

### Chapter 3.

## So What is Human?

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Let us now return to Ibsen's Nora, and her poignant aching quest. What identity will Nora find in a hostile and decadent society? Having declined her role as wife and mother, will she now find security and identity in a new function? If Nora is not a human being, what sociological or philosophical ingredient will perform the desired transformation to "humanness"? If Nora is not a human being what is she? What is a human being; does one become human?

Out there, she will hear such statements as, "We're not afraid to give up what's feminine to be free." And again, "Let women who wish to, and who are gratified by doing so, stay home or take subordinate jobs...but get this straight, this choice has nothing to do with femininity." She will also hear the theme echoed again and again that a "totally new life-style for both men and women, where submission and domination do not exist, is essential for the full realization of women's equality."

She will hear demands for a complete social revolution in America, a restructuring of the nation's family, religious, educational, political, professional, and economic frameworks. They will say, "The traditional roles which describe man as the provider, protector, leader, and woman as the mother, nest-builder and follower, result from ancient myths and misconceptions. These must be replaced by a sexless society."

On the other hand, there are the "Pussycats" who will tell her, "You are simply female. Learn how it works. The individual parts add up to the purring efficiency of the whole. Think of yourself as a switchboard with all sorts of lovely buttons and plug-ins for lighting up and making connections. The idea is to keep the lines busy but not crossed up." It is truly amazing how humanity is nothing but disruptive outside of Christ. Feminists and "Pussycats" represent two reactionary extremes. Both plunder rather than heal our humanity. It is a sad commentary on humanity's lostness.

Will Nora turn to religionists for her answers? There, too, she will find ambiguity and confusion of role and identity. England's Emmaline Pankhurst, relying heavily on religion, bolstered her followers with "Trust in God; She will provide." On the other hand, a Texas preacher asserts from his pulpit, uncontested by his congregation, "Flakey, that stands for female!" And an avowedly Christian psychologist taught seminars on "Masculinity Deified," urging women and children to become puppets to the husband and father. They were taught to think only his thoughts, cater to his every whim, and thus to grossly distort the biblical concept of submission and subvert honest manhood.

The contemporary scenario has metastasized into a preposterous degree of heresy, pagan worship and the celebration of lesbianism. The stated goals of feminism, once purporting to be a simple plea for legitimate recognition of women as God's persons, wanting to serve him with all our human faculties, has been a "slippery slope" indeed for many who were acknowledged leaders in the church. The danger signals were evident in the early stages of this leadership. It would seem that the very biblical notion of male responsibility for maintaining theological integrity has been perilously weak at the juncture where early correction should have been made.

Then there are more subtle errors, intentional or innocent, which reflect a bias in the interpretation of Scriptures. Referring to 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, and specifically to verse 7, "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man," one man concludes: "In this passage, we are dealing with divinely established principles by which the man is the head of the woman and the *woman bears the image of the man.*" Paul hereby is interpreted as endorsing the dangerously false premise

that woman was made in the image of man rather than in the image of God. Such interpretation, however, contradicts the clear statement of equality in Galatians 3:28 and the clear teaching of the Genesis account of creation. This misinterpretation occurs despite the explicit wording of Paul's statement, "woman is the *glory* (not image) of man." While this kind of exegesis may be innocent or careless, it is no less devastating. It is unfortunate that men who are qualified and able ministers should thus earn for themselves epithets such as "misogynistic" and "chauvinist." But the greater tragedy is that they unjustly project that onus to the Apostle Paul who writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The confusion among those who have chosen to join the male-female controversy within the church continues to escalate at an alarming rate. Within the evangelical community there is a tiresome lexicon skirmish, of dubious value. If the "rights" issue could be sidelined and all the energy and giftedness focused, with childlike humility (the kind Jesus recommended!), on self-forgetful, compassionate serving of others, it is awesome to think how effectively the church could demonstrate her high calling!

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Mother Theresa, honoring just such godly serving. It has, appropriately, not been awarded to anyone for engagement in self-assertive demands for personal rights and privilege. One can hardly avoid the conclusion that our enemy has developed an effective strategy for disqualifying the very ones called to be salt and light in our decadent and darkened society, by keeping us continually distracted with issues of our identity or intrinsic value. Such distraction will persist so long as we continue to see ourselves through the secular grid of earned value. In that context we are consumed with ego-centered ambition and power struggles-- a frustrating and futile way to live, indeed.

Does it matter any longer that GOD has secured to us his gracious gifts of unconditional love, forgiveness and acceptance? Must we continually petition for standing, acknowledgment and approval from every other source but the One before whom we stand, and whom we claim to serve? It seems the ubiquitous "equality" issue, which is adjunct to identity, has largely degenerated into an obsession with prestige and power. When such attitudes prevail, it is evident there is little or no understanding-- certainly a lack of gratitude for--God's value system, and futile capitulation to a secular/worldly value system. This amounts to a fall from grace, and the practice of the legalistic system of demand and performance from which we as Christ's redeemed ones have been liberated.

Clearly, the Scriptures never renege on the equality of woman with man, and in these consistent declarations the woman's identity is securely established. It is in this uncompromising strength of identity that her personhood stands unchallenged and unthreatened. From the Word of God we learn that we are human beings, both man and woman, because God made us so. The purpose then of our mutual humanity is to mirror God's image. The sexual mode through which we give expression to God's character is our function, our role. The issue of our equal value is a decision made by God, and validated when we choose to acknowledge Him as the one who determines our destiny.

"Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).

The qualifying characteristic of our humanity is that we are infused with the very life of God. This is the means by which we are intended to reflect his character, to reproduce his kind of life. This also tells us that our humanity is dependent upon God for fulfillment. Without him we are dust, lacking both significance and authority. In the worship of him, in communion with his perfection and wholeness we find healing and authentication. It is not because he needs us, but because we need him, that God commands our worship. And our worship is a response to the God who in love shares with us his own life. This is both the basic and ultimate relationship of our lives, from which all other relationships derive their relevance.

In the case of human creativity, the function of the "created" object is left to the discretion and prerogative of the "creator." In commerce and industry, a careful system of patents and copyrights has been devised to vouchsafe this exclusive privilege. Is not this human system of law and order a reflection of the prevailing right-of-ownership between God and his creatures? If we allow for God at all, we must recognize the priority

of the Creator-God to determine the purpose for which he created and the intelligence and integrity of his determined order for the function of our humanity.

It seems altogether evident and reassuring that our God-assigned function is intended to contribute to the fulfillment and the wholeness of our humanity. Inferiority or superiority are irrelevant as we stand before God, and when present are evidence that we are failing to live in the dignity and humility of who we are as God's persons.

The Genesis account of creation teaches us that the human being is more than beast, less than God. Both man and woman are given dominion over the lesser creatures, under divine authority. We are to worship God and rule nature. Worship is the acknowledgment of God's character, and ruling His creation with benevolent care will extend our worship of the Creator-God. Within these boundaries we are free, unthreatened, and fulfilled. Any alteration of this order diminishes our joy and makes us spoilers of His creation.

A vital corollary to being created in God's image and his mandated authority to rule his creation, is the freedom to choose, a consummate privilege and responsibility. (Presumably, it is now politically incorrect to refer to "mandate". Will it now be "womandate", or perhaps "persondate"?) God does not coerce our worship and love. He does not insist upon his right to be worshiped, loved and served! How singularly strange it is that we humans resort to coercion and demand, methods inappropriate to our humanity and surely arrogant toward God.

So, are women human? The question should never have to be raised! The incontrovertible proof is the biblical account of creation. Do women have equal value with men? The answer will be evident and affirming if we receive the biblical mandate for who we are and why we are here. On the other hand, the question has no definitive answer when we detach ourselves from God's purpose for our mutual humanity, and rely upon a non-biblical assessment of our value/identity.

So, what's the difference? Why did God create us male and female?

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