



UNITY IN OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST

The Core Identity Over All Others

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“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to *unite* all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”  
Ephesians 1:3–10 ESV



[The Church] is...a sign of a cosmic unity that all things are summed up in Christ, and the Church is to be the visible communion of human beings that anticipates that ultimate union of all things in Christ. It is a living sign; a community where that unity is already experienced in some degree...This is, in some respects, is the whole point of redemptive history. That God is going to knit back the human race in his Son. When the church fails to be that proleptic reality of the eschatological union of all things in Christ, then we are very deeply failing in the calling we've been given. - Peter Leithart



“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” (Colossians 3:5–11 ESV)

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# Unity In Our New Identity in Christ

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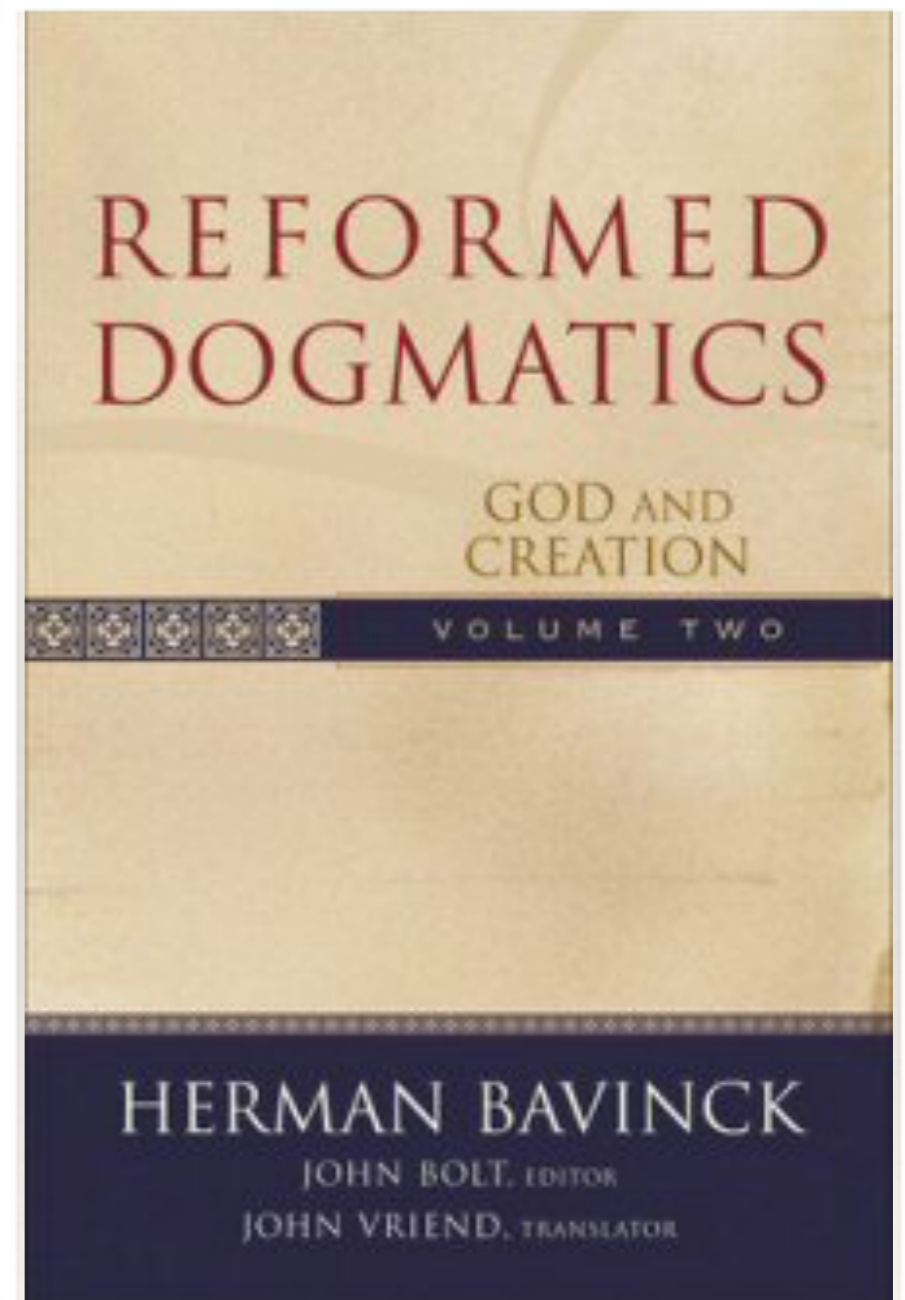
# The Pretext for Our Core Identity



- ❖ Identity - Who are we and how do we know?
- ❖ “You have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”
- ❖ “Beauty brings copies of itself into being. It makes us draw it, take photographs of it, or describe it to other people.” - Elaine Scarry

# Image: Beautiful Community

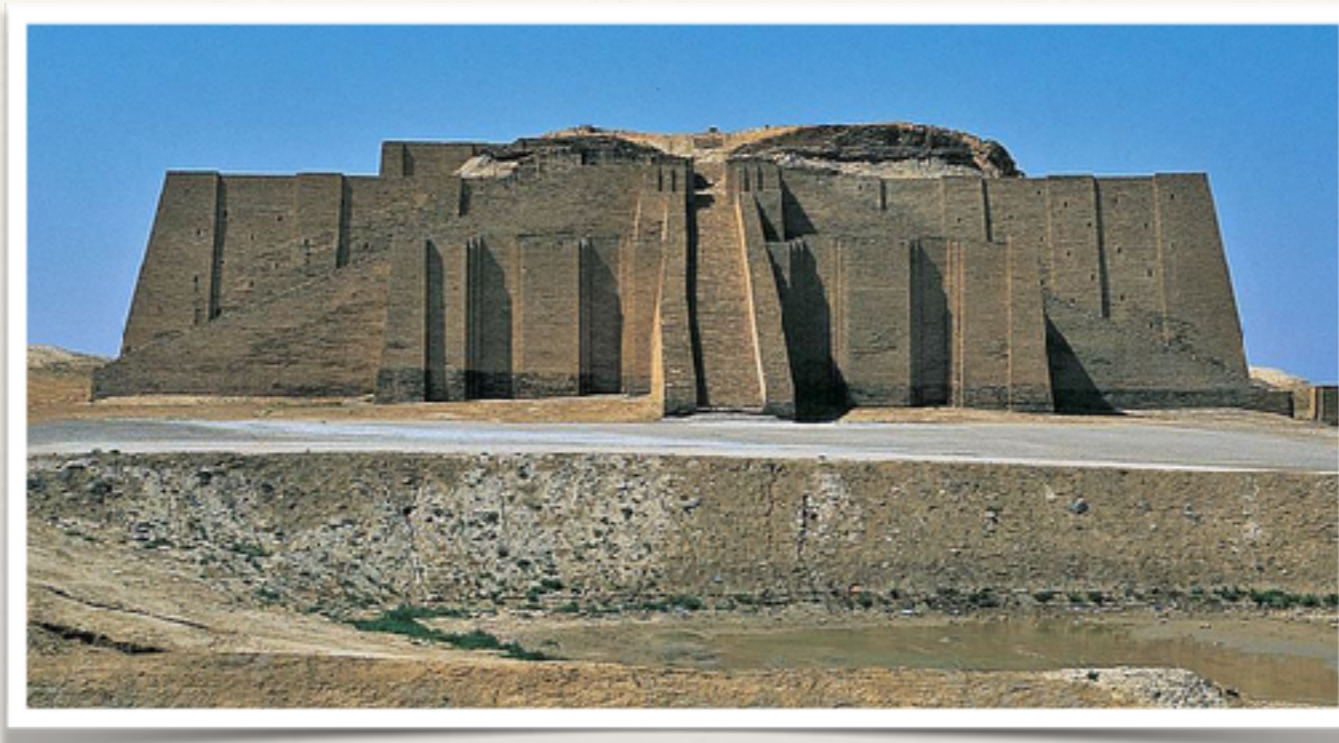
- ❖ The image of God is much too rich for it to be fully realized in a single human being, however richly gifted that human being may be... *Only humanity in its entirety—as one complete organism, summed up under a single head, spread out over the whole earth, as prophet proclaiming the truth of God, as priest dedicating itself to God, as ruler controlling the earth and the whole of creation—only it is the fully finished image, the most telling and striking likeness of God.*
- ❖ In God, too, there is unity in diversity, diversity in unity. Indeed, this order and this harmony is present in him absolutely. In the case of creatures we see only a faint analogy of it... *Among us unity exists only by attraction, by the will and the disposition of the will; it is a moral unity that is fragile and unstable.* And where there is a more profound physical unity as, say, between the capacities of a single substance, there is no independence, and the unity swallows up the diversity. *But in God both are present: absolute unity as well as absolute diversity.* It is one selfsame being sustained by three hypostases. This results in the most perfect kind of community, a community of the same beings; at the same time it results in the most perfect diversity, a diversity of divine persons.



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# The Partition of Our Core Identity

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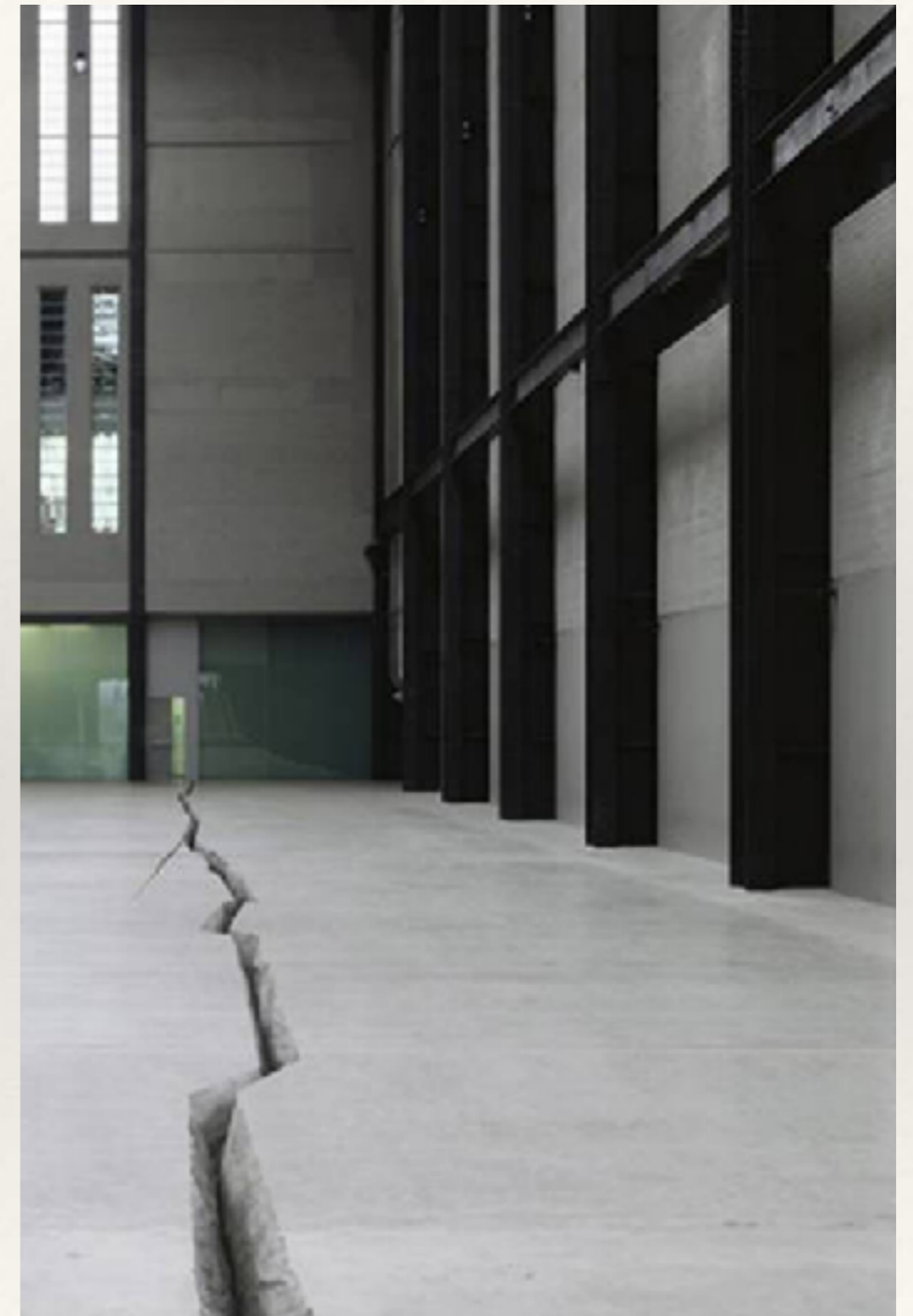


- ❖ The impact of Babel was our now pervasive desire to root our core identity in our group affiliations, instead of our union with God and one another as diverse image bearers.
- ❖ There would have been a rich diversity of human cultures and ethnicities even without the fall. The difference would've been a God glorifying unity in our diversity.
- ❖ The pitfall of our partitioned core identities is that these identities are not the fixed markers we think they are!
  - ❖ "Identities are not the fixed markers people assume them to be but are instead dynamically constructed in the moment."



# The Partition of Our Core Identity

- ❖ “Sometimes we believe that dignity is a pie to be divvied up among us. We worry that if we grant dignity to one group’s suffering or accounting of history then there is less available for us. But this is foolish. We make God small when the reverse should be the case. For, after all, if Jesus is coming back to make all the sad things untrue, then the more sad things we know, the *bigger* Jesus must be to undo them. The cracks are already there. Calling out the brokenness does not diminish Jesus’s power. It *magnifies* it.” - Dr. Elissa Yukiko Weichbrodt
- ❖ Because of the ghettoization of humanity, these reinforced behaviors and ideas create cross-cultural barriers.
- ❖ So, if it’s in our power we self-select.



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# The Promise for Our Core Identity

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What the fall destroyed was union and unity with God and each other. Reunion is the story of Scripture. These words we find in Scripture - renewed, reconciled, united - are the reversal of the fractures, divides, breaks, partitions of life in this world and before God that was/is so desperately needed. We are truly “stamped from the beginning” for unity and union, for wholeness and shalom.

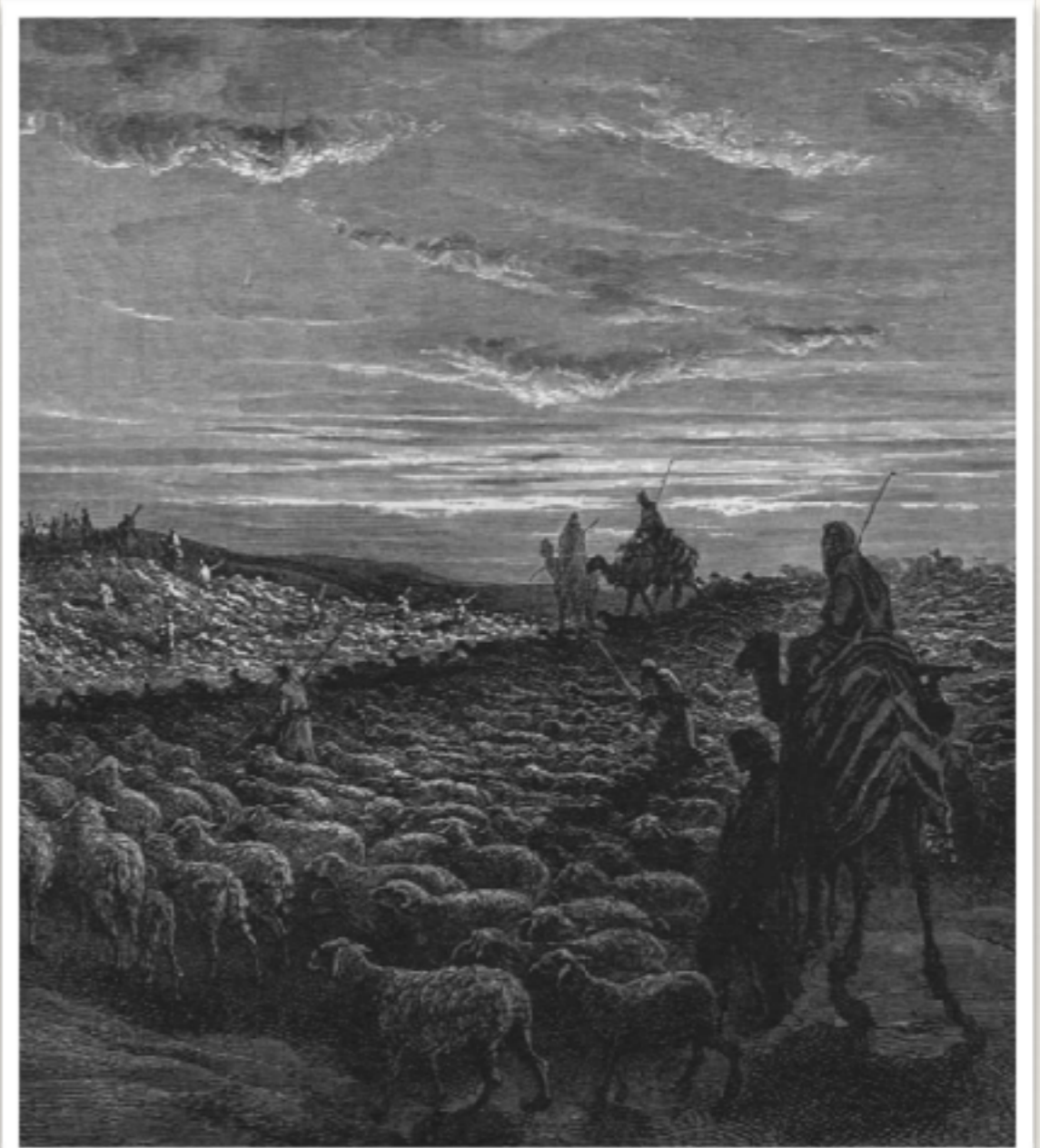
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# God's Response to Our Partitioned Identity

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Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:28-29).



# The Practice of Our Core Identity



“The Spirit is not an automated die-press, punching out stacks of Jesus-copies, one after another. The Spirit’s perfecting work is creative and sensitive to the character of the material before him. Those filled by the Spirit are one body of Christ, renewed in his image; yet “varieties of services” (1 Cor. 12:5) and diverse gifts (1 Cor. 12:6–10) are given “by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (1 Cor. 12:11). The work of the Spirit is both particularizing (or “diversifying”) and unifying. The distinctiveness of each member does not destroy the unity of the body; the unity of the body does not annul the distinctiveness of each member... The new creation will be beautiful because there will be harmony and right relationship between God and humanity, among humanity, and among all that God has made. Each thing will be most truly what it is, and—what is more, and amazing—the utterly distinct character of each being will contribute to the beauty of the whole.”

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# The Practice of Our Core Identity

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“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” (Colossians 3:12–17 ESV)

# THE PRACTICE OF OUR CORE IDENTITY

- ❖ Lenses
  - ❖ “We don’t see things as they are; we see them as we are” (Cuban writer Anaïs Nin).
  - ❖ We need the ability to recognize our own lenses or cultural filter we are wearing in any situation and learn to put on the lenses of someone else from a different cultural background.



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# THE PRACTICE OF OUR CORE IDENTITY

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- ❖ Our capacities to understand each other, to share in work, and to hope require an increasing consciousness about our own worldviews and a commitment to listen to and walk under the influence of others.
- ❖ For many in the dominant culture, in which one element of the lifeworld is entitlement, this can be a stressful experience.
- ❖ For those in the minority the need for trust remains a challenge, especially if memories are saturated with wounds.

