Infinite Hope for Finite Flesh

A Christian Response to Transhumanist Idolatry

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1.0 Introduction[1]

Our age proclaims a gospel of deliverance by design: therapies to silence pain, interfaces to extend cognition, and genetic edits to outmaneuver death. Beneath the glitter of this progress lies a recognizable theology of glory (Latin, *theologia gloriae*). It is a secular soteriology where salvation is recast as human achievement and hope is relocated from God's promise to human prowess.[2]

To a Lutheran ear, the spiritual stakes are immediate. The Creator revealed in Scripture does not redeem the lost by lifting them out of their finitude, but by entering it. He is the God of the manger and the Cross, who takes on flesh, suffers with his creatures, and raises a truly human body from the grave. In this light, technology is rightly understood not as a ladder to divinity, but as a "mask of God" (Latin, *larva Dei*). It is an instrument of vocation used to serve the neighbor yet strictly refused as a rival false redeemer.[3]

The drama of Psalm 8, illuminated by Hebrews 2:5–9, anchors this discourse. Human dignity is a divine gift, and dominion is only truly fulfilled in Christ. Placed alongside the self-exalting ascent of the tower of Babel recounted in Genesis 11:1–9 and the self-emptying *kenosis* of Philippians 2:5–11, the contrast sharpens. The Father's grace precedes any human technique, his gift precedes any human grasping, and the Son's resurrection precedes any human enhancement. What follows does not aim to reject human ingenuity, but to distinctively situate it. The Church embraces tools to care for the world yet places its ultimate hope only in the crucified and risen Lord. His redeemed followers live as finite creatures who embrace an infinite hope.

1.1. The Issue: Transhumanism's Soteriological Claims

In recent decades, transhumanism has matured from speculative thought into a wide-ranging cultural project. It not only advances discrete techniques (such as gene editing, brain-computer interfaces, and life-extension therapies), but a comprehensive

narrative about human destiny. According to this vision, suffering and mortality are engineering problems awaiting technical solutions, and finitude represents a design flaw requiring correction. The theological implications are unmistakable. Salvation is reimagined as a human achievement rather than a divine gift. Also, ultimate hope shifts from God's redeeming action to one's own innovation.[4]

A Lutheran assessment welcomes medicine and technology as genuine benefits while resisting their elevation into pseudo-saviors. The concern is not technical competence but spiritual allegiance. When tools designed for healing begin to promise deliverance from the fallen human condition, they function as idols. Lutheran theology teaches that God meets and dignifies humanity within the very conditions of embodied life, limits that Christ embraced. He was made "for a little while" lower than the angels to crown humanity with glory through his suffering and death (Heb 2:5–9).[5] The question is not whether technology serves good purposes; it often does. Instead, the query is whether transhumanism's storyline of ascent accords with the Gospel's narrative of grace descending in the crucified and risen Messiah.[6]

1.2. Thesis Statement

This essay contends that a Christ-centered, canonical reading of Scripture, which is anchored in Psalm 8 as interpreted through Hebrews 2:5–9 and illumined by Genesis 11:1–9 and Philippians 2:5–11, locates human dignity and hope in God's gift of grace rather than human self-enhancement. Technologies focused on the latter are ethically viable when they serve God-given vocation and neighbor-love.[7] However, they become spiritually perilous when they reach for soteriology. Viewed through a Lutheran theology of the Cross (Latin, *theologia crucis*), transhumanist aspirations toward self-deification deny the very arena in which God lovingly encounters and exalts the lost, namely, through the finite and fragile life that the Messiah assumed and redeemed.[8]

1.3. Methodological Approach

This essay reads Scripture canonically by allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, with the Gospel as the canon's interpretive key. Exegesis is governed by Christological fulfillment, which guards against moralism, abstraction, and triumphalist appeals to "human potential." Accordingly, Psalm 8's bestowed dignity and vocation are read through Hebrews 2:5–9, where the "coming world" is not subjected to angels but to humanity fulfilled in Christ. He is the One made "lower than the angels for a little while" and then "crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death." This frames the essay's central claim that the biblical pattern moves from divine descent to cruciform exaltation, not from human ascent to self-made glory.

The argument attends carefully to key lexical and translational hinges that shape the essay's theological conclusions. In Psalm 8 and its reception in Hebrews 2:5–11, particular attention is given to Hebrew *ʾĕlōhîm* (and its Septuagint rendering

"angels") and *kābôd* ("glory"), as well as Greek terms that carry the interpretive weight in Hebrews 2:5–9 (for example, *brachý ti* as "a little lower/for a little while," *estefanōsas* "crowned," *hypétaxas* as "subjected/put under"). In Philippians 2:5–11, the essay treats *ekenōsen* ("emptied himself") with care, emphasizing how the text itself defines "emptying" by taking the "nature of a servant" rather than surrendering deity. Throughout, linguistic nuance is handled within each passage's literary and canonical context, so that word-study clarifies, rather than replaces, the text's theological thrust.[9]

Ethical judgment is guided by a Lutheran Law/Gospel dialectic. The Law exposes and restrains the heart's impulse to convert creaturely limits into shame and to pursue "salvation by design" (a modernized works-righteousness). In contrast, the Gospel proclaims dignity, identity, and hope as a gift secured in the crucified and risen Messiah. Within this framework, the essay is explicitly shaped by the theology of the Cross. It insists that God reveals his glory "under the opposite" (Latin, *sub contrario*), not in visible invulnerability or technological triumph, but in the manger and especially the Cross. This confessional posture also supplies the essay's constructive boundary. Technology, when used within one's vocation, is a penultimate good through which God's care is manifested in service to others. Nevertheless, it is a serious error to treat technology as an ultimate, eschatological solution, or as a tool for humanity's self-deification.[10]

Methodologically, the essay undertakes the following: (1) establishing Scripture's affirmative witness to human dignity in Psalm 8 as interpreted through Hebrews 2:5–9; (2) using Genesis 11:1–9 as a diagnostic text that exposes how technological ingenuity can be recruited into a "name-making" immortality project; and (3) presenting Philippians 2:5–11 as the Gospel's counter-narrative that redefines glory through Christ's self-emptying and the Cross. The conclusion distinguishes technology's proper role as an instrument of neighbor-serving mercy from the spiritual peril of transhumanist enhancement narratives that function as rival soteriologies.[11]

2.0 Psalm 8 in Light of Hebrews 2:5–9: Dignity as a Divine Gift, Dominion Fulfilled in Christ[12]

Human dignity is not a prize seized by strength but a status bestowed by God's grace.[13] Similarly, human dominion is not achieved through autonomy but fulfilled in the crucified and risen Lord.[14] Psalm 8 announces a grandeur for humanity that defies natural explanation. The Creator of the universe remembers frail creatures and crowns them with glory and honor. Hebrews 2:5–9 receives this ancient promise, places it into the nail-scarred hands of Christ, and reveals that the royal vocation of Psalm 8 is brought to completion only through Jesus' sacrificial death. The movement is one of descent and gift, not ascent and gain.

2.1 Textual and Canonical Observations

Psalm 8 is a creation hymn framed by a doxology ("O Lord, our Lord," vv. 1, 9). Within that frame, verses 4–6 articulate a paradox. The Creator's cosmic majesty is displayed precisely in his attentiveness to frail humanity. The psalm's anthropological terms sharpen the point. "Man" is *ʾĕnôš* ("mortal/fragile human"), and "son of man" is *ben-ʾādām* ("son of Adam / human being"). These terms emphasize creaturely weakness and Adamic solidarity. Against any reading that treats human greatness as self-generated, the psalm's grammar remains consistently donative. God "remembers," "pays attention," "crowns," and sets humanity over the "works" of the Creator's "hands." Dominion, therefore, is derivative, namely, a trust received, not a sovereignty seized.

Psalm 8:5 (Hebrew versification 8:6) serves as a pivotal textual and theological hinge. While the Masoretic Text reads *meʿaṭ meʾĕlōhîm* ("a little lower than God" or "divine beings"), the Septuagint renders this as *brachý ti par' angélous* ("a little [lower] than angels").[15] Since *ʾĕlōhîm* has a semantic range that includes both God and heavenly beings, the Septuagint's selection of "angels" is a specific interpretive choice rather than a value-neutral equivalent.[16] This distinction becomes crucial in Hebrews 2:5–9, which quotes the Septuagint. Consequently, Hebrews reads Psalm 8 not merely as a celebration of inherent human dignity, but as an eschatological promise. The world to come is not subject to angels, but to humanity, a dominion that is ultimately realized and fulfilled in the Messiah.

Hebrews 2:5–9 sets Psalm 8 within an explicit eschatological scope, specifically, the "coming world." This is not "under the control of angels" (Heb 2:5). Two exegetical features drive the argument. First, the elasticity of *brachý ti* ("a little / for a little while") allows Hebrews 2 to connect Psalm 8's "lowering" to Christ's incarnational humiliation. Second, Psalm 8's dominion lexicon becomes the backbone of the reading in Hebrews 2:5–11. "You crowned" is *estefanōsas*, and "You put everything in subjection" is *hypétaxas*. God's intent is comprehensive ("left nothing that is not in subjection to him"), while candidly acknowledging that present visibility is incomplete ("we do not yet see everything in subjection to him"). Canonically, Psalm 8's royal anthropology thus requires an already/not yet reading. The promise is true, but its full manifestation awaits consummation.

The climactic inversion arrives in Hebrews 2:9. Jesus is "crowned with glory and honor" (*dóxē kai timē*) because he "suffered death." In the canonical logic of Hebrews 2, Psalm 8 is neither a triumphalist anthem of autonomous mastery nor a sentimental hymn to human potential. Rather, it is a vocation and destiny that reaches its consummation through the Messiah's cruciform descent and vindication.

2.2 Christological Interpretation of Psalm 8

Within the canon, Psalm 8's anthropology functions typologically. It names what humanity is called to be under God, while anticipating the one in whom that calling is perfectly embodied and restored. The "mortal human" (*'ĕnôš*) and the "son of Adam" (*ben-'ādām*) are genuinely universal categories, yet Hebrews 2:5–9 shows that this universal is fulfilled in a particular person, Jesus of Nazareth. The psalm's horizon is human, but its completion is messianic. Human dominion is concentrated in the representative second Adam acting "for us" (Latin, *pro nobis*).

Hebrews 2:5–9 makes that fulfillment explicit in that it binds Psalm 8 to Christ's saving work. The "lowering" expressed in the phrase "a little [lower] than" is not read as a static claim about rank alone but as the narrative movement of Jesus' incarnation. The Son enters the human condition "for a little while," embracing weakness and mortality. This is precisely where a Lutheran theology of the Cross coheres with the logic of Hebrews.[17] Christ does not redeem by evading creaturely limitation but by assuming it fully. Accordingly, Psalm 8's coronation is not detached from the Cross. As noted above, Jesus is "crowned with glory and honor" (Heb 2:9) because he "suffered death." Glory is thus hidden beneath a contradictory appearance. The royal crown is bestowed through humiliation, not either by technological advancement or heroic ascent.

This Christological reading also governs Psalm 8's dominion claim of subjecting creation to humanity. Hebrews 2:5–9 insists that universal subjection remains God's intent, while simultaneously admitting present incompletion. The resolution is Christological: "But we look to Jesus." Therefore, the Church's perspective is promissory and cruciform. Faith apprehends the true state of reality in Christ even when empirical conditions lag behind the promise.

Finally, Hebrews 2:5–9 soteriologically anchors the anthropology of Psalm 8. Jesus fully experienced "death for everyone" (*geúsētai thanátou…hyper pantos*, Heb 2:9).[18] That clause prevents Psalm 8 from being recruited into narratives of self-deification. Human dignity and destiny are not secured by enhancement but by vicarious atonement and resurrection life in the Messiah. Psalm 8's "crown," read through Hebrews 2:5–9, is therefore Gospel. Humanity's vocation is real, but its fulfillment is received as a gift in the crucified and risen Messiah.

2.3 Anthropological and Eschatological Implications

Hebrews 2:5–9 refuses both triumphalism and despair by naming the Church's present condition with theological honesty. Psalm 8's dominion promise is true, yet its comprehensive visibility remains incomplete. The same passage that insists God "left nothing" outside the scope of "you subjected / put under" also admits that we do not yet experience the created realm as fully ordered under humanity's feet

(Heb 2:8). This truth yields a distinctly biblical anthropology.[19] Humanity's vocation is real, but it is presently fractured and awaiting consummation.

The interpretive key is Hebrews' Christological focusing move. Psalm 8's royal anthropology is gathered into Jesus, who embodies humanity's intended destiny "for us." What is not yet manifest in "us" is already secured in him, because he entered the human condition "for a little while" (Heb 2:7) and was crowned with "glory and honor" through suffering. Accordingly, the "coming world" (*tēn oikouménēn tēn méllousan*; v. 5) becomes the horizon that calls into question claims about human mastery. The Church may affirm human dignity and vocation without collapsing those affirmations into present-day achievement or measurable technological capacity.[20]

This eschatological posture reshapes how finitude is understood. Psalm 8's "mortal/fragile human" and "son of Adam/human being" do not name a defect to be engineered away but the physical creatureliness within which God bestows honor and within which the Messiah fulfills humanity's calling. Hebrews 2:5–9 intensifies the point. The road to dominion runs through representative suffering, because the crown comes through experiencing "death for everyone." As a result, Christian anthropology cannot treat "limitations" as merely technical problems. Creaturely limits are the arena in which God's promised future is received in faith and enacted in patience, rather than seized through impatient overreach.

2.4 Theological Critique of Transhumanism

Read through Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2:5–9, transhumanism's most serious problem is not that it employs advanced tools, but that it subtly reassigns eschatological weight to them. When technological enhancement is framed as the path to secure what Scripture places in the "coming world," it becomes an attempted shortcut around the canonical logic of promise, suffering, and gift. The biblical arc does not move from finitude to glory by self-upgrade. Instead, it does so by Christ's descent "for a little while" and his crowning with "glory and honor" because of his atoning sacrifice at Calvary.

Psalm 8 prevents a performance-based account of dignity. The hymn locates honor in God's bestowal ("you crown"), not in humanity's capacity to overcome weakness. Hebrews 2:5–9 heightens that critique by locating the decisive human "crown" on Jesus' head, not as the reward for optimization but as the verdict rendered through cruciform obedience on behalf of lost humanity. If the crown is received in Christ "for us," then all attempts at immortality drift toward a rival soteriology. This is because they treat human dignity as being ultimately grounded in augmented intelligence, engineered longevity, or invulnerability.

Most pointedly, Hebrews 2:5–9 specifies the mechanism of restoration. It is not the evasion of death, but Christ becoming the "atoning sacrifice" (1 John 2:2) for the

"sins" of the "whole world." This truth sets a theological boundary line. Medicine and technology may serve life and neighbor-love, and they may even be extraordinary mercies. Yet they cannot bear the weight of redemption, because Scripture identifies death's defeat with Jesus' vicarious suffering and resurrection, not with indefinite biological extension or the displacement of embodied dependence (1 Cor 15:54–56). Where transhumanism promises a crown without the Cross, Hebrews 2:5–9 insists that the crown named by Psalm 8 is obtained through the Cross and bestowed as a divine gift.

2.5 Lutheran Integration

Within a Lutheran framework, Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2:5–9 clarify both the appropriate use of technology and the proper object of hope. Because the "crown" is bestowed in the Messiah, the Christian is freed from making technology a ladder to obtain security, status, or immortality. The Law names and judges the sinful drive to convert Psalm 8's vocation into self-sovereignty in which the phrase "you subjected / put under" is treated as a warrant for domination or self-deification. In contrast, the Gospel announces that the representative Son of Man has already borne our curse and secured our eternal destiny. Jesus became a finite and frail human "for a little while" (Heb 2:9) and was "crowned with glory and honor" by tasting "death for everyone." Human dignity is therefore not negotiated by performance but received in Christ.[21]

This is where the theology of the Cross supplies needed ethical clarity. God's decisive act is not revealed in visible invulnerability, but in the suffering Messiah. He restores repentant, believing sinners by entering human weakness. That pattern sets the limits of Christian discourse about alleged "progress." Technology may be embraced vigorously as an instrument of mercy within vocation, but it must remain a servant rather than a savior. It is fitted for penultimate goods such as healing, alleviation, assistance, and service. Meanwhile, ultimate blessings, such as righteousness, death's defeat, and the final ordering of the coming world, remain God's gift in Christ.[22]

Thus, the Psalm 8 / Hebrews 2:5–9 unit yields a coherent Lutheran ethic. Believers affirm the derivative dignity of being a "mortal/fragile human" and a "son of Adam/human being" as crowned by God. They also confess the fulfillment of that crown in Jesus "for us," and resist any program that relocates the hope of the "coming world" into human technique. The Church's posture is neither technophobic nor technolatrous. Instead, it is confident in promise, active in mercy (as opposed to a quietist withdrawal from technological engagement), and patient for the day when what Scripture says is true will also be what the world unmistakably sees.[23]

3.0 Genesis 11:1–9: The Babel of Bio-Enhancement[24]

If Psalm 8 (read through Heb 2:5–9) anchors human dignity in God's gift and fulfills human dominion in Christ's cruciform victory, Genesis 11:1–9 offers a sobering counter-portrait of a community that treats its ingenuity as a ladder to security, unity, and self-made glory. The tower of Babel episode is not an anti-technology fable; rather, it is a spiritual diagnosis. Human creativity, here expressed in a genuine technological advance, is pressed into the service of a deeper desire to manufacture a future without dependence on the Creator. In that sense, Babel becomes a mirror held up to modern bio-enhancement narratives that quietly relocate hope from promise to prowess and from gift to grasping.

The text's relevance to transhumanist ambition lies precisely in its realism. The tower of Babel episode does not begin with horns and pitchforks, but with coordination, progress, and a plausible fear of vulnerability. Yet the historical narrative exposes what happens when fear and pride converge: the will to consolidate, to control, and to "make a name" that can outlast the fragile creature (in essence a futile immortality project).[25] Genesis 11 thus sharpens the focus of the question this essay explores. Will humanity's tools remain masks of God for neighbor-serving vocation, or will they become rival redeemers, promising a kind of salvation by design?[26]

3.1 Exegetical Analysis of Genesis 11:1–9

3.1.1 Setting the scene: unity after the flood and the tension beneath it (v. 1)

Verse 1 opens with an arresting portrait that the "whole earth had one language and a single vocabulary." On the surface, this is an image of harmony. Human beings can understand one another without friction or mistranslation. However, within Genesis's larger narrative arc, that unity is not morally neutral. It resides within a post-fall world where sin tends to bend even good gifts inward toward idolatrous pursuits. The issue is not that people share speech; instead, it is what they plan to do with their common verbalization.

The phrase rendered "one language" is vivid in Hebrew. It is literally "one lip," an idiomatic way of saying that the people speak as though with one mouth (or voice). Also, the phrase translated "single vocabulary" suggests not merely a shared terminology, but also a common way of framing reality, including assumptions, aims, and slogans. The narrator is signaling that speech, one of God's gifts for communion, can become an instrument for consolidation. Unity can serve love, but it can also be enslaved by domination. The unfolding biblical account shows how easily this becomes a collective project of self-exaltation.

3.1.2 The migration and the temptation of settling (v. 2)

Verse 2 adds literary motion. As people migrate, they find a plain and settle there. The detail matters. In Genesis, movement and populating the planet are not arbitrary themes. They belong to God's creational and post-flood mandate (1:28; 9:1). The divine command to spread out is not a punishment but a gift. After all, the earth is wide, life is meant to flourish in many places, and human community is intended to exist without becoming a single, centralized monolith.[27]

So then, when Genesis 11:2 emphasizes settling, it is not condemning agriculture or city life. Rather, it raises a theological tension, namely, that inhabiting one region can become a refusal of the Creator's will. People can start to treat one location, rather than God's promise, as their source of security. They can begin to fear dispersal, not because it is evil, but because spreading out exposes their vulnerability. In a fallen world, openness feels intolerable. Consequently, humanity's desire to settle quietly becomes an obsession to control.

3.1.3 Technology as an amplifier: bricks, bitumen, and the thrill of nefarious ambitions (v. 3)

Verse 3 turns explicitly to technological ingenuity: "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." In the ancient Near East, brickmaking was a real innovation, especially where stone was scarce. Brick is modular, uniform, and scalable. It allows human beings to build higher and more expansively than local materials might otherwise permit. Bitumen ("tar") serves as mortar, which functions as another enabling development.

Here, the account is notably candid. It does not demonize this ingenuity. It simply shows that technology can be used to amplify nefarious ambitions. Put another way, it enlarges the reach of sinful intentions. Tools do not create the sinful human heart (Jer 17:9); instead, they extend what the heart already wants. That is why the repeated refrain "Come, let's" (Gen 11:3–4) is so telling. It signals enthusiasm, momentum, and a collective resolve. The builders are not coerced; rather, they are energized. The tower of Babel episode is not an account about a few tyrants forcing the masses. Instead, it is the narrative of a society agreeing on a project to secure their own greatness. That is precisely why it remains unsettlingly relevant. The most spiritually dangerous idolatries are often the ones that feel like common sense.[28]

3.1.4 The core confession of Babel: "let's make a name for ourselves" (v. 4)

Verse 4 identifies the vaunted project. Fallen people decide to "build a city," with a "tower" (often understood as resembling a ziggurat) whose apex pierces the "sky."

This misguided group is keen to prevent themselves from being "scattered abroad" all over the world. Several features deserve careful attention.

First, Babel is communal and self-referential. The phrase "for ourselves" appears with a quiet insistence. These individuals are not building a metropolitan area primarily as a shelter for the weak or as a center of neighborly life. They are erecting a monument to their identity and as a declaration of their self-created future. The city becomes a guarantee that they can hold themselves together. Likewise, the tower serves as a symbol that they can elevate themselves skyward.

Second, the tower's "top" literally reaching to the "heavens" is not mainly about architectural height but theological aspiration. In Genesis, the "heavens" are God's sacred dwelling, the sphere of his supreme authority. The point is not that humans can actually invade the Creator's throne room. Instead, it is that they desire an immortality project that holds ultimate significance. This overhyped endeavor crosses the line into what should rightfully belong to the sovereign Lord alone. The tower is the visible shape of an invisible desire for transcendence without repentance and glory without gift.

Third, the beating heart of the passage is Babel's creed, "let's make a name for ourselves." In Scripture, the concept of a "name" is not merely a label. It signifies identity, reputation, standing, and enduring legacy. To "make a name" is to establish a permanence that defies creaturely fragility. It is to secure significance by construction rather than by receiving it from the Creator.[29] The builders seek what fallen people always desire, that is, a righteousness they can point to, a glory they can manage, and a security they can maintain.[30]

Fourth, the motive clause matters: "so that we will not be scattered abroad." The people's ambition is fueled by fear. Dispersion feels like a threat, not a vocation. They imagine that their displacement will mean a loss of control, identity, and safety. So, this misguided and shortsighted group pursues unity as an absolute. Yet, when the compulsion for it dominates every decision, it becomes oppressive. Babel's unity (a single language, plan, and monument) is not that of love, but of self-preservation.

At this point, the theological conflict is clear. The Creator directs humanity to trust and obey him as they populate the earth. In response, these fallen individuals decide to consolidate their ambitions and efforts out of apprehension. Here, the tower of Babel is not simply an account about hubris. It is pride recruited to calm anxiety, along with an attempt to address creaturely vulnerability by building a substitute source of protection.

3.1.5 Divine descent and narrative irony: God "comes down" (v. 5)

Verse 5 is one of Scripture's sharpest moments of irony: "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the people were building." The humans envision a

tower whose "top reaches to the sky" (v. 4). Yet the narrator depicts the Creator as needing to come "down" to see it. The contrast is not cruel, but revelatory. Human grandiosity always looks smaller from the standpoint of God's supreme majesty.

The descent, however, is not only irony. It is also theologically significant. God's coming down shows that he is not absent from human projects. Neither is he apathetic to what people build. The Babel industrialists imagine they can shape their future without any reference to the Creator. The text quietly contradicts that delusion. God attends, assesses, and then acts.[31]

In the wider biblical arc, especially from a Lutheran, Christ-centered reading, this "coming down" also anticipates a pattern. The Lord's decisive works are not acts of human ascent, but divine descent. God's movement toward his creatures is the beginning of both judgment and mercy. The account about Babel shows both.

3.1.6 Judgment that restrains: one people, one purpose, and the danger of totalizing unity (v. 6)

In verse 6, the Creator declares, "If this is the first thing they are doing as one people, who all have one language, then nothing that they intend to do will be too difficult for them." This statement is often misunderstood as divine insecurity, as though the Lord feels threatened by human cleverness and ingenuity. Yet the text points elsewhere. God is not paranoid about being surpassed. His concern is that united sinners, amplified by technology and unrestrained by humility, can do terrible harm, especially when a society treats its central immortality project as unquestionable. The issue is not human capacity; rather, it is human curvature toward self.[32]

Expressed differently, the tower of Babel is a warning about the spiritual danger of frictionless coordination in a fallen world. Under the repressive control of rogue operatives, dissent becomes treason, difference becomes defect, and weakness becomes something to eliminate rather than to shoulder. Totalizing unity is never merely organizational; it is moral. It creates the conditions for unbridled and inhumane coercion. The Creator's intervention, therefore, is not an arbitrary sabotage of progress but a restraint on a scheme that treats creaturely life as raw material for self-salvation.

3.1.7 Confusion and scattering: the mercy inside the fracture (vv. 7–8)

Verses 7–8 describe the Creator's response: "Come, let's go down there and confuse their language, so that they cannot understand one another's speech." As a result, the "Lord scattered them from there over the face of the whole earth, and they stopped building the city." The phrasing "Come, let's go down" deliberately echoes the builders' own refrain. Babel's human council says, "Come, let's build" (v. 4), and God replies, in effect, "Come, let's act."

The parallel highlights a confrontation of wills. Fallen human beings coordinate for self-exaltation, and the Creator intervenes to prevent self-destruction. Here the Law-like character of the event is plain. God judges, disrupts, and blocks the idol-making project. Yet even the judgment is threaded with mercy. Confused language limits human overreach. It introduces friction into the machinery of unrestrained pride. It prevents a unified rebellion from hardening into a single, global, and totalitarian order.[33]

Admittedly, this is an uncomfortable mercy, yet it is mercy nonetheless. The Creator does not annihilate the builders; instead, he restrains them. He breaks the spell of their unanimity. He forces a kind of humility upon the human immortality project by reintroducing a necessary dependence on the need for translation, patience, local communities, and the slow, painstaking work of cultivating mutual understanding. While Babel's fracture is severe, it is also protective. It is judgment that curbs potentially unrestrained hubris.

3.1.8 Babel named: human "confusion" as theological commentary (v. 9)

Finally, verse 9 gives the place its name, "Babel," "because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth." Here, "Babel" sounds like the Hebrew word for confusion. The naming is a theological interpretation. History is not random; instead, it is morally charged. Human beings tried to "make a name" (v. 4) for themselves, but the enduring legacy attached to their project becomes a memorial of bewilderment. "Babel" (v. 9) is what happens when fallen people attempt to secure their eternal identity apart from the Creator. They end up with fragmentation they cannot remedy by their own self-engineered unity programs.[34]

Amazingly, it is precisely here that the canonical horizon opens. Genesis 11 does not end the biblical account. Instead, it intensifies its need. Now that human speech is fractured, how will communion be restored? Also, now that people scatter, how will the nations be gathered without coercion? The rest of Scripture answers not with a human tower but with the Creator's own descent. This occurs first in the incarnation of the Word and then climactically in the Cross, where the Son of God bears the curse of human pride and heals division not by force but by forgiving, redeeming grace.

3.2 Theological Application: Babel and the Lure of Bio-Enhancement

The tower of Babel becomes freshly intelligible when we recognize its logic in contemporary dress. The modern dream is rarely phrased as building a "tower whose top reaches to the sky" (v. 4), but it often carries the same spiritual grammar. Fallen human beings are self-deluded into imagining they can engineer their way

past vulnerability, secure their eternal future, and make a name that outlasts death. Transhumanism, especially in its more sweeping and militant forms, does not merely propose tools for healing; it offers a narrative of ascent. It is an implied salvation story in which finitude is the enemy and technology is the redeemer.[35]

The tower of Babel account helps us see that the deepest question is not "Can we do it?" but "What are we trusting it to do?" Brickmaking in Genesis 11 is not condemned because it is advanced; rather, it is indicted because it symbolizes a false hope. The builders convert a technological capability into an immortality project. Likewise, bio-enhancement becomes spiritually perilous when it shifts from serving embodied life to rewriting what embodied life is for. In that shift, enhancement ceases to be an instrument of mercy and becomes a mechanism to define what it means to be human.[36]

The parallels sharpen at three points:

1. *Name-making and the modern cult of optimization*. Babel seeks a "name," a self-secured identity. Today, "name" can be rebranded as legacy, platform, influence, or even the curated self that refuses limits. Bio-enhancement can easily become a liturgy of self-authoring: "I am what I can upgrade"; "I am what I can control"; "I am what I can extend."
2. *Fear of dispersal and the drive toward consolidation*. The builders fear scattering. Modern enhancement ideologies often fear dependence, whether on the body, community, time, mortality, or even God. The impulse is to centralize agency in the autonomous, normative self.[37] It is to become less contingent, interruptible, and needy. In contrast, the Gospel does not treat creaturely need as a scandal to erase, but as the place where divine mercy takes on human flesh.
3. *Uniformity as a false peace*. Babel's vision of a single, unified system mirrors modern initiatives to standardize by identifying "best traits," "ideal outcomes," and "optimal solutions." When enhancement becomes a social expectation rather than a freely chosen act of care, diversity is reframed as a defect, and any form of weakness becomes unacceptable. The account warns us that a frictionless unity among flawed individuals is rarely benign. Instead, such enforced conformity often creates the conditions necessary for coercion.

So then, Genesis 11 provides a crucial ethical and spiritual boundary. Technology must never be asked to carry eschatological weight. Tools can help, heal, and relieve, but they cannot justify, resurrect, or bestow the "name" that death cannot erase. When enhancement is treated as the route to a final, unending human future, it becomes a rival gospel. The tower of Babel account reminds us how such false gospels end with confusion, fracture, and the collapse of promised permanence.

3.3 Lutheran Integration: Law/Gospel, Divine Descent, and the Gift of the Name

A Lutheran reading of the tower of Babel account is clearest when it is framed by Law and Gospel, not as abstract categories, but as God's active work through his Word. For example, under the Law, Babel unmasks the sinful human heart (Jer 17:9). The tower is the architecture of works-righteousness. It is a visible achievement meant to secure what only the Creator can give.

The builders are not only manufacturing bricks. They are also making a claim. They want a future they can manage and a "name" they can guarantee. Here the Law does what God intended, to expose our inward curve, along with our instinct to treat gift as wage and vocation as self-salvation. Babel is what happens when humanity's technological "can" is harnessed to humanity's spiritual "must," namely, "I must secure myself," "I must justify myself," and "I must not be dispersed."

Yet even Babel's judgment carries a merciful restraint. While God's confusion of language is painful, it prevents something far worse. It undermines a totalizing human project that would have crushed difference and enthroned human glory. In Lutheran terms, this is a function of the Law in curbing sin in the civil realm (the left-hand kingdom).[38] God restrains evil not because he delights in human frustration, but because he refuses to let self-deification continue uninterrupted to its bitter and mortifying end.

Under the Gospel, the tower of Babel account is not answered by erecting a more glorious and enduring stairway to heaven but by a deeper descent. The Creator "comes down" at Babel to judge and restrain. Later, he comes down in Christ to save and raise. The Gospel does not teach that God meets us once we have climbed high enough to reach his sacred enclave. Rather, we learn that the Lord meets us precisely where we are scattered, confused, and unable to build our way back (1 John 4:10). This is why the pattern matters. Babel's descent anticipates the Incarnation's descent. Also, the fracture of human speech anticipates the Spirit's gift at Pentecost, not as a return to coercive uniformity, but as a communion created by God's grace across real differences (Acts 2:1–11; Rom 12:3–7; 1 Cor 12:1–31).

Most importantly, Lutheran theology relocates the "name" question. The tower of Babel episode says, "let's make a name for ourselves" (Gen 11:4). The Gospel says, "You are given a name you could never construct." In Christ, identity is received, not achieved. Also, in the waters of baptism, the Christian is named (Matt 28:19). It is not by personal accomplishment, optimized traits, or technological permanence. Rather, it is by belonging to the crucified and risen Lord. The deepest human longing that Babel misdirects, the heartfelt desire for a lasting name, is not mocked by the Creator. Instead, he answers it through the pure gift of his grace in Christ.

That re-centering yields practical ethical clarity for bio-enhancement in three ways:

1. *Technology as vocation*: We can affirm medicine, prosthetics, and even sophisticated interventions as genuine mercies, that is, "masks of God" through which we serve our neighbor. Yet because vocation can be distorted by greed, pride, or self-interest, the use of technology within our callings demands continual spiritual discernment.
2. *Technology as temptation*: We resist enhancement as "name-making," as an immortality project of self-transcendence that treats finitude as a curse rather than the arena where the Creator meets us in the flesh.
3. *Hope as resurrection, not redesign*: The Christian neither despises the body nor idolizes it. We care for it as a creaturely gift, and we refuse to treat its limits as evidence that God has failed. Our final transformation is promised in Christ's resurrection, not engineered by our own ascent.

Seen in this way, the tower of Babel account does not call the Church to reject technology; instead, it summons the body of Christ to resist technological idolatry. Believers refuse the propaganda that says salvation comes by upgrade rather than by grace. Also, the biblical narrative invites a posture that is both humble and active. It is humble because we are creatures who cannot build our way into the heavens; and it is active because we are neighbors who can use tools in love while waiting for the coming eternal kingdom of grace, mercy, and righteousness that God alone can give in Christ.[39]

4.0 Philippians 2:5–11: *Kenosis* in an Era of Self-Optimization[40]

If the tower of Babel account recorded in Genesis 11:1–9 exposes the longstanding temptation to build a future we can control, Philippians 2:5–11 reveals God's wholly different way of securing the future for us. It is not by human ascent, but by divine descent. The tower's builders said, in effect, "Let us make a name." Paul announces the Father's countermovement. God gives the name, yet by way of the Son's self-emptying and the shame of the Cross. Where self-optimization promises a curated glory through upgrades and ever-higher performance, the Gospel unveils a glory that comes hidden inside humility, obedience, and suffering love.[41]

This truth matters now because the "salvation stories" prevalent in the Global North rarely sound religious, yet they still preach. They tell us how to become whole through relentless self-improvement: more efficient, disciplined, enhanced, and untouchable by weakness. Even when the aims are understandable (such as less pain, fewer limits, and a longer health span), the spiritual grammar can quietly shift. The body becomes a problem to solve, finitude becomes a flaw to erase, and

dependence becomes an embarrassment. In that setting, Philippians 2:5–11 does not merely offer moral advice about humility; it proclaims Christ. He is the eternal Son who refused to treat equality with God as a prize to exploit, who emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, and who was exalted precisely through the Cross.

From there, Paul draws the Church into that cruciform pattern. It is not as a ladder to earn God's favor, but as the shape of life that flows from grace already given. This is where the Lutheran accent is crucial. The passage calls Christians to a disposition and a way of life, but it does so as a result of receiving the gift. Christ's self-humbling is first a saving act for us before it becomes a pattern in us. Only when the Cross is received as sheer mercy does the Church become free to resist the tyranny of self-optimization and to practice a more human, more neighbor-facing way of being in the world.[42]

4.1 Exegetical Analysis of Philippians 2:5–11

4.1.1 The pastoral context: a communal "attitude," not a private self-project (v. 5)

Paul's command is strikingly corporate: "let this attitude be in you." The target is not merely an individual preference, but the shared life of a community tempted toward rivalry, status-seeking, and self-protection. The Greek verb translated "attitude" is not limited to one's inner feelings. It includes orientation, practical judgment, and the posture that shapes how we treat other people. Paul is not promoting a private spirituality of self-improvement. Instead, he is forming a cross-centered people whose shared life reflects the self-giving love they have received in Christ.

That difference matters in an era of self-optimization. Much of modern "improvement" language assumes life is a solo project: craft the best version of yourself; maximize your value; eliminate weakness; and outperform the competition. Paul pushes in the opposite direction. The Christian life is not a solitary climb toward superiority, but a shared life in which the strong bend toward the weak, the honored make room for the overlooked, and the whole community learns to count others more significant than themselves (a truth emphasized in vv. 1–4). The "mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16) is therefore not a technique; rather, it is participation in the life of the One who gave himself for the lost at Calvary.[43]

4.1.2 Christ's eternal preexistence and true deity: "by nature God" (v. 6a)

Paul begins not with Bethlehem, but with eternity. Christ was "by nature God" (or "in the form of God"). The phrase does not mean Jesus merely resembled God or played a divine role. It points to Jesus' true divine status, that is, his full sharing in the reality and glory that belongs to the triune Godhead. This opening clause safeguards the paradox at the heart of the passage. The one who goes low is not

a creature grasping upward. He is the eternal Son who already possesses what no creature can seize.

That is the first theological shock. The account Paul tells is not about a superhero who climbs up toward divinity. It is about the truly divine one who chooses the downward path. In a world of "becoming more," verse 6 begins by recounting the one who already is fully God. He lacks nothing, needs no upgrade, and is threatened by no limitation. From that fullness, he moves freely and deliberately toward fallen, sinful humanity.

4.1.3 Not a "prize to be displayed": refusing divine privilege as self-advantage (v. 6b)

Paul reveals that Christ did not "consider equality with God as a prize to be displayed." This could also be rendered as "something to be exploited" or "used for advantage." Less likely is the view that the *harpagmos* clause refers to an attribute not possessed that must be either seized or grasped. The key idea is not that Jesus lacked equality and tried not to reach for it. The language evokes the posture of maximizing one's rightful privilege. It is the notion of using power to shield oneself from suffering, avoid vulnerability, or secure a comfortable distance from the lowly.

This is where the passage presses directly against the instinct behind self-optimization. At its root, achieving perfection is an attempt to reduce one's vulnerability. It is to become less interruptible, less needy, less exposed to pain, aging, and limitation. Christ does the opposite. Though he has every right to remain above our fragility, he does not cling to his rightful, kingly prerogatives. He does not use his divinity as a barrier between himself and our weakness. He also does not treat glory as something to guard for his own comfort.[44]

4.1.4 "He emptied himself": not subtraction of deity, but addition of servanthood (v. 7)

Next comes the Greek verb that has generated centuries of discussion: "he emptied himself" (*ekenōsen*). Yet the passage itself explains what that "emptying" means. Consequently, we need not imagine that the Son stopped being divine or poured divinity out of himself like liquid from a cup. Paul does not define the emptying as losing something, but as "taking the nature (or form) of a servant" and being "born in human likeness."

The divestment, then, is not a subtraction of Godhood but a willing embrace of lowliness. It is the Son's decision to live his eternal, divine existence under human conditions, including hunger, fatigue, dependence, misunderstanding, rejection, and pain. He does not cease to be who he is. Instead, he chooses to be who he is for the lost in a new way, namely, close enough to bleed and close enough to die.

Paul's wording is careful and precise. Just as Christ was "by nature God" (v. 6), so now he takes the "nature of a servant" (literally, a "slave"; v. 7). The parallel is intentional. The one who truly shares the essence of the Father and the Spirit likewise genuinely embraces a servant's status. This is not virtue signaling; it is a real entry into the conditions of humble and sacrificial service. In Scripture, this involves self-giving for the good of others. It is precisely what an ego-optimization mindset shuns to perfect the self.

Here, the Incarnation is not presented as an inspirational example of humility; rather, it is the concrete means of our salvation. The Son's self-emptying is his solidarity with the same people optimization cultures often overlook, especially, the weak, fragile, failing, and dependent. Jesus of Nazareth does not stand over them as an unattainable ideal; instead, he stands with them as their Redeemer.[45]

4.1.5 "He humbled himself": obedience all the way down (v. 8)

Paul intensifies Christ's descent with a sequence of phrases that move step by step toward the nadir of his humiliation. Verse 7 states that Jesus of Nazareth was "born in human likeness." Also, his "appearance was like that of any other man" (literally, "was found in appearance as a man").

Verse 8 reveals that the Messiah went further in his self-sacrificing journey by humbling himself and becoming "obedient to the point of death." This especially included dying on the Cross as an atoning sacrifice for humanity's sins (2 Cor 5:21). The rhetorical piling up is deliberate. Paul is not merely stating that Jesus died. The apostle is tracing the manner and depth of Christ's self-giving, so that the Church sees what kind of Lord he is, and therefore what kind of redemptive life flows from him.

The Messiah's humility is not an invisible spiritual attitude, but a publicly recognizable existence lived under the ordinary conditions of humanity. The Son's self-emptying becomes a historical, embodied reality that can be seen, rejected, misunderstood, and finally executed at Calvary. Salvation does not happen at a safe distance from the material world.

Christ's humiliation is neither an accident nor the tragic outcome of political forces. It is chosen, not because suffering is intrinsically good, but because divine love is willing to be abased for the sake of the beloved. This guards the Gospel from being reduced to a lamentable account about a good man crushed by the overwhelming forces of injustice.

Paul identifies the shape of Christ's humility as obedience. This is not portrayed as begrudging compliance with arbitrary rules, but as the Son's faithful submission to the Father's saving will. In Lutheran terms, this is saving obedience. Jesus does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Paul describes the Messiah's obedience at

its extreme, namely, to the "point of death" (Phil 2:8). The Son does not circumvent death; instead, he goes through it, or as Hebrews 2:9 declares, he fully experiences "death for everyone."

Paul adds the phrase "even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). In the apostle's day, crucifixion was designed to degrade and publicly shame. Here the theology of the Cross becomes unavoidable. God's glory is revealed "under the opposite," where human eyes least expect it. The apostle clarifies that the Son's divestment is a deliberate embrace of servant-like obedience that goes all the way to an ignominious end.

4.1.6 "Therefore God also highly exalted him": the Father's vindication of the crucified Son (v. 9)

Verse 9 begins with "Therefore" (*dio*, "for this reason"). Paul is stating a divine logic. Christ's exaltation is the Father's answer to the Son's humiliation. This is vindication, not bargaining. The Cross is not an embarrassing detour that must be corrected by a subsequent bestowal of glory. Rather, it is the path the Father deliberately chose, and the exaltation is his public "Yes" to that path.

"God also highly exalted him" does not signal an increase in deity but the public installation of the crucified Son as Lord. The Father sets before the world what faith already confesses. The One who was shamed is the rightful King of the entire universe. God also bestowed on the Messiah the "name that is above every name." We learn that the Father gives; the Son does not seize. The movement is gift, not grasping.

The "name" given to the exalted Christ is the public manifestation of the divine majesty and saving lordship that he possessed eternally. This exaltation denotes no ontological change, but rather the glorification and exercise of his divinity in his human nature. "Lord" (*kyrios*; v. 11) is thus neither a magical word nor a mere title, but the confessed reality that the crucified and risen Son is true God and true man. The apostle's "therefore" (*dio*; v. 9) should be read as Gospel proclamation, not Law. Christ's humiliation did not earn his exaltation; it accomplished our eternal salvation. Thus, the Father's exaltation of the Son is the declaration that redemption is complete. The believers' humility flows from this grace as its fruit, not as a condition for reward (for example, "humble yourself sufficiently, and God will exalt you").

4.1.7 "So that … every knee will bow": the purpose of exaltation and the scope of Christ's lordship (v. 10)

Verse 10 ties the Father's exaltation of the Son to a public, cosmic aim: that all creation (personified) acknowledges Jesus' supreme power and everlasting jurisdiction. The phrase rendered "at the name of Jesus" points to confessed authority and worshipful homage. "Every knee will bow" depicts comprehensive submission and reverence. It is creation's acknowledgement of Christ's rightful rule. This is both sobering and

comforting: sobering because no rival potentate remains standing, and comforting because the Sovereign before whom all bow is the one who first bowed low for us.

Paul's threefold sweep—"in heaven and on earth and under the earth"—signals that no realm lies outside Christ's dominion. It is a rhetorical way of saying the Messiah's lordship is universal. The Old Testament resonance matters. The apostle's prose echoes worship language reserved for Yahweh, now centered on Jesus.[46] The apostle's statement is not narrowing hope to the measurable world. Instead, it widens the believers' confident expectation to the reality of Christ's universal reign.

4.1.8 "Every tongue will confess": the universal acclamation that completes the hymn (v. 11)

Verse 11 completes verse 10. If "every knee" denotes universal homage, then "every tongue" (v. 11) depicts open acknowledgement. It is the assent of creation (personified) to the identity and authority of the crucified and exalted Messiah. The Greek verb rendered "confess" is not merely a bare, reluctant admission. Rather, it carries a richness that can include praise and thanksgiving. The point is not a forced slogan but the fitting acknowledgement of reality.

The content is precise, specifically, "Jesus Christ is Lord." In keeping with what was noted above, "Lord" (*kyrios*) is the term the Septuagint regularly uses for the divine name, Yahweh.[47] The implication is that the confession belongs in the sphere of worship. Moreover, it is to the "glory of God the Father." Christ's sovereignty and majesty do not compete with that belonging to the Father; instead, these attributes reveal him with clarity (John 1:18). Jesus' exaltation results not in self-congratulation but in God's glorification (17:4–5).

In summation, Philippians 2:5–11 unfolds as a single, coherent movement. The eternal Son refuses to treat his divine status as self-advantage, enters our ordinary human condition as a bondservant, and carries that lowly obedience to the shame of crucifixion. Then the Father responds to the Son's cruciform obedience by raising him to the highest honor, granting him the supreme name, so that all creation across every realm must finally acknowledge aloud what faith confesses now: "Jesus Christ is Lord." In turn, this open affirmation magnifies, rather than competes with, the "glory" of the Father (and the Spirit).[48]

4.2 Canonical Connections to Hebrews 2

Hebrews 2 opens with a claim that sets the horizon. The coming inhabited world is not subjected to angels. This situates the discussion within God's forward-looking purpose for humanity. The author cites Psalm 8 to show that God intended human beings, who are frail creatures remembered by God, to be crowned with honor and entrusted with stewardship. Yet Hebrews 2 also insists on the solemn tension that we do not presently see everything arranged under human dominion. This realism

refuses the urge to treat the human condition as a project we can complete by dogged resolve and clever ingenuity.

Where Philippians 2 narrates the Son's downward movement as taking the servant's form, Hebrews 2 presents it as being made "for a little while" lower than angels. Both texts insist that God does not redeem from a safe distance. The Son comes close enough to bear weakness, mortality, and the burden of death. Furthermore, Hebrews 2:9 declares that Jesus is "crowned … with glory and honor" because of his suffering death, and that by the grace of God, Jesus endures death for everyone. This matches the pattern of Philippians 2. The cross-shaped path is the route God chose to disclose and enact his saving purpose. The turning point is not evasion, but Christ's death undertaken for the lost.

Hebrews 2 is candid. We do not yet see the promised ordering of creation fully displayed, and yet the eyes of faith recognize Jesus as the already-secured fulfillment of God's intent. Philippians 2 parallels this with its horizon of universal acknowledgement. The final truth about the Messiah will one day be openly confessed. Based on these two passages, Christians can welcome temporary, earthly blessings without expecting transhumanist technologies to achieve the eternal perfection that Scripture reserves for the Son's rule.

Moreover, Hebrews 2 reads Psalm 8 as truly about humanity and insists the "not yet" remains about humanity's vocation, which Jesus repairs and fulfills. Philippians 2 locates the final shape of human life in the reign of the crucified and exalted Christ. Taken together, both texts clarify the boundary line, namely, humanity's future is not a product of self-transcendence, but a gift received in Christ. Hebrews 2 and Philippians 2 likewise teach that God's way of restoring humanity runs through the Messiah's lowliness and suffering love, and that the Father's vindication of that path defines what "glory" actually is. That canonical harmony sets the stage for ethical discernment in an age obsessed with the pursuit of self-optimization.[49]

4.3 Theological Application: *Kenosis*, Embodiment, and Discernment in a Culture of Self-Optimization

If Hebrews and Philippians together teach that God's "way up" runs through the Messiah's lowliness, then the Church's ethical task is not difficult to name, only challenging to practice. We are called to live as people who refuse to treat creaturely limits as ultimate enemies and technological power as a rival redeemer. So then, the question is not whether believers may use advanced tools. Instead, it is whether our use of these aligns with Christ's self-giving love or quietly retrains our hearts to pursue a different gospel, one that promises life by upgrade rather than by grace.

Admittedly, self-optimization rarely announces itself as idolatry. It often appears to foster virtues such as discipline, aspiration, responsibility, and self-care. Yet the heart of the immortality project can subtly take on a religious connotation. It offers

a creed ("you are what you improve"), a liturgy (tracking, measuring, and refining), and a vision of salvation (a future secured by mastery over weakness). Philippians 2 places that entire endeavor under a bright light. God is not revealed by Christ insulating himself from vulnerability. The Son discloses the Father by drawing near to the vulnerable, entering our limits, and giving himself away.

Here, Christian anthropology is not embarrassed by the body. Scripture does not treat enfleshment as an early stage to surpass, as though salvation were graduation into pure mind. The Son of God did not bring salvation to the lost by abandoning flesh. Rather, he saved us by taking it, honoring it, suffering in it, and raising it to new life.[50] On the one hand, weakness is not intrinsically good, and the Church should not romanticize pain. Yet, on the other hand, weakness is not meaningless. It is the condition Christ embraced to redeem us, and therefore frailty cannot be treated as sheer disgrace.[51]

The implication is that believers are free to receive medical and technological help with gratitude. Even so, the same freedom also permits refusal, especially the false narrative that says our worth depends either on our performance or our longevity. A useful way to express this truth is to distinguish servant-tools from savior-tools. Servant-tools aim at healing, relief, and assistance that enable ordinary human life. Savior-tools claim (whether explicitly or implicitly) to deliver what only God promises: escape from finitude, conquest of death as an ultimate reality, or a new kind of "humanity" grounded in engineered superiority.[52]

In Philippians 2, Paul's summons is communal. The Church's witness is not only defined by personal restraint. It is also a shared way of life that contradicts the loneliness of optimization culture. When a society trains people to curate, protect, and improve the self, the Church becomes a place where people learn to receive life as gift, to confess their brokenness without shame, and to honor the weak as indispensable members of Christ's body.

4.4 Lutheran Integration: Law/Gospel Clarity, the Theology of the Cross, and Technology as Vocation

The canonical witness this essay has traced does not merely inform a Lutheran approach to transhumanist desire; it stabilizes it. Lutheran theology refuses two equal and opposite errors: making ethics into a ladder for earning righteousness and shrugging off ethical discernment as though grace rendered created life morally weightless. The pattern of Philippians 2:5–11, read alongside Hebrews 2:5–9 and the Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11:1–9, allows robust technological use as a work of mercy while denying technology the role of a pseudo-savior.

God's decisive self-revelation is not found where human beings instinctively look for it, that is, in visible strength, control, and invulnerability. Instead, it is found in the suffering Messiah and the Cross. This is not a lionizing of pain; rather, it is

a refusal to lie about where God has promised to be for sinners. The Christian can pursue healing vigorously and still confess that final deliverance does not come by escaping the body, but by the crucified and risen Lord who redeems embodied life.

The Law exposes the heart's bent toward self-salvation. This is seen in fallen humanity's desire to secure a "name," to outrun dependence, and to make death negotiable by ingenuity. The Gospel does not merely reprove our grasping. It also announces that Christ has already borne what we cannot fix and has been vindicated by the Father for doing so. Where the Law unmasks the false gospel of "salvation by improvement," the true Gospel grants the freedom to receive creaturely life as gift and to use tools without venerating them.

A Lutheran reading of Philippians 2:5–11 is careful. The Christlike "attitude" is not first a program for spiritual achievement; instead, it flows from Jesus' saving work already given for us. Righteousness before God is received, not produced. Consequently, the Son's self-emptying is not a burdensome demand to imitate, but a liberating gift that shapes us for self-giving love to our neighbor.

God cares for the world through ordinary means (such as people, institutions, and technologies) so that human beings can heal, shelter, and protect one another. Within that framework, medical interventions and assistive devices can be received as mercies. Yet vocation supplies a boundary. Tools are for love of neighbor, not for self-deification. When enhancement becomes a bid for superiority or a means of securing identity, vocation is no longer the governing aim.

Lutheran realism helps keep the conversation steady. Christians may support technological development that alleviates suffering and serves temporal goods, without pretending that such work delivers the kingdom of God. The idolization of technology (*technolatry*) treats penultimate goods as the basis to achieve ultimate redemption. In contrast, an inordinate fear of technology (*technophobia*) rejects penultimate goods because they cannot secure freedom from human frailty. Lutheran theology avoids both extremes by refusing to confuse what technology can do (offer real help) with what only God can do (save, justify, raise the dead, and make all things new in Christ).[53]

Believers can affirm vigorous technological mercy while resisting enhancement narratives that redefine human dignity in terms of capacity, productivity, or engineered superiority. Christians can also refuse the religious dogma of escape, because the Son's saving path honors the body and promises its redemption, not its replacement. Lutheran integration yields a cruciform compass. The closer a practice moves toward serving the neighbor within creaturely life, the more naturally it fits vocation. Oppositely, the more it moves toward securing the self against creaturely life, the more it begins to mimic the tower of Babel delusion and contradict the mind of Christ.

5.0 Addressing Objections

At least two objections surface whenever transhumanism is critiqued on theological grounds.[54] The first appeals to human calling: "Aren't people meant to create, improve, and heal?" The second questions posture: "Isn't this just fear of progress?" Both deserve a serious reply. Christianity is not allergic to innovation, and it does not sanctify suffering. Yet the central issue remains one of spiritual weight, specifically, whether technology is received as a tool of mercy within creaturely life or trusted as a deliverer from creaturely life. The distinction is not subtle. It is the difference between vocation and salvation-by-design.[55]

5.1 The "Co-Creator" Defense

The "co-creator" defense often begins well. Human beings are commanded to cultivate and steward the earth (Gen 1:28), and Christians have long recognized that medicine, engineering, and agriculture can serve the neighbor. Within a Lutheran construct, such work belongs to vocation. God provides sustenance through ordinary means, such as hands, institutions, and tools. In this sense, it is correct to reject a passive piety that treats the world as if it should only be endured.

Yet the problem is not whether humans make and mend. The issue is what kind of future we imagine those efforts can secure. The term "co-creator" can quietly inflate human agency until it begins to sound like "co-redeemer." Scripture does not present finitude as a mistake awaiting correction. Psalm 8 portrays humanity as frail yet crowned by divine gift, while Hebrews 2:5–9 asserts that crown is fulfilled in the Messiah. The movement is not human ascent into invulnerability, but divine descent into vulnerability, followed by resurrection and exaltation. The Christian hope is grounded in what God gives, not what people engineer.

This distinction helps clarify an ethical boundary without resorting to slogans. Therapies that restore or support ordinary embodied life typically align with neighbor-love. They aim at healing, relief, and participation in daily callings. Enhancement-as-salvation, by contrast, aims at overcoming embodied life by treating dependence as indignity and mortality as a technical embarrassment. The difference is not that one uses advanced tools and the other does not. Rather, it is the narrative each practice communicates about what it means to be human and what we are allowed to hope for.[56]

A prosthetic that helps a person walk, an implant that restores hearing, or a treatment that slows degenerative disease can be received as mercy precisely because it does not require the body to be despised in order to be helped. Yet the same technologies can be framed and eventually demanded within a narrative of optimization in which "normal" becomes an obsolete category and "unaugmented" becomes a failure. When that shift occurs, the neighbor's good quietly yields to a

new moral economy. Superiority is praised, weakness is penalized, and the human person is valued by capacity.

Here the Law/Gospel distinction brings needed clarity. The Law exposes the heart's recurring temptation to convert gift into wage and creaturely limits into shame. It names the spiritual drift that turns technological power into a righteousness project, that is, a modern form of making a "name" (Gen 11:4). The Gospel does not reprimand longing. Instead, it fulfills it with a promise that technology cannot keep. Our final rescue from death is not an upgrade but a gift, specifically union with the crucified and risen Christ, who entered our weakness "for a little while" and secured redeemed humanity's destiny in himself (Heb 2:5–9). Therefore, Christians may robustly affirm human creativity while refusing to assign it an ultimate task.

The practical question, then, is not merely "Can we?" but "What are we trusting this to do?" If a technology is expected to confer final identity, secure ultimate meaning, or neutralize death's certainty, it has crossed from tool to idol. Vocation remains wide enough for innovation and narrow enough to resist self-deification.

5.2 The "Luddite" Accusation

The second objection focuses on tone rather than logic by asking, "Isn't this critique just technophobia disguised as religious concern?" That query is understandable. Christians can romanticize "naturalness" and treat any intervention as suspect, as if refusing help were a mark of holiness. Such a posture is neither compassionate nor faithful. The believer who prays "deliver us from evil" (or the "Evil One"; Matt 6:13) is not required to pretend that disease is beneficial or pain is virtuous.

Still, the critique offered here is not anti-technology; it is anti-technolatry. The target is not the use of tools for healing but the elevation of tools into a saving horizon. In many transhumanist accounts, suffering becomes meaningless by definition, finitude becomes intolerable, and death becomes an engineering problem. That is not simply a medical ambition; rather, it is a rival eschatology. It asks technology to deliver what Scripture reserves for the Father's act in the Son, specifically, the defeat of death and the renewal of redeemed humanity.[57]

A Lutheran theology of the Cross can hold two truths together without contradiction. First, suffering is an evil to be resisted, and Christians may pursue healing with vigor and gratitude. Second, the elimination of suffering cannot become the ground of hope, because God has located the believers' confident expectation in the crucified Messiah. He alone meets sinners "under the opposite" and in the resurrection that no technique can produce. The Cross does not glorify pain. Instead, it proclaims the truth about where God has pledged to be for the weak, the fearful, and the dying.

This is why the "Luddite" label fails. A Luddite rejects technology simply because it is technology. The Church's calling is more demanding. Use technology

for love of neighbor while refusing to venerate it. That refusal is not indifference to suffering; rather, it is protection against a deeper cruelty. When technology is treated as a pseudo-savior, it eventually demands sacrifices. The weak become problems to solve, the dependent become burdens to manage, and the unenhanced become "irresponsible" or "left behind." A society that cannot tolerate limits will struggle to affirm the inherent value of limited people.[58]

Pastorally, these distinctions matter. Many who live with disability or chronic illness rely on assistive technologies as genuine mercy. A Christian critique of transhumanism must never imply that receiving help is a failure of faith. The question is not whether we accept aid. Instead, the issue is whether we accept a new hierarchy of worth in which dignity rises and falls with performance, productivity, or engineered advantage. The Gospel rejects that hierarchy. Christ identifies with the lowly and gives himself for them. Therefore, the Church should be the place where need is not shameful and strength is not a claim to superiority.

Finally, Christians may encourage research and innovation while evaluating and critiquing the promises attached to them. We can pursue penultimate goods (such as health, relief, and safety) without demanding that they deliver ultimate goods (such as righteousness, immortality, and the final ordering of the world to come). That is not a fear of progress. Rather, it is theological realism shaped by the candor of Hebrews 2:8 ("we do not yet see everything in subjection") and the Church's assurance ("but we look to Jesus"; v. 9). In short, technology may be a servant of mercy, but it must not be asked to become a rival redeemer.[59]

6.0 Conclusion

Transhumanism raises questions that are not primarily technical but theological. What is a human being, what is our destiny, and where may ultimate hope rest? Many enhancement proposals pursue genuine aims, such as healing, relief, and extended capacity for service. Yet transhumanism often gathers those objectives into a larger promise, namely, deliverance from finitude itself, and a future secured by human design. The Gospel does not deny the longing that animates such hopes; it names it honestly. It then locates its fulfillment where it actually belongs, in the crucified and risen Messiah, who alone can carry the salvific weight of redeemed humanity's eternal future.

6.1 Synthesis

This essay has argued that Scripture's canonical pattern consistently resists salvation-by-ascent. Psalm 8 grounds human dignity in God's gift. Frail humanity is remembered and crowned by divine generosity, not by autonomous achievement.

Hebrews 2:5–9 then makes the decisive Christological claim that Psalm 8's promise is fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. The passage's realism is also a rebuke to modern impatience. Human mastery is incomplete and will remain so until God's eternal kingdom is openly disclosed. Hope, therefore, is not engineered on our timetable but secured in the Son who tasted "death for everyone" (Heb 2:9).

From there, Genesis 11:1–9 exposes how technology becomes spiritually perilous when it is recruited into an immortality project. The tower of Babel episode is not an anti-innovation fable. Rather, it is a diagnosis of the heart's shift from trust to self-securing construction: "let's make a name for ourselves." Ingenuity amplifies a deeper fear of scattering, dependence, and vulnerability. The result is not only pride but also a totalizing unity that cannot tolerate weakness or difference. God's disruption is judgment, yet also restraint. It is a severe mercy that limits harm when sinners coordinate without humility.

Philippians 2:5–11 supplies the Bible's countermovement. Where Babel reaches upward, Christ comes downward. The eternal Son refuses to treat equality with God as self-advantage and takes the form of a servant, humbling himself to death on a cross. This is not only an ethical example; it is also the saving way God chose. In an era of self-optimization, the passage redefines glory. It is not invulnerability achieved through self-improvement, but divine love revealed through self-giving. The Gospel's path does not bypass creatureliness; rather, it redeems it from within.

These texts yield an incisive conclusion. Technology may serve penultimate benefits (such as repair, relief, and assistance), yet it must not be asked to deliver ultimate goods (such as justification, death's defeat, and God's eternal kingdom). When enhancement is framed as salvation, it becomes a rival gospel. It is a crown without the cross, a future without promise, and a "name" secured without grace.

6.2 Distinctive Lutheran Contribution

As the citations in this essay show, research on the ethics of transhumanism from a Christian perspective is growing rapidly. A Lutheran approach clarifies this debate by maintaining a distinction between gift and grasping, and by speaking with equal candor about sin and grace. The Law/Gospel distinction functions as a theological safeguard. The Law does not simply warn against obvious vice. It also exposes the heart's subtle drive to turn even good pursuits into righteousness projects. People want a security they can manage, an identity they can display, and a future they can control. Transhumanism intensifies that temptation by offering technical means that appear to place the limits of creaturely life on the negotiable list. The Law tells the truth about this drift before it hardens into idolatry.

This diagnostic use of the Law is essential because the struggle against a theology of glory is not only external but internal. It persists even in believers, who remain at

once righteous in Christ and still sinners. Even the redeemed are continually enticed to treat technology as a means of self-justification, especially by trying to quiet the anxiety of creaturely limits through control rather than through faith. Indeed, the impulse to build a private tower of "Babel" does not disappear at conversion. It must be drowned daily through repentance and a renewed understanding of one's identity in Christ.

Concerning the Gospel, it does more than correct a misplaced hope. It gives what the Law demands but cannot supply, specifically, a righteousness from God and a hope grounded outside the self. Christ does not redeem by lifting us out of finitude, but by entering it. This includes taking flesh, bearing sin, suffering death, and rising for our justification and life. This grace-forward center prevents two equal and opposite errors. It resists technophobia that refuses genuine mercies, and it resists technolatry that enthrones human technique. Because salvation is received, not achieved, Christians are freed to use tools without needing them to secure meaning, worth, or destiny.

Here the theology of the Cross is especially clarifying. A theology of glory looks for God in visible strength, control, and upward movement. The Cross teaches that God reveals himself "under the opposite" in the suffering Christ. Moreover, any theology that seeks God in visible strength, rational mastery, or technological triumph is not only morally mistaken but also fundamentally misguided in its way of knowing God.

A theology of the Cross does not romanticize pain; instead, it anchors hope where God has promised to be for sinners. It also protects the weak. In a culture trained to prize optimization, the Cross insists that dignity is not measured by performance. The crucified Lord meets human beings in dependence and gives them a future by promise, not by progress.

Lutheran vocation then restores technology to its proper role. God often cares for neighbors through ordinary means (such as skills, institutions, medicines, and devices) so that the Church can affirm robust engagement with healing arts as works of mercy. Yet vocation also draws the boundary. Tools are for loving the neighbor within embodied life, not for escaping an earthbound existence. When technology becomes a ladder to self-deification or a substitute for resurrection hope, it has exceeded its calling.

6.3 Final Charge

The Church should not respond to the transhumanist desire with either mockery or panic. The longing beneath it, such as deliverance from suffering, a lasting name, or life that death cannot steal, is a human aspiration Scripture takes seriously. The Christian answer is not to deny these sorts of yearnings, but to locate their fulfillment in the Messiah.

Practically, this essay calls for technological sobriety. Christians may pursue healing vigorously and receive medical advances with gratitude, while refusing to treat them as ultimate. We can support innovation that relieves suffering without adopting the propaganda that finitude is a defect and death is negotiable by design. We can use tools as servants of mercy while resisting their promotion into pseudo-saviors.

This posture also shapes the Church's public witness. If enhancement becomes an expectation, the vulnerable will be pressured to justify their continued existence by increasing their capacity. The Church must resist that insidious logic by embodying a different measure of worth. It is one that affirms baptismal identity rather than engineered advantage, neighbor-love rather than self-optimization, and resurrection hope rather than the indefinite extension of temporal existence. The faith community formed by the Cross must remain a place where need is not shameful, where weakness is not despised, and where persons are not valued by their output.

In sum, the Christian life combines active mercy with patient hope. We work for penultimate goods without confusing them with God's eternal kingdom. We refuse to build modern towers that promise a crown without the Cross. We also confess, with quiet assurance, that the future of redeemed humanity is not a technological achievement but a divine gift. It is the new humanity in Christ, given through the crucified and risen Messiah and consummated in the resurrection of the dead.

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Notes

1. Authorship and Use of AI: This essay is the author's scholarly work, and the author accepts full responsibility for its arguments, evidence, and conclusions. AI tools were used in a limited support role: flagging potential sources for the author's independent review, suggesting alternative organizational arrangements, and revising author-drafted prose at the sentence level. AI did not originate the essay's reasoning, theological claims, exegetical conclusions, Lutheran confessional judgments, or constructive proposals. The author independently evaluated every substantive suggestion, verified every cited source, and checked relevant claims against primary texts, established scholarly methods, and peer-reviewed research.
2. See Michael Latzer, "Digitalization, AI and the Rise of Techno-Religion: Transhumanist Promises and the Challenge to Enlightenment," *Telecommunications Policy* 50 (2026): 103115. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2025.103115; Katleho Mokoena, "Transcendence in African Spirituality and the Techno-Utopia," *Practical Theology* 18, no. 2 (2025): 139–151. https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2025.2477336.

3. In classic Lutheran usage, the "mask of God" refers primarily to divine care delivered through the neighbor in vocation (such as feeding through farmers, protecting through magistrates, and healing through physicians). Here the concept is applied secondarily to the tools and structures those neighbors use, so that technologies remain instruments of mediated care rather than independent "masks" alongside persons. See Kimbell Kornu, "The Pilgrim's Progress or Regress? The Case of Transhumanism and Deification," *Religions* 15, no. 8 (2024): 904. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15080904; William G. Fredstrom, "Wendell Berry and Martin Luther on Creatureliness in a Technological Age," *Lutheran Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (2025): 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1353/lut.2025.a950806.

4. See J. Menacho and L. Puig-Puig, "In Tech We Trust? On Salvation through Technology," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 60, no. 3 (2025): 677–99. https://doi.org/10.16995/zygon.16878; W. W. Suwanto, "Transcendence or Transformation: A Theological Critique of AI Transhumanism and Union with Christ," *Jurnal Jaffray* 23, no. 1 (2025): 1–34. https://doi.org/10.25278/jj.v23i1.1007.

5. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Evangelical Heritage Version, 2019 Wartburg Project, Inc. All rights reserved.

6. See Daekyung Jung, "Transhumanism and Theological Anthropology: A Theological Examination of Transhumanism," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 64, no. 2 (2022): 172–94. https://doi.org/10.1515/nzsth-2022-0009; Wiesław Łużyński, "Christian Hope and the Promise of Transhumanism: The Perspective of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI," *Collectanea Theologica* 94, no. 4 (2024): 199–211. https://doi.org/10.21697/ct.2024.94.4.07.

7. For an explanation concerning how a Lutheran framework for faithful medical practice within secular institutions could be constructed, see Dan Lioy, "The *Imago Dei* in the ICU: Why Every Patient Matters," *Verba Vitae* 3, no. 2 (August 10, 2026): 9–46. https://verba-vitae.org/index.php/vvj/article/view/128.

8. See John H. Evans, "The Theological Debate Over Human Enhancement: An Empirical Case Study of a Mediating Organization," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 55, no. 3 (2020): 615–37. https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12619; Ted Peters, "*Imago Dei*, DNA, and the Transhuman Way," *Theology and Science* 16, no. 3 (2018): 353–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2018.1488529.

9. For an explanation concerning why competence in scholarly exegesis, anchored in Hebrew and Greek, remains essential, see Dan Lioy, "Why the Words Still Matter: Recovering Biblical Languages as an Act of Pastoral Love," *Promissio: A Journal of Confessing Theology* 1, no. 1 (2026): 37. https://promissio.ilt.edu/index.php/pj/article/view/84.

10. Here a distinction is made between created goods that serve life within time from eschatological goods that only the Father secures through the Son.

11. See Denis Alexander, "Enhancing Humans or a New Creation? A Christian Critique of Transhumanism," *Cambridge Papers* 18, no. 2 (June 2009). https://www.cambridgepapers.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/18-2-Enhancing-humans-or-a-new-creation.pdf; Graham J. Jenkins, "Transhumanism and Catholic Social Teaching," *Religions* 16, no. 8 (2025): 971. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16080971; Samson Tadelle Demo, "Deconstructing Transhumanism: A Metanoia from *Homo Deus* to *Homo Kenosus*," *Conspectus* 36, no. 1 (2023): 84–96. https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2023.3.1.

12. The discourse in this section has been informed by the exegetical and theological discussions of Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2:5–9 appearing in the following: F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle*

to the Hebrews, rev. ed., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 71–77; Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984), 36–38; Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., vol. 19, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 104–10; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1-50: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 16, *Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 48–52; Paul Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 144–57; Rolf A. Jacobson and Beth Tanner, "Book One of the Psalter: Psalms 1–41," in *The Book of Psalms*, ed. Nancy délaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 120–28; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Hebrews*, vol. 15, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 63–70; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 36, *Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 213–23; Patrick Henry Reardon, *Christ in the Psalms* (Chesterton, IN: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2000), 15–16.

13. For more on this point, see Dan Lioy, "The *Imago Dei*: Biblical Foundations, Theological Implications, and Enduring Significance," *Verba Vitae* 1, no. 3–4 (Autumn 2024): 45. https://verba-vitae.org/index.php/vvj/article/view/25.

14. For more on this point, see Dan Lioy, "Creation and the Meaning of Life in the Apocalypse: Eschatological Renewal and Divine Purpose," *Verba Vitae* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2025): 7–8. https://verba-vitae.org/index.php/vvj/article/view/54.

15. See Rick Brannan, Ken M. Penner, et al., *The Lexham English Septuagint*, 2nd ed. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Ps 8:6.

16. The Septuagint's rendering of *'elohim* as *angeloi* is consistent with, and likely influenced by, a wider Second Temple interpretive tradition that equated the *bene elohim* ("sons of God") with angels. Evidence for this identification appears in 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. At the same time, the Septuagint's use of *angeloi* for *'elohim* is sporadic, indicating a selective rather than systematic translation strategy. See Jared Compton, "Made Lower than Angels: A Fresh Look at Hebrews 2:5–9," *Themelios* 49, no. 3 (2024). https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/themelios/article/made-lower-than-angels-a-fresh-look-at-hebrews-25-9/; Jason Maston, "'What is Man?' An Argument for the Christological Reading of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 112, no. 1 (2021): 89–104. https://doi.org/10.1515/znw-2021-0005.

17. For a consideration of Paul's *theologia crucis*, as exemplified in 2 Cor 11:16–12:10, see Dan Lioy, "Paul's Theology of the Cross: A Case Study Analysis of 2 Corinthians 11:16–12:10," *Conspectus* 20, no. 1 (September 2015): 89–133. https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC178216.

18. Most Greek manuscripts read "by God's grace" (*charíti theoû*), while a minority variant reads "apart from God" (*chōrís theoû*). The former enjoys broader external support and coheres with Hebrews' soteriological emphasis on divine grace.

19. For an examination of a distinctively Lutheran theological anthropology, which emphasizes the integral unity of body and soul against reductive philosophical frameworks, see Dan Lioy, "Embodied Souls: Exploring Human Personhood in the Age of AI," *Verba Vitae* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2025): 31–62, https://verba-vitae.org/index.php/vvj/article/view/36.

20. See Yanto P. Hermanto, "*Imago Dei* and Artificial Intelligence: A Theological Inquiry into Personhood and Human Ontological Boundaries," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 81, no. 1 (2025): 5. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10877; Stoyan Kitanov, "Rethinking the Complexities of the Body and Disability: Theological Account," *Religions* 15, no. 9 (September 2024): 2. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15091113.

21. See Paul Martens and Wemimo B. Jaiyesimi, "The Recovery of Human Dignity in Protestant Christianity and Its Ethical Implications," *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 425. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030425; Steven Umbrello and Paul O'Hara, "Human Dignity in the Digital Age," *Journal of Ethics and Emerging Technologies* 35, no. 1 (2025): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.55613/jeet.v35i1.165.

22. See King-Ho Leung, "The Technologisation of Grace and Theology: Meta-theological Insights from Transhumanism," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 33, no. 4 (August 2020): 479–95. https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946820909747; N. Gray Sutanto, "Work Under the Fall," *Reformed Faith & Practice: The Journal of Reformed Theological Seminary* 9, no. 1 (December 2024). https://journal.rts.edu/article/work-under-the-fall/.

23. For an extensive explanation of the glorious new creation that awaits God's reborn children, as detailed in Rev 21, see Dan Lioy and George Coon, *John's Unfolding Cosmic Drama: A Literary and Theological Analysis of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2026), 377–81.

24. The discourse in this section has been informed by the exegetical and theological discussions of Genesis 11:1–9 appearing in the following: Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 350–59; Ronald Hendel, *Genesis 1–11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. John J. Collins, vol. 1A, *Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2024), 390–407; K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 466–86; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 233–41.

25. For an examination of the comprehensive scope of fallen human existence, which is characterized by existential futility, universal mortality, and the absolute impotence of human resources against death's dominion, see Dan Lioy, "Victory over the Vapor: How the Cross Alone Annihilates the Culture of Death," *Verba Vitae* 2, no. 4 (Winter 2025): 7–32. https://verba-vitae.org/index.php/vvj/article/view/76.

26. See William G. Fredstrom, "Vocational Attunement in Our Distracted Digital Age," *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 24, no. 6 (December 2024 / January 2025). https://learn.elca.org/jle/vocational-attunement-in-our-distracted-digital-age/; Benson O. Igboin, "The Illusion of Limitlessness: Engaging Cornel du Toit's Perspective on Transhumanism and Being," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 46, no. 3 (2025): a3351. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v46i3.3351.

27. See Theodore Hiebert, "The Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World's Cultures," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 29–58. https://doi.org/10.2307/27638419; Bobby Kurnia Putrawan, Ludwig Beethoven J. Noya, and Alisaid Prawiro Negoro, "Centripetal-centrifugal Forces in the Tower of Babel Narrative (Gen 11:1–9)," *Old Testament Essays* 35, no. 2 (2022). https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2022/v35n2a5.

28. See Isaac Nahon-Serfaty, "Destination Babel: Communication, Technology, and Responsibility," *Journal of Jewish Ethics* 8, no. 1 (2022). https://doi.org/10.5325/jjewi-

ethi.8.1.0111; Wolfgang Vondey, "A Political Theology of Glossolalia: Reconciling the Tongues of Babel, Jerusalem, and Corinth," *Pneuma* 33, no. 2 (2025): 233–51. https://doi.org/10.1163/17455251-bja10063.

29. See Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas: Encyclical Letter on Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence* (May 15, 2026), The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html. The encyclical reinforces this essay's analysis by warning that contemporary technological culture often reenacts Babel's "name-making" impulse, especially by pursuing permanence and self-sufficiency through power and optimization rather than receiving identity as a God-given gift grounded in creaturely limits and communion.

30. See Leonard Ndzi, "Unity and Pride: An Exploration of the Motivations Behind the People's Decision to Build the Tower in Genesis 11:1–9," *Greener Journal of Social Sciences* 14, no. 2 (2024): 212–20. https://doi.org/10.15580/gjss.2024.2.102524152; Steven W. Tyra, "Babeling Nationalism: Reading Genesis 11:1–9 with Luther and Calvin," *Principia: A Journal of Classical Education* 3, no. 1 (2024): 21–42. https://doi.org/10.5840/principia20246208.

31. A similar contrast appears in Revelation 20:9, where an evil army under Satan's command spreads across earth's "broad expanse" and surrounds the fortified camp of the "saints," which is the "beloved" community of the redeemed. Just as the malevolent horde boldly advances upward, God sends down "fire" from "heaven" to "devour" them. See Lioy and Coon, *John's Unfolding Cosmic Drama*, 364.

32. In other words, a human-centered or anthropocentric bias, which is countered by the Creator's sovereign preemption of fallen humanity's sinful plans. See J. Kim, "Artificial Intelligence and the Sustainable Future of Co-Creation," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 60, no. 1 (2025): 18–30. https://doi.org/10.16995/zygon.17283; Eduardo R. Cruz, "Artificial Vice? Artificial Intelligence and Threats to the Self," *Theology and Science* 23, no. 2 (2025): 249–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2025.2472119.

33. See Michael Laffin, "Babel, Tyranny and Totality: Reading Genesis 11 with Luther," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 31, no. 4 (2018): 379–80. https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946818792166; Laura Perrings, "The Tower of Babel: The Correction of God's People," *Denison Journal of Religion* 7 (2007). http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/religion/vol7/iss1/2.

34. For a consideration regarding how radical contemporary critical theory (RCCT) operates as a rival worldview that fragments human identity into politicized categories of oppression and privilege, relativizes truth to power dynamics, and erodes inherent dignity by subordinating it to ideological narratives, see Dan Lioy, "Redemption, Not Revolution: Human Flourishing through Cross-Shaped Love," *Verba Vitae* 3, no. 1 (May 3, 2026): 9–38, https://verba-vitae.org/index.php/vvj/article/view/98.

35. It is important to distinguish between modest enhancement proposals (such as therapies that restore ordinary bodily and cognitive capacities within human limits) and transhumanist visions. Modest enhancements can often be received as instruments of vocation when governed by love of neighbor and honest acknowledgment of creaturely limits. In contrast, maximalist posthuman projects aim at engineered immortality, radical self-transcendence, or fundamental redefinition of what it means to be human. In doing so, they relocate eschatological hope from God's promise to human technique and therefore exemplify the theology of glory this essay critiques. See Paschal M. Corby, "An Innate Despair: The Philosophical Limitations of Transhumanism and its Misplaced

Hope in Human Enhancement," *The Linacre Quarterly* 92, no. 2 (2025): 182–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/00243639241281977; Mikael Leidenhag, "Saved through Technology: Exploring the Soteriology and Eschatology of Transhumanism," *Religion Compass* 14, no. 11 (2020): e12377. https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12377.

36. See Benjamin Parviz, "Christian Hope and Transhumanism," *Christian Bioethics: Non-Ecumenical Studies in Medical Morality* 31, no. 2 (August 2025): 69–81. https://doi.org/10.1093/cb/cbaf006; Ximian Xu, "Shall We Sanctify Ourselves with Biomedical Technology? A Reformed Appraisal of Moral Bioenhancement," *Theology and Science* 22, no. 2 (2024): 292–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2024.2351641.

37. For an explanation regarding how the myth of the autonomous, normative self arose and became the catalyst for the sexual revolution, see Dan Lioy, "A Pauline Response to the Myth of the Autonomous, Normative Self," *Verba Vitae* 1, no. 1–2 (March 29, 2024): 53–65. https://verba-vitae.org/index.php/vvj/article/view/4.

38. In other words, the political or civil use (the *usus politicus*) of the Law. Admittedly, throughout the essay, the primary concern is the theological use of the Law (the *usus theologicus*), which drives sinners to despair of self-salvation and thus to the Gospel.

39. See Douglas C. Youvan, "The God They Cannot Face: A Resonant Critique of the New Technological Babel" (2025). https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Douglas-Youvan/publication/390947658_The_God_They_Cannot_Face_A_Resonant_Critique_of_the_New_Technological_Babel/links/6804464dbfbe974b23adf35b/The-God-They-Cannot-Face-A-Resonant-Critique-of-the-New-Technological-Babel.pdf; Daniel L. Sutherland, "From Babel to AI: Idolatry, Transhumanism, and the Crisis of *Imago Dei*." *American Academy of Religion* (AAR), 2025. https://www.academia.edu/download/122227240/Sutherland_BabeltoAI_ConstructiveTheology_AARSE2025Paper.pdf.

40. The discourse in this section has been informed by the exegetical and theological discussions of Philippians 2:5–11 appearing in the following: Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 191–229; Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, vol. 43, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2004), 99–135; Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 96–109; Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 95–116.

41. See Roger Haydon Mitchell, "Kenosis or Sovereignty? Christ Jesus and the Disclosure of the Divine Mind," *Theology* 127, no. 3 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1177/0040571X241232103; Angela Gloria Erum, "An Exegesis of Philippians 2:1–11," *American Journal of Biblical Theology* 26, no. 1 (2025): 1–20. https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/ErumAG01.pdf.

42. See John M. G. Barclay, "Benefiting Others and Benefit to Oneself: Seneca and Paul on 'Altruism,'" in *Paul and Seneca in Dialogue*, ed. Joseph R. Dodson and David E. Briones (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 109–126. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004341364_007; Simeon Zahl, "Engineering Desire: Biotechnological Enhancement as Theological Problem," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 32, no. 2 (2019): 216–228. https://doi.org/10.1177/0953946819827138.

43. See John M.G. Barclay, "Does the Gospel Require Self-Sacrifice? Paul and the Reconfiguration of the Self," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 36, no. 1 (2023): 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/09539468221132095; Jos De Kock, "Spirituality and Theological Formation:

Seven Critical Considerations," *Christian Education Journal* 17, no. 1 (2020): 101–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/19397909241234294.

44. See Mark J. Keown, "The Missional Power of the Christ-Hymn," *Religions* 15, no. 6 (2024): 711. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15060711; Ramarolahy Patricia Josette and Robijaona Rahelivololoniaina Baholy, "The *Kenosis* of Jesus Christ: Model of the Christian Life According to Philippians 2:5–11," *Britain International of Humanities and Social Sciences Journal* 6, no. 1 (2024): 25–38. https://doi.org/10.33258/biohs.v6i1.1061.

45. See Ligita Ryliškytė, "Kenotic Solidarity in Discernment," *Religions* 15, no. 12 (2024): 1453. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121453.

46. An analysis of the passage indicates that it exhibits balanced parallelism, rhythmic language, and potentially antiphonal structure, features characteristic of early Christian hymnody. For these reasons, many specialists propose that Paul is either quoting or adapting a preexisting hymn that may have already been familiar to the Philippian congregation. See Michael C. Magree, "Modern Exegesis of Philippians 2:6–7," in *The Interpretation of* Kenosis *from Origen to Cyril of Alexandria: Dimensions of Self-Emptying in the Reception of Philippians 2:7* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 8–46. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198896661.003.0002; William Shiell, "Singing to 'Lord Jesus Christ': A Prose Hymn and Its Philippian Recipients," *Religions* 14, no. 10 (2023): 1228. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101228.

47. As Lioy and Coon note on page 51 of John's Unfolding Cosmic Drama, in Exodus 3:14–15, God reveals two names to Moses: "I am" (*ʾehyeh*) and "Lord" (*yhwh*), both derived from the Hebrew verb, *hayah* ("to be"), suggesting meanings like "I am" and "he is" (or "he exists"). Some specialists interpret *yhwh* as a declaration of God's aseity (a reference to his self-existence and independence from creation). However, in the context of Exodus, the name emphasizes the Creator's active presence and steadfast commitment to redeem Israel, rather than solely the abstract, objective truth of his reality. This focus is evident in the pillar of cloud and fire (13:21–22) and Moses' plea for God's abiding presence (33:14–15). Thus, while *yhwh* may etymologically mean "he is," its primary significance in Exodus is the Creator's redemptive presence with Israel.

48. See Eric Covington, "'Their End Is Destruction': Reading Philippians as Philosophical Dialogue," *Religions* 15, no. 4 (2024): 462. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040462; Gregory E. Lamb, "Beyond the Greco-Roman or Jewish Monocle: Reading Philippians and Paul 'Kaleidoscopically'," *Religions* 15, no. 4 (2024): 467. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040467.

49. See Andrew Jake Morgensen, "Kenotic Anthropology: Becoming More Human, Not Less," paper presented at the RCSA Academic Symposium 2025, Vancouver, British Columbia, 2025. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57b0a5c2bebafb2459fb2cf0/t/67e1c1b16dac6212406eb557/1742848434390/a1)+Andrew+Jake+Morgensen_Symposium+Final+Paper.pdf; Bradley Jersak, "Biblical and Christological Grounds for Voluntary *Kenosis*," *The Kenarchy Journal* 5 (2023): 1–30. https://kenarchy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Kenarchy_Volume5.1.pdf.

50. These observations directly challenge gnostic tendencies that salvation means escape from embodied, material existence. By affirming that Christ redeems finitude through his incarnation, the essay aligns with the Lutheran maxim *finitum capax infiniti* (the finite is capable of holding the infinite).

51. See D. J. Louw, "A Christian Spirituality of Imperfection: Towards a Pastoral Theology of Descent within the Praxis of Orthopathy," *Acta Theologica* 41, no. 2 (2021): 70–95.

https://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at/article/view/5887; M. Tumeinski, "The Gift of Peace, Christians with Impairments, and the Church," *Horizons* 48, no. 1 (2021): 122–54. https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2021.5.

52. See Jason T. Eberl, "Who Wants to Live Forever? Transhumanist Immortality and Christian Eternity," *Christian Bioethics* 31, no. 2 (2025): 82–91. https://doi.org/10.1093/cb/cbaf004; David Hershenov, "Why Christians Should Not Embrace Extreme Transhumanism," *Christian Bioethics* 31, no. 2 (August 2025): 92–102. https://doi.org/10.1093/cb/cbaf005.

53. See Ximian Xu, "Growth or Decline: Christian Virtues and Artificial Moral Advisors," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 38, no. 1 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1177/09539468241305014; Ximian Xu, "Hope, Christian Morality, and the Ethics of Predictive AI," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 38, no. 1 (2025). https://doi.org/10.1177/09539468251324787.

54. For a more extensive critique of transhumanism in direct dialogue with theistic ethical frameworks, see Roberto Di Ceglie, "Transhumanism vs. Theistic Ethics," *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* 9, no. 1 (2025): 384–402. https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v9i1.86003; Ryan Lemasters, "Religious Transhumanism as a New Religious Movement: Sketching a Model of the Development of Religious Transhumanism," *Religions* 15, no. 8 (2024): 885. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15080885; Michael Agerbo Mørch, "Is Moderate Transhumanism Compatible with Christian Faith?" *Theology and Science* 24, no. 1 (2025): 97–108. https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2025.2592332; Tobias Tanton, "Extending the Transhuman Person: Religious Practices as Cognitive Technological Enhancements," *Religions* 16, no. 3 (2025): 272. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030272.

55. See comparable deliberations in the following: Michael S. Burdett, "Incarnation, Posthumanism and Performative Anthropology: The Body of Technology and the Body of Christ," *Christian Bioethics: Non-Ecumenical Studies in Medical Morality* 28, no. 3 (December 2022): 207–16. https://doi.org/10.1093/cb/cbab009; Michael Burdett and King-Ho Leung, "The Machine in the Ghost: Transhumanism and the Ontology of Information," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* (2023): 714–31. https://doi.org/10.1111/zygo.12886; Khegan M. Delport, "The Artifice of Eternity: Transhumanism and Theosis," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 9, no. 1 (2023): 1–27. https://doi.org/10.17570/stj.2023.v9n1.at1; Manitza Kotzé, "Transhumanism as a Positional Good, Economic Inequality, and a Response from Christian Ethics," *In die Skriflig* 58, no. 1 (2024): 1–7. https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v58i1.3072.

56. Concededly, the line between "restoring" and "enhancing" is hard to draw, because what counts as "normal" changes with the person, the setting, and the technology available. Consequently, this essay uses a different criterion: does the technology serve the neighbor as a helpful tool, or is it being treated as something that can either save us or secure our eternal future? See Raymond R. Hausoul, "Hope and Transhumanism," in *The Oxford Compendium of Hope*, chap. 49 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 825–42. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197618240.003.0049; Bjørn Hofmann, "Human Enhancement: Enhancing Health or Harnessing Happiness?" *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* 16 (2019): 87–98. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-018-9888-z.

57. See Michael Baggot, L.C., "The Daring and Disappointing Dreams of Transhumanism's Secular Eschatology," *Nova et Vetera* 22, no. 3 (2024): 841–78. https://doi.org/10.1353/nov.2024.a934929; Oliver Krüger, "The Future Never Dies: A Relational Approach to

Secular and Religious Entanglements of Posthuman Utopia," *Religions* 54, no. 3 (2024): 453–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2024.2362066.

58. See Massimo Leone, "Technology and Sacrifice," *Religions* 15, no. 6 (2024): 692. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15060692; Amy Debates, "Christianity and Transhumanism in the Inequity Era," *Christian Bioethics* 31, no. 2 (August 2025): 121–29. https://doi.org/10.1093/cb/cbaf007.

59. See Michael Stephen Burdett, "Proximate and Ultimate Concerns in Christian Ethical Responses to Artificial Intelligence," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 36, no. 3 (2023): 620–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/09539468231180135; Pavel-Iosif Pungilă, "Christian Perspectives on Technology: A Dialog Between Faith and Innovation," *RAIS Journal for Social Sciences* 8, no. 2 (2024): 154–59. https://journal.rais.education/index.php/raiss/article/view/249.

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