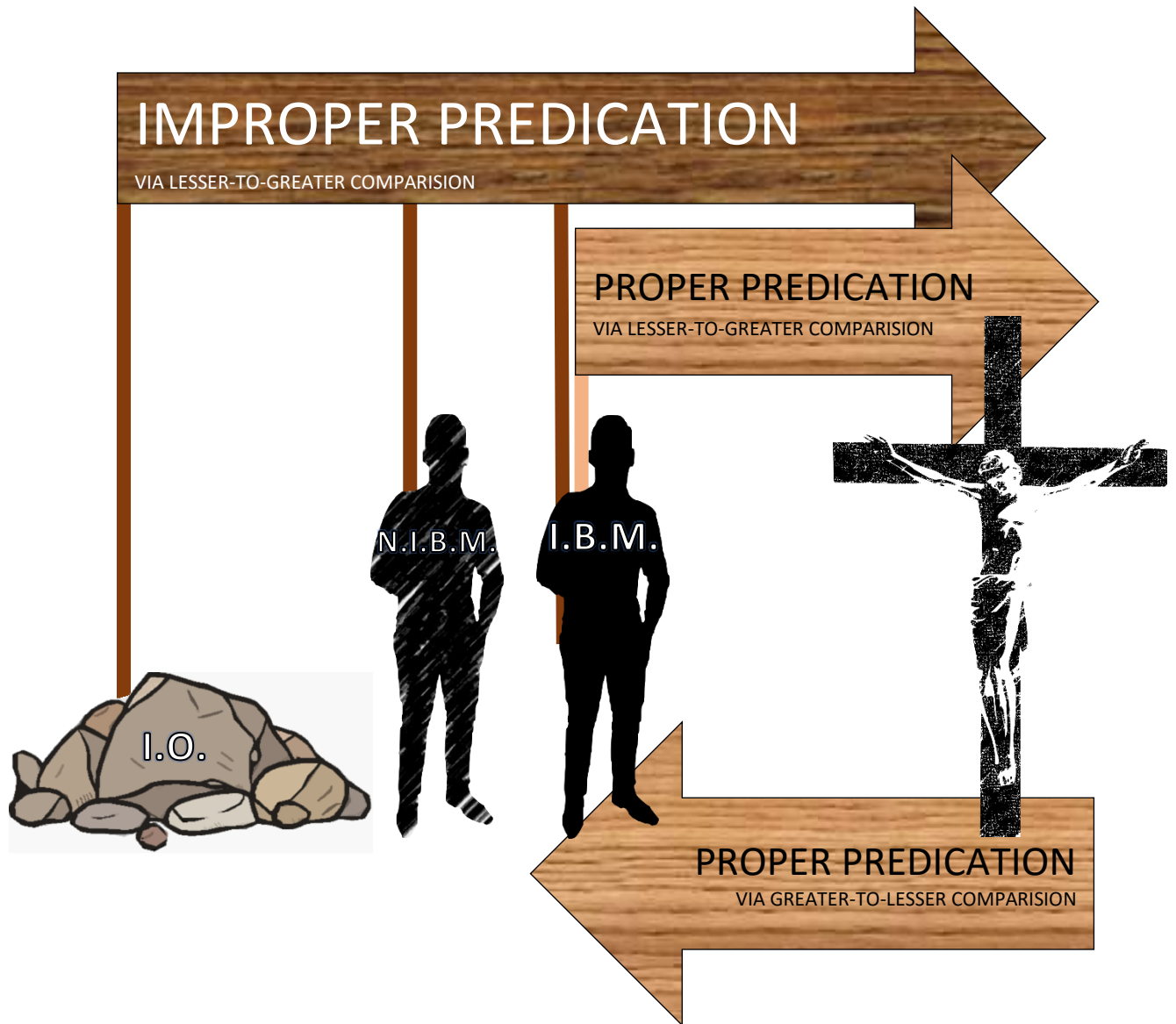
I.B.M. = Image-bearing Man

APPENDIX 13. ANALOGY OF PROPER PROPORTION



I.B.M. = Image-bearing Man

APPENDIX 14. IMPROPER AND PROPER PREDICATION



I.O. = Impersonal Object

N.I.B.M. = Non-image-bearing Man

I.B.M. = Image-bearing Man

APPENDIX 15. *GENUS APOTELESMATICUM*

Figure 15.1 – Incorrect Model of Christ’s Suffering and Death

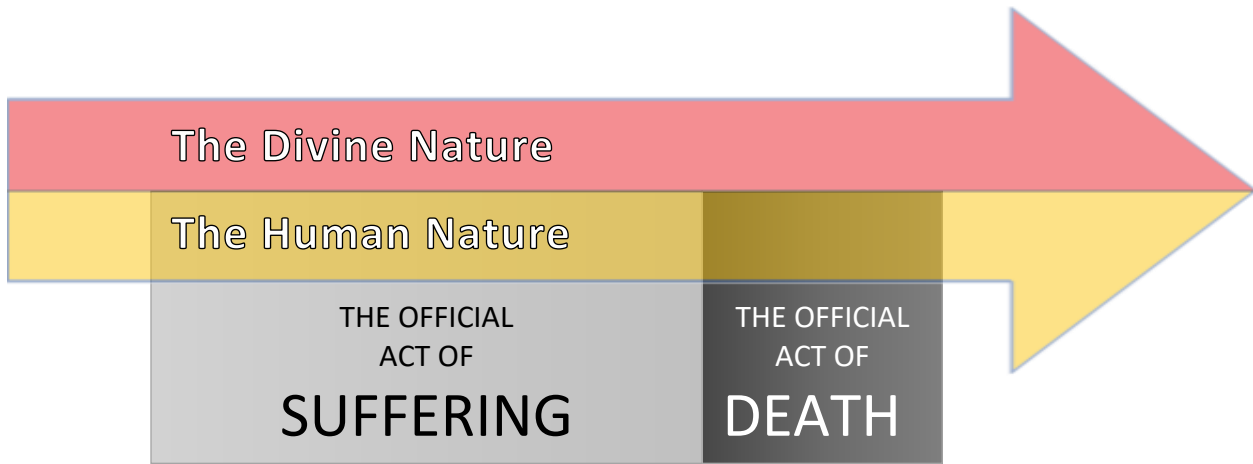


Figure 15.2 – Correct Model of Christ’s Suffering and Death



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