



Body Theology: Reinterpreting God's Gift in Human Frailty

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Abstract: The discussion on the topic of body theology is based on observations of the state of humanity, which no longer appreciates its identity as noble beings capable of managing themselves well and functioning in all aspects of nobility. The human body consists of numerous organs, genes, and cells bound together as a unified whole that complements and depends on each other, with very precise coordination through ion organs. An organ is composed of various types of tissues to perform specific functions. For example, the intestine comprises multiple tissue types. The muscular layer is composed of smooth muscle tissue, within which there are lymphatic vessels and nerves. "cari,smata" is a noun derived from the verb "cari,zomai" (to give); indicating what has been given, bestowed; [such as; as; when] the result of a natural disaster, a very friendly grace gift, a benefaction that grants, beneficial for, with various meanings depending on context: special treatment [bequeathing/granting, rescuing from danger, gift. "cari,smata" is a divine gift given to humans and used for the glory of God. Indeed, everything in human life or everything lived by humans is a gift from God aimed at declaring the Almighty's sovereignty within human beings and to this world. With this understanding, humans need to realize and understand how things are and how they would be without them. Everything is a gift given by God.

Keywords: Body Theology, Gift, Human.

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Introduction

It is undeniable that in human life, our self-worth is often measured by material parameters such as beauty, intelligence, social status, or wealth. However, in a deeper reality, the true value of human beings should be reflected in our alignment with the purpose and plan set by the Creator. Each individual has immeasurable significance as we are created in goodness by God (Moritz, 2017).

Yet, in the journey of human life, the awareness of the importance of preserving and nurturing life is increasingly marginalized for some people, as the negative impacts of human actions on this planet become clearer. We realize that planet Earth, our home, is suffering serious damage due to irresponsible exploitation of natural resources. This exploitation process not only damages the earth's body but also harms the human community as a whole. This long journey reflects a long-established paradigm where humans tend to prioritize themselves, an attitude that has emerged since the beginning of humanity's fall into sin. However, today, we are faced with the awareness that nature is not just a resource to be exploited, but a heritage that must be preserved and managed wisely (de Wet, 2014).

The human body, as part of this beautiful creation, should be a reflection of the harmonious relationship between humans and others, nature, and the Creator. In this context, the body is not only an instrument to fulfill personal needs but also a vessel to build healthy relationships horizontally and vertically, with fellow

human beings and with the God who created us. This research aims to explore how humans can develop a deeper understanding of self-meaning and responsibility towards the environment, and how this relationship can lead to a more meaningful and significant life for all creatures (Ariawan, 2022).

Body Theology, a profound and deep concept, proposes that the human body is not just a separate physical entity from spirituality but a medium through which we can experience and understand the presence of God. In this perspective, the human body becomes a sign or symbol that reveals a higher reality, namely the existence of God. In understanding Body Theology, we are reminded that God, as a reality that cannot be directly seen by human eyes, can be found and experienced through His creation. Humans, with their bodies, become a mirror of God's presence in this world. The human body is not just a tool for living daily life but also a channel that allows us to realize the existence of God (W. A. Dreyer & Pillay, 2017).

It is important to understand that this concept does not consider the human body as God itself but as a medium that directs us to a deeper spiritual experience. In this context, the human body becomes the meeting point between the physical and the spiritual, between the seen and the unseen. As a manifestation of God's existence, the human body allows us to see and feel things that cannot be physically seen, such as spirituality and divinity. In other words, through our bodies, we can understand and feel the presence of God in our daily lives (Lal et al., 2023).

Body Theology teaches that the human body is a wonder that reveals the mystery of God's presence in this world. In every movement, expression, and physical experience, we can see traces of the greatness and majesty of the Creator. Thus, the human body becomes a window that opens our view to a higher reality, namely the existence of God. However, it is important to remember that understanding Body Theology does not mean that we should abandon the material world or neglect the importance of maintaining physical health. On the contrary, this concept teaches that the human body must be respected and preserved as the primary access point to experiencing God's presence in this world. By taking care of our bodies, we also honor the gift that the Creator has given us in goodness and beauty.

Method

This research employs a literature review method to investigate the theological significance of the human body. Several articles highlighted in this literature review include:

1. The seminal work "Theology of the Body" by Pope John Paul II: In this work, Pope John Paul II explores the theological significance of the human body, particularly in the context of marriage and sexuality. He emphasizes the dignity of the human person and the sacredness of the body as a reflection of God's image.
2. "Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Understanding of Sanctification" by Sam Williamson: Williamson delves into the theological concept of sanctification and proposes a holistic understanding that involves the body. He challenges the dichotomy between spiritual and physical aspects of sanctification, advocating for a more integrated approach.
3. "Bodily Resurrection and Life Everlasting" by Geoffrey Rowell: Rowell examines the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection and its implications for theology and eschatology. He explores how bodily resurrection confirms the goodness of physical existence and emphasizes the continuity between earthly and heavenly life.
4. "Theology and the Body" edited by Philip Sheldrake: This collection of essays explores various theological perspectives on the human body, covering topics such as embodiment, sexuality, suffering, and disability. Contributors engage with diverse theological traditions and contemporary debates.
5. "Created in God's Image" by Anthony A. Hoekema: Hoekema provides a comprehensive overview of the Christian doctrine of humanity, focusing on the biblical concept of humans created in the image of God. He discusses the implications of this doctrine for understanding the nature and purpose of the human body.
6. "Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed" by Marc Cortez: Cortez offers a guide to theological anthropology, examining key concepts such as human nature, sin, and redemption. He explores the relationship between theology and the human body, considering how theological beliefs shape our understanding of embodied existence.
7. "The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33" by Michael F. Bird: Bird analyzes the metaphorical language used in Ephesians 5:21-33 to describe the relationship between Christ and the church as a marriage. He explores the implications of this metaphor for understanding the significance of the human body in Christian theology.
8. "Bodily Interactions and Early Christian Community Formation" by Todd D. Still: Still investigates the role of bodily interactions, such as greeting rituals and communal meals, in shaping early Christian community life. He highlights the embodied nature of Christian identity and social cohesion in the New Testament context.

These works offer valuable insights into the theological significance of the human body, addressing themes such as embodiment, sanctification, resurrection, and community formation. By engaging with these perspectives, scholars can deepen their understanding of theology and the body, exploring the rich theological implications of embodied existence.

Result and Discussion

Theology is a discipline that seeks to understand and explain the nature of God and all His arrangements, specifically concerning humanity. The central focus of theology is God and humanity; without God and humanity, theology would be impossible to decipher its meaning and essence, although theology about God still contains many hidden aspects due to the limitations of the human body to explain through the organs within it.

An organ is composed of various types of tissues to perform a specific function. For example, the intestines consist of various types of tissues. The muscle layer is composed of smooth muscle tissue, within which there are lymphatic vessels and nerves. The submucosal layer is composed of lymphatic vessels, nerves, and loose connective tissue. Meanwhile, the mucosal layer is composed of epithelial tissue, loose connective tissue, and smooth muscle tissue (Putra, Padmasari, & Ariawan, 2020). The various tissues composing the digestive organ (intestines) perform the same function, which is to digest and absorb food. Organs collaborate to perform specific physiological functions for the same purpose within an organ system. Each organ is an indispensable component of that system. In the bodies of vertebrate animals, there are various organ systems, namely:

1. Respiratory System

The respiratory system consists of the nose, trachea, bronchi, and lungs. The function of the respiratory system is to obtain O₂ and expel CO₂ to obtain energy by simplifying organic compounds. This system symbolizes the interconnectedness between the body's organs, complementing each other.

2. Circulatory System

The circulatory system consists of the heart, blood, arteries, veins, lymphatic vessels, lymph nodes, and lymph fluid. The circulatory system functions to transport nutrients from the small intestine to the entire body. The body is a divine gift given to humans and is used for the glory of God. Indeed, everything in human life or everything lived by humans is a gift from God aimed at declaring the Almighty's sovereignty within human beings and to this world. With this understanding, humans need to realize and understand how things are and how they would be without them. Everything is a gift given by God.

With the interdependence of this body, we can observe how credible human life is as the body of Christ, living complementarily. Differences must be observed and accepted as long as they are based on the name of Jesus Christ. As an incarnation of the power of grace in the form of extraordinary powers given to individuals, often in multiple gifts, special

abilities; abilities for self-restraint in various aspects of gender, gifts (from; about giving), special abilities given through the life experiences of every individual/until the ordination of what God has given, blessings. The body is an important part of human life. A person without a body is dead; the body is what processes all the sources of human life. Thus, a person without a body has no meaning. Besides this body, there is also the head, which is interdependent with the body and also with parts of all the organs of the human body, whether from the smallest or cells found within humans. In the context of God's revelation to humanity, the body is *rb'B*, a masculine noun meaning flesh, body, family member. This word is a form of a singular masculine noun that indicates one person not fragmented. The human body is the body of Christ or a representation of the image of God revealed to this world.

3. Digestive System

The digestive system consists of the oral cavity (containing teeth, tongue, and salivary glands), the digestive tract (starting from the esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, rectum, and anus), digestive glands, liver, and pancreas. The digestive system functions to digest food for absorption by the body. The human body is a form of communication. We can communicate ourselves with everything in our minds and hearts just through the body. The body is related to who the human being is. In our current discussion, we try to understand our bodies individually, with reference to building teachings by inviting us back to the holy book, seeing God's plan at the beginning of our creation. So, in the book of Genesis, it has been revealed to us that humans are formed based on God's kindness and created in the image and likeness of God. With radical thinking, we can say that God has a body, but a body that is not the same as our visible bodies. So God is the true God, namely God who has a form that can be understood in Jesus Christ.

For us to understand our bodies, we must critically think about the meaning of our lives. Because when we take a closer look at our lives today, many people, especially among young people, cannot understand the meaning of their lives: who am I, what is the purpose of my life, it is almost not thought of. Or they do think about it, but they place the meaning of their lives on something wrong. What is the meaning of our lives! Is it for pleasure, for someone, or for something, to pursue achievements, for family, don't know at all, or for God?

Why am I asking this? When people do not have a meaning to their lives or put it in the wrong place, they will also not understand or misuse their bodies. When people just want to enjoy life, their bodies are also used to enjoy themselves. Do not be surprised if people surrender their bodies only for pleasure, such as sex, food, drugs, and so on. Therefore, it is very important for us to have a good understanding of the meaning and purpose of our lives, so that we can also interpret our bodies. Our bodies are not for pleasure or for something futile or limited.

People who do not understand their lives are attacked by various challenges with all kinds of misleading views of their lives, especially regarding the body. When faced with such situations, how do we interpret this body? How can we interpret our own lives? In this body theology, we find the meaning of our lives again. Christ teaches us that the meaning of our lives is to love one another as He loves us (John 15:12). One of the main meanings shown here is that God has written this call in our bodies by

creating man and woman and calling us, men and women, to become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). Because we find the meaning of our lives in loving one another, concretized in the body, our bodies must also be used to love God, others, and ourselves (Naibaho, Ariawan, Harianja, Simorangkir, & Sinambela, 2022).

The body or flesh is a manifestation of the reality of the existence of the living God, for humans are made from the dust of the earth, which has no ability except to remain still. However, after God breathed life (*Ruahk*) into the dust (*Adamah*) that had been formed by God, it became a real and living thing, declaring that God's ability is real. *xapioyara* is a divine power that is difficult for humans to understand with real analogies. Charisma is related to God's power that was provided before the world was made (Ephesians 1:4). For God has planned everything that has happened and will happen in the coming days. Every person who becomes the body of Christ is a Christ family member who becomes one flesh with Christ when allowed to become the body of Christ with predetermined provisions (Kruger, 2016).

Because humans have exercised their free will by choosing to follow Satan's way of thinking in the garden of Eden. Humans had to leave that family relationship with God or that body of Christ when they misused their free will. *BIS* = Then God said, "Now let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Human (*Adam*) has power that comes from the earth/dust (*Adamah*), a part of this world. Humanity is a part of God's divine nature that becomes part of human beings and will one day disappear if God wants it to disappear from human beings. But God has planned the best for each person by providing everything that can be used by humans and must be based on God's corridor.

KJV And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. Translation And God said, "Let us make man in (our) image [us], after our (we) likeness: and let them have dominion/power (in) over the fish from the sea, and (in) over the fowl from the air, and (in) over the cattle, and (in) over all earth, and (in) over all thing that creeping from earth." Power is only possessed by the Body of Christ, the word *70* which means the body that has been transformed from the earth or dust (*Ever*) that previously had no ability about everything. So the body of God is felt by humans when they have no ability at all, which means denying oneself by acknowledging that inability or limitation. Because humans are made by God from what has no ability, from the weakest or from inanimate objects called living by humans. So humans do not live if they leave the body of Christ.

The body we know today as Body Theology, Body Theology is the science of God and also all His creations. What is meant here is that the human body is a sign and a means of the presence of God. God is a reality that cannot be seen. The only way to make this reality of God visible is in the human body. The body is actually able to make visible what is invisible, which is spiritual and divine. Our bodies are manifestations of the presence of God (Y. Dreyer, Zeindler, Case-Winters, Sadananda, & Weinrich, 2013).

God has a body that is difficult for us to study but only we can understand. Because we are not facilitated to study the form of the existence of God as a whole. Our ability to think about it will never be able to as long as we are still in or in this humanity camp. That can only be understood by faith in Jesus Christ. Just as we have logic or can understand something that we can see with logic, likewise we will be able to understand God logically only not yet time for now can be understood by our analogy (Simatupang, Widiastuti, & Imeldawati, 2022).

God cannot be understood entirely when we are now in this world. Maybe we can understand that God is almighty; we can understand that God can make everything like making the paralyzed walk, the blind see, and the dead live. But that is not yet the whole manifestation or essence of God. But that is a small part that God can do that is entrusted to be able to understand us. So God is a God we cannot think of. We cannot explain the true essence of God because God is a God we cannot think of for now and we must understand that we cannot explain what we cannot think of.

Conclusion

The human body naturally coordinates among its parts. However, it is disheartening to observe the state of the church. Individuals often fail to agree with one another, and conflicts persist between different factions. What one group does, another may ignore or oppose, leading to a lack of unity and support. How then can the reality of a coordinated body be established? This situation is akin to attempting to walk to a destination and retrieve an item: if the hand wishes to grasp the object but the feet refuse to move, or if both hands and feet are willing but the eyes refuse to see, hindering movement. Can the body then reach the intended point and retrieve the item? It is imperative that we adhere to a single principle, purpose, heart, mind, and be moved by one Spirit (Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 2:2; 4:2).

An organ is composed of various types of tissues to perform specific functions. For instance, the intestine comprises multiple tissue types, including the serous, muscular, submucosal, and mucosal layers. The serous layer consists of loose connective tissue and squamous epithelium. This organ system is similarly possessed by humans. Likewise, this analogy extends to the religious life desired by God. Therefore, it serves as a fitting illustration and should be a focal point for every Christian community. Hence, attention should be given to how the human body's organs function daily within individuals, mutually complementing each other without seeking personal glory.

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