

The Incarnation and Human Personhood

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The Problem of Person and Personhood

FAULTY THEOLOGY IS DANGEROUS THEOLOGY. Intellectually holding to proper theology yet not letting it sink into the warp and woof of life is also dangerous. This is true when confessing a biblically orthodox view of the Incarnation but ignoring its implications for everyday life. Note the statement below.

The flesh of Christ *was not conceived in the womb of the Virgin apart from the deity (non sine divinitate conceptam in utero Virginis)* and before she was overshadowed by the Logos, but the divine Logos Himself was conceived by the reception of His flesh, and the very flesh of the Logos was conceived in the incarnation.¹

Written by sixth century North African bishop Fulgentius, it stresses that the Divine Word (Logos), the second person of the Trinity, did not assume an already formed human conceptus in Mary's womb but instead assumed human nature at the very moment of conception.

One thousand years later, the sixteenth-century Lutheran Confessors would teach that Christ's assumed human nature always possessed the majesty of his divine nature and that Christ "possessed this majesty from his conception in the womb of his mother."² Just as there never was a time when the divine Logos did not exist, there was never a time when Jesus' conceptus was not God and man in one person.

This has been the orthodox teaching on the incarnation from very early times. Yet, how many Christians know how this teaching answers a central question about the moment *person* and *personhood* occur? Just as Jesus was God and man in one person at the moment of conception, I hope to show that *person* and *personhood* begin at the moment of conception for all humans. At no time in the womb does a new human life lack being a genuine, authentic *person*, whether as a zygote, blastocyst, embryo, or fetus. These terms "describe stages of biological human development and as such, do not describe the development *into* a human person."³ This is critical.

Today, Christians live in a world that denies *person* and *personhood* to certain human beings, particularly the unborn. Lutheran ethicist Gilbert Meilaender explains:

Over the last several decades ... the term “personhood” has often been used to deny protection to the developing fetus. The word points to a set of capacities—usually including consciousness and self-awareness, ability to feel pain, at least some minimal capacity for relationship with others, and perhaps some capacity for self-motivated activity. “Personhood” became something a living human being may or may not possess, and the class of persons becomes smaller—perhaps considerably smaller—than the class of living human beings.⁴

In other words, the terms *person* and *personhood* in use today are given to others because of something they possess rather than who or what they are.

For example, note the following description of the terms “human” and “person,” written by theologian and philosopher ethicist James S. Walters.

Human and person are not equivalent terms. For example, I do not think that a human conceptus qualifies as a person and neither does a human who is irretrievably beyond consciousness—say, a patient in a truly permanent coma. That is, neither a conceptus nor a permanently comatose patient possesses self-consciousness and therefore neither qualifies for the moral status of person.⁵

Many Christians embrace this descriptive difference. What has happened to bring many to the point that, while they hold to Jesus’ true deity and humanity in one person, they also hold to the idea that “human and person are not equivalent terms” and that certain humans do not qualify “for the moral status of person”?

The Historic Church and the Meaning of Person

ORTHODOX SCHOLAR JOHN ZIZIOULAS examines the problem. “The concept of the person,” he writes, has been detached “from theology” and united “with the idea of an autonomous morality or with an existential philosophy which is purely humanistic.”⁶ Zizioulas calls the Church to the awareness that “person both as a concept and as a living reality is purely the product of patristic thought.”⁷ In other words, the term developed within the Church. For this reason, knowing the history behind the word is critically important.

The English word *person* has its roots in the Greek word πρόσωπον [*prospan*] and the Latin *persona*. The Greek word, depending on the context, can mean: “the front part of the head,” as in “face, countenance,” or it can be used figuratively as “*personal presence or relational circumstance*.” It can also mean “entire bodily

presence, *person*.” In addition, it can mean “the outer surface of something,” as well as describing “that which is present in a certain form or character to a viewer,” thus the translation “external things” or “appearance.”⁸ The Septuagint⁹ often uses the word πρόσωπον to translate the Hebrew פָּנִים (*panim*), *face* as in Psalm 26:8-9.¹⁰ The word could also be used for “mask” in a theater and thus for an actor’s dramatic part or character.¹¹ The Latin *persona* also means a “mask” used in a theater, “and hence the role, the character that the actor plays.”¹² At the same time, the Latin *persona* “came to designate the human individual in [his/her] particularity.”¹³

Thus, Christianity did not invent the words *prospon* and *persona*. They were common everyday words in the ancient Greco-Roman world. However, the early Christians used these words in their theological reflection and, in doing so, as Emmanuel Housset stresses, “brought to light a radically new sense of the person, that is neither Greek nor Latin, even if it was prepared in Greek and transmitted in Latin.”¹⁴ The early Christians bequeathed this new sense to the languages that would birth the English language.

The concept of person began to take on a Christian shape in the Trinitarian battles and the debates over Christology. The reworking of the word would affect its use until recent times. Beginning with such Latin theologians as Tertullian,¹⁵ the word *persona* came to be used to describe how God could be one and yet three. In his writings, he does not use the word *person* in the Roman “juristic sense of a title-holder but in the metaphysical sense of a concrete individual or a self.”¹⁶

The development of *person* does not stop with the Trinity. The concept is further developed in Christology and the view concerning the two natures in Christ. The one *person* of Christ is described as having two natures, divine and human. This *person* is seen as more than the characteristics of either “nature.” “The distinction between personhood and human nature means that one cannot simply ground the personhood in any natural characteristics—including the body, consciousness, soul, or will—for such a move would violate the principles of traditional Christology.”¹⁷

Secular and Heretical Views of Christ’s Person

HOWEVER, IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY, John Locke would “influence the way in which philosophers conceive of ‘persons’ and personal identity, and Locke’s account continues to be a mainstay of analytical philosophies of personal identity.”¹⁸ As Lydia Jaeger notes, Locke taught that “rationality, self-awareness and memory constituted the person.”¹⁹ She continues: “What is striking in these proposals is the return to a definition by the nature of the individual: persons are once again defined by traits, most often by their intellectual capacities, or even their cerebral activity.”²⁰ This causes confusion as to when a human being becomes or is no longer a person. To

ground “personhood in biological or cultural characteristics,” as James Thieke notes, “one risks making personhood a contingent reality, in which one’s personhood can change (or even disappear) with the changes in one’s body or mind.”²¹

Today, the majority view concerning *person* and *personhood* has taken on meanings directly contrary to a Christian view of *person* and *personhood* developed in the Christian world through its Trinitarian theology and Christological language.²²

Christians who hold to the historic Christian faith should not be confounded by today’s interpretation of what makes someone a *person* and thus what defines *personhood*. Instead, the view of the *person* as understood by historic Christianity should govern how the biblically orthodox Christian thinks. This in turn should determine how the Christian evaluates abortion and other life issues. Abortion fails the litmus test of the Christological position of classical orthodox Christianity. The idea of aborting the human zygote/embryo/fetus because it has not reached the status of *personhood*, as is often held today, would have a better chance among various Christological heresies,²³ such as Gnosticism, Adoptionism, Arianism, Nestorianism, or Apollinarianism.²⁴ On the other hand, it is logically and theologically challenging²⁵ for this thinking to exist within the historic Christological view of the two natures in the one Christ existing from the moment of conception. Today’s conception of person and personhood is simply incompatible with historic orthodox Christianity.²⁶ So, this apologetic for the human *person* must discuss the historical orthodox Christological view.

However, the heresies mentioned above must be briefly described first.

- Gnosticism holds that while Jesus may be divine, he certainly was not physically human since the divine would never have anything to do with the physical. Jesus thus becomes a phantom. He may seem to be human, but he is not.²⁷
- Adoptionism holds that Jesus was a man who, at some point in his life, was adopted as the Son of God and thus could bear the title divine in an honorary way, but he was not the true God.²⁸
- Arianism stresses that it is not the one God who became flesh in Jesus, but rather the first created and highest of all creatures known as the “Logos” or “Word.” This Being, a quasi-semi god, took on flesh in the historical Jesus. Jesus ended up being neither fully God nor fully human, but as J. W. C. Wand notes, “like Mohammed’s coffin, hovered between earth and heaven belonging to neither.”²⁹
- Nestorianism, while stressing the divine and human natures in Christ, separates these natures to the point that what they have in common is only a moral agency of the will. Mary gives birth to the human Jesus

but not to God himself. The human nature becomes the carrier for the divine nature.³⁰ Some have described it as being like two boards glued together. The only thing connecting the boards is glue. Otherwise, they have nothing to do with each other. Nestorius himself would only partially fall into this category, but full-blown Nestorianism seems to have the potential to treat the two natures in this way. Nestorius could even be accused of a type of Adoptionism. As Roger Olson writes, “Nestorius simply replaced the adopting one with the Logos (rather than the Father). The Logos, the eternal Word of God, adopted the man Jesus as his partner, so to speak, and that partnership constituted the incarnation. Only it didn’t, said the critics. Being a ‘partner’ with God does not make one God.”³¹

- Apollinarianism teaches that God takes the place of the human rational soul (i.e., mind) in Jesus. Thus, as C. FitzSimons Allison notes, Apollinarianism destroys “something of the humanity” of Jesus.³² Jesus ends up being God controlling a human body. But God has not truly become incarnate, nor is Christ truly and fully human.

What does all the above have to do with personhood and abortion? How can a correct Christology help Christians deepen their understanding that it is theologically untenable for someone claiming to be a biblical, orthodox believer in Christ to speak as if the zygote, embryo, or fetus in the womb is not yet a *person* and thus may be aborted?

The answer to these questions can be comprehended if one understands what would have happened if Jesus had been born today and his mother had aborted him while in her womb. What if Mary had asserted her “rights” to her own body and treated the developing zygote, embryo, or fetus in her womb as not possessing any personhood, giving him a right to live? In the case of the Gnostic Jesus, nothing would have happened since Jesus was not born but merely appeared on the scene at a particular time in history, and his appearance was only as a phantom. In the case of Adoptionism, only the human zygote/embryo/fetus in the womb would have been aborted, but this would have had nothing to do with God since God had not yet adopted him to be his Son. In any case, even with being adopted as God’s “Divine Son,” Jesus would still not have been God come in the flesh. In the case of Arianism, the zygote/embryo/fetus in the womb of Mary is neither fully human nor God. The abortion of the Nestorian Jesus would have only affected the human nature. This would be because there is only a moral uniting of the will between the human and divine, not an actual uniting in one person. The aborted Apollinarian Jesus would only have been a partially human zygote, embryo, or fetus, not quite fully human, and God could have left it to start all over again. In the above cases, the abortion would not have been of the God-man Jesus.³³

The Ecumenical Creeds and Christ's Person

ON THE OTHER HAND, WHAT WOULD an abortion have done to the historic orthodox Jesus? One must know how historic orthodox Christianity views Jesus in its authoritative Scriptures and creeds to answer this.

The Apostles' Creed confesses Jesus as God the Father's "only begotten son" and that Jesus "was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary." Notice what Scottish theologian Thomas F. Torrance states concerning this section of the Creed and how it intersects with life in the womb.

This article of the creed is particularly relevant for our discussion here. It acknowledges as one of the central truths of the Christian faith that in his Incarnation in which the Lord Jesus assumed our human nature, gathering up all the stages and healing them in his own human life, including conception, he thereby gave the human embryo a sacred inviolable status from the very beginning of his or her creaturely existence. For Christians this excludes the drawing of an arbitrary line at some stage in the development and growth of human being before birth, marking off a period when tampering with the human embryo in any way is deemed permissible.³⁴

The Nicene Creed, the most agreed-upon creed in historic Christianity, confesses the following.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds [God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [essence] with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy [Spirit] of the Virgin Mary, and was made man....³⁵

Here, the deity of Christ is proclaimed, and his humanity is also stressed. However, the creed has no precise definition concerning the union of the human and divine natures in the one person of Jesus Christ. That would come after the theological battles over Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism.

On the other hand, the later Athanasian Creed is highly detailed.

Who, although he is God and man, is nevertheless not two but one Christ. He is one however, not by the transformation of his divinity into flesh, but by the taking up of his humanity into God; one certainly not by confusion of substance, but by oneness of person. For just as rational soul and flesh are a single man, so, God and man are a single Christ.³⁶

God does not change. He is not converted into flesh. Instead, the human nature is taken "up ... into God." This means that Jesus is both truly human and God in one

person *from conception*. The orthodox Christian can say with Fulgentius that “the very flesh of the Logos was conceived in the incarnation.”³⁷ Because of this union, the Apostle Paul can say to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28: “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, *which he obtained with his own blood*.”³⁸ God does not have blood. Yet here, Paul speaks concerning the blood of God. This can be done only because of the union of the two natures in the person of the one Christ, and this union took place in conception.

The Chalcedonian Definition of A.D. 451 describes what happened when the Word became flesh in Jesus. While the definition following does not answer the “how” of the mystery of the incarnation, it does seek to protect the mystery. It stresses Christ as fully God and fully human in one person.

Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance [ὁμοούσιος] with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer [θεοτόκος] one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized in TWO NATURES, WITHOUT CONFUSION, WITHOUT CHANGE, WITHOUT DIVISION, WITHOUT SEPARATION [ἐν δύο φύσεσιν, ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαρέτως, ἀχωρίστως];³⁹ the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence [ὑπόστασις], not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ, even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.⁴⁰

Notice that the historic orthodox Church calls the mother of Jesus the *Theotokos*,⁴¹ the bearer of God. The Latin words translating *Theotokos* are *Mater Dei*, “Mother of God.” Scripture teaches that God is not a creature but the Creator. He cannot be born. He has no origin. He has always been. He is eternal. Yet in the one person of Jesus, the fertilized egg in the womb of Mary is not only truly and fully human but also truly and fully God. Thus, Mary gives birth to no mere human being, but to one who is both God and human in one person, whom theologians have called the theanthropic⁴² Christ. For this to be true, God had to be fully and intimately united

to this human nature from conception. This is what the incarnation is all about. God the Logos did not unite himself to an already formed human nature in the womb of Mary. Nor did God, at the moment of conception, begin gradually uniting himself to the human nature.⁴³ To teach these ideas is heresy. Instead, from the very moment of conception, God the Word and a human nature are one person. Therefore, John of Damascus can write:

For the divine Word was not made one with flesh that had an independent pre-existence, but taking up His abode in the womb of the holy Virgin, He unreservedly in His own subsistence took upon Himself through the pure blood of the eternal Virgin a body of flesh animated with the spirit of reason and thought, thus assuming to Himself the first-fruits of man's compound nature, Himself, the Word, having become a subsistence in the flesh. So that He is at once flesh, and at the same time flesh of God the Word, and likewise flesh animated, possessing both reason and thought. Wherefore we speak not of man as having become God, but of God as having become Man. For being by nature perfect God, He naturally became likewise perfect Man: and did not change His nature nor make the dispensation an empty show, but became, without confusion or change or division, one in subsistence with the flesh, which was conceived of the holy Virgin, and animated with reason and thought, and had found existence in Him, while He did not change the nature of His divinity into the essence of flesh, nor the essence of flesh into the nature of His divinity, and did not make one compound nature out of His divine nature and the human nature He had assumed.⁴⁴

A little over 800 years later, theologian Martin Chemnitz would echo John of Damascus when he wrote, "As soon as the flesh *began to exist (inceperet existere)*, through the assumption or union it *at once (iam)* became the flesh of the divine Logos Himself."⁴⁵

Even biology confirms that from the very beginning that that which is in the womb is human, albeit one that must grow and develop. Thomas F. Torrance notes: "The human being is already genetically complete in the womb from the moment of conception, when the body and soul of the new human being grow together within the womb of the mother and in living relation with her."⁴⁶ The problem with considerable thinking in today's world is that while the zygote/embryo/fetus may be considered human, many will not assign personhood to it until certain conditions are met. However, not everyone agrees on what those conditions are. If we look at Jesus, we find that his full personhood begins at the moment of conception.

The Holy Scriptures and Christ's Person

JOHN BEGINS HIS GOSPEL with the following declaration in John 1:1-4, 14, 16-18:

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men....¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth....¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Verses 1-4 stress the deity of the Word (Λόγος ; Logos). Verse 1 emphasizes that the Logos is and always has been God. Yet, it also distinguishes the Logos from God the Father, which shows that even though the author, as a Jew, is a monotheist, there are indications here of what would come to be later known as Trinitarian Monotheism. In verse 3, this Word is the God who made all things. The high point comes with verse 14. Here it is this God who “became flesh” and lived (ἐσκήνωσεν)⁴⁷ among real humans. While the word “flesh” (σάρξ) in the Christian Scriptures has a multiplicity of meanings, here in John 1:14, it “is a form of metonymy, indicating the full humanity which the divine Logos assumes, a humanity that is embodied and spirited.”⁴⁸ God became truly human in Jesus. This full humanity was not something that happened with birth, but while in Mary's womb, from the moment when he “became flesh” at conception.

In Luke 1:35, Mary asks the angel how she, as a virgin, can conceive and bear a child. Note the angel's response.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child *to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.*

The child in the womb has yet to be born. He is τὸ γεννώμενον, “the one being born” or “to be born.” Yet, in Mary's womb, he is called “holy—the Son of God.” Even the fetus of John the Baptist notices this truth. The reader is given an indication of this when, in chapter 1:29-44, the Gospel writer describes what happened when the six-month pregnant Elizabeth came in contact with the newly pregnant Mary.

³⁹In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby (βρέφος) in my womb leaped for joy.

Here, we have a fetus responding to a newly conceived life in another womb. Why? Because the fetus in Elizabeth's womb recognized this new life in Mary's womb as the Lord God come in the flesh. Two items in verse 39 are essential here.

First, Luke begins the Greek text of verse 29 with the word Ἀναστᾶσα (*anastasa*), which is an aorist participle of the Greek verb ἀνίστημι. The English Standard Version (ESV) translates this word as “arose” in Luke 1:39. Luke uses this word in his Gospel and the book of Acts “about sixty times against about twenty-two times in the rest of [the New Testament].”⁴⁹ The word occurs hundreds of times in the Septuagint.⁵⁰ In various places, this word is used for preparing for a journey,⁵¹ as we see in Luke 15:18, 20, Acts 10:20, and Acts 22:10.⁵²

Second, Luke 1:39 tells us that this rising to prepare for a journey happened “in those days” (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις). Luke's frequent use of this phrase in his Gospel and Acts indicates his fondness for it.⁵³ “In those days Mary arose and went with haste” is used right after the annunciation to Mary by the Angel Gabriel that she will conceive and give birth to a child who would “be called holy—the Son of God.” Luke 1:38 records, “And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.” Immediately after this, verse 39 declares: “In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah.” By using the words “in those days,” Plummer believes that Luke is stressing this event to be “soon after the Annunciation. As the projected journey was one of several days, it would require time to arrange it and find an escort.”⁵⁴ So if Mary conceived at the time of the annunciation, and then between preparation time and travel, it took Mary almost a week before she arrived at her cousin Elizabeth's home, then the child inside Mary would most likely still be in the zygote stage.⁵⁵ Graham Scott notes, “In this case, the Christ whom the unborn John greeted was probably not even implanted in the womb. If so, the somewhat more than six-month-old fetus to be named John responded to the arrival of a zygote not even implanted in the wall of the womb.”⁵⁶ Who was that zygote? It was he who was God and human in one *person*.

Several ancient church fathers speak on this event in Luke. One of them, Maximus of Turin (died 408/423), describes what happened when the βρέφος (*brepfos*) in the womb (see Luke 1:44) came in contact with the zygote in Mary's womb.

Not yet born, already he [John] prophesies and, while still in the enclosure of his mother's womb, confesses the coming of Christ with movements of joy since he could not do so with his voice. For Elizabeth says to holy Mary: *As soon as you greeted me, the child in my womb exulted for joy.* John exults, then, before he is born, and before his eyes can see what the world looks like he can recognize the Lord of the world with his spirit. In this regard I think that the prophetic phrase is apropos which says: *Before*

I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you came forth from the womb I sanctified you. Thus we ought not to marvel that, after he was put in prison by Herod, from his confinement he continued to announce Christ to his disciples, when even confined in the womb he preached the same Lord by his movements.⁵⁷

New Testament scholar Arthur Just notes that the word “βρέφος” (*brepfos*) in verse 41

is used for babies both before and after birth, implying that an unborn child is a fully human person. The word occurs eight times in the NT, six of which are in Luke-Acts. It refers to John the Baptist while in his mother’s womb in Lk 1:41, 44; to Jesus after his birth in Lk 2:12, 16; to the young children brought to Jesus in Lk 18:15; and to newborn babies in Acts 7:19, 1 Pet 2:2. St. Paul describes Timothy as knowing the Scriptures ἀπὸ βρέφους, “from [the time he was an] infant” (2 Tim 3:15).⁵⁸

Just concludes that “the biblical usage of this term has important ramifications for human-life issues. It supports—even mandates—a concern for the sanctity of human life from conception onward and makes disregard for such life morally reprehensible.”⁵⁹

Martin Chemnitz describes this incarnation of God in Jesus using the technical language of sixteenth-century Lutheran theology.

*This union is so intimate, individual, inseparable, and indissoluble that the divine nature of the Logos neither wills nor is able nor ought to be considered, sought, or comprehended outside this union with the flesh, but rather within this most closely knit union. And the assumed flesh must be considered, sought, and apprehended only within the intimate embrace of the assuming Logos and not outside of Him; not because the Logos did not exist previously in Himself as a proper, individual, and perfect person, nor as if that individual body of the assumed nature subsisted in itself and existed before and outside the union at some time as a proper and peculiar person, but because the hypostasis of the Son of God which existed from eternity, out of divine kindness, assumed into the unity of His own person that body (*massa*) of human nature, devoid of its own personality, in the very moment when it was first conceived and formed.*⁶⁰

What Chemnitz articulates should remind any orthodox Christian that, had Mary aborted Jesus, she would not have aborted a “mere” human zygote, embryo, or fetus, a human nature with no personhood, but rather a human nature that was united in a most intimate way to the divine Logos. For Jesus, personhood began the moment he was conceived. Thus, Christian ethicist Gilbert Meilaender can state “that in the child conceived in, carried by, and born to Mary God has taken the whole

of our bodily development into his own life....”⁶¹ Steven Mueller, in his *Called to Believe, Teach, and Confess: An Introduction to Doctrinal Theology*, agrees with Meilaender, when he writes that “from the moment of conception [Christ] grew as an ordinary child in the womb. After a normal human gestation, he was born as all other humans are born.”⁶² Note these two scholars’ words: “from the moment of conception” and “a normal human gestation.”

Should this not communicate something about the personhood of *any* human zygote/embryo/fetus? Some would answer negatively since the incarnation of God in Jesus vastly differs from the conception of a mere human being. One is someone who is God and human in one person. All others who are conceived are simply human. However, if the human nature in the womb of Mary was fully human and had personhood from the moment of his conception, then dare we consider that personhood for any human zygote/embryo/fetus begins also at any time other than conception? Had Mary aborted Jesus, she would have done so to the one who was God and man from the very moment of conception.⁶³ Personhood was there from the beginning. The fact that God deemed it necessary to become incarnate the very instant Mary conceived should highlight the importance of any human conception. God became incarnate in Jesus to rescue his fallen creation from the results of its sin. Since our problem with sin begins at conception, the one who was to rescue us was God and man from conception. In Psalm 51:5, the writer declares, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”⁶⁴

Psalm 51:5 is one of the classical biblical texts for the doctrine of original or inherited sin. David is “indicating that he is in that common stream of mankind where all, from the moment of birth, are sinners.”⁶⁵ The human race’s sin problem has been with each of us since our conception. Thus, the Savior from sin had to be God and man in one person from the very beginning of conception. He became like us in every way, except he was holy, without sin.

Note how Hebrews 2:14-17 speaks to us:

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, *he himself likewise partook of the same things*,⁶⁶ that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷ *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect*,⁶⁷ so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Jesus “partook of the same things” as all human beings. The Greek text says, “he in like manner partook of them.” Again, “he had to be made like his brothers in every respect.” Here, the Greek can be translated as, “For which reason he was

obligated in accordance with all things to be made like the [his] brothers.” Wouldn’t this mean from the time of his conception and not merely from the time of his birth?⁶⁸ Does this not concern who we were in our mother’s wombs from conception?⁶⁹ Does this not speak concerning the importance of every human being from the time of his or her conception? If God chose to “become flesh” from the very moment of conception, what does that show us about how he values any human conception?

God loved human beings enough to become incarnate in Christ from the moment of his conception. By doing this, God was being “made like his brothers in every respect” so that he might “make propitiation for the sins of the people.” Or, as the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.... He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”⁷⁰

What This Means for the Biblical Christian

A PROPER VIEW OF CHRISTOLOGY should affect how we define personhood and thus our views on abortion and other life issues. God became incarnate at the moment of conception because we, from the moment of our conception, were human persons affected by sin. We needed the theanthropic Jesus to pass through the entire cycle of life so that our entire cycle of life might be cleansed. Seventeenth-century Lutheran theologian Jerome Kromayer expressed this truth when he wrote, “Christ passed through all stages of our life in order that He might thoroughly heal our sinful conception and birth.”⁷¹ Thus, while we are conceived with human natures infected by sin (Psalm 51:5), Jesus is conceived with a perfect and holy human nature (Matthew 1:20). Ultimately, the person of Jesus does the work of atonement on behalf of the world. This work begins with the conception of Jesus in the womb and continues through his life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Well over one hundred years ago, Lutheran theologian John Schaller wrote, “While it is idle to speculate upon the *nature* of the generative act of the Holy Ghost, it may safely be described from its *effects* as a *segregation* of one living germ cell in the Virgin; its *purification* of a soul from the substance of the mother’s soul; and the successive development of the child’s body. Yet Mary was the *true* mother of Jesus, even as he is true man.”⁷² All this, from conception, birth, crucifixion, death, and resurrection, was as the Nicene Creed says “for us and our salvation”!

In combating the heresy of Apollinarius, the fourth-century church father, Gregory Nazianzus wrote: “The unassumed is the unhealed, but what is united with God is also being saved.”⁷³ Gregory spoke in particular to Apollinarius’ denial that Jesus was born with a human mind. However, Gregory’s words today also speak to the conception of Jesus since if Mary truly is the *Theotokos* from conception,

then the incarnation of Jesus did not begin with the birth of Jesus but rather with his conception in the womb. God the Word had come to heal all of us, from our conception in the womb as sinful to the very end of our lives. What is not assumed is not healed. Our salvatory healing begins at the moment of our conception since God himself was united in one person with the full human nature. As Gregory writes, “Whoever says the human being was formed and then God put him on to wear him is condemned: this is not God’s birth but the avoidance of birth.”⁷⁴

God became like us in all things, including conception. He did this because, in his great love, he was at work bringing about the salvation that heals us by beginning with our beginning. If Jesus was true person at conception, then surely we, whom he came to save, are also true persons.

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Notes

1. Fulgentius, quoted in Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, trans. Jacob A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), 209. Italics added. The Latin states, “*carnem Christi non sine divinitate conceptam in utero Virginis, prinsquam susciperetur a Verbo; sed ipsum Verbum Deum suae carnis acceptione conceptum, ipsamque carnem Verbi incarnatione conceptam.*” Fulgentius, *De Fide, seu De Regula Verae Fidel, Ad Petrum*, Liber Unus (PL 65: 698d-699a). (Patrologia Latina. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1884-1864). Hereafter PL.
2. Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand, Solid Declaration, Article VIII in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 620–21. The original German states, “*welche Majestät er doch gleich in seiner Entpfängnus auch in Mutterleibe gehabt.*” *Solida Declaratio*, Artikel VIII, Von der Person Christi, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, Elfte Auflage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 1025. The Latin translation of the German, which came shortly after the original German, is “*Eam vero maiestatem statim in sua conceptione, etiam in utero matris habuit.*” SD VIII, *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*, 1025.
3. John Janex Miklavcic and Paul Flamen, “Personhood Status of the Human Zygote, Embryo, Fetus,” *The Linacre Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2017):130.
4. Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 38-39.
5. James S. Walters, *What is a Person? An Ethical Exploration* (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 3.
6. John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 27.
7. *Ibid.*, 27.

8. William Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition, rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 887–88.
9. A third century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.
10. “You have said, ‘Seek my *face*.’ My heart says to you, ‘Your *face*, Lord, do I seek.’ Hide not your *face* from me.” While the Septuagint numbers the Psalm as 26, the Hebrew Masoretic Text numbers it as Psalm 27. English versions tend to follow the Hebrew text. English Bible verses are from the English Standard Version unless noted by the author.
11. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and augm., Henry Stuart Jones, Roderick McKenzie, et. al. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1533.
12. Lydia Jaeger, “Christ and the Concept of Person,” *Themelios* 45, no. 2 (2020): 279.
13. *Ibid.*, 279.
14. Emmanuel Housset, *La vocation de la personne: L’histoire du concept de personne de sa naissance augustinienne à sa redécouverte phénoménologique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2014), 36-37, as quoted in Lydia Jaeger, “Christ and the Concept of Person,” 280. The English translation Jaeger uses is from the following French paragraph: “*Toutes ces sens de la personne vont se retrouver dans les controverses christologiques et trinitaires, sauf le sens de masque, et c’est pourquoi il faut bien reconnaître que la pensée chrétienne n’a pas inventé le terme de personne : toute la réflexion théologique va partir de ces sens quotidiens de prosôpon et de persona, mais pour mettre en évidence un sens radicalement nouveau de la personne, qui ne sera ni grec, ni latin, même s’il se prépare en grec et se transmet en latin.*” Housset, Emmanuel. *La vocation de la personne: L’histoire du concept de personne de sa naissance augustinienne à sa redécouverte phénoménologique* (French Edition) (p. 41). Humensis. Kindle Edition. Hans Urs von Balthasar writes that in Greek or Roman “antiquity there could be no concept of person in the Christian modern sense.” Hans Urs von Balthasar, “On the Concept of Person,” *Communio* 14 (Spring 1986): 20. To use a couple of lines taken from David H. Kelsey, “Christian thinkers have always borrowed what they took to be the best anthropological wisdom of their host non-Christian cultures” and what they borrowed “they borrowed selectively, and then they *bent* it.” David H. Kelsey, “Personal Bodies: A Theological Anthropological Proposal,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, eds. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton & Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 141. This is what the early Christians did with the word *person*, they *bent* it for the purpose of Christian theology.
15. Tertullian seems to be the first in the ancient church to employ the term *Trinitas* (Trinity). See Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study on the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972), 150.
16. Fortman, *The Triune God*, 150.
17. James Thieke, “Science, Religion, and Human Identity: Contributions from the Science and Religion Forum,” *Zygon* 57, no. 3 (September 2022): 680.
18. Kim Atkins, ed., *Self and Subjectivity* (Malden, Massachusetts; Oxford, UK; Victoria, AU: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 19.
19. Jaeger, “Christ and the Concept of Person,” 284. On the other hand, David Behan notes that “Locke used ‘person’ in two ways within *praktike*. First, he used ‘person’ to refer to moral man, the individual. Second, he used ‘person’ to refer to what is owned by

that individual—*his* moral property, which I shall call the forensic personality of moral man.” David P. Behan, “Locke on Persons and Personal Identity,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 9, No. 1 (March 1979): 67.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Thieke, “Science, Religion, and Human Identity,” *Zygon* 57, no. 3 (September 2022): 685.

22. Roman Catholic Philosopher John W. Carlson lists three definitions for the word *person*. First, he notes how the word is used “for the perennial tradition, as expressed in the formula developed by Boethius,” who lived in the later part of the fifth century and early part of the sixth. In Boethius’s sense, a person is “an individual *supposit* of a rational nature.” John W. Carlson, *Words of Wisdom: A Philosophical Dictionary for the Perennial Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 204. The word *supposit* comes from the Latin *suppositum*. It is “a self-existent or self-subsistent thing” Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 291. Thus, in the first definition, the word *person*, “whether physical (in particular, human) or purely spiritual (e.g., angelic or divine)—will be a special type of metaphysical *subject* as distinguishable from a psychological *subject*.” Carlson, *Words of Wisdom*, 204. This is how the historic orthodox church has come to describe the three *persons* of the one God (i.e., Trinity) and the one *person* of Christ, who is yet fully God and fully human. The second definition for the word *person* is “an individual who manifests the developed traits and abilities associated with human personal life (e.g., self-awareness, deliberate choice and action); thus, a psychological *subject*.” *Ibid.* It is in this sense that the modern secular world tends to define the word *person*, and this can cause a disconnect between a historic orthodox Christian dialoguing with a secular individual as to whether a zygote, embryo, or fetus in the womb can be considered a *person*. Carlson notes a third definition for the word *person* as “in an extended sense, a *juridical* subject (e.g., a corporation) that is able to participate in contracts or other legal instruments.” *Ibid.*, 204-05. I will use definitions 1 and 2 in this article. Understanding how the word *person* has been defined will also help us understand the disconnect when two sides understand the word *personhood* differently. Again, Carlson gives two definitions of the word *personhood*. First, it is defined as “the status of being a *person* – i.e., being an individual *supposit* of a rational nature.” *Ibid.*, 205. However, as Carlson notes, it is “understood by many contemporary moral philosophers, especially in the English-speaking world” as “equivalent to having membership in the *moral community*—which, for these thinkers, is determined by the possession of the developed traits and abilities characteristic of *persons*.” *Ibid.* For a further understanding of how the Christian view of *person* developed, see the following articles: James Thieke, “Science, Religion, and Human Identity: Contributions from the Science and Religion Forum,” *Zygon* 57, no. 3 (September 2022): 675-90; Joseph Ratzinger, “Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology,” *Communio* 17 (Fall 1990): 439-54; Lydia Jaeger, “Christ and the Concept of Person,” *Themelios* 45, no. 2 (2022): 277-90; John Janez Miklavcic and Paul Flaman, “Personhood Status and the Human Zygote, Embryo, Fetus,” *The Linacre Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2017), 130-44; Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between ‘Someone’ and ‘Something’* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996); Calum Mackellar, *The Image of God, Personhood and the Embryo* (London: SCM Press, 2017); Emmanuel Housset, *La vocation de la personne: L’histoire du concept de personne de sa naissance augustinienne à sa redécouverte phénoménologique* (Paris: PUF, 2014); Philip

- A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).
23. I do not intend to go into detail concerning each of the heretical movements mentioned above. Those who wish to do more study on heresy in the early Church may find the following books helpful: Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984); Bengt Häggglund, *History of Theology*, 4th rev. ed., trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007); Douglas W. Johnson, *The Great Jesus Debates: Four Early Church Battles about the Person and Work of Jesus* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005); Alister McGrath, *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009); Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).
24. This does not imply that the early heretics would have understood “personhood” as many do in the Twenty-first century. Nor does it suggest that most of these groups would have advocated abortion. Early Christianity was almost unanimously opposed to abortion. For instance, the late first century/early second century *Didache* plainly states, “Do not abort a fetus or kill a child that is born (οὐ φονεύσεις τέκνον ἐν φθορᾷ οὐδὲ γεννηθὲν ἀποκτενεῖς).” *The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 2.2 in *The Apostolic Fathers*, Volume 1: *I Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache, Barnabas*, ed. and trans. Bart D. Ehrman (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2003), 419, 418. What I am saying is that the faulty Christology of each of the heresies mentioned can lead modern-day people, including Christians, to views on “personhood” and abortion that are at odds with the stand for life. The opposite may also be true, as when a person who advocates abortion ends up latching on to some kind of Christological heresy that could live side-by-side with their stance on abortion. For the early church’s stance on abortion, see Michael J. Gorman, *Abortion and the Early Church*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982. For the abortion side, see Margaret D. Kamitsuka, *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019). See also Jack Kilcrease’s review of Kamitsuka’s book in this edition of *Verba Vitae*, 1/3-4 (2024): 171-76.
25. I write the words “logically and theologically challenging” because, while it is true that there are those orthodox Christians who would stand on the side of “non-personhood” of a child in the womb and thus advocate abortion, this is most often not held with rational arguments but with the emotions that go with a specific ideology (i.e., reproductive rights). Thus, John F. Kavanaugh notes, “The question, ‘Are we eliminating persons with potentials, and not just potential persons?’ is absent from most public discourse, other than to say that abortion is more a matter of feeling than evidence.” John F. Kavanaugh, S.J., *Who Count As Persons? Human Identity and the Ethics of Killing* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 130. Even orthodox Christians are not immune from being affected by this “feeling” approach to abortion rather than taking the “evidence” approach, especially if they have embraced a particular ideology.
26. By “historic orthodox Christianity,” I am writing of churches and individual Christians who adhere to the authority of Holy Scripture, the normativity of the Ecumenical Creeds, and highly respect the ancient Church Fathers. This would not only include traditional Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians, but also Protestant Christians who continue

to hold to the authority of the Scripture, the normativity of the Ecumenical Creeds, and who consider the ancient Church Fathers as important teachers and witnesses to Christian doctrine and life. While these churches and individuals still have disagreements, they are closer to each other in what they agree on, as opposed to the many things they commonly disagree with because of the relativity and revisionism of many churches and individuals in the post-modern world.

27. Harold O. J. Brown writes: “Gnosticism produced docetism because it considered it intolerable to think that a pure spiritual being, Christ, could suffer as a man. Hence he must have been human in appearance only.” Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 52. The word *docetism* comes from the Greek word *doke* (δοκέω) and means “to appear to one’s understanding” or “to seem.” Someone embracing docetism would embrace the teaching that Christ only appeared to be human, but in reality, was not. Writing in the first decade of the second century, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, wrote: “And so, be deaf when anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David, the son of Mary, who was truly born and ate and drank, who was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate and was really crucified and died in the sight of those ‘in heaven and on earth and under the earth.’ Moreover He was truly raised from the dead by the power of His Father; in like manner His Father, through Jesus Christ, will raise up those of us who believe in Him. Apart from Him we have no true life.” Ignatius of Antioch in Gerald G. Walsh, “The Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch,” *The Apostolic Fathers*, trans. Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M.-F. Marique, and Gerald G. Walsh, vol. 1 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 104. The above English translation is from the Greek text of Ignatius’s letter to the Trallians. The Greek is as follows: “Κωφώθητε οὖν, ὅταν ὑμῖν χωρὶς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ λαλή τις, τοῦ ἐκ γένους Δαυεὶδ, τοῦ ἐκ Μαρίας, ὃς ἀληθῶς ἐγεννήθη· ἔφαγέν τε καὶ ἔπιεν, ἀληθῶς ἐδίδωχθη· ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, ἀληθῶς ἐσταυρώθη· καὶ ἀπέθανεν, βλεπόντων τῶν ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ ὑποχθονίων. ὃς καὶ ἀληθῶς ἠγέρθη· ἀπὸ νεκρῶν, ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ, κατὰ τὸ ὁμοίωμα ὃς καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας αὐτῷ οὕτως ἐγερεῖ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, οὗ χωρὶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ζῆν οὐκ ἔχομεν. Kirsopp Lake, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press & London, UK: William Heinemann LTD, 1912, 1975), 220.
28. “This exceptional elevation, which in primitive adoptionism was usually associated with the event of Christ’s baptism, involves nevertheless only a special divine activity upon or in Jesus, not the personal presence in him of a second member of the Trinity bearing the proper name of Word (Logos) or Son.” Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, eds. *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 6.
29. J. W. C. Wand, *The Four Great Heresies* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Company, 1955), 42.
30. Mary is thus called *Christotokos*, Christ-bearer, not *Theotokos*, God-bearer. Nestorius, after whom the heresy is named, “argued that the eternal God, who is without beginning and without end, could not have spent nine months in a woman’s womb and been born. On the other hand, what was born of Mary was not simply a human being.” Ronald E. Heine, *Classical Christian Doctrine: Introducing the Essentials of the Ancient Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 80. In one of Nestorius’ sermons, he is reported as saying: “Mary, my friend, did not give birth to the Godhead (for ‘what is born of the flesh is flesh’ [John 3:6]). A creature did not produce him who is uncreatable. The Father has not just recently generated God the Logos from the Virgin (for ‘in the beginning

- was the Logos,' as John [John 1:1] says). A creature did not produce the Creator, rather she gave birth to the human being, the instrument of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit did not create God the Logos (for 'what is born of her is of the Holy Spirit' [Matt. 1:20]). Rather, he formed out of the Virgin a temple for God the Logos, a temple in which he dwelt." Nestorius, "Nestorius' First Sermon Against the Theotokos," *The Christological Controversy*, trans. and ed., Richard A. Norris, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 124. For orthodox Christianity, the problem is that if God is not united to the human nature of Jesus from conception, you quickly end up with two natures—divine and human—that have little to do with each other. Even to say that God dwelt in the human nature of Jesus is not enough and can be a subtle way of saying that the man Jesus is not God, but only one in whom God dwelt in a most powerful way.
31. Roger E. Olson, *Counterfeit Christianity: The Persistence of Errors in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), 80.
 32. C. FitzSimons Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy: An Affirmation of Christian Orthodoxy* (Harrisburg, PA; New York: Morehouse Publishing, 1994), 107.
 33. Philip Schaff writes concerning "the GOD-MAN as the result of the incarnation. Christ is not a (Nestorian) *double* being, with *two* persons, nor a compound (Apollinarian or Monophysite) *middle* being, a *tertium quid*, neither divine *nor* human; but he is *one* person *both* divine *and* human." Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The History of Creeds*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1878), 31.
 34. T. F. Torrance, *Test-Tube Babies: Morals—Science—And the Law* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1984), 10.
 35. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890), 59. The bracketed word [Spirit] has been substituted for "Ghost" used in Schaff's translation. Other brackets in the sentence are Schaff's. The Greek text says: "Καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον ἸΗΣΟΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝ, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ· δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο· τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα." *Ibid*, 57.
 36. J. N. D. Kelly, *The Athanasian Creed* (London, UK: Adam and Charles Black, 1964), 20. The Latin is: "*Qui licet deus sit et homo, non duo tamen sed unus est Christus. Unus autem non conversione divinitatis in carne, sed adsumptione humanitatis in deo; unus omnino non confusione substantiae, sed unitate personae. Nam sicut anima rationabilis et caro unus est homo, ita deus et homo unus est Christus.*" *Ibid*.
 37. Fulgentius, quoted in Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 209.
 38. The Greek text of Acts 20:28 reads **θεοῦ**, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ **τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου**. Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), Ac 20:28. (Bold in the Greek text in this endnote and italics in the English biblical text on page 79 is added for emphasis.)
 39. The original Greek used—ὁμοούσιος, θεοτόκος, ὑπόστασις—are in the text edited by Bettenson [see note 40 below]. The other Greek words—ἐν δύο φύσεσιν, ἀσυγγύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαρέτως, ἀχωρίστως—come from Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*,

- with a History and Critical Notes, Vol. 2: *The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890), 62.
40. Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., ed., Chris Maunder (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 56-57.
41. “θεοτόκος, *God-bearing, who is mother of God.*” G. W. H. Lampe, ed., “θεοτόκος,” *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, UK: At The Clarendon Press, 1961), 639. J. W. C. Wand notes that *Theotokos* lays “the stress rather on the delivery than on the idea of parenthood.” J. W. C. Wand, *The Four Great Heresies*, London: A. R. Mowbray & Company, 1955), 97. However, while “delivery” may be a good way to describe what the word implies, one can only deliver that which has been in the womb for nine months.
42. The word “theanthropic” comes from the Greek word “θεάνθρωπος” which means “*God-man.*” G. W. H. Lampe, ed., “θεάνθρωπος,” *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 616. Jesus has always lived as the theanthropic Christ since the time of conception. Everything he does is as the theanthropic Christ. Thus, he is always the God-man; whatever he does, he does as the God-man since he is one *person*.
43. This seems to be the position of Margaret Kamitsuka in her book *Abortion and the Christian Tradition*. She writes, “The Logos assuming Jesus’ human nature was not an immediate union of substances but an interactive movement of the divine and human over a lifetime.” Margaret D. Kamitsuka, *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 85.
44. John Damascene, “An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith,” in *St. Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; trans. S. D. F. Salmond, vol. 9b, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1899), 46. The Greek text is as follows: αὐτὸς ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ Λόγος χρηματίσας τῇ σαρκὶ ὑπόστασις. οὐ γὰρ προϋποστάτη καθ’ ἑαυτὴν σαρκὶ ἠνώθη ὁ θεῖος Λόγος, ἀλλ’ ἐνοικήσας τῇ γαστρὶ τῆς ἁγίας Παρθένου, ἀπεριγράπτως ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ὑποστάσει ἐκ τῶν ἀγνῶν τῆς Ἄειπαρθένου αἱμάτων, σάρκα ἐψυχωμένην ψυχῇ λογικῇ τε καὶ νοερᾷ ὑπεστήσατο, ἀπαρχὴν προσλαβόμενος τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου φυράματος, αὐτὸς ὁ Λόγος γενόμενος τῇ σαρκὶ ὑπόστασις. Ὅστε ἅμα σὰρξ, ἅμα θεοῦ Λόγου σὰρξ, ἅμα σὰρξ ἐμψυχος, λογικὴ τε καὶ νοερά. Διὸ οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἀποθεωθέντα λέγομεν, ἀλλὰ Θεὸν ἐνανθρωπήσαντα. Ὡν γὰρ φύσει τέλειος θεὸς, γέγονε φύσει τέλειος ἄνθρωπος ὁ αὐτός. οὐ τραπεῖς τὴν φύσιν, οὐδὲ φαντάσας τὴν οἰκονομίαν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας Παρθένου ληφθείσῃ, λογικῶς τε καὶ νοερῶς ἐψυχωμένη σαρκὶ, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ εἶναι λαχοῦση, ἐνωθεὶς καθ’ ὑπόστασιν ἀσυγχύτως καὶ ἀναλλοιώτως, καὶ ἀδιαίρετως, μὴ μεταβαλὼν τὴν τῆς θεότητος αὐτοῦ φύσιν εἰς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς οὐσίαν, μήτε τὴν οὐσίαν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν φύσιν τῆς αὐτοῦ θεότητος, οὐδὲ ἐκ τῆς θείας αὐτοῦ φύσεως, καὶ ἥς πρόσελάβετο ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, μίαν φύσιν ἀποτελέσας σύνθετον. John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 (PG 94: 985c & 988a. *Patrologia graeca*. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857-1886). Readers may examine the Greek text for its context by going to this link: <https://ia800304.us.archive.org/10/items/patrologiaecurs62migngoog/patrologiaecurs62migngoog.pdf>
45. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 101. The Latin states, “*hoc est, itaim cum caro illa inceperet existere, jam erat per assumption seu unionem facta propri Dei Verbi caro.*” Martini Chemnitii, *De Duabus Naturis in Christo* (Francofvrti & Wittebergae: Sumptibus Haeredum D. Tobiae Maevii, & Elerdi Schumacheri, MDCLIII), 34. Reprinted in Doctor

- Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici, De Coena Domini, De Duabus Naturis in Christo, Theologiae Jesuitarum* (Chelsea, MI: Lutheran Heritage Foundation, 2000). Italics added.
46. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Being and Nature of the Unborn Child* (Lenoir, NC: Glen Lorian Books, 2000), 12.
 47. New Testament scholar Andreas Köstenberger writes: “The Greek verb σκηνώω (*sk*), commonly translated ‘dwelt,’ more literally means ‘to pitch one’s tent.’ This rare term, used elsewhere in the NT only in the Book of Revelation (7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3) suggests that in Jesus, God has come to take up residence among his people once again, in a way even more intimate than when he dwelt in the midst of wilderness Israel in the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34-36).” Andreas J. Köstenberg, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 41.
 48. Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 34.
 49. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 1896), 27.
 50. *Ibid.* The Septuagint (LXX) is a third century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. This translation became the Bible of the first-century Christian church as it moved out into the Greco-Roman world.
 51. *Ibid.*
 52. *Ibid.*
 53. *Ibid.*
 54. *Ibid.*, 27-28.
 55. Graham A. D. Scott, “Abortion and the Incarnation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 17, no 1 (Winter 1974): 37.
 56. *Ibid.*
 57. St. Maximus of Turin, “Sermon 5: On the Birthday of Saint John the Baptist,” in *The Sermons of St. Maximus of Turin*, eds. Walter J. Burghardt and Thomas Comerford Lawler; trans. Boniface Ramsey, vol. 50, Ancient Christian Writers (New York; Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 1989), 24.
 58. Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50 in Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 72-73.
 59. *Ibid.*, 73.
 60. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 70. Italics added for emphasis. The Latin text says: “*Quae unio adeo arcta, individua, inseparabilis & indissolubilis est, ut divina natura του λόγου nec velit, nec possit, nec debeat extra hanc cum carne unionem, sed in arctissima illa unione cogitari, quaeri aut apprehendi. Caro etiam assumpta, non extra, sed in traintimum του λόγου assumptis complexum cogitanda, quaerenda, & apprehendenda est, non quod λόγος antea non fuerit per se proptia, singularis perfecta persona, nec quasi individua illa massa naturae assumptae, ante & extra illam unionem, per se subsistens, & propria seu peculiaris persona, ali quando fuerit, sed quod hypostasis beneplacito, massdam illam humanae naturae, propria personalitate destitutam, in ipso momento, cum primum conciperetur & formarctur, in unitatem suae personae assumpserit.*” Martini Chemnitii, *De Duabus Naturis in Christo* (Francofvrti & Wittebergae: Sumptibus Haeredum D. Tobiae

- Maevii, & Elerdi Schumacheri, MDCLIII), 19. Reprinted in Doctor Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici, De Coena Domini, De Duabus Naturis in Christo, Theologiae Jesuitarum* (Chelsea, MI: Lutheran Heritage Foundation, 2000). The orthodox Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard writes: “*The form of the union consists in the hypostasis [personality] of the Word becoming the hypostasis [personality] of the flesh....*” Johann Gerhard, *On the Person and Office of Christ*. Trans. Richard J. Dinda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 109. The original Latin text is as follows: “*Formale unionis consistit in eo, quod υπόστασις τοῦ Λόγου sit facta carnis υπόστασις.*” Iohannis Gerhardi, *Loci Theologici*, Tomus Primus, Locus Quartus (Berolini: Sumtibus Gust. Schlawitz, 1863), 498.
61. Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, 48-49.
62. Steven P. Mueller, ed., *Called to Believe, Teach, and Confess: An Introduction to Doctrinal Theology*, vol. 3 in *Called by the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 197.
63. In 1 Corinthians 2:8, the Apostle Paul writes concerning “the rulers of this age” who “crucified **the Lord of glory** (τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης).” Had Mary aborted her developing child in her womb, no matter what stage of development it was, she would have aborted “the Lord of glory.” (Bold added for emphasis.)
64. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1986), Ps 51:5.
65. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959), 403.
66. Italics is for emphasis. “[H]e himself likewise partook of the same things” is a translation of the Greek text which reads, “καὶ αὐτὸς παραπλησίως μετέσχευεν τῶν αὐτῶν.” Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition, Heb 2:14.
67. Italics is for emphasis. The translation “in every respect” is the Greek word ὁμοιωθῆναι from the word ὁμοίω. The form of the word is an aorist, passive, infinitive. Here, it means “become like, be like ... someone.” Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd rev. ed., 707. New Testament scholar Simon Kistemaker notes concerning Hebrews 2:17: “In this verse the writer of Hebrews explains the necessity of Christ’s identification with man. In order to be of help to sinful man, Jesus had to become like his brothers in all but one way: he was sinless. Full identification was necessary; he was under divine obligation to become like his brothers.” Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Hebrews*, vol. 15, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 76.
68. John W. Kleinig notes concerning these verses that “[t]o free mankind from the fear of death, Jesus ‘had to be made like his brothers in every respect,’ Jesus did not just appear to be human; he was totally human in every way, apart from sin (4:15; 7:26)... After undergoing *the whole human life cycle*, the eternal Son of God became High Priest by passing through death to glory (2:10)... Yet even though he was ordained at his enthronement, his whole earthly life, with all that he suffered, prepared him for his work as the great High Priest of humanity (5:7-10).” John W. Kleinig, *Hebrews in Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 138. Does not this “life cycle” include conception? Note: Italics in the text has been added for emphasis.
69. Not simply after six weeks, or three months, or birth.

70. *New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1986), 1 Cor 5:19 & 21.
71. Jerome Kromayer, *Theologia Positivo-Polemica*, II, 91 quoted in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 306. Kromayer's original Latin text says: "*Christus per omnes actatis nostrae gradus venit, ut immundam nostrum conceptionem et nativitatem radicitus curare.*" Quoted in Joh. Guilielmi Baieri, *Compendium Theologia Positivae*, vol. 3 ed. C. F. W. Walther (St. Louis: Luth. Concordia-Verlag, 1879; repr. ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Emmanuel Press, 2005), 26.
72. John Schaller, *Biblical Christology: A Study in Lutheran Dogmatics* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1981), 54.
73. St Gregory of Nazianzus, "The First Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter," *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, ed. John Behr; trans. Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham. Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 158. The original Greek text is, "Τὸ γὰρ ἀπρόσληπτον, ἀθεράπευτον· ὁ δὲ ἦνωται τῷ Θεῷ, ποντο καὶ σώζεται." PG 27, 181 & 184.
74. St Gregory of Nazianzus, "The First Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter," 156. The original Greek text is, "Εἴ τις διαπεπλάσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, εἶθ' ὑποδεδυκέναι λέγοι Θεὸν, κατάκριτος. Οὐ γὰρ γέννησις Θεοῦ τοῦτό ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ φυγὴ γεννήσεως." PG 37, 177 & 180.