A Serious Christian Journal of Life and its Significance

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Verba Vitae

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Verba Vitae is committed to bringing the classical Christian tradition into conversation with life issues now confronting us. Modeling the reasoned *logos* of the theological tradition, *Verba Vitae* explores the truth-claims made by thinkers and examines the grounds upon which these assertions are made.

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A Word from the General Editor

Issues of life and death concern beings that live and die. This issue of *Verba Vitae* deals with the issue of personhood and its relevance to the questions of life and its significance.

In "Luther's Concern for Life," Robert Kolb discusses how Martin Luther's concern for the fifth commandment motivated him to condemn violence towards and abuse of another person and how his views influenced his theological heirs to oppose both positive and negative forms of racism. Kolb's contribution dovetails nicely with Dan Lioy's "The Imago Dei: Biblical Foundations, Theological Implications, and Enduring Significance." Lioy's article describes how the *imago Dei* functioned historically to ground ethical reflection and behavior while providing a foundation for the sanctity of life. Since Christ is the ultimate embodiment of the *imago Dei*, Christians, through the Spirit, can be effective stewards of God's creation and life's sanctity.

The articles by Dennis Bielfeldt, "Personal Identity, Divine Love, and Extrinsic Individuation," and Doug Morton, "The Incarnation and Human Personhood," explore philosophical and theological notions of personhood. Bielfeldt examines traditional intrinsic accounts of personal identity, finds them lacking, and argues that adopting an extrinsic criterion of divine intentionality to ground identity is accordingly justified. Such a move, however, results in deep questions about the justifiability of harming or terminating persons whom God accordingly intends. Morton finds Locke's psychological criterion of personhood problematic, arguing that there are superior resources within the theological tradition to ground personal identity. After exploring the concept of personhood in the tradition, Morton, like Bielfeldt, suggests that grounding personhood theologically is *prima facie* justified and that such grounding has profound significance for issues of the ontology of life.

The contributions by John Ehrett, "Arnim Polster's Lutheran Case Against Abortion," and John Eidsmoe and Mary Huffman, "Law and Personhood: A Biblical and Medical Study from a Two Kingdoms Perspective," each address the issue of personhood before the law, particularly concerning the deeper theological grounds for the law's consideration of what it is to be a person. Ehrett's article describes Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod pastor Arnim Polster's opposition to the liberalization of California's abortion laws based on what he believed was an objective fact: Unborn life is human life. Eidsmoe/Huffman explore the medical, moral and

theological background to the law's understanding of personhood, pointing out that the development of the notion in the legal tradition is consonant with Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms.

Finally, Daniel Hackmann's "AI and Personhood: A Theological Perspective" points to the current discussion among philosophers, social scientists, and legal scholars on how to understand personhood in the context of AI and AI-driven systems. Two significant questions arise: Under what conditions should personhood be ascribed to AI systems, and what relevance do the traditional notions of personhood have to the world of AI generally? Like Lioy, Hackmann believes that the *imago Dei* can be fruitfully employed in reflecting upon personhood.

Five book reviews round out the issue, each dealing with personhood and the significance of life in some way.

Enjoy the read!

Dennis Bielfeldt, General Editor

Martin Luther's Concern for Human Life

Robert Kolb

"Life" in Luther's World

Statistically, over roughly a century, people died as often in the 1500s as today, with one death for every birth over the long term. However, sixteenth-century European societies could not hide death as effectively as modern Western cultures do.[1] The vulnerability and fragility of life confronted everyone much more directly than is the case with many in North America and Western Europe today. In the Christian ethos that dominated those early modern "Christian" societies, the obligation of every individual to promote and protect the life of others was as clear as the many threats to life all around—disease and violence—even in a world with little careless use of weapons and reckless driving.

Some of what today must be regarded as "life issues" did not surface in Martin Luther's day. Euthanasia, for instance, was not an issue because few people lived beyond the "climatic" year of age 63. This was thought to be a dangerous point in life. It was the age in which both Melanchthon and Luther died.[2] Their friend, Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483-1565), lived into his eighty-second year, and the printer Urban Gaubisch (1521-1612), who printed Luther's works after the reformer's death as well as works by many of his disciples, died at 91. His pastor, Christoph Schleupner, chose the example of Barsillai from 2 Samuel 19: 32–40 as the basis for Gaubisch's funeral sermon. This supporter of King David declined the royal offer of a benefice in Jerusalem to return in his old age to his homeland, Gilead. The preacher admonished the younger to respect the aging, bear their infirmities with them, and provide for their needs. Schleupner reflected Luther's treatment of the fourth commandment in the Large Catechism with his depiction of both Barsillai and Gaubisch as the preacher urged the mourners to foster the community's welfare by having the younger care for the elderly and give them comfort and support.[3] The vulnerability of life in this time rendered euthanasia a topic that made no sense.

Furthermore, abortions did take place in Luther's time and were mainly regulated by the rule of the village. But no epidemic of abortion threatened unborn life in his time, and he did not comment on it. He reported on the punishment of a woman who had given birth and then had slain the newborn child. He reported this

without any extensive comment beyond his condemnation of infanticide.[4] He did react, however, not only to those sins of commission that brought bodily harm and death to others but also to sins of omission that neglected the needy and excused the unwillingness of Christians to sacrifice for the care of others.

The Tensions of the Time

Martin Luther lived in an age where threats to human life abounded, and antidotes for bodily ills were scarce. Although he did not face the challenges to life of those who in modern times prize individual freedom above the common good and God's commands to love even our enemies, he recognized that among his contemporaries, the lives of others were often seen as cheap. He viewed Satan as the enemy of life as God had created it. He frequently echoed Jesus' description of the devil as a "liar and murderer" (John 8:44) and saw him as very active in his own time. He lamented over the assassination of Halle Pastor Georg Winkler in a conspiracy hatched at the court of Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz. Luther stated that Satan

> shows himself straightforwardly as the murderer in all the killing that is done throughout the world, on water and land, at home and at court: this man is stabbed, that one's throat is cut; someone drowns; another burns to death; yet another is slain by a falling wall, and the wolves devour the next and so on, and so on. People are killed in all sorts of ways, all of which are the devil's work or that of his servants. He rages most violently when he inflames princes and kings against one another, so that the whole world is filled with nothing but war and murder, strife and bloodshed without ceasing or ending, as though people were born for nothing but killing and were afraid that they could not die unless they strangled and murdered each other. But he delights most in murdering those who want to speak of Christ's word in the inn of this world [the devil provides a temporary abode in this world]. He cannot stand them; they cast suspicious eyes on his inn and reveal him to be a liar and a murderer.[5]

Much short of murder, bodily harm and damage to reputations affected every community, whether village in the countryside or neighborhood in a town. A Reformation scholar who had examined popular attitudes in sixteenth-century England once commented in a private conversation that the people he studied were irritable. He added, "And you would be irritable, too, if you had the same two meals every day, ill-fitting clothing, drafty homes, and hard, hard work." Luther's acquaintances were often irritable, which sometimes led—through contempt and manipulation—to violence. Bitter attacks on him and his colleagues revealed the level of hatred that afflicted even theologians. Students occasionally fought with townspeople in the streets of Wittenberg, and the town council finally granted students the same right as

apprentices had, the right to wear swords in public, much to Luther's chagrin.[6] His close friend, Peter Beskendorf, for whom Luther composed a guide to praying in 1535, later in that year became inebriated at a family gathering. When his son-in-law, Dietrich Freyenhagen, a professional soldier, claimed that his body was magically protected from all assaults and every weapon, Beskendorf ran him through with his sword. The barber escaped the death penalty only through Luther's intervention and died destitute in exile in nearby Dessau. Luther remained in contact with him, giving counsel and aid while condemning his careless disregard for life.[7]

Luther's Attitude toward Life in his Treatment of Genesis 3 and 4

LUTHER'S REGARD FOR THE WORTH and value of every human life extended far beyond opposing such violent actions. In 1524, he preached a series of sermons on Genesis. In one sermon on Genesis 2:18, he emphasized that Eve was created to be Adam's helper, with focus on the gift of children. Not only were they created with one flesh but also one spirit, sharing all things.[8] His 1535 lectures on Genesis articulate his firm conviction that God provides for his human creatures through the aid and support they give each other. God recognized that it was not good that Adam be alone (Gen. 2:18), thus forming the community of love for friends and enemies, intimates and strangers alike, that Jesus, for instance, described in the Sermon on the Mount. The professor observed that alone Adam had the personal good that God gives his human creatures in relating to them. But with the creation of Eve, God provided for the common good, linking human beings inextricably to each other. Luther noted God's reason for creating Eve was the need for human companionship and protection—mutual support—along with the need to continue the human race.[9] Luther reflected this understanding of humanity in a sermon on the parable of the Good Samaritan in 1531. He noted that the word "neighbor" is often defined as a person "who needs a favor or should be served and shown love," but in this parable, the neighbor is, in the view of Scripture, the one who simply shows love even to a Samaritan, a member of a despised race. It understands the term "neighbor" in what Aristotle named the sphere of relationships, emphasizing that the reality of human life takes shape within the context of such personal relationships. Mutual love marks the godly life; neighbors were created to aid and support others.[10] Luther presumed that God determined the very nature of human creatures as creatures fashioned for community with each other and their Creator. This presupposition shaped Luther's view of life and carelessness with one's own life and the life of others.

Lecturing on Genesis 4 in 1536 gave the reformer further occasion to comment on God's regard for human life and the attitude toward life that he expects from other human beings. Cain's murder of Abel provided Luther with a model for tracing the

development of sin from the failure to fear, love, and trust in God above all things to the attitudes of arrogance, discontent, resentment, envy, and pride that finally led to the deed of murder. Because he wanted to be lord of all, in control of his environment, Cain felt no need to hearken to God.[11] Luther analyzed the course of Cain's resort to murder: his disappointment at being deprived of what he wanted led him to kill Abel. He then became brusque and surly when God asked about Abel. He could only reply with scorn, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Luther pointed out that Cain had defied God's design for human life together in caring community.[12]

Luther's Preaching on the Fifth Commandment

In 1525, Luther preached on the giving of the Law in Exodus 20. God gave this command in order to cage the "wolves, bears, lions, etc." in this world because he was worried about human welfare. For God knew that the human heart was intent on stamping out the lives of others after the fall into sin. People lose patience at any hurt, and revenge ensues. The slightest offense brings kindness to a halt. Even when the hand does not make a move, we laugh up our sleeves when something goes wrong for the other, whether the person is ill, faces ruin, or is dying. As Christ had taught in the Sermon on the Mount, the preacher reminded the congregation that the fifth commandment forbids not only striking with the fist but also insulting with words, showing anger with gestures, and nursing rage in the heart.[13]

In 1528, one of the reformer's catechetical sermons that paved the way for the composition of his catechisms the next year explained the fifth commandment as God's provision for protection for his human creatures. The commandment extends beyond forbidding harm. It extends even to condemning words or thoughts that injure. It also embraces the six works of mercy found in Matthew 25:35-36: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, opening one's home to the stranger, looking after the sick, and visiting the imprisoned. This command therefore "requires a heart that is gentle, friendly, and sweet toward everybody, ready to do good to all." Luther cited Deuteronomy 15:7-8 in which Moses commanded people to open their hands and give to others what they need.[14]

Luther preached on Matthew 5:21 to the congregation in Wittenberg around 1530, while his pastor and colleague Johannes Bugenhagen assisted the Lübeck government in introducing reform. In this sermon, Luther charged that the Pharisees of Christ's time had applied the fifth commandment only to "course outward deeds," forbidding nothing other than "striking dead with the hand." This narrow interpretation pays no attention to Christ's explanation of the commandment presented in this passage. Hearts may be filled with anger, hate, and envy, with many plots to harm another person, and with words of cursing. Luther condemned these attitudes of contempt toward living human beings even as he recognized that being kind to

others, helping them in need and treating them as every human being wants to be treated, may be a burden. Nonetheless, it is the way God wants his human creatures to practice their being human (Matt. 5:20, 22). Luther dismissed the halfway measure of forgiving but not forgetting; had God not forgotten our sinfulness, we would all go to hell, he observed.[15] He did, however, explain to the congregation the nature of godly anger that must be exercised as part of the callings of parents and governmental officials charged with keeping public order. He maintained that their strict discipline should be directed against the deed, not the person.[16] Luther then elaborated on the Word "*raca*," a term of contempt, and a word that Matthew preserved in its original Aramaic. It embraces any symptoms of anger against others, including refusing to talk to them, laughing at them, and dreaming of their ruin. Luther contrasted these with the "motherly" attitude that rebukes in love to correct a child.[17] He urged reconciliation as Christ had suggested. His concern for life went beyond preserving a breathing body to working to prevent shortening life artificially and to the bearing of burdens that foster and nourish the goodness of life that God intends for his human creatures.

Luther's Treatment of the Fifth Commandment in Catechetical Works

In the summer and fall of 1520, Luther published four programmatic works that detailed his call for reform. Two deconstructed medieval piety: his *Open Letter to the German Nobility* critiqued a series of individual practices, and his *Prelude, On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* dismantled the ritualistic system that focused on the individual's participation and performance in the sacred works connected with the sacraments. The culmination of these four treatises came with his *On the Freedom of a Christian*, which laid out how trusting in Christ produces the fruits of faith, in freedom from sin, God's wrath, and death, and in bonding to the neighbor, the freedom to act in truly human fashion. The first of these, *On Good Works*, countered the charge of his opponents that his doctrine of justification through the forgiving Word of absolution and the trust in Christ that it elicits would lead to disobedience and licentiousness. He used the Ten Commandments as his framework for demonstrating how faith exhibits itself in hearkening to the commands of God. Against the "angry and revenge-seeking passion" that God forbids in the fifth commandment stands the obedience expressed in "meekness." Not intended is the kind of meekness that seems present when a person simply wants to avoid involvement in the troubles of others. Beasts and unbelievers practice that kind of meekness that turns to resentment and anger when the needs of others impose themselves. Godly meekness seeks no vengeance and avoids cursing, speaking, or thinking evil of others, even enemies. These meek people do good to those who curse and insult them, as Paul admonishes in Romans 12:14. Even though all feel

anger toward others when threatened, Luther describes true godly meekness: the heart feels compassion toward enemies when evil happens to them. For, as he says, "the heart is most tormented when it has to be angry and severe."[18]

Luther explained what violates the fifth commandment in the Prayer Book he began constructing in 1522. His list included anger, using "insults, profanity, slander, backbiting, condemnation, scorn" against others, revealing another's sins in public rather than protecting them from such information being shared with the public, failure to look for the best in others, failure to forgive and pray for enemies, failure to practice mercy also toward enemies, inciting others against each other or causing disunity in other ways, failure to reconcile others, failure to prevent or fend off anger and discord where possible, along with all forms of violence against others.[19]

Luther's Small Catechism traces the violation of the fifth commandment back to a failure to fear and love God, the root sin from which all defiance of God stems. God forbids hurting or harming others and commands helping and befriending them in every physical need.[20] The Large Catechism expands on this simple summary. Referring to Matthew 5:21-26, Luther condemned harming others by hand or heart, word or gestures, or aiding and abetting others in harming another person. Anger, reproof, and punishment God reserves for those called to keep order in society.[21] Luther noted that the devil arouses enemies who envy our blessings, tempting us to respond in kind. He traced the course of sin from hearts filled with anger to a readiness to get revenge. Curses follow, then blows, eventually calamity and murder. God gave this commandment as a "wall, fortress, and refuge" around his human creatures to protect them from violence. The people of Christ learn to calm their anger and have a patient, gentle heart.[22] Beyond this, Luther called for action to aid those in need.

> If you send a naked person away when you could clothe him, you have let him freeze to death. If you see anyone who is suffering from hunger and do not feed him, you have let him starve. Likewise, if you see anyone who is condemned to death or in similar peril and do not save him although you have the means and ways to do so, you have killed him.… Therefore, God rightly calls all people murderers who do not offer counsel or assistance to those in need and peril to body and life.[23]

In paraphrasing Matthew 25, Luther noted that Jesus would say to such people, "You would have permitted me and my family to die of hunger, thirst, and cold, to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, to rot in prison or perish from want." God thereby encourages gentleness, patience, and kindness, even toward our enemies.[24] Commenting on this passage in the Large Catechism, Warren Lattimore quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "The church has an unconditional obligation toward the victims of any societal order, even if they do not belong to the Christian community. Let us work for the good of all."[25]

Though not strictly a catechetical work, Luther's *A Simple Way to Pray* of 1535 reviewed the Ten Commandments as a guide to prayer. This meditation responded to a request for instruction for praying, and the reformer dedicated it to his barber, Peter Beskendorf, who, shortly after its appearance, plunged a sword into his son-in-law in an inebriated moment. Luther analyzed the Decalogue in this work according to a four-fold scheme, viewing each commandment as instruction, thanksgiving, confession, and prayer. The fifth commandment instructs God's people to love the neighbor and to harm no one, either by word or deed, out of anger, vexation, envy, hatred, or for any other reason. Instead, God's people give aid and assistance in every physical need. This provides protection for others a person helps and for oneself whom others help. The command not to kill gives cause to give thanks to God for the protection his provision gives for order in society and mutual assistance. Luther then confessed his own lack of gratitude for God's fatherly protection, ignoring the command and neglecting to give support to others in need.

> We amble along complacently, feel no remorse that in defiance of this commandment we neglect our neighbor, and, yes, we desert him, persecute, injure, or even kill him in our thoughts. We indulge in anger, rage, and villainy as though we were doing a fine and noble thing.[26]

Finally, Luther counseled praying for God's help in obeying this commandment, joining others in dealing with those in need with kindness, gentleness, and love, forgiving, bearing with the faults of others patiently, and living together in true peace and harmony.[27]

Luther's Confrontation with Physical Afflictions as Pastor, Son, and Parent

LUTHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE VALUE and wonder of God's gift of life led him to view death as the enemy, the tool of the Enemy, who is the devil himself. Furthermore, illness came from Satan's hand, and God has given not only his consolation but also medical means of combatting disease.[28] Yet Luther always confronted the dying and the grieving with the promise of life everlasting through Christ's resurrection. He brought this consolation to friends, students' families, his own family, and himself. When his close friend and collaborator, the court painter Lukas Cranach, and his wife received news of the death of their son Johannes in distant Bologna, Luther came to their side with the consolation of Christ's triumph over death.[29] A letter to his friend Caspar Müller, chancellor of the county of Mansfeld, who was enduring illness, reflects Luther's own struggle with illness, leaving no doubt that life is precious and every bodily affliction reveals the world's fallenness. He emphasized that Christ had conquered "the world, the devil, sin, death, flesh, sickness, and all evils."[30] Although Urban Rhegius was to realize that in his illness, he was being

"buffeted by a messenger of Satan and suffering from a thorn in the flesh," he could find comfort in God perfecting his strength through this affliction (2 Cor. 12:9).[31] Illness also elicited words of comfort from Luther. In 1519 he placed the "affliction" suffered by Elector Frederick the Wise in Christ's body to be borne also by him.[32] He reached out with concern and support to those suffering "melancholy," the sixteenth-century label for depression.[33] Luther's own description of his approach to visiting the sick demonstrates his recognition of the worth of life and health while also revealing his intent to place all in God's hands.[34] His counsel in the face of the plague and other illnesses demonstrates a trust in God and a firm belief that medical science served as a gift of God, which Christians are bound to use. For with medical science, God contends against dying and for life with common sense and the medical tools produced through rational human investigation.[35]

Luther's prayers for his parents, as they struggled in their last days against illness and approaching death, offered the consolation of Christ's presence and his sharing the evils afflicted upon body and soul that take away the joy of life.[36] The record of his reaction to his father's death, intense weeping, and physical pain,[37] illustrates the deep grief that he also felt at the death of his daughters Elizabeth[38] and Magdalena.[39] He experienced death first-hand and reacted fiercely against all that threatened life.

However, Luther also has a reputation for his harsh criticism of others. His fear of the breakdown of law and order in writing against the "robbing, murderous hordes" of peasants[40] must, however, be set in the context of the more than one hundred—primarily local—peasant revolts that preceded the outbreak of widespread peasant revolt and peasant violence in 1524/1525.[41] Little known is his letter to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz of July 21, 1525, pleading for the release of a young man imprisoned for alleged participation in the revolt. In this letter, he admonished the prince-bishop that "it is not good for a lord to incite his subjects to displeasure, ill will, and hostility, and it is also foolish to do so." Luther conceded that it is proper to be strict when people are seditious or when they become unmanageable and stubborn in the performance of their duties, but once they have been defeated, they are a different people and deserve mercy with punishment. He quoted James 2:13, "mercy rejoices against judgment."[42]

It is also true that he condemned those whom he thought should know better than to deny the core beliefs of Scripture, including followers of the pope, as well as Jews and Muslims. Despite his shameful, inexcusable attacks on Jews at the end of his life, when he heard rumors of active Jewish attempts to convert Christians as the end of time approached, his concern for the conversion of Jewish neighbors continued well beyond his treatise of 1523, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*.[43] He also argued for catechetical training, in part to prepare Christians to witness to Muslims should they fall captive to Turkish invaders.[44]

He did utter denunciations of friends who had turned to false teachings regarding justification, such as his colleague Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. However, not long after their severe rupture over Karlstadt's denial of the true presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, along with his attempts to introduce Old Testament ceremonial laws as necessary for Christians, he was accused of aiding the revolting peasants. First, his family, and then Karlstadt himself, found refuge in Luther's home, where the Luther family hid him in secret since he was *persona non grata* with the Saxon government. Karlstadt renounced his contrary views temporarily, but when he returned to them, the break with Luther was inevitable.[45] Luther also attempted reconciliation many times with his student Johann Agricola, who consistently attacked Luther's fundamental hermeneutical distinction of law and gospel until Agricola finally escaped city arrest and fled Wittenberg for the rest of his and Luther's lives.[46]

On the contrary, Luther did not display the prejudices sometimes held against those from other lands in Europe. His pastoral care for the Croatian-Italian student Matthias Flacius Illyricus turned Flacius into a life-long defender of Luther's teachings, even against German fellow students, who used his Slavic origins to combat Flacius' criticism of their hero, Philip Melanchthon.[47] His relationship with the English found expression in his support of Robert Barnes, whom King Henry VIII burned at the stake,[48] and in his relationship with students from the kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden.[49]

And Luther's Followers in Our Own Time

THESE OPEN ATTITUDES ACROSS TRIBAL DIVIDES have not always been shared by those who claimed Luther's name. Among the forms of animosity that are rising in the midst of the prospering yet deeply dissatisfied populations of Western Europe and North America, drawing even Lutherans into their vortex, is racism in its various forms. Theologians in Germany were drawn to the National Socialist Party as a bulwark against forces undermining Christian values and institutions in the Germany of the 1920s. However, Canadian historian James M. Stayer points out that it was those anchored in the Lutheran confession, for instance, University of Erlangen theologians Werner Elert and Paul Althaus, and not those from the nineteenth-century Liberal tradition, who recognized the danger and discarded their infatuation with Adolf Hitler.[50] Their colleague Hermann Sasse never understood the attraction; he was among the very first voices among German Evangelical theologians to condemn both the racism that attributed superior characteristics to the so-called Aryan race and the racism that bred hatred of the Jews.[51]

Luther recognized that evil lurks behind the closed doors of our homes, even those homes with crosses or pious sayings on their door. We are surprised when a shooting occurs in our neighborhoods or an overdose brings an ambulance to the

house across the street. However, the tensions of modern life foster in all people the fermenting of fears that glide into hatred. Stresses of many kinds stir up resentment that stews inside and turns into physical assaults or more subtle ways of undermining the bodily well-being of others. Finding identity in ancestry or "race" amounts to nothing other than idolatry. Our twenty-first-century Western expectations that life should include freedom for leisure of many kinds and the toys that modern life supplies for our entertainment divert our sensitivity to the needs of others within our reach, a number that has grown larger with modern devices that facilitate global contacts. The expectations of our society, however, arouse the desire to have what others have. At the same time, we ignore the poverty of goods or spirit in those we encounter in our neighborhoods, at work, or even in our own families.

Luther observed in lecturing on 1 John 3:15 in 1527 that those who are envious of others and wish them harm have the scorpion's tail mentioned in Revelation 9:10, with its sting that has the power to hurt others.[52] The assertion that only sticks and stones can harm a person is false. Words can indeed injure us, and so can thoughts, for they bear the poison of the scorpion's sting. Desires to be free of the burden of the needs of those around us sting even when we think we have them in a sheath.

Luther understood that the only way to truly overcome our tendency to turn in on ourselves to protect ourselves by lashing out at others is to find our true security in Christ's words that accept us and his incorporation of us into his family. The restoration of a relationship with our Creator produces the knowledge that frees us from self-concern so that we might risk reconciliation with others. Thus, Luther's logic of life leads his followers to oppose all threats to life, from in the womb to life in the weakness and vulnerability of old age. Luther's logic of life leads those who take his message seriously to condemn and repudiate every attempt to demean and disadvantage others for any reason. Luther's logic of life leads his followers to strive for the welfare of the hungry and thirsty, the imprisoned, the sojourners and refugees, and the broken and desperate. Luther's logic of life delivers the joys of self-sacrifice that Jesus modeled and his disciples displayed as Christ's people reach out to all who need their support.

Robert Kolb *is professor of systematic theology emeritus at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, is co-editor with Timothy J. Wengert of the 2000 translation of* The Book of Concord *and co-editor with Irene Dingel and Lubomír Batka of* The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology *(2014). He has authored several books on Luther and Lutheran teaching, including two appearing in 2024*: Face to Face. Martin Luther's View of Reality *(Fortress Press) and the second edition of* The Christian Faith, a Lutheran Exposition*, co-authored with Theodore J. Hopkins (Concordia Publishing House).*

Notes

1. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973).
2. On the climactic year, see Robert Kolb, "Memoria Melanchthonia 1560. The Public Presentation of Philip Melanchthon at his Death," in *Memoria – theologische Synthese – Autoritätenkonflikt. Die Rezeption Luthers und Melanchthons in der Schülergeneration*, ed. Irene Dingel (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2016), 89-102.
3. Schleupner, *Barsillai octogenarius: Das ist: Von Barsillaj Achtzigjährigem Hochlöblichem Alter Leichpredigt/ Bey Begräbnüß/ des … Alten Vrban Gaubischen/ weyland Buchdruckers zu Eißleben …* (Eisleben, 1616), E2b–E4b.
4. WA 42: 202, 29-35, LW 1: 274.
5. WA 23: 404/405,14.-7, LW 43: 146-147.
6. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, Vol. 1: *His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 295.
7. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*, Vol. 3: *The Preservation of the Church, 1532-1546*, trans. James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1986), 14–15.
8. WA 14:126,18-128,16. Cf. his sermon with similar comments on the verse in a sermon from 1519, WA 2: 167,16-168,9, refashioned in the Winter Postil of 1528, WA 21: 67,16-68,16.
9. WA 42: 87,11-88,14, LW 1:115-116.
10. WA 22: 249, 28-35, *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker (1905-1909; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 3:51.
11. WA 42: 192,14-203,6, LW 1: 259-275.
12. WA 42: 203,7-209,34, LW 1: 275-281.
13. WA 16: 507,22-510,19.
14. WA 30,1: 72,28-75,26, LW 51:152-153.
15. WA 32: 360,23-362:14, LW 21: 74-76.
16. WA 32: 362,15-363,18, LW 21: 76-77.
17. WA 32: 363,19-364,29, LW 21:77-78.
18. WA 6: 265,27-268,7, LW 44:100-103.
19. WA 10,2: 383,1.17, LW 43:19.
20. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, ed. Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014 [henceforth BSELK]), 864, *The Book of Concord*, ed. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000 [henceforth BC]), 352.
21. BSELK 992/993, 25-994/995, 12, BC 410-411.
22. BSELK 994/995, 13-996/997, 21, BC 411-412.
23. BSELK 996/997, 22-998/999, 18, BC 412.
24. BSELK 998/999, 19-1000/1001, 6, BC 412-413.
25. Lattimore, "Hatred as Murder," in *Luther's Large Catechism with Annotations and Contemporary Applications*, ed. John T. Pless and Larry M. Vogel (St Louis: Concordia, 2022), 234-235, citing Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Berlin: 1932-1933*, trans. Isael Best and David Higgins, ed. Larry Rasmussen, in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Works* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 12: 365.

26. WA 38: 368,35-369,28, LW 43: 205.

27. WA 38: 369,28-35, LW 43: 205-206.

28. WA Tischreden 3: 501-503, Nr. 4784; *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, Theodore G. Tappert, ed., (Westminster: Philadelphia, 1955), 46-47.

29. WA Tischreden 4:505-508, Nr. 4787. On Luther and death, see Neil R. Leroux, *Martin Luther as Comforter. Writings on Death* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), and Robert Kolb, *Face to Face. Luther's View of Reality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2024), 63-67.

30. WA Briefe 7: 117-119, Nr. 2147.

31. WA Briefe 7:147-148, Nr. 2167.

32. WA Briefe 6: 104-106, Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 26-28.

33. Stephen Pietsch, *Of Good Comfort. Martin Luther's Letters to the Depressed and their Significance for Pastoral Care Today* (Adelaide: ATF, 2016), and Ute Mennicke-Haustein, *Luthers Trostbriefe* (Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1989).

34. WA Tischreden 2: 356, Nr. 2194b., Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 36-37.

35. Cf his report on the plague of August 19, 1527, in a letter to Georg Spalatin, WA Briefe 6:232-233, Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 228-230, cf. his treatise *Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague*, WA 23: 338-379, LW 43:119-138.

36. WA Briefe 5: 239-241, Nr. 1529; 6: 103-104, Nr. 1820, LW 49: 267-271, 50: 17-21.

37. As the amanuensis Veit Dietrich, who accompanied him to the Fortress Coburg in 1530, related, WA Briefe 5: 379, 16–19; Nr. 1595.

38. WA Briefe 4: 511, Nr. 1303, LW 49: 203.

39. WA Tischreden 5: 189–192, Nr. 5494; WA, TR 5: 186,19–26, Nr. 5490c.

40. WA 18: 357-361. LW 46: 455.

41. Robert Scribner, "The Reformation movements in Germany," in *The New Cambridge Modern History, Volume II, The Reformation 1520-1559*, ed. Geoffrey Elton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 86-87; Tom Scott, *Town, Country, and Regions in Reformation Germany* (Leiden, Brill, 2005), 3-188.

42. WA Briefe 3: 547-548, Nr. 905, Tappert, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 174.-75.

43. *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*, WA 11: 314-336, LW 45: 199-229, LW 45: 200-201, 229; WA 11: 314-336; cf. similar expressions in a sermon of 1524, WA 15: 447,11-22, and a letter of July 9, 1530, WA Briefe 5: 452-1-28, with instructions for the catechetization of a young Jewish woman. See Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther's Last Battles. Politics and Polemics, 1531-1546* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 115-142, and Steven G. Burnett, "What Could Luther Have Known of Judaism," in *Juden, Christen und Muslime im Zeitalter der Reformation*, ed. Matthias Pohlig, 133–146. (Heidelberg: Verein für Reformationsgeschichte, 2020), 133-146.

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47. Oliver K. Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 47-49; Luka Ilić, *Theologian of Sin and Grace. The Process of Radicalization in the Theology of Matthias Flacius Illyricus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck/ Ruprecht, 2014), 61-65; Irene Dingel, "Flacius als Schüler Luthers und Melanchthons," in *Vestigia Pietatis. Studien zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit in Thüringen und Sachsen, Ernst Koch gewidmet*, ed. Gerhard Graf, Hans-Peter Hasse et al. (Leipzig 2000 [Herbergen der Christenheit, Sonderbd. 5]), 77-93.
48. Luther's preface to Barnes' confession of faith demonstrates their relationship, WA 51: 449-451, LW 60: 228-233.
49. Simo Heininen, *Die finnischen Studenten in Wittenberg, 1531-1552* (Helsinki: Oy, 1980).
50. James M. Stayer, *Martin Luther, German Saviour. German Evangelical Theological Factions and the Interpretation of Luther, 1917-1933* (Montreal/ Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 70-95.
51. Sasse, "Die 'Krisis der Religion' und die Verkündigung der Kirche," and "Die Kirche und die politischen Mächte der Zeit," *Kirchliches Jahrbuch für die evangelischen Landeskirchen Deutschlands 1932* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932), 129, 30-113. Although he sharply criticized Sasse for abandoning the effort to compose the Barmen Declaration of 1934, on which he had initially worked, the faithful follower of Karl Barth, Arthur Cochrane, in his *The Church's Confession under Hitler* (2. ed., Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1976), stated "It is to the lasting credit of Prof. Hermann Sasse, of the University of Erlangen, that he was the first to declare that because of this one plank in the Party's program [the embrace of positive and negative racism] the Church could in no way approve of Nazism. It had to be categorically repudiated. The fact that Sasse eventually broke with the Confessing Church in the interest of a narrow Lutheran confessionalism, and thereby greatly weakened the church's opposition to National Socialism, must not obscure the prophetic role he played at the outset," p. 36. On Sasse and his colleagues, see Lowell C. Green, *The Erlangen School of Theology. Its History, Teaching, and Practice* (Fort Wayne: Lutheran Legacy, 2010), 231-309, and Lowell C. Green, *Lutherans Against Hitler. The Untold Story* (St. Louis: Concordia 2007), 325-357.
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Personal Identity, Divine Love, and Extrinsic Individuation

Dennis Bielfeldt

I

Early *Star Trek* episodes featured Scotty beaming Kirk up and down from the surface of the planets around which the Enterprise was orbiting. As a child, I remember thinking Kirk was on the ship, then on the planet, and later back on the ship. Clearly, the transporter was a much better way of getting around than other options!

But one evening, my 14-year-old self experienced disquieting thoughts after watching Kirk dissolve in the transporter room. I had surmised by now that the transporter works by somehow taking an informational picture of Kirk's body, erasing that body in the transporter room, sending the information to the planet's surface, and then reconstituting another body down below according to the informational picture. I vividly remember thinking, "What would happen if the transporter were to *break down*?" What if the machine, after taking the informational picture of Kirk, failed to reconstitute him on the planet's surface? Would Kirk then be *dead*?

But it did not seem quite right to think Kirk dead because, presumably, the machine had stored Kirk's information so he could be reconstituted after the transporter was fixed.[1] How could Kirk be dead now if he could be reconstituted later? Was Kirk somehow still alive because of his information? Moreover, if he were dead now because he was not yet reconstituted, would he not be dead every time he took the transporter, for does it not take *a little* time after dissolution to be reconstituted? What is it to *be dead* in this scenario, a scenario where *some time always elapses* between Kirk's "erasure" on the Enterprise and his reconstitution down below? Does the continuity of Kirk's information mean that, in some sense, Kirk is never really dead?[2]

As I grew older, other thoughts arose when considering Kirk and his transporter. What if another type of malfunction occurred, and Kirk was transported to three places at the same time? Would there now be three Kirks, or would one be more legitimately Kirk than the rest? If so, which one would this be? Would the reconstituted Kirk closest in time to the dissolved Kirk be *more Kirk* than the rest? Or

what if there were one hundred different Kirk bodies reconstituted on one hundred different planets exactly at the same time? Would the Kirk reconstituted closest in space to the original Kirk be more Kirk than the rest? Does it even make sense to talk about *degrees of* Kirk?

Although I did not realize it then, I had stumbled onto the philosophical problem of personal identity. In considering all these Kirks and trying to discern which was *truly* Kirk, I confronted the issue of what makes a person a person, that is, what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a person to be the person that the person is? The question of personhood is a question of *particularity*, for it makes no sense to speak of *general* persons.

Long before *Star Trek* episodes, there were *Bugs Bunny* cartoons. While I don't remember most episodes with clarity, I do remember one where Bugs Bunny and Yosemite Sam changed bodies. Somehow, the cartoon made it clear that Yosemite Sam's body was inhabited by Bugs Bunny, and Bugs Bunny's body was where Yosemite Sam was now. Of course, it never occurred to me then to ask explicitly whether what made Bugs Bunny "Bugs Bunny" was Bug's Bunny's *body*. Yet I knew how Bugs *behaved*, and some of those behaviors were now exhibited by Yosemite Sam's body, thus displaying lucidly (to me then) that Bugs was now present in Sam. Bug's voice and mannerisms told me that Bugs Bunny could occupy the body of Yosemite Sam and remain Bugs Bunny.[3]

I don't remember if Bugs ever *forgot* he was Bugs Bunny when inhabiting Yosemite Sam, but I do remember thinking what it would have been like to be Bugs when he was inhabiting Sam and thinking that it was surely possible that Bugs *could forget* who he was. Being Bugs without Bugs' body was easily conceivable because I could clearly see Bugs in Yosemite Sam's body, but now a new question had emerged: Could Bugs simply forget he was Bugs and start to act like Yosemite Sam? Moreover, could Bugs forget altogether about his experience of being in Sam's body? It would be one thing for Bugs to lose his body and another thing to lose his *mind*. For my eight-year-old self, such things were clearly *conceivable*.

II

I DID NOT KNOW THEN THAT the *Star Trek* and *Bugs Bunny* shows were teaching me the philosophical problem of *personal identity*: What is it that makes a single person the selfsame person he or she is? How is it that a person at one time is the same individual as that person at another time? This question connects to the ancient problem of change: What is it that is constant during the process of change? How can we say that something changes? After all, if it changes, it is not the same thing; if it is the same thing, it does not really change. If there is change, how does not everything

change? Moreover, if not everything changes, how does some *this* remain that does not change when there is nonetheless a change in everything with respect to the *this*?

The grammar of our language clearly suggests that not everything can change. In fact, if everything were to change, as the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus suggested, then there would not be anything at all constant with respect to which one could say "that has changed."[4]

Aristotle famously claimed that primary substances remain even though there are changes to these substances. He theorized that primary substances change with respect to the accidents they can assume. Accidents were *present in* or *inhered in* a particular thing. For Aristotle, the very same particular thing can change with respect to its quantity, quality, relative (relation), *habitus* (state), time, location, situation (position), action, and affection (passion). It's the *very same* auto whether it was *here* or *there*, whether it was owned by *Bob* or *Frank*, or whether it hit *this* car or *that* one.[5]

But now the question: what is it about a primary substance that makes it *this* primary substance and not *another*? What are the features of a thing by virtue of which that thing is the thing it is and are accordingly *constant* no matter what accidents it might have? Aristotle claimed that what can be *said of* the substance pertains to those features, while what is *present in* the substance concerns the accidents. The later philosophical tradition regularly used the term *essence* to refer to those features of a thing that re-identify it across different occasions or situations wherein different accidents are present.[6]

Now, the problem of personal identity is the problem of change as it relates to the person. What are those features that make a person a particular person in distinction from those properties that the person might (or might not) exhibit? We call those features that must be present for the person to be the person the *necessary* features or properties of the person, and those properties that the person can either exhibit or not exhibit the *contingent* features or properties of the person. Now the question arises fully: What properties are *constitutive* of personal identity, i.e., what are the *necessary* and *sufficient* features of Bob by virtue of which Bob is Bob? Or one might even say, what is Bob's *essence* on the basis of which he is identical to himself?[7]

The problem of personal identity is a species of the problem of change, and the problem of change is related to the use of *subjunctive* or *counterfactual* conditionals. Let us examine the logic of these interrogatives:

(1) What if Russia were to win the war with Ukraine?
(2) What if Germany were to have won World War II?

Although Russia has not yet won nor lost the war with Ukraine, we regularly think about what *might* happen if it did or did not. After all, Russia c*ould win* this war. Accordingly, (1) with its "were to win the war," expresses a subjunctive situation

that has not yet happened. (2) expresses, however, a counterfactual situation, for although Germany lost the war, we can ask what would happen "were Germany to have won" it. Consider the following:

(3) If Russia were to win the war, Ukrainian industry would be devastated.
(4) If Germany were to have won World War II, German would now be the official language of commerce.

Both express hypotheticals. In (3), the future has not happened, but in a future where Russia wins the war, then Ukraine's industry would be devastated. We might, for starters, symbolize this as "R → U," with R meaning "Russia wins" and U signifying "Ukraine's industry is devastated." Notice that (2) is symbolized the same way, with W meaning "Germany wins World War II" and S signifying "German is the official language of commerce." The counterfactual conditional "W → S" has the same logical form as the subjunctive conditional "R → U." Both are if-then statements, where the antecedent (the "if part" of the statement) is assumed to obtain for the sake of the conditional, though it in fact does not. (In the subjunctive, the antecedent has not happened but still could, and in the counterfactual, the antecedent states what did not happen but could have). The "then part" of the statement is the conditional's consequent that declares what is the case were the antecedent to have occurred.[8] So far, so good. Now consider the following:

(5) If Frank wins the lottery, Frank will buy Mary a ring.
(6) If Bob were older, he would not have hit Fred.

(5) expresses a subjunctive conditional, but we can now be more granular in our symbolization than merely "F → M." The antecedent asserts "Frank wins the lottery," while the consequent declares "Frank buys Mary a ring." Now allow "f" to refer to Frank, "m" to Mary, "Lx" to "x wins the lottery," and "Bxy" to "*x* buys *y* a ring." Symbolizing we have "Wf → Bfm." The subjunctive conditional states that if Frank wins, then Frank buys Mary a ring. What is constant across the conditional is Frank. The "f" in the antecedent must refer to the same individual as the "f" in the consequent. Frank must be the *same* guy whether he wins the lottery or whether he buys a ring for Mary or not. The personal identity of Frank does not change across the antecedent and consequent of a subjunctive conditional.

The same is obviously the case in (6). If Bob had been older (which he is not), he would not have hit Fred (which, apparently, he did). Symbolizing, we have "Ob → ~Hbf" where "O" to "is older," and "Hxy" to "*x* hits *y*." Again, the personal identity of Bob must be constant across the antecedent and consequent of the conditional.[9]

But what is it that makes Frank, Frank, and Bob, Bob? Why can we use the same constant "f" in (5) to refer to Frank in the antecedent and consequent and 'b' in (6) to refer both in the antecedent and consequent to Bob?

This question really seems to matter to us. Why is this? Sydney Shoemaker writes:

> Central to virtually every person's concerns is the desire to continue in existence with a life worth living. In some important sense, survival of persons "matters," especially to the persons themselves. And survival seems to involve identity. Locke remarked that "person" is a "forensic" term, because of the tie between personal identity and such matters as responsibility and compensation; and clearly the fact that the person held responsible for an action should be the person who did the action, and the person compensated for a wrong should be the person who suffered from it, is intimately related to the fact that people care about their own futures in the way they do.[10]

If Bob hits Fred, and Fred seeks revenge, he wants his revenge to apply to the one who hit him, i.e., to Bob. He is likely not going to be satisfied if he hits a likeness of Bob or somebody similar to Bob. In fact, if Fred were to hit *that* person, he will have committed an unprovoked attack on *somebody else.* Not only will Fred have failed to "right his wrong" with Bob, but he now has also established a new situation where another has a ground to right his wrong against him.

Establishing personal identity is important in any kind of moral or legal judgment. When assigning punishments for deeds done, it is necessary to show that the guy really did it. Juries are often told that the person on the video doing the crime is the selfsame defendant they see before them. Moreover, the defendant is *sane*; the body they see before them, which is the body on the tape committing the crime, has the *same mind* now as he did when committing the crime. Consequently, two criteria for personal identity have been commonly used throughout the philosophical tradition: those of *bodily* and *psychological* continuity. The *body* view claims that an individual is identified by his or her physical body; the *psychological* or *personality* view argues that an individual is identified by his or her beliefs, desires, memories, dispositions, aims, etc.

The physical or body view has been ascribed to Aristotle but has many contemporary defenders.[11] Sometimes, a distinction is made between identifying the person with the whole body or simply with the brain.[12]

Both are *prima facie* plausible, but they both deny the intuitions that I (and many others) surely have had, for it seems to make sense that "I could have had a different body than the one I have, or I could have had a different brain." After all, I can imagine having a body that runs faster or jumps higher or a different brain with different synapses and neural flow.[13]

III

Imagine that your friend Lewis told you on Thursday that he was going on a business trip for two weeks beginning the next day. Imagine your surprise on Saturday night

when you see Lewis eating with his wife Monica at Ted's Steakhouse! You go to the table, and Lewis stands up. Monica looks adoringly at her husband as he speaks clearly to you in the deep, resonant voice you always associate with Lewis. You, however, know that this can't be Lewis because Lewis said he was out of town for the next two weeks. Thus, you chide Monica for being out with another man while her husband is away. "How could you do this, Monica? Not only are you apparently cheating on Lewis, but the guy you are cheating with is indistinguishable from your husband. I am going to call Lewis and tell him what his wife has been up to!"

Monica looks at you with astonishment, "This *is* Lewis." But you say, "No, I talked to Lewis, and he assured me he would be out of town." Monica persists, "This is Lewis, the same guy you talked to yesterday." You ask, "Why should I believe that, Monica? How convenient to cheat with somebody indistinguishable from your husband. You think that nobody will know." Monica retorts, "I can prove this is Lewis! I was with him since he left you, and there is no way a look-alike has shown up to take his place." Momentarily disarmed by this, you ask Monica for more explanation.

"OK," she says, "You agree that this body looks like that of Lewis's, right?"

"Exactly the same," you reply, "but I trust Lewis and thus know that this is not Lewis, though his body looks like Lewis' body."

"It is the same body," Monica retorts, "because this body is *continuous* with Lewis'."

"How do you know that?" you counter.

Monica says, "I was with Lewis yesterday, though you did not see me. I watched Lewis talk to you and then walk towards me after talking with you. I then was with him continuously through the night and until this very time. Imagine t_1 is the time yesterday you and Lewis spoke, and the time today is t_n. I can verify that for all times t_i where i varies from 1 to n that I was in some causal contact with Lewis. I either saw him, touched him, smelled him, heard him, etc. There simply was no time for some other body that looks like Lewis to have been substituted for Lewis."

You are still not very impressed by the argument because you are certain that Lewis is out of town. "Well, I don't know about that, Monica; it seems to me perfectly conceivable that this Lewis look-alike showed up when you weren't looking closely enough or maybe even became an instant Lewis *Ersatz* when you were looking. I don't know the exact mechanism by which this happened, but I trust Lewis and know that this must have occurred." You remain convinced that Lewis is out of town, even if this seems to be Lewis's particular body, the very same body that talked with you yesterday was with Monica overnight and stands before you now.

In this argument, it appears that Monica's position is quite plausible. Lewis is identified by his *body*. It is very odd to claim that somebody else has a qualitatively

indiscernible body to Lewis, has the same causal relations with its environment, but is somehow *not* Lewis. Yet, Monica has not dispelled your doubt because it is *conceivable* that this body before you is not the body of Lewis.

Perhaps your perplexity is due to early imprinting from philosophically suspect Bugs Bunny cartoons. Just as it was conceivable to you that Bugs Bunny really existed in the body of Yosemite Sam, so it is conceivable that Lewis really is not in this Lewis-looking body. Scurrying away from Monica and her putative Lewis, you reach your study and pull down the old modal logic book that Willard Van Orman Quine taught you to distrust. Letting "Lx" be "x has a Lewis body," "l" be Lewis, and remembering that ◇ means possibility and □ necessity, you write:

(7) $Ll \,\&\, \Diamond \sim Ll$.

This says that it is the case that Lewis has a Lewis body, and it is possible that it is not the case that Lewis has a Lewis body. But that does not seem to express it clearly enough, for you want to affirm that there is an existing entity that is Lewis and he possibly does not have a Lewis body. So, employing an existential quantifier and equality sign, you write:

(8) $\exists x[(x = l) \,\&\, (Lx \,\&\, \Diamond \sim Lx)]$

Now you are declaring that there is something that is Lewis, and while it is the case that this Lewis has a Lewis body, it is possible that this Lewis might not have had that body. It is, thus, a contingent matter whether Lewis has a Lewis body or not. Just like Bugs, Lewis can be Lewis without his body. Having been convinced of Kripke's possible world semantics over Hintikka's talk of models, you say, *while it is the case that Lewis has a Lewis body in this world, there is at least one possible world in which Lewis does not have a Lewis body.*[14] Since you can conceive Lewis not having a Lewis body in a possible world, *having a Lewis body* is not a Lewis-making characteristic of Lewis. I can project Lewis into subjunctive and counterfactual situations where Lewis is Lewis but does not have a Lewis body. Because this is conceivable – or *seems* conceivable – Lewis is not his body as (8) clearly states.[15]

Thinking about the logical form of the contingency of the body to Lewis, one naturally begins reflecting on the analogous issue of Bugs forgetting that he is Bugs. You ask yourself, "If Lewis is not re-identified across possible worlds based on his body, maybe he is so identified because of his mind. If physical continuity fails to keep Lewis *Lewis* in every possible world, perhaps psychological continuity cannot accomplish it either. After all, is it not conceivable that I might lose my memory and really act wholly differently than I have previously thought and acted?

Think of the harrowing effects of dementia or other brain diseases. Alzheimer's patients forget their own children or even their own spouses, and people with brain

tumors often act and think quite differently than they once did. So, we ask ourselves: Is it conceivable that you can be you without having the thoughts you once had? Could you not forget everything that you once knew, act quite differently than before, and still be you? Simply put, is it not possible for you to be you without psychological continuity?

The situation seems analogous to that of the body. Clearly, I can conceive of myself – or seem to be able to conceive myself – not having the psychological states and dispositions that I have had. In other words, it seems I can project myself into the counterfactual situation of not having my own mental states. Thinking about Lewis, one might write as follows: "Mx means x has the mind of Lewis."

(9) $\exists x [(X = l) \& (Mx \& \Diamond \sim Mx)]$

(9) claims that having the mind of Lewis is not a Lewis-making property and, accordingly, that *something else* identifies Lewis across possible worlds other than psychological continuity. Maybe, just as Lewis could have a different body and still be Lewis, he could have a different mental history and still be Lewis. Accordingly, neither our bodies nor our minds are sufficient to identify us across possible worlds. Maybe, in fact, having this body and this mental history is a *contingent* matter, and *something deeper than my body or my mental states constitutes my person.*

IV

So, what remains? What about souls? Are we not ultimately souls that *have* bodies and minds? After all, reincarnation teaches that something exists that has this body and thoughts in this life and another body and different thoughts in another life. Unfortunately, this traditional answer to the problem of identity brings with it some very deep problems.

Imagine Bill and John at a cocktail party discussing the criterion of personal identity. Bill knows that persons can't be re-identified by their bodies because it is logically possible to have a different body, or perhaps no body at all. Bill is a Christian who learned that upon death, one either exists felicitously in heaven or perhaps horribly in hell, and thus, he has never thought that his body determines his identity.

Bill believes that disembodied existence is possible and realizes that making one's body the criterion of one's personal identity makes the following subjunctive conditional unsatisfiable, "If I were to die, I would enjoy the beatific vision with God." Since bodily criteria must re-identify persons across possible worlds, one cannot connect the "I" of the antecedent to the "I" of the consequent. Bill knows that identifying personhood with the body means that there is no reason to think that the one surviving death is the same person as the one living. Consequently, Bill

claims that the criterion of identity must be the *soul*, and it is logically possible for souls to have different bodies and mental histories than they have.

John points out to Bill that religious teachings are quite uneven in their views of what people in this life take to the next life. Reincarnation teaches, in general, that either there is no bodily or psychological continuity between what persons take in this life to the next, or if there is some mental continuity, it is deeply occluded. Documented cases of people remembering past lives are available, but it is notable that most of those accounts do not support direct psychological continuity. John is convinced that there is not much evidence that the person remembering has *psychological continuity* with a person who once lived.

Moreover, trying to make psychological continuity connect pre-mortem and post-mortem life seems a misguided effort when psychological continuity clearly fails to re-identify individuals in this life. Lisa was in a car accident and has amnesia, and recognizes nobody she knew before. She has no memories of pre-amnesia existence. However, her husband, James, has no trouble recognizing that it is Lisa because the person who does not know him looks exactly like Lisa, and he can, in principle, trace the physical continuity of Lisa's body over time.

Knowing that neither the physical qua physical nor the mental qua mental can work to individuate Lisa, Bill and John finally agree that only the ancient view of an immaterial soul can provide the continuity of personal identity. Lisa's soul could presumably have *both* a different body and a different psychology. Accordingly, the individuality of a person is best explained by pointing to individual souls, to which bodies and psychological characteristics are merely *accidental*.

Unfortunately, neither John nor Bill has thought deeply enough about what individuates souls. What is it about an immaterial Lisa soul that re-identifies her across possible worlds? What are the properties of Lisa's soul by virtue of which she is Lisa and not Molly, and what are the properties of Molly's soul by virtue of which she is Molly and not Lisa? If immaterial souls individuate persons, what are the essential features of Molly and Lisa's immaterial souls that differentiate the one from the other?

This is a very thorny question that relates to part of *Leibniz's Law*, e.g., the identity of indiscernibles. Try making a list of the properties of Lisa's soul, e.g., immateriality, simplicity, eternality, etc. Notice that these look like the very same set of properties that Mary's soul would have. Now consider the identity of indiscernibles expressed as follows, where x and y range over all individuals and P over all properties.

(10) $\forall x \forall y \forall P[(Px \leftrightarrow Py) \rightarrow (x = y)]$

For any individuals (like the souls of Molly and Lisa), if the individuals have the same set of properties (Lisa's soul has the same characteristics as Molly's soul), then

the individuals turn out to be the *same individual*. While this is the case for Lisa and Molly, *a fortiori* it applies to any putative individual soul whatsoever. Applying (10) to individual souls, we discover that all putative individual souls are the same soul! This is clearly not the result that Bill had hoped for when convincing John that personhood might be grounded in a personal soul.

But there are other problems. Following Jacob Berger, consider the soul theory to be this:

> Person P_1 at time T_1 is numerically identical to person P_2 at a later time T_2 if and only if there is a chain of overlapping soul-continuity linking P_1 and P_2 – that is, P_1 and P_2 have the same soul.[16]

Berger argues persuasively that "either (a) souls, like physical bodies, change over time, in which case the soul theory faces an analogue problem of diachronic *soul* identity, or (b) souls, like physical bodies, do not change over time, in which case the soul theory faces a related problem insofar as it cannot explain why souls inhere in particular bodies – and so the soul theory at best only partially explains personal identity."[17] The problem for (a) is that no criterion for the identity of immaterial souls has ever been successfully given. So let us just *assert* there is some *haecceity* by virtue of which this immaterial soul is this immaterial soul and not another.[18] But this strategy to secure (a) ultimately exposes (b) to a profound difficulty: There seems now to be a wholly arbitrary connection between a particular soul and a particular body. Kim has called this "the pairing problem," a problem that is entirely *inexplicable*.[19]

In summary, appealing to individual souls for the criterion of personal identity is deeply problematic if one wants to specify actual individual-making properties. One can assert a *haecceity* about which one can "know not what," but in so doing one explains personal identity by features that are inaccessible and not specifiable, and one must, in addition, simply countenance a profound inexplicability with regard to the connection between a soul and any particular body or psychological state that the soul has.

So, we find ourselves back at the beginning. We have the counterfactual statements, "I could have had a different body than I have" and "I might have had different memories and experiences than I do." Searching for something deeper than physical or psychological continuity to ground these conditionals, we alight upon a personal soul more fundamental than either the body or the mind. However, in thinking about this we run into the difficulties just sketched.

We either can specify some properties of these souls or not. If we can, then since soul characteristics are constant across souls, *there is only one soul* that finds itself identifying with various bodies and having differing mental characteristics. If we

cannot specify such properties and are left with a mere *haecceity* that identifies souls, then we make inexplicable any relation between the soul and a particular body or mental history and run the risk of explaining the obscure by the more obscure. Since this result is not tolerable, and the problem of identifying the person with a body or a particular set of mental experiences and memories is profound, we conclude that the problem of personal identity is intractable.[20]

V

Patricia is pregnant, unmarried, and considering terminating her pregnancy. She talks to a pregnancy counselor who tells her that her 12-week fetus is already a *person*, and that killing terminates the life of that person. Patricia has studied some philosophy and knows that the fetus likely does not have continuity of memory or experience and that while the fetus' body does show some continuity, she remembers that her philosophy professor told her that bodily criteria cannot ultimately individuate persons. She also recalls him saying that recourse to a personal self-individuating soul in the absence of how to *specify* the soul's individuality is merely question-begging. Patricia thus eyes the counselor and delivers the message: "Since we have inadequate criteria upon which to establish personhood, the fetus simply cannot be regarded as a person, and thus the rights that persons are thought to have cannot be extended to the fetus." The counselor looks at the young woman sadly and simply says, "But God loves His children, so think deeply before you do this!" Patricia's walk home from the pregnancy center was not easy because she was bothered by what the woman had told her, even though she was not sure why. Somehow, it seemed simpler in the classroom.

Patricia has a decision to make, as do all of us who must deal generally with persons. Even though we do not often think explicitly about it, our moral and ethical reasoning, our very notion of justice, seems to demand that we know what a person *is*. Are we really *one* person, or might we be *many*? After all, if persons are individuated either by bodily or mental properties, and these properties change, then arguably, so does the person having the body or the mental states. Perhaps we are many persons bundled in particular ways?[21] Since our moral judgments seem to be about persons, a problem with the identity of personhood threatens our very notion of moral *agency*. If I am not the same person that committed the crime, why must I be punished?

Patricia's thoughts of personhood regarding the life inside her increased her distress in the long evening that followed and into the next days. Her mom and dad had taken her to church when young, and although she had subsequently learned to see the world without the illusion of God, old thoughts returned, stubbornly per-

sisting in her reflections on personhood over the next few days. She started to think about how the problem of personal identity connects to the claims of the pastor that Jesus was resurrected after three days, and that He is the "first fruits" of a general resurrection (I Cor. 15:20).

There is something deeply troubling about this, thought Patricia. The term "resurrection" means that a *body* "rises" from the dead. She remembered her pastor said that the resurrection was not simply a claim about incorporeal existence, for Hebraic thought assumed that a human being is a body having the breath (*ruach)* of life. Accordingly, the Hebrews affirmed a *somatic* criterion of personal identity and knew that any hope of survival in the future was the hope of *bodily* survival.

Patricia grew troubled by her thoughts. What is that by virtue of which the post-mortem Jesus is the same person as the pre-mortem Jesus? Does scripture not claim that there is a strict identity between the resurrected Jesus and the one carrying his cross at Golgotha. But how is Jesus the same person? She thought this was such a profound problem because the personal identity of Jesus seems to ground the very hope of the resurrection of the Christian. The issue of personal identity exploded upon Patricia and showed itself as directly relevant to all the beliefs she once had, and the beliefs her parents still had. Seemingly the question was at the heart of the very *coherence* of the Easter hope.

Is it logically or metaphysically possible for *me* to be resurrected after death, or can there only be a copy or *replica* of me in post-mortem existence? After all, all accounts allowing persistence of personhood from pre-mortem to post-mortem states are faced with weighty philosophical objections. What is *in* the person, her soul, memories, conscious states or body, that make it the case that she is the *same* person after death as she was before death? Patricia suddenly realized that the problem of personhood ran much deeper than how she chose to regard the little life within her. Easter hope and fetus hope seemed to converge for her. Patricia was distressed because it appeared to her that the way allowing her to not regard her fetus as a person and simultaneously to deny the cogency of her parents' beliefs entailed that *she herself was not a person*. This bothered her far more than she thought it should.

VI

So, is there no way out of the trap that Patricia, and perhaps many of us, find ourselves within? After all, we have found all accounts of personhood deeply suspect. Bob is not strictly identical to his body, to his mental life, or to a soul that can be coherently individuated. There seem to be, in fact, no *intrinsic criteria* that can rightly individuate persons. Are we left then with nothing?

I suggest that while there is no answer to this question, that is, while I admit that there is *nothing* in the person that could make the person the person the person is, both before and after death, individuation is still possible, at least for the Christian. To see this, we must look *away* from ourselves towards that which is *extrinsic* to us.

Individuation is possible because God *remembers* each and every one of us, that is, our individuality is grounded in His divine, eternal memory. The identity conditions of personhood are not found in us. While we possess no property of thisness, we are *graced* from without by that which makes identical our pre- and postmortem existence. It is not a *replica* of me that will be reconstituted; it is no forgery, no counterpart of me living the good life after I toiled in the negations of this life – it is rather me and the fact that it is possible that it is *me* is grounded in the intentionality of God. *It is He who does not forget me.* It is He who pursues me through the thickets of existence, He who attacks and consoles, He who condemns and promises. It is He who has created me and redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature. Because God "stitched me together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 119:13), I know that my Redeemer lives, and in His living, I know that I will live and that nothing will separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:39).

While the annihilated Kirk in the transport tube can have replicas on many planets, the annihilated *me* in the tomb has no replicas. Through God's overflowing and overwhelming love, the new creature I will be is the same "I" as the old creature I was. Through the strange inversion of theology, a criterion of theological identity arises in the destruction of the metaphysical "I." Through God's love, I, who am not who I will be, nevertheless will be the *very same one* who will someday be in the eternal House of our Lord.[22]

What I am suggesting is that personhood, to the extent that it is a clear notion, must be individuated *extrinsically* and not *intrinsically*. Peter is Peter because he is externally *regarded* to be Peter. This extrinsic denomination of Peter as Peter is finally found within the be-ing God *in se*.

Our attempts to define personhood intrinsically have proven to be a dead end, for there are no physical or metaphysical properties a person possesses that can accomplish the requisite individuation. What is needed here is a different type of "Copernican Revolution," one in which the metaphysical presence of self-certainty is overturned in favor of the *gift* of personhood flowing from God to humanity. Peter is Peter because God *regards* Peter so. God thus functions as a type of *ideal agent* that grants personhood, e.g., they are the person that they are because God has loved them into a self-same one. God's loving of Peter in an appropriate Peter-way discriminates Peter from John and Bill whom God loves respectively in a John-way and Bill-way.

What is needed here is an account of divine intentionality in which *the relation of divine loving* is what individuates persons. I think such an account can be given, and turn now to the work of philosopher Robert Koons, in "Divine Persons as Relational Qua-objects" to suggest a trajectory of such an account.[23] In this thought-provoking article, Koons adopts a "strong doctrine of divine simplicity (SDDS)" that assumes the following:

1. God is identical to His nature, which is either a universal or a trope.[24]
2. His internal character is fixed by His nature, so He is not the subject of accidents.
3. God is identical to His one and only action.
4. God has no proper parts.[25]

Koons explains that (1) is consistent either with a realist or nominalist constituent ontology,[26] and accordingly, that a Thomistic moderate realism with its concomitant notion of intentionality is consistent with SDDS. Koons writes:

> ...the mind is able to think about and understand essences of external objects by including essences as immediate proper parts of mental acts. This is in sharp contrast to the *representationalism* that has dominated the theory of intentionality since Ockham. Our mental acts do not include mere representations of the natures of things: instead, they include forms (i.e., individual essences) that actually share those intended natures. The relation between the internal vehicle of intentionality and its external object is either *identity* (the very same universal existing both in the mind and the things that exemplify them) or *conspecificity* (the individual essences contained by the mind are conspecific with the individual essences of external things).[27]

Accordingly, Koons argues that the divine nature is an *intentional relation*, that it is perfect knowledge and love, and that these are the same relation in God.[28] He provides an example of an intentional relationship for human beings in thinking about trees. When S thinks about trees, S intends an intelligible species of tree-kind, such that "the tree-ish intelligible species in the human act is of the very same kind as the natures of individual trees in the world."[29] However, S does not intend a substantial tree, because such a tree is a combination of a tree-nature and an appropriate individuator.[30]

It is important to understanding intentionality in human beings to grasp it in God, Koons believes. A human being is composed of a nature, an individuator (matter), and a mental action, where the mental action in itself is comprised of an accidental nature or essence and an internal *vehicle of intentionality*.[31] This vehicle of intentionality is itself constituted by an internal relation between the human being and the object she *understands*.[32] This object does not, however, need to be external

to S. S can intend her own nature. Accordingly, the vehicle of intentionality is now the internal relation between S and S's own nature.[33]

But this intentionality of S back upon S's nature can become *reflexive*, because it is the nature of S to intend intentionally that which intends.[34] Accordingly, Koons points out, the vehicle of intentionality falls away, since S's own nature acts "both as the vehicle and the object of the intentional relation," such that "the distinctions between the act of understanding, its essence, its object, and its internal vehicle of intentionality have all collapsed into a single entity."[35] Accordingly, the mental act is its essence, and this "essence is both the internal vehicle of intentionality and the ultimate object of understanding."[36]

Koons next considers relevant beings on the great chain of being. Take angels, for instance. An angel is not identical to its act of self-understanding; rather, an angel's self-understanding is accidental to the angel's nature. This differs from divine self-understanding, for here "there is no distinct vehicle of intentionality that could be distinguished from God's own nature by virtue of its location within the distinct act of understanding."[37] God knows, in that, "the divine nature stands in the divine-nature relation to the divine nature itself."[38] Accordingly, the divine nature is the relator, relation, and relatee, and thus, God "understands all things through understanding Himself."[39]

Koons employs suitably understood *qua*-objects to individuate persons of the Trinity without making the divine persons distinct from the divine nature, or without making the divine nature simply predicable of the persons. Accordingly, the Father is God *qua* knower of God, the Son is God *qua* known by God, and the Spirit is God *qua* both knower of God *and* known by God. He claims that the persons are *numerically*, but not *really* distinct from the divine nature. However, "the distinction between the three Persons is real and intrinsic to the divine nature."[40]

What is important for our purposes is Koons's use of divine simplicity to identify divine knowledge and divine love, and his making of the traditional move to individuate divine Persons through love.[41] Koons claims that the "relationship of love metaphysically entails the numerical distinctness of the three divine persons and thereby ... also entails their real distinctness."[42]

Koons is very interested in *hypostatic qua-objects*, that is, *qua*-objects founded on God meeting these conditions:

- Like God, it [the qua object] is a necessary being.
- It is not strictly identical to God simpliciter.
- It is not wholly grounded in a logical or conceptual way on any other divine qua-object, so it must be fully determinate in its definition.[43]

Hence, because there are only two intrinsic, relational properties of God – knowing (or loving) and being known (or being loved), and because logically these three can produce only three non-disjunctive combinations, there are exactly three hypostatic qua-objects (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).[44] Just as knowing is distinct from being known, so is loving distinct from being loved. Knowing God and being known by God are not extensionally equivalent and the relationship of knowing is not symmetrical, for "even from God's perspective God *qua* knower of God and God *qua* known by God are distinct *qua*-entities."[45] Thus, there are three persons, yet what is true of any of the three Persons is also true of the divine nature.

Now assume the divine nature loves its own nature and is loved by that nature, and that there are these qua-objects: God loves *qua* lover, God loves *qua* loved, God loves *qua* lover and being loved. Let's symbolize these as L_1g = God loves as lover, L_2g = God loves as loved, and L_3g = God loves as lover and loved. Combing those possibilities, we have this:

$(L_1g \,\&\, L_2g) \vee (L_1g \,\&\, L_3g) \vee (L_2g \,\&\, L_3g) \vee (L_2g \,\&\, L_1g) \vee (L_3g \,\&\, L_1g) \vee (L_3g \,\&\, L_2g)$

These are the relations of loving made possible by the three Persons, L_1g = Father, L_2g = Son, and L_3g = Holy Spirit. Clearly, here the act of loving (coextensive with the act of knowing) *individuates* the divine Persons. Without love, the divine nature would not be actualized as that nature having persons. Thus, loving produces persons!

Let us return now to the idea that God knows and loves the world through knowing and loving Himself. We must distinguish intrinsic or *hypostatic qua*-objects in God, from any extrinsic *qua* objects for God. While the former are necessary, the latter are merely contingent.[46] God might have distributed his love in the world differently than God did or known different things than He did. However, this contingency, I would argue, is a contingency in God and not due to the world.

God loves through Himself the world in all of its particularity. If divine love individuates the persons of the Trinity, then can it not also individuate persons in general? While God's loving of Himself producing the three Persons is intrinsic to God's nature, God's loving of the world produces persons extrinsic to his Nature, persons whom by His nature He loves and knows. God *is* Himself – that is, God knows Himself or loves Himself – when God loves and knows persons. I am suggesting here that we might regard the external contingent persons He loves as intrinsic to the divine nature! Just as God understands all things through understanding Himself, God loves all things through loving Himself. Just as the divine Persons are individuated by divine love, so are all other individuals so individuated.[47]

If my argument for the bankruptcy of intrinsic individuation for personhood has been successful and my pleas for the importance of personhood heard, then mov-

ing to individuate persons extrinsically is not as crazy as it might sound. In fact, if one is a *theist* believing that God exists apart from human awareness, perception, conception, and language, then it is *reasonable* to attempt to ground personhood *extrinsically*. I think one could extend Koons's account of love individuating divine persons to love individuating persons in general.[48]

Why is this? For Christians, God *cares* for His people; He *loves* them. Caring and loving are clearly intentional relations. To claim that "God is love" (I John 4:16) is to claim *inter alia*, that God's very Being is constituted by a primal intentionality towards creation. If there are no intrinsic accounts of personhood that individuate persons across times and worlds, and if God exists and is intentionally related to the world, then if we are going to be able to defend an account of personhood at all, we must attempt to offer an extrinsic account grounded upon divine intentionality and love.

But what ramifications does this have for issues of life? After all, life comes in "bundles." Individual organisms are individuated mostly by their functionality. We have seen that human beings cannot be so individuated and that *divine regard* is needed to keep Bill and John from being the same subject. Notice that the importance of divine regard for personhood generally has a profound effect on the question that Patricia is facing. If it is God's intentionality that individuates Bill from John, then that same intentionality reasonably individuates Patricia's fetus from her, other fetuses, and *all people in general*. God's love of each of us individually establishes the person that is loved in God's eyes and, finally, in the eyes of each of us.

VII

All that I have said is, I think, consistent with the classical theological tradition. There are three persons in one Godhead, and there are two natures in one person of Christ. In traditional Trinitarian thinking, relations *inside the Trinity* determine the persons of the Trinity, i.e., the Father begets the Son and spirates the Spirit, the Son is begotten of the Father and spirates the Spirit, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The persons of God are the direct result of God's intentionality, God's activity. It is the second person of the Trinity, already individuated through God's divine activity, who assumes flesh, who takes on a human nature that joins with the divine agency in a union that is never relinquished.

The Trinitarian God is a God of persons; God acts personally and internally within Himself, and personally and externally with respect of everything He creates. God's individuation into persons grounds the individuation he grants to creation through his personal love. Divine love drives the Father to beget and to spirate. There is a unity of love between the divine persons loving and being loved.

In the same way that creation itself is a manifestation of God's love, so, too, those coming into creation are loved into existence by God. *What I am suggesting is that God's creative love brings individuality into being, an individuality that can sometimes be understood intrinsically but whose ontology is profoundly extrinsic.* All this very much affects Patricia's decision.

But what of the *imago Dei*? Does not the notion of an *image of God* entail some intrinsic criteria? If Frank is made in the image of God, then it seems that there must be intrinsic characteristics of Frank, intrinsic characteristics of God, and some relation of *image* connecting the *relata* of Frank and God. We might say this:

(11) Frank is in the image of God if and only if [(Pf & Qg) &**S**PQ]

(11) states that Frank is in the image of God when he has a set of properties (P) "sufficiently similar" (S) to some properties of God (Q). (This is a second-order formula relating properties, not individuals.) If being in the image of God entails intrinsic criteria, and no account of personhood can proceed without intrinsic criteria, then it seems that the *imago Dei* cannot obtain on the extrinsic account of personhood I am suggesting.

But being made in the image of God does not need to individuate persons in this way. God's love individuates persons, and the persons so individuated have certain general properties whose presence makes the persons so individuated to be made in the image of God. What might these general properties be?

Daniel Dennett's article, "Conditions of Personhood," lists six constitutive conditions on the personhood of *x*. Accordingly, *x*

- has rationality,
- possesses intentionality,
- receives a particular stance from others,
- must be capable of reciprocating the stance others assume towards it,
- can verbally communicate,
- is conscious in a particular way.[49]

While to be made in the image of God is to possess these constitutive conditions of personhood, these general conditions do not an individual person make. It is one thing for something possessing these six characteristics not to obtain, it is quite another for the *particular individual* that happens to possess these six characteristics not to exist. While denying being to one who possesses properties of being made in the image of God is a thing not to take lightly, denying the existence of the individual itself is of another order entirely, *particularly if that individual's individuality is due to the love of God Himself!*

I have argued that Patricia's decision to terminate her pregnancy depends upon the principle of individuation: What is that by virtue of which an individual is the individual it is? If she cannot defend an intrinsic principle of individuation and yet believes that there are such things as persons, it is reasonable for her to explore an extrinsic account of personhood. But just as Patricia is Patricia because God's creative love determines her to be Patricia, God Himself individuates Lisa, Mary, Peter, Bill, John, and all people. This entails that God individuates the one who lives inside her now and will grow through birth and all of life's stages into His child. If it is divine love that knits us into persons, and it is persons with whom we must deal morally, then choosing to terminate a person intended by God is a very grave matter indeed. Hopefully, Patricia can leave her college philosophy class behind and seriously consider the argument before her. I would suggest that it is in her best interest to do so.

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Notes

1. Although I never thought it explicitly, I was assuming what philosophers now call *global supervenience*, that two Kirk brains, one in the transporter tube on the Enterprise and another down below on the surface planet, if they are *molecule-by-molecule replicas*, would necessarily have the same mental states. Simply put, the mental life of Kirk depends asymmetrically upon his neurophysiological constitution. Only in this way, would physical reconstitution bring with it the requisite mental reconstitution needed for identity. For more on global supervenience see, Gregory Currie, "Individualism and Global Supervenience," *British Journal of the Philosophy of Science* 35 (1984): 345-58, Jaegwon Kim, *Supervenience and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Dennis Bielfeldt, "The Perils and Promise of Supervenience for Theology, in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, eds. Niels Gregerson, Willem Drees and Ulf Görman (Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 2000), 117-52.
2. The question pertains to the relationship between information and life. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the demiurge takes information from the world of forms and crafts a world in conformity with it. Clearly, agency is needed to actualize information of the forms into a world of becoming. See *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters,* eds. Huntington Cairns & Edith Hamilton (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1963), 1151-1211. Assuming the Demiurge is a living being, Plato might thus be comfortable with

this definition of information: *Some pattern or organization of matter and energy that has been given meaning by a living being*. See Marcia Bates, "Information and Knowledge: An Evolutionary Framework for Information Science," *Information Research* 10, no. 4 (July 2005). URL = https://informationr.net/ir/10-4/paper239.html. Accessed May 12, 2024. For a solid introduction to the Timaeus, see Donald Zeyl and Barbara Sattler, "Plato's *Timaeus*," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2023 Edition), eds. Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman. Last modified Fall 2023. URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/plato-timaeus/.

3. I did not realize either that I was tacitly assuming a behaviorist criterion of personhood. Yosemite's body acting like Bugs Bunny simply was Bugs Bunny for me. I suspect that if challenged, I would have said then that Bugs' *soul* caused Yosemite's body to act, so Bugs person was not reducible to bodily behavior.

4. Heraclitus is a Greek philosopher of Ephesus who taught around 500 BC. He was famous for teaching *inter alia* that all things are constantly changing. See Daniel W. Graham, "Heraclitus," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman, eds. Last Modified December 8, 2023. URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/heraclitus/ Accessed May 10, 2024.

5. See Aristotle's *Categories* in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York, Random House, 1941), 7-39.

6. It is generally agreed that Aristotle held a view of general or species essences. What is more controversial is that he advocated individual essences. For a defense of Aristotle's embrace of individual essences drawn from his *Metaphysics*, see Charlotte Witt, *Substance and Essence in Aristotle: An Interpretation of Metaphysics VIII – IX* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

7. Following Plantinga, one might claim that E is an *individual essence* of individual x if and only if (i) E is essential to x and (ii) necessarily for all y, y exemplifies E if and only if y = x. For a solid treatment of the issues concerning individual essences see Penelope Mackie, *How Things Might Have Been: Individuals, Kinds and Essential Properties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). URL = https://academic.oup.com/book/36189. Accessed May 11, 2024.

8. There are many logical issues that arise regarding contrary to fact conditionals. Let us again contemplate an antecedent in which Germany won the war W and German is the official language of commerce S. So "W → S." But we know that a material conditional is true if the antecedent is false or the consequent true. Thus, "W → S" is true if Germany did not win the war or German is the official language of commerce. But in thinking through a counterfactual, we seem to want to say the truth of "W → S" is dependent upon W obtaining, and that it is W's *truth* that is important in the truth of "W → S." For a very solid introductory treatment of this issue, see Paul Egré and Hans Rott, "The Logic of Conditionals," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, eds. Last modified July 3, 2021. URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/logic-conditionals/

9. Despite the way I am presenting this, I want to remind the reader that, in my opinion, the material conditional cannot adequately express counterfactual and subjunctive conditionals. Assume that p→q. This is equivalent to ~p v q, so all that "p→q" means is either p does not obtain or q does. Since the antecedent *p* of the subjunctive and counterfactual

does not express what is the case, the entire conditional is true whatever might be the truth of the consequent *q*. But this is not what a counterfactual statement means. Treating all of this in the main body of this article would be tangential to the issue of personal identity.

10. Sydney Shoemaker, "Identity and Identities," *Daedalus* 135, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 40-48. See 44ff.

11. See, for instance, David Shoemaker, *Personal Identity and Ethics: A Brief Introduction* (Peterborough, Ontario, CA; Buffalo, NY: Broadview Press, 2009) or Eric T. Olson, *The Human Animal: Personal Identity without Psychology* (New York, NY; Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997).

12. The literature on the problem of personal identity is enormous. Defendants of the physical view are legion, as well as its attackers. For a very easy introduction to this problem from a theologian, see Joshua Farris, "What's so simple about Personal Identity," *Philosophy Now*—Issue 107. (https://philosophynow.org/issues/107/Whats_So_Simple_About_Personal_Identity). Accessed April 29, 2024. Farris distinguishes the body view, the brain view, memory continuity and character continuity views, the "simple view" advocating a soul, and the "not-so-simple view" which identifies personhood with a particular "first-person perspective." For the latter, see Lynne Rudder Baker, *Naturalism, and the First-Person Perspective* (Oxford, UK; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013). Farris quotes Baker: "A Person is a being with a first-person perspective essentially, who persists as long as her first-person perspective is exemplified." See Baker, *Naturalism, and the First-Person Perspective*, 149.

13. So much here depends upon the phenomenological evidence. It certainly *seems* like I can think of myself having a different body. But one could argue, "yes, you're thinking of having a different body, but the one you think of having a different body is not strictly identical to the one who was thinking originally. David Lewis, in fact, argued that when thinking of oneself having a different body, one is thinking of a *counterpart* of oneself having that body. See Mackie, Penelope and Mark Jago, "Transworld Identity," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2022/entries/identity-transworld/ Accessed May 12, 2024. A forensic account understands personhood in terms of moral conduct and of what is praiseworthy or blameworthy. "Person" thus relates directly to responsibility and accountability. Locke writes: "[person] is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit; and so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of law, happiness and misery. This personality extends itself beyond present existence to what is past, only by consciousness – whereby it becomes concerned and accountable." See *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Book II, Chapter 27.

14. See Saul Kripke, "Semantical Considerations on Modal Logic," *Acta Philosophica Fennica* 16 (1963): 83-93 and "Quantified Modal Logic and Essentialism*," Nous* 51, no. 2 (2017): 221-234, and Jaacko Hintikka, "The Semantics of Modal Notions and the Indeterminacy of Ontology," *Syntheses* 21, nos. 3/4 (1970): 408-424 and *Models for Modalities* (Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Co., 1969).

15. While (7) can be read as *de dicto* modality (the modality attaches to propositions), it is clear that the modality of (8) is *de re*, that is, it attaches to things.

16. See "A Dilemma for the Soul Theory of Personal Identity," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 83 (2018): 41-55, 42. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-016-9594-x .

17. Ibid.

18. Notice that the haecceity must be "deeper" than thoughts that the soul might have. It has to be that which is stable and can accordingly take on or have differing thoughts. Saying that each individual soul has one without being able to identify the properties by which it is had seems to beg the question.

19. Ibid., 53. See Jaegwon Kim, "Lonely Souls: Causation and Substance Dualism," in *Soul, Body and Survival: Essays in the Metaphysics of Human Persons,* ed. K. Cocoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

20. Wittgenstein, of course, would suggest that the entire pursuit of locating the criterion of personal identity likely expresses an underlying philosophical neurosis or pathology.

21. David Hume is associated with the "bundle theory of the self" as is Derek Parfit. Parfit famously argued that while one can speak of persons, they cannot be separately listed in an inventory of what exists. They are, in fact, nothing more than the brain and body and the complicated interrelationships between physical and mental events. The upshot of this is that although one can use person-talk, there are no metaphysical facts about them, and accordingly, that what is important is not the putative identity of the person, but a survival connecting physical and psychological events. See *inter alia*, Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity," *The Philosophical Review* 80, no. 1 (1971): 3-27, and "Personal Identity and Rationality," *Syntheses* 52 (1982): 227-41, and "The Unimportance of Identity," in *Identity*, Henry Harris, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 13-45.

22. For those interested, the criterion of identity I propose is this: x = y if and only if, for any property P, God regards x as instantiating P if and only if God regards y as instantiating P. On this criterion, it is a question of the intrinsic instantiation of P, but rather the extrinsic judgment by God of x and y instantiating P. If God can extrinsically regard x's intrinsic instantiation of ~P to be W (worthy of salvation), even when intrinsically it is not worthy (~W), then God should be able to regard x=y when there is some P that x instantiates that y does not. For a somewhat technical account of defining virtue extrinsically, see Dennis Bielfeldt, "Virtue is not in the Head: Contributions from the Late Medieval and Reformation Traditions for Understanding Virtue Extrinsically," 58-76, in *Habits in Mind*: *Integrating Theology, Philosophy, and the Cognitive Science of Virtue, Emotion, and Character Formation,* eds. Gregory Peterson, James van Slyke, Michael Spezio, and Kevin Reimer (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishing, 2017). I argue here that the general movement towards externalism in semantics invites an extrinsic account of virtue as well. Accordingly, for any person *x*, and any possible virtue M, necessarily *x* has M if and only if God regards *x* as having M. Luther routinely substitutes "believer" for "person" to soften the electionistic overtones. Accordingly, allowing B to be the domain of believers, N the necessity operator, and defining the intensional operator "$Rx_{(My)}$" as "x regards y as instancing M," we have $(\forall x \epsilon B)(\forall M)N(Mx \leftrightarrow Rg_{(Mx)})$.

23. Robert Koons, "Divine Persons as Relational Qua-Objects," *Religious Studies* 54, no. 3 (September 2018): 337-57.

24. A universal, unlike a particular, can exist in many places at the same time. For instance, if human nature is a universal, then that exact nature is present in both Peter and Paul. This Plato-inspired view must be distinguished from that claiming that human nature is a trope. Trope theory, often associated with Aristotle, claims that Paul's nature is as particular as is Peter's nature, but that these particular natures can nonetheless be instantiations of a common universal. Consider the statement, "Socrates is white." Aristotle construes Socrates' whiteness as a particular whiteness *present in* Socrates, but allows for whiteness

in general to be *said of* this particular whiteness. While to say that the divine nature is a universal, but has only one instantiation is perhaps metaphysically distinct from saying that the divine nature is a particular (a trope), the distinction seems to make little difference to the structure of the divine. God's individuality and uniqueness is preserved either way.

25. Ibid., 339. Koons believes divine simplicity is also committed to God being identical to His own existence, which is the one and only instance of pure or absolute existence. He does not, however, need this assumption to justify the conclusions he reaches in this article.
26. Ibid., 339-40. The realist version assumes that universals are real and distinct from particulars, the latter of which are bundles of universals plus something that individuates the bundle, e.g. signate matter, a haecceity, or a bare particular. The nominalist version claims that essences are particulars that are really distinct from one another, and that these essences are related by "less than numerical identity" (Scotus).
27. Ibid., 340. The term "conspecificity" means "to belong to the same species." While two organisms might differ with respect to their physical characteristics and behaviors, they can still belong to the same species and be "conspecific." Accordingly, when coming to know triangularity, one might claim an i*dentity* between the triangle known and our intential act of knowing it. Alternately, one might claim that the intential object and the thing intended are not identical, but only *conspecific*. Both are *particulars* though they share deep commonality. The question is always how to explain the commonality between conspecifics. But while it is quite plausible, I think, to explain their similarity by appeal to a universal they both instantiate, one can simply allow the similarities (and differences) between the two simply to remain a brute fact about each. Nominalist strategies do the latter.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., 341.
30. Koons is thinking about Thomas Aquinas' metaphysics here, so he realizes that the form of the tree needs matter in order to be an existing substance. The intelligible species of the tree is accordingly conspecific with the tree itself.
31. For Thomas, the internal vehicle of intentionality is the intelligible species.
32. Koons points out that on the Aristotelian-Thomistic account all acts of understanding are veridical, because when A intends and object B, the intelligible species B cannot not be present to A.
33. Ibid., 342. One might say on this view that it is the nature of S to abstract the intelligible species of S in knowing S. Accordingly, self-knowledge proceeds by abstracting the species of self-knowing from the self-knower.
34. S knows S by knowing S as knowing S.
35. Ibid., 342-43. This might seem confusing, but Koons is pointing out that if S knows S by abstracting from S the knowing of S, there obtains an identity between the knower and thing known. Establishing this identity formally is beyond the scope of this paper.
36. Ibid., 343.
37. Ibid. Intuitively, it seems easier to establish that God knows God by knowing God as knowing God than to show, in general, that S knows S by knowing S as knowing S.
38. Ibid., 344.
39. Ibid., 344ff. See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q14, A5, A6, A11. Koons develops a model of the Trinity based upon q*ua-objects*.

40. Ibid., 353: "It is a distinction that is necessary and does not in any way depend upon how we (contingent creatures) think about God, or how God has chosen to reveal Himself or relate Himself to us."

41. Ibid., 346: "Given the SDDS, divine love and divine knowledge are the very same relation. Moreover, God knows that these are all the same. So God *qua* lover is identical to God *qua* knower, and so on."

42. Ibid., 349. They are really distinct from each other, but not the divine nature.

43. Ibid., 345-46.

44. Ibid., 346.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., 345: "Extrinsic aspects of God, like God *qua* creator of the world or God *qua* friend of Abraham, do represent distinct *qua*-objects, but they all differ very radically from God simpliciter, in that all of them are merely contingent in their existence."

47. It might seem heretical to claim that this extra-divine individuation is intrinsic to the divine nature. However, if we take seriously the claim that God is omniscient and omnipotent, then extra-divine freedom falls within the sway of the divine will. Such freedom is known and loved through the divine nature, is consistent with God's divine simplicity, and is a constituent of the one divine action upon creation.

48. I realize that I have not given an account of divine love individuating extra-divine persons, but rather have provided a sketch of the trajectory such an account might take.This is all that can be done here, unfortunately.

49. Daniel Dennett, "Conditions of Personhood," in *The Identities of Persons*, ed. A. O. Rorty (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1976), 177-78. See https://philpapers.org/archive/DENCOP.pdf.

The Imago Dei: Biblical Foundations, Theological Implications, and Enduring Significance

Dan Lioy

I. Introduction: The Concept of the Imago Dei

The concept of the imago Dei, meaning "image of God"[1] (Hebrew, בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים; *b'tselem elohim*), refers to the truth that humans are created in God's image and likeness. This idea, first introduced in Genesis 1:26–27, is a foundational doctrine with profound implications for human identity, value, and purpose. For instance, it grounds humanity's capacities for relating to God and exercising responsible dominion over the earth. Additionally, the imago Dei points to the Creator endowing people with rational, moral, and creative faculties. Furthermore, the imago Dei invests humanity with inherent meaning and purpose, namely, to know God, responsibly steward his creation, and manifest His holy character.

The imago Dei, while tarnished by sin, has not been destroyed. The New Testament affirms that Christ, who is the perfect image of God, restores in redeemed humanity what was distorted at the Fall. As believers are transformed into Christ's likeness by the Spirit through the means of grace, the original purpose of bearing God's image finds greater and ultimate fulfillment. As such, the imago Dei is a powerful unifying concept for Christian theology, ethics, and understanding of human identity and vocation. Accordingly, the upcoming sections of this essay explore the imago Dei's biblical foundations, theological implications, and enduring significance.

II. The Imago Dei in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)

A. Genesis 1:26–27, the Creation of Humanity in God's Image

In Genesis 1:26–27, the Creator declared, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every

creeping thing that crawls on the earth. God created the man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them."

The Hebrew noun translated as "image" is צֶלֶם (*tselem*). It can also mean "likeness" or "similarity," and conveys the sense of a visual representation of person or object. Also, the Hebrew noun translated as "likeness" is דְּמוּת (*demuth*). It can also mean "resemblance" or "similitude," and conveys the sense of a correspondence in appearance, character, or nature between a person or object. Both terms emphasize a close interrelationship between the original and the copy and, in turn, highlight the intimate connection between humanity and God.

The use of the plural pronouns "us" and "our" in verse 26 has been interpreted in several ways. For instance, some see it as a reference to the plurality within the triune Godhead (i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). A more likely option is that the plural pronouns could be either a *pluralis majestatis* (Latin, a plural of majesty) or a reference to God and the members of his heavenly court (1 Kings 22:19; Job 1:6; 2:1; Pss 82:1; 89:5–8; Isa 6:1–3; Dan 7:9–10).

The repetition of "image" in verse 27 highlights the deep relational connection the Creator intended to exist between himself and humanity. Indeed, being created in God's image is a fundamental aspect of what it means to be human.

More generally, the phrase "image of God" indicates that people—both male and female genders—are designed to be the Lord's vice-regents (a royal identity), representatives (a priestly identity), and stewards on earth, especially by reflecting his characteristics and attributes in a unique way compared to the rest of creation. The implication is that the imago Dei endows humans with the distinctive capacity to exist in a covenant relationship with God.

As bearers of God's image, humans have a unique capacity for intimate covenant relationships, not just with the Creator but also with one another. The biblical description of the first marriage between Adam and Eve—where a man leaves his family to cleave to his wife, and together they become "one flesh" (Gen 2:24)—serves as a foundational model for the marriage relationship between a man and a woman. This union is further extended metaphorically in Scripture to illustrate the covenant relationship between God and his people. Specifically, the Old Testament prophets depict God as the bridegroom of Israel, and the New Testament presents Christ as the bridegroom of the church.

Yet, as the account of the Fall recorded in Genesis 3 reveals, people have ruptured their intimate communion with the Creator through acts of rebellion against him. The consequence is incurred guilt and death spreading to all biological descendants of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:16–17; Rom 5:12–17; 6:23; 1 Cor 15:21–22). Moreover, the divinely ordained royal and priestly identity is marred by sin. However, as noted

below, for repentant, believing sinners, this dual identity is being restored through their union with Christ.

The significance of the phrase "image of God" has been interpreted in various ways throughout history. The following are five of the most common understandings.

1. *Literal Interpretation*: This view suggests a physical resemblance between humans and God. However, since Scripture reveals that "God is spirit" (John 4:24), this interpretation raises questions about God having a physical form (anthropomorphism) and what that form might be.

2. *Functional/Representational Interpretation*: According to this view, the "image of God" refers to the role and function of humans as God's representatives on earth. Humans are entrusted with the responsibility to manage and care for creation, in which they act as God's agents or ambassadors, as well as reflect His dominion. The "image" here signifies a role or function rather than a physical appearance.

3. *Substantive Interpretation*: This view emphasizes the "likeness" to God in non-physical attributes. It suggests that humans share certain qualities with God, such as reason, self-awareness, free will, creativity, and other capacities. This "likeness" reflects God's non-corporeal nature, even though humans are embodied souls.

4. *Relational Interpretation*: This view highlights the unique relationship and communion that humans can have with God. Humans are set apart from the rest of creation by their capacity for intimate connection with the Divine.

5. *Ethical Interpretation*: According to this view, the "likeness" to God is connected to an innate moral compass. It is maintained that humans, like God, can discern right from wrong and follow ethical principles. The "likeness" here is tied to the capacity for moral reasoning and acting in accordance with God's righteousness.

Aside from the first view, the rest work together harmoniously to paint a richer, more nuanced portrait of humanity's unique status and role within God's creation as his vice-regents. The following observations illustrate this truth.

1. *Functional and Substantive* (views 2 and 3): Here, God is envisioned as the supreme Creator and humans as his stewards. For instance, view 2 spotlights humanity's function as caretakers and managers entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing and preserving God's creation. View 3 adds that people are not mere managers but unique beings endowed with specific abilities (such as reason and creativity) that reflect God's own attributes. People can plan, problem-solve, and manage the created world in accordance with God's intended purpose.

2. *Relational and Ethical* (views 4 and 5): Beyond function, humanity has a special connection with God. For example, view 4 emphasizes the unique relationship people can have with God, their Creator. Specifically, unlike other created beings, people

are not just instruments but have the capacity for intimacy and deep connection with God. View 5 builds on this by suggesting that this relationship is fueled by humanity's moral compass. Like God, people can distinguish between right and wrong, allowing them to manage creation ethically and strive to reflect God's righteousness.

3. *Synergy*: Each view complements and strengthens the others. For instance, humanity's function (view 2) and abilities (view 3) equip people to be capable stewards. Their relationship (view 4) with God shapes their moral compass (view 5), which guides how they wisely and responsibly manage creation (view 2). Together, these views elevate humanity's role beyond merely existing. People become active participants in fulfilling God's purposes, reflecting His character, and building a world that aligns with His will.

4. *Distinct from Creation*: Views 2 through 5 work together to show that humans are not just another component of creation but rather vice-regents, responsible managers, and ethical representatives who reflect God's nature in a way no other creature can. The implication is that humanity should be distinguished from the rest of creation. While animals may possess some intelligence, they lack the full range of abilities, as well as the capacity for the complex relationship with God that humans possess.

B. Other Old Testament References to the Image of God

1. Genesis 5:1–2, Passing on the Divine Image to Humanity's Offspring

Genesis 5:1–2 connects back to 1:26–27, where God creates humanity in His "image" and "likeness." In 5:1–2, it is reiterated that, even after the Fall, the preceding truth applies to both Adam and Eve, whom God created as "male and female." Several key interpretations arise regarding the "image of God" in relation to humanity, as follows:

a. *Spiritual Inheritance*: The "image of God" is seen as a spiritual reality passed down from Adam and Eve to all their descendants. The use of "man" (Hebrew, אָדָם, *adam*) for both male and female suggests a shared essence across humanity.

b. *The Nature of the Image*: The exact nature of the image remains open to interpretation. In keeping with what was noted earlier, it likely encompasses aspects such as rational faculties (reasoning and thinking), moral awareness (distinguishing right from wrong), a capacity for relationship with God, and stewardship over creation (caring for the earth).

c. *Material and Immaterial*: While the spiritual image is inherited, humanity also possesses a physical aspect, namely, being formed "from the dust of the ground" (literally, "as dust from the ground"; 2:7). This reality creates a dynamic tension between the material and immaterial aspects of humanity after the Fall (Gen 3).

d. *Procreation and God's Rule*: Some interpretations see 5:1–2 as reinforcing the command to "be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it" (1:28). Procreation becomes a way to extend God's "dominion" through his human "vice-regents" on earth.

What follows are three main points of debate with respect to the preceding interpretations:

a. *Focus of the Image*: Is the image primarily physical, functional, rational, relational, or moral?

b. *Impact of the Fall*: Was the full image preserved or distorted by sin (Gen 3)? Does it require restoration through faith in Christ? From a New Testament perspective, the answer to the second question is yes.

c. *Thematic Connections*: How does the image of God connect to concepts like human dignity, dominion over creation, and humanity's original sinless state versus their current fallen condition?

In stepping back from the above queries, most interpretations see Genesis 5:1–2 as affirming that the imago Dei is passed down to all humanity. This truth makes all humans inherently valuable, designed for a relationship with God and having a special role in creation, even though that image is now adversely affected by sin.

2. Genesis 9:6, the Image of God as the Basis for Human Value and Dignity

Genesis 9:6 is foundational for the concept of the imago Dei, for it states, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for God made man in his own image." This verse is seen as establishing a basis for human dignity and the sanctity of human life. That said, different interpretations understand this connection in the following ways:

a. *Sacredness of Human Life*: The statement "for God made man in his own image" grounds the Creator's prohibition against murder. Despite the adverse effects of the Fall, humans still reflect God's nature and so have inherent worth and dignity.

b. *Human Rights*: Some specialists think this verse establishes a biblical basis for human rights. Since humans bear God's image, their dignity deserves respect and protection.

c. *Capital Punishment*: The verse prescribes capital punishment for murder ("Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed"). Some specialists regard this as God's endorsement of capital punishment, while others view it as a principle of just retribution, allowing for different forms of punishment besides execution.

d. *Corporate Responsibility*: Some specialists interpret "by man" as referring to society's collective responsibility to uphold justice, not just individual executioners.

e. *Imago Dei after the Fall*: While affirming creation in God's image, this verse raises questions about the impact of the Fall on the imago Dei. Some specialists think it is partially lost, while others see it as defaced, yet not destroyed.

f. *Applying the Principle*: There is debate about whether the concept of the imago Dei applies only to those fully formed in God's image, potentially excluding the unborn and those with severe mental disabilities. Most classical expressions of the historic Christian faith have taken an inclusive, affirming view.

g. *Traditions and Interpretations*: Based on this verse, Catholic and Protestant Christian traditions generally emphasize human dignity and rights. However, some Reformed traditions, like the Anabaptists, are more cautious about endorsing capital punishment from this verse.

In stepping back from the preceding observations, despite varied interpretations, Genesis 9:6 is widely seen as grounding the inherent worth and dignity of human life. This is because all people—including an unborn fetus, a newborn infant, and people suffering from severe forms of dementia—are created in God's image. This truth bestows a sanctity that should be respected and protected through just systems and ethical conduct.

3. Psalm 8, the Glory and Honor Bestowed on Humanity

Psalm 8 offers a profound perspective on the glory and honor the Creator has bestowed upon humanity. The author (traditionally identified as King David; Hebrew, לְדָוִד, "of, by, to, or for David") expresses awe and wonder at the exalted status of human beings within God's creation, despite their apparent insignificance compared to the vastness of the universe.

Regarding the above, modern astronomy and cosmology estimate the observable universe to contain over two trillion galaxies, with some galaxies containing hundreds of billions of stars. An even greater number of planets potentially accompanies these galaxies, all spread across a vast sphere roughly 93 billion light-years in diameter, based on the age of the universe (approximately 13.8 billion years) and the expansion of space.

a. *Humanity's Exalted Status and Dominion (vv. 3–8)*

The psalmist marvels at God's concern for humanity and his decision to crown people with glory and honor. Although humans seem insignificant compared to the vast heavens (vv. 3–4), God has elevated them to a position of dominion and authority over the works of his hands (vv. 5–6). This vice-regency extends over domesticated animals, wild creatures, birds, and even fish (vv. 7–8). The composer emphasizes the sweeping nature of humanity's rule over the earth and its inhabitants.

b. *Reflection of God's Glory (vv. 1, 9)*

The psalm begins and ends by declaring God's majestic name and renown throughout the earth (vv. 1, 9). This observation suggests that humanity's glory and honor are derived from and reflect the Creator's glory. Expressed differently, humans are vice-regents, representatives, and stewards of God's splendor on earth.

The above observations notwithstanding, there are diverse interpretations and emphases regarding the specific implications of humanity's glory and honor, as follows:

a. *Functional Interpretation*: This view focuses on humans as stewards and caretakers of God's creation. The dominion granted is seen as a responsibility to manage and care for the earth and its inhabitants, reflecting God's character as a benevolent Ruler.

b. *Theological Interpretation*: This view emphasizes the theological significance of humanity being made in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26–27). The glory and honor bestowed upon humans are seen as a reflection of their unique relationship with God and their ability to represent him on earth.

c. *Christological Interpretation*: Some specialists view Psalm 8 through a Christological lens, seeing in it a foreshadowing of the incarnation of Christ and his ultimate exaltation as the true representative of redeemed humanity. This interpretation highlights the fulfillment of redeemed humanity's glory and honor in union with Christ (Heb 2:5–9).

d. *Ecological Interpretation*: In light of contemporary environmental concerns, some specialists emphasize the responsibility of humans to exercise their dominion over creation in a sustainable and responsible manner, especially by acting as faithful stewards of God's creation.

In stepping back from the above sets of views, while they vary in their emphases, they all acknowledge the unique status and privilege God has granted to humanity. Psalm 8 invites readers to appreciate the dignity and responsibility bestowed upon human beings while maintaining a sense of humility and reverence for the Creator who has granted such honor.

III. The Imago Dei in the New Testament

A. Jesus Christ as the Perfect Image of God

1. 2 Corinthians 4:4, Christ as the Visible Likeness and Precise Representation of the Divine Image

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul states that the gospel he and his missionary colleagues proclaimed displayed the "glory of Christ," who is the "image [Greek, εἰκὼν, *eikon*] of God." The emphasis here is on the radiant, incarnate Son being the visible likeness and precise representation of the Father.

a. *Christ as the Flawless Expression of God's Being*: This verse portrays Christ as the perfect, unblemished representation of God's nature, character, and splendor. In Christ's essence, he is the visible manifestation of the "invisible God" (Col 1:15). Also, as the "exact imprint of the divine nature" (Heb 1:3), Christ reveals God most fully and clearly.

b. *Theological Views*: Some specialists interpret 2 Corinthians 4:4 as referring to Christ's preexistent, eternal nature as the second Person of the Trinity, along with being the perfect image of the Father from before creation. Others argue that the verse refers to the incarnate Christ—God the Son taking on human form—and so being the perfect, embodied image of God. A broader interpretation holds that the verse encompasses both Christ's eternal, divine nature and His incarnation as the God-man.

c. *Contrast to the Imperfect Human Image*: Unlike fallen humans, who bear a distorted, imperfect image of God (Gen 3; Rom 3:23), Christ is the unblemished, radiant image of the Godhead. Christ restores the marred image of the Creator in redeemed humanity through spiritual rebirth so that they may obtain a full knowledge of the Son (Col 3:10; Phil 3:10; 2 Pet 3:18).

d. *Revelation of God's Glory*: As the "image of God," the resplendent Christ reveals and displays the Creator's full glory in a way that no one and nothing else can. Hence, to see Christ is to perceive the triune God's glorious majesty, perfections, and effulgence (John 14:9; Heb 1:2; 1 John 3:2; Rev 1:12–15).

e. *Implications and Interpretations*: Admittedly, there are diverging views on whether "image" refers primarily to Christ's eternal divine nature, incarnate state, or both. Be that as it may, seeing Christ rightly—by the Spirit through the means of grace—is essential to understanding God and experiencing His glorious salvation.

Furthermore, specialists generally agree that 2 Corinthians 4:4 presents Christ as the ultimate revelation of the Creator in human form. Put simply, the Son is the perfect and unblemished image of the Father. Moreover, this verse indicates that the incarnate Savior is the fullest expression of God's nature and glory, made tangible for humanity. Therefore, as the gospel proclaims, to truly know God, people must focus the eyes of their faith on the glory revealed in Christ.

2. Colossians 1:15, Christ as the Ultimate Expression and Embodiment of the Invisible God

Colossians 1:15 states that "the Son is the image [Greek, εἰκὼν, *eikon*] of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." This verse presents Christ as the ultimate expression and embodiment of the "image of God" concept first introduced in Genesis 1:26–27 and reiterated in 2 Corinthians 4:4. What follows are the main interpretations and implications of Colossians 1:15.

a. *Christ as the Perfect Image of God*: While humans were created in the "image of God" (Gen 1:26–27), Christ is described as the very "image of the invisible God." This truth indicates that Christ fully and perfectly represents and reveals the nature, attributes, and character of the unseen Creator in a way that fallen humanity cannot. Indeed, Christ is the definitive and flawless expression of what it means to bear God's image.

b. *Relationship with the Father*: Some interpretations emphasize the unique relationship between the Son and the Father, where Christ perfectly reflects and reveals the unseen Creator. As the "image of the invisible God," Christ makes the Father known and visible to humanity through the Son's incarnation, teachings, and redemptive work.

c. *Christ's Preeminence and Divinity*: The phrase "firstborn over all creation" does not imply that Christ was created or born in a temporal sense. Rather, it affirms Christ's preeminence, sovereignty, and divine nature as the eternal Son of God who preexisted before and is superior to all creation. This phrase establishes Christ's deity and his position as the heir and ruler over all creation.

d. *Creator and Sustainer of All Things*: Verse 15 is often connected to verses 16 and 17, which affirm Christ's role as the originator and preserver of the cosmos. Hence, as the "firstborn over all creation" (v. 15), Christ has the authority and power to bring into existence and uphold the entire universe, further establishing His divine nature and preeminence.

e. *Implications for Humanity*: Some interpretations suggest that since Christ is the perfect "image of God," He restores and renews the marred imago Dei in repentant, believing sinners through salvation and sanctification. As a result of being united to Christ, the redeemed can progressively reflect the true image of God more fully (especially by the Spirit through the means of grace) and thereby receive back the dignity and purpose God originally intended for humanity in creation.

f. *Christological Emphasis*: Verse 15 is often interpreted within the larger context of the New Testament's teachings about Christ. The emphasis is typically placed on the central role of Christ's person and sacrificial work in revealing God's nature, redeeming humanity from sin, and reconciling all creation to God (v. 20).

The main interpretive differences of Colossians 1:15 can be summarized as follows:

a. *Ontological vs. Functional Views*:

Ontological View: This perspective emphasizes Christ's metaphysical and eternal nature. According to this view, the phrase "the firstborn over all creation" refers to Christ's preexistent, divine nature as the eternal Son of God, who was begotten

before the creation of the universe. This view affirms Christ is coequal to the Father and the Spirit in divine essence and eternal preexistence. Expressed differently, it spotlights Christ's full divinity and his existence from eternity past, before the creation of the world.

Functional View: This perspective interprets the phrase "the firstborn over all creation" as referring to Christ's preeminence, sovereignty, and authority in relation to creation rather than necessarily implying his eternal pre-existence. According to this view, the emphasis is placed on Christ's functional superiority and headship over the created order. Proponents suggest that the phrase highlights Christ's role and status as the supreme ruler and potentate over all of creation without necessarily stating his temporal human origin or relationship to the created universe before his incarnation.

b. *Preincarnate vs. Incarnate Focus*:

Preincarnate Focus: This perspective emphasizes Christ's preexistence and eternal nature before his incarnation. It interprets the phrase "the firstborn over all creation" as referring to Christ's eternal relationship with the Father and the Son's role in the act of creation itself.

Incarnate Focus: This view focuses on Christ's entry into the created order as the God-man. It interprets the phrase "the firstborn over all creation" as referring to Christ's preeminence and authority within the created order, particularly in relation to his redemptive work and the establishment of the new creation.

The preceding sets of interpretive differences need not be mutually exclusive, and various theological traditions have combined elements of these perspectives. For example, some traditions affirm both the ontological and functional aspects, particularly by emphasizing Christ's eternal, divine nature, along with his functional preeminence and authority over creation.

On the one hand, the ontological view is more prominent in traditional Trinitarian theology, especially by stressing Christ's eternal divinity and full equality with the Father and the Spirit. On the other hand, the functional view has been more common in certain Protestant traditions that emphasize Christ's role and authority in creation and redemption.

Meanwhile, the pre-incarnate focus is often associated with a high Christology that affirms the Son's preexistence and eternal relationship with the Father and the Spirit. Alternatively, the incarnate focus is more prominent in perspectives that emphasize Christ's redemptive work and his role as the head of the new creation.

While the various preceding interpretations contain nuances and different emphases, the overarching message remains that Christ is the ultimate and perfect revelation of God, the preeminent and divine Creator, and the one through whom the distorted image of God in regenerate humanity is restored and renewed.

3. Hebrews 1:3, Christ as the Brilliant Outshining and Exact Imprint of God

Hebrews 1:3 states that the Son is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact imprint of the divine nature." What follows is a detailed explanation of the verse, including its various interpretations.

a. *Radiance of God's Glory*

The phrase translated as "the radiance of God's glory" (Greek, δόξης, *doxes*) depicts the Son as the brilliant outshining that emanates from the divine splendor. Just as the sun's rays beam outward from it, the Son radiates and makes visible the intrinsic glory of God. Moreover, the phrase conveys the idea that the Son fully manifests and expresses the infinite resplendence, majesty, and perfections of the triune God in a unique and unparalleled way. Some specialists think the phrase refers to the pre-incarnate glory of the Son before taking on human form (John 17:5). Other specialists maintain the phrase has in view the glory exhibited by the incarnate Son during his earthly ministry and death on the Cross (1:14; 12:23).

b. *Exact Imprint / Representation of God's Nature*

The phrase rendered as "exact imprint" (Greek, χαρακτὴρ) conveys the Son's unique relationship and unity with the Father and the Spirit. This observation implies that the Son, as the precise expression of the Godhead, possesses the same being and bears the same attributes as the Father and the Spirit. Indeed, there is no aspect of the triune God's character and nature that is not found perfectly in the Son. Some specialists consider the Greek noun to be a reference either to the impression made by a seal or engraved with a stamp. In both cases, the incarnate Son is the perfect representation of the divine essence. This truth affirms the Son's full deity and co-equality with the Father and the Spirit.

The main interpretive differences of Hebrews 1:3 can be summarized as follows (mirroring those associated with Col 1:15):

a. *Ontological vs. Functional View*:

Ontological View: According to this perspective, Hebrews 1:3 deals with the essential nature or being of Christ. Hence, the phrases "radiance of God's glory" and "exact imprint of the divine nature" are interpreted as referring to Christ's inherent and eternal divinity, in which his equality with the Father and the Spirit is affirmed. Indeed, this view upholds Christ's full deity and coequal status within the triune Godhead.

Functional View: This interpretation considers the references to Christ as the "radiance" and "exact imprint" to be metaphorical expressions of his role in revealing and representing the triune Godhead's character and glory. Hence, this perspective focuses on the functional roles and attributes ascribed to Christ, rather than his essential nature or ontological equality with the Father and the Spirit.

b. Preincarnate vs. Incarnate Focus

Preincarnate Focus: Some scholars interpret this verse as primarily referring to Christ before he became a human being. Accordingly, the descriptions of "radiance" and "exact imprint" are seen as speaking about Christ's preexistent, divine nature and his eternal relationship with the Father and the Spirit before taking on human form.

Incarnate Focus: Other scholars view this verse as primarily addressing Christ's incarnate state, emphasizing His divine nature as manifested in His earthly life and ministry. Correspondingly, the descriptions of "radiance" and "exact imprint" are seen as referring to Christ's perfect revelation of God's character and glory through Christ's words, deeds, and sacrificial death.

As with Colossians 1:15, the above interpretive perspectives need not be mutually exclusive. For instance, some specialists hold a view that incorporates both ontological and functional elements, as well as recognize the significance of Hebrews 1:3 for both Christ's preincarnate and incarnate states. Additionally, the broader context of the letter and its emphasis on the superiority of Christ over angels and every aspect of the Old Testament revelation inform the interpretation of this verse.

So, then, despite whatever interpretive nuances that may exist, Hebrews 1:3 has several theological implications regarding Christ as the "exact imprint" of God. First, the verse affirms the Son's full divinity and co-equality with the Father and the Spirit as the second Person of the Trinity. Second, the passage establishes the Son as the perfect and definitive self-revelation of God's glory and nature. Indeed, only through the Son can the triune Godhead's real nature and splendor be fully known (John 1:18). Third, the Son's divine nature enables him to serve as the sole, perfect mediator and great high priest between the Creator and sinful humanity (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 2:14–18; 4:14–16; 1 John 2:1).

B. The Full Restoration of the Divine Image in Believers

1. Second Corinthians 3:18, the Spiritual Transformation of Believers into Christ's Glorious Image

Second Corinthians 3:18 is part of Paul's larger discussion in which he contrasts the old covenant (represented by the veiled glory of Moses' face) with the new covenant in Christ, whose glory is unveiled and transformative. Specifically, the redeemed, with an "unveiled face," reflect the "Lord's glory." Alternatively, they "contemplate," as those who gaze at someone or something in a mirror, the "glory" of the Son.

In either case, the above reality becomes the basis for Jesus' followers "being transformed into his own image" (Greek, εἰκόνα, *eikona*). The emphasis here is on them becoming increasingly similar in character and nature to Christ. Yet, believers

do not bring about this profound metamorphosis in their own strength and willpower. Instead, it is the "Lord"—namely, the "Spirit"—who produces an essential change in the redeemed (particularly through the means of grace) from "one degree of glory to another." What follows are the key interpretations connected with 2 Corinthians 3:18.

a. *Progressive Transformation*: The phrase "are being transformed" (present tense) indicates an ongoing, progressive process of spiritual change. As believers behold and reflect the glory of Christ, they are gradually being conformed to his "own image."

b. *From Glory to Glory*: The transformation happens in stages, namely, "from one degree of glory to another." It is a lifelong journey of increasing Christlikeness, in which believers become increasingly radiant reflections of the "Lord's glory."

c. *The Agent of Transformation*: The transformation is ultimately accomplished by the "Lord, who is the Spirit." This is a reference to the divine third Person of the Trinity, who is actively at work in the lives of believers.

d. *The Means of Transformation*: The catalyst for this transformation is reflecting/beholding the "Lord's glory." Accordingly, as believers encounter the "glory" of Christ (e.g., through the ministry of the Word and sacraments), they are progressively changed into His "image."

The main interpretive differences of 2 Corinthians 3:18 can be summarized as follows:

a. *The Nature of the Image*: Some specialists interpret the "image" as primarily referring to moral transformation, where believers are conformed to Christ's character and virtues. Other specialists think Paul's reference to the "image" also includes the future glorification of believers at the Second Advent, where they bear the physical, resurrected image of Christ.

b. *The Role of Human Effort*: Some specialists emphasize the passive nature of spiritual transformation, where believers simply reflect/behold Christ's glory, and the Spirit does the transforming work. Other specialists highlight the necessity of human effort and cooperation with the Spirit's work, either through the means of grace, the practice of spiritual disciplines and obedience, or both.

c. *The Basis of Beholding*: Different views exist on the primary basis for reflecting/beholding Christ's glory, such as through Scripture reading, prayer, corporate/individual worship, the sacraments, and/or various other spiritual practices.

d. *The Extent of Transformation*: While most specialists agree that full Christlikeness does not occur in this life, different perspectives exist on the degree of spiritual transformation possible before Christ's return.

The above interpretive differences notwithstanding, the core theological truth remains clear. Through the Spirit's presence and power, believers can behold and

manifest Christ's glory. Likewise, as they do so (especially through the means of grace), a gradual yet profound metaphysical change occurs. Specifically, the Spirit enables Jesus' followers to be increasingly conformed to his image and character.

2. Colossians 3:10, Redeemed Humanity Putting on the New, Regenerate Self

In Colossians 3:9–10, Paul sets up a contrast between the "old," unregenerate "self" (Greek, ἄνθρωπον, *anthropon*) and the "new," regenerate "self." The first is characterized by wicked "practices," whereas Christlikeness distinguishes the second. The Spirit uses the "knowledge" arising from Scripture (especially through the written, proclaimed, and enacted Word) to bring about the believers' continual renewal or renovation. This metamorphosis of their character and nature is consistent with the "image" (Greek, εἰκόνα, *eikona*) of the one who created the "new self."

What follows are the key interpretations connected with Colossians 3:10.

a. *The Meaning of "Put on or Be Clothed with the New Self"*: This phrase refers to the believer's new nature and identity in union with Christ, which is being radically transformed. It contrasts with the "old self" (v. 9), which refers to the former sinful nature that is being "put off."

b. *The Renewal Process*: The phrase "which is continually being renewed" (present tense) suggests an ongoing, progressive renovation. Hence, this spiritual transformation is not just a one-time event (i.e., occurring only at the moment of the believer's conversion at baptism) but a lifelong transformation consistent with being a follower of the Savior.

c. *The Means of Renewal "in Knowledge"*: The transformation of the believers' "new self" is facilitated by an increasing "knowledge" of Christ. This likely refers to a deeper understanding of the Creator's truth, ways, and will, which shapes the believers' thinking and character (Rom 12:1–2; Eph 4:23; Col 3:10).

d. *The Goal of Renewal "according to the Image of its Creator"*: The intended outcome of the spiritual transformation is the restoration of the imago Dei in Christ's followers. As previously noted, the divine image was marred by sin. Yet, the Spirit, especially working through the means of grace, progressively brings about an amazing change. It is nothing less than God recreating his regenerate children anew in union with Christ so that they become his living masterpieces (Eph 2:10).

The main interpretive differences of Colossians 3:10 can be summarized as follows:

a. *The Nature of the Image*: Some specialists see the "image" primarily as moral or spiritual renewal and emphasize the restoration of God's character and virtues in believers. Other specialists view the "image" as also including the future physical/

bodily transformation at the Second Advent, where believers bear the glorified image of Christ.

b. *The Role of Knowledge*: Some specialists understand "knowledge" as referring to a deep, experiential awareness of God and his ways, which is gained through the study of Scripture, prayer, and obedience. Other specialists view "knowledge" as more of an intellectual or doctrinal understanding of biblical truth.

c. *The Extent of Renewal*: Some specialists think that the renewal of the imago Dei can only be fully realized in the afterlife or at Christ's return. Other specialists maintain that a significant degree of transformation and Christlikeness is possible in this life through the work of the Spirit (particularly through the means of grace).

d. *The Basis of Renewal*: Differing views exist on the primary basis by which this renewal takes place, such as through the study of Scripture, spiritual disciplines, the work of the Spirit, or a combination of these factors.

The above interpretive differences notwithstanding, the core theological truth remains clear. The Spirit, especially through the Word and sacraments, enables believers to undergo a process of metaphysical renewal, with the goal of being increasingly conformed to the image of Christ, their Creator. Admittedly, while this restoration of the imago Dei begins at conversion and reaches its completion at the Second Advent, it is presently a lifelong experience facilitated by believers growing in the "grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 3:18).

C. The Ultimate Renewal of the Imago Dei in Believers

In eternity, believers, due to their union with Christ, experience the ultimate renewal of the imago Dei, namely, a complete restoration of the divine image within them. This renovation is part of the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan and the culmination of the believer's sanctification process. That said, there are differing interpretations regarding the nature of the renewal, as follows.

1. *Physical and spiritual renewal*

Some specialists focus more on the physical aspect of the believers' renewal. Here, the emphasis is on them receiving glorified, resurrected bodies, which are free from sin, corruption, and death (Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:42–49). This physical restoration is part of the imago Dei's full reconstitution, in keeping with the body being originally created in God's image.

Other specialists focus more on the spiritual aspect of the believers' renewal. Here, the emphasis is on restoring the believer's inner nature, mind, and soul to

reflect God's character and holiness more fully. This interpretation highlights the moral and ethical aspects of the imago Dei.

2. *Relational and functional renewal*

Some specialists view the renewal of the imago Dei primarily in terms of the restoration of the believer's relationship with God. Here, the emphasis is on believers in eternity, enjoying unhindered fellowship and communion with God, reflecting the original, intended relationship between the Creator and humanity (Gen 3:8; Rev 21:3, 7; 22:3–5).

Other specialists focus more on the functional aspect of the believers' renewal. In this case, the restored imago Dei enables believers to fulfill their intended role and dominion mandate (Gen 1:28; Ps 8:6–8; Heb 2:8). This includes them exercising godly stewardship and authority in the new heavens and the new earth (Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor 6:2–3; Rev 22:5).

3. *Degree of renewal*

There are differing views concerning the degree of the imago Dei's renewal in eternity. Some specialists think it will be complete and perfect within regenerate humanity, including the removal of sin and corruption (Rev 21:4; 22:3). In this case, the "humble bodies" (Phil 3:21) of believers are transformed to be like the Savior's "glorious body." This new, everlasting reality mirrors the "image" (Greek, εἰκόνος, *eikonos*; Rom 8:29) of the "Son," the "heavenly man" (1 Cor 15:49), who stands in sharp contrast to humanity's first male progenitor, Adam, the "man made of dust" (vv. 44–48).

Other specialists hold a more nuanced view. On the one hand, they maintain that the renewal is profound and transformative. Yet, on the other hand, in the eternal state, aspects of the believers' individuality and uniqueness remain preserved. This condition allows for a diversity of expression within the unity of the divine image (Isa 2:2–5; 60:3, 5; Micah 4:1–5; Rev 21:24–26).

The preceding differences in interpretation notwithstanding, most Christian traditions affirm that the renewal of the imago Dei in eternity is a glorious promise for believers. It reflects the culmination of God's redemptive work and the full restoration of regenerate humanity to its intended purpose and glory.

IV. Theological Implications of the Imago Dei

The preceding sections of this essay have argued that people being created in God's image significantly impacts how they view human nature, dignity, and purpose. By delving deeper into this biblical concept, foundational truths about the connection between God, humanity, and the contemporary intellectual and cultural horizon can

be uncovered. As explained below, exploring this concept is crucial for building a well-defined understanding of humanity (anthropology) from a theological perspective. Ultimately, such a framework can guide ethical reasoning and practical application (praxis) across various aspects of human life.

A. The Dignity and Value of Human Life

The doctrine of the imago Dei establishes the inherent dignity and value of all human life from conception onward. Since people are created in God's image (Gen 1:26–27), they possess an intrinsic worth that transcends utility or social status. This grounds a biblical basis for human rights and respect.

Key implications:

1. Humans have sacred value simply by being created by God in his image (Gen 1:27; 9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9).
2. All human life, including the unborn, aged, and disabled, deserves protection and respect (Lev 19:32; Prov 31:8; Ps 139:13; Micah 6:8; Jer 1:5; Jas 1:27).
3. The imago Dei counters philosophies that devalue or objectify human beings (Ps 8:4–8; Jas 3:9).
4. God's image in humans provides a unique status above all other created beings (Gen 1:26, 28).

B. The Basis for Human Creativity and Dominion over Creation

Being created in God's image means humans reflect divine communicable attributes (i.e., traits God chooses to share with humanity) like rationality, morality, and creativity. In turn, this reality equips people to exercise dominion over creation as God's vice-regents, representatives, and stewards (Gen 1:26–28). As noted earlier, this status reflects a dual royal and priestly identity, which is being restored in believers through their union with Christ (Rom 8:16–17; 12:1–2; 2 Cor 5:18–20; 2 Tim 2:12; Heb 13:15–16; 1 Pet 2:4–5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

Key implications:

1. Humans can innovate, create, and harness the natural world through their God-given reason and creativity (Gen 2:19–20; Exod 31:3–5).
2. The cultural mandate stems from bearing God's image as his subordinate creators and cultivators (Gen 1:26–28; 2:15).
3. Humans exercising dominion over creation is a God-given responsibility involving wise management, not oppression or exploitation (Gen 2:15; Num 35:33–34; Ps 8:3–8).

4. Human inquiry, invention, and appreciation of beauty reflect God's own creative nature (Exod 35:30–35; Prov 8:30–31; Eccl 3:11; Rom 1:19–20).

C. The potential for relationship and communion with God

The imago Dei enables a unique communion between God and humanity. Being created in God's likeness means humans can relate to him in a way animals cannot. After the Fall (Gen 3:8), this innate ability for divine fellowship and intimacy can only be fully realized among the Father's reborn children in union with Christ (John 6:56; 15:4–7; 1 John 2:24; 3:24).

Key implications:

1. God created humans as relational beings who thirst for intimacy with their Maker (Pss 42:1–2; 63:1; John 7:37–38).
2. Sin damaged, yet did not destroy, the imago Dei and the possibility of knowing God (Gen 5:1; 9:6).
3. So, even after the Fall, humans still have capacities (e.g., reason, spirituality, and so on) that create the potential for relationship and communion with God (Eccl 3:11; Ps 8:3–4; John 14:6; Acts 17:26–28; Rom 1:19–20).
4. Christ, the perfect, incarnate image of the invisible God, restores the broken relationship between the Creator and redeemed humanity (Rom 5:1–2; 2 Cor 5:17–21; Col 1:15–19).

D. The Responsibility to Reflect God's Character and Attributes

It is by the Spirit, through the means of grace, that God's reborn children, as his image-bearers, reflect his ethical nature and represent his holy character among lost humanity. Indeed, doing so is a high calling and high privilege for Jesus' followers (Matt 5:14–16; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 5:1–2, 8–10; Phil 2:14–16).

Key implications:

1. Believers must rely on the Spirit to cultivate virtues that reflect God's holiness, love, justice, and so on (Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22–23).
2. The imago Dei in Jesus' followers is most clearly manifest when they mirror God's character and attributes (Matt 5:43–48; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; 1 Pet 1:15–16).
3. Moral failure distorts the imago Dei, while Christlikeness restores it (Rom 3:23; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10).

4. For redeemed humanity, maintaining ethical conduct, showing compassion, and prioritizing social responsibility stems from the fact that humans are created in God's image (Micah 6:8; Matt 22:37–39; Jam 2:164–17).

To sum up, the concept of imago Dei forms the basis for the inherent worth of every human life. It grounds the God-given capacities within humanity for creativity and stewardship over creation. The presence of the divine image also establishes the potential for a unique relationship with the Creator.

Yet, after the Fall, the preceding aspects are not fully realized on their own. For God's reborn children, remaining united to Christ by faith and empowered by the Spirit, who works through the means of grace, allows for a fuller expression of these capacities. This includes offering a foundation for Christian ethics and the recognition of human rights.

V. The Implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the Imago Dei in Humans

The emergence of AI raises significant questions about the concept of humans being created in the image of God. For example, in what ways are people, as God's image bearers, distinctively unique when it seems that large language models (LLMs) can replicate and even surpass human capabilities in reasoning, language use, and creativity? This state of uncertainty presents the following ethical challenges and potential opportunities, especially for believers, whom (as noted above) the Spirit is transforming into the image of Christ by the means of grace.

A. *Responsible Management and Creativity*

The imago Dei equips humans with creativity and the responsibility to manage creation wisely. LLMs can augment this capacity. For instance, AI systems can leverage vast datasets and computing power to generate increasingly sophisticated tools that assist humans in various fields. Similarly, believers can utilize this technology to reason, innovate, and shape the world in productive ways that honor the Creator.

B. *Ethical Considerations and Development*

With the creative and technological prowess of LLMs comes immense responsibility for humans to operate as prudent stewards of God's creation. Here, ethical considerations around the development and deployment of AI remain crucial. For example, it is imperative that the use of these systems respect human dignity and rights. Accordingly, people of faith should thoughtfully consider, anticipate, and manage the societal impacts of LLMs. As image-bearers of Christ, believers are called to exercise wisdom and foresight, ensuring that their values guide the development and use of these powerful technologies.

C. *Enhancing Knowledge, Without Replacing Human Value*

While AI can significantly enhance human capability in accessing information, analyzing data, and expressing creative ideas, it should not be seen as replacing the inherent worth and dignity of humans as bearers of the imago Dei. On the one hand, AI tools can facilitate knowledge expansion; yet, on the other hand, human faculties for reason, moral judgment, and creativity remain irreplaceable. In this regard, believers can use LLMs to unveil more of the remarkable creativity God has embedded in humans as his image-bearers.

D. *Reflecting God's Nature*

When used carefully and ethically, AI systems can potentially assist humans in comprehending, expressing, and exploring profound truths across various languages and contexts. However, this potential is only realized for believers when LLMs operate as supportive tools under their control and are continuously refined to align with God's perfect moral character.

E. *The Uniqueness of the Divine-Human Relationship*

No matter how advanced AI systems become, they can never replicate the profound connection between the Creator and humans, which remains even after the Fall. Believers, as image-bearers of Christ, have a renewed capacity to experience far greater communion with God. Moreover, while LLMs can be used to address various facets of this transcendent reality, these tools can never be an adequate substitute for the divine-human relationship. Instead, the Spirit can enable Jesus' followers to use emerging AI technologies to affirm and safeguard the unique connection they have with the Father in union with the Son.

In stepping back from the preceding observations, discerning believers recognize that the rise of AI signifies a new frontier for the responsible stewardship of the imago Dei in humans. Achieving this necessitates wisdom, the continuous refining of LLMs to serve the common good, maintaining an unwavering commitment to preserving human dignity and value, and recognizing the unique relationship humans have with their Creator. As AI continues to evolve, the ongoing conversation about its implications for the imago Dei in humans remains crucial.

VI. Conclusion: The Enduring Significance of the Imago Dei

The concept of the imago Dei, meaning humans are created in God's image, is a profound and enduring idea with significant implications. Being rooted in Genesis 1:26–27, it shapes the biblical view of human identity, worth, purpose, and connection to the Creator. This concept is both unique and uplifting.

At its core, the imago Dei emphasizes the inherent dignity and value of all human life. By virtue of being created by God, every person possesses intrinsic

worth. This truth safeguards against viewing people as mere objects to be exploited and provides a strong foundation for universal human rights. The fight against injustice, oppression, and the dehumanization of vulnerable groups also finds moral grounding in this principle.

Yet, the imago Dei encompasses more than just human value. It highlights the ability of people to reason, create, and understand morality, reflecting aspects of God's nature. It casts humanity's role as overseers of the earth as a significant responsibility stemming from their original creation mandate as God's vice-regents, representatives, and stewards. The greatest achievements in art, intellect, and culture spring from this unique human capacity.

Unlike any other creation, the imago Dei reveals humanity's potential for an intimate relationship with God. Although sin has marred this image, it remains inextricably linked to redemption. Through faith in Christ, the perfect embodiment of God, the imago Dei can be restored. As the Spirit works within believers through the means of grace, they become more Christlike and fulfill their true, God-given, and everlasting purpose.

The concept of the imago Dei remains important for its ethical demands and potential for redemption. As God's image-bearers, believers are called to manifest the Creator's moral character through their thoughts, feelings, and actions. This includes embodying God's love, justice, and mercy in this fallen world. Their responsibility to reflect the divine image extends to how they treat everyone, from the beginning to the end of life.

Whether forming a human rights doctrine based on the Bible, restoring human dignity through social reform, or encouraging believers to embrace their creative potential, the imago Dei shines as a guiding light. This ancient truth remains as relevant and applicable today as when it was first expressed thousands of years ago in Genesis 1:26–27. Contemplating its many facets regarding human identity and purpose ensures that Jesus' followers uphold the incomparable value of human life and fulfill their God-given calling as ambassadors for Christ to their unsaved peers.

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Note

1. Unless otherwise noted, the English renderings of Scripture are taken from the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV), © 2019 Wartburg Project, Inc. All rights reserved.

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The Incarnation and Human Personhood

Douglas V. Morton

The Problem of Person and Personhood

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Historic Church and the Meaning of Person

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

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

presence, *person*." In addition, it can mean "the outer surface of something," as well as describing "that which is present in a certain form or character to a viewer," thus the translation "external things" or "appearance."[8] The Septuagint[9] often uses the word πρόσωπον to translate the Hebrew פָּנִים (*pnm*), *face* as in Psalm 26:8-9.[10] The word could also be used for "mask" in a theater and thus for an actor's dramatic part or character.[11] The Latin *persona* also means a "mask" used in a theater, "and hence the role, the character that the actor plays."[12] At the same time, the Latin *persona* "came to designate the human individual in [his/her] particularity."[13]

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

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

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

Secular and Heretical Views of Christ's Person

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

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

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

Christians who hold to the historic Christian faith should not be confounded by today's interpretation of what makes someone a *person* and thus what defines *personhood*. Instead, the view of the *person* as understood by historic Christianity should govern how the biblically orthodox Christian thinks. This in turn should determine how the Christian evaluates abortion and other life issues. Abortion fails the litmus test of the Christological position of classical orthodox Christianity. The idea of aborting the human zygote/embryo/fetus because it has not reached the status of *personhood*, as is often held today, would have a better chance among various Christological heresies,[23] such as Gnosticism, Adoptionism, Arianism, Nestorianism, or Apollinarianism.[24] On the other hand, it is logically and theologically challenging[25] for this thinking to exist within the historic Christological view of the two natures in the one Christ existing from the moment of conception. Today's conception of person and personhood is simply incompatible with historic orthodox Christianity.[26] So, this apologetic for the human *person* must discuss the historical orthodox Christological view.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Ecumenical Creeds and Christ's Person

On the other hand, what would an abortion have done to the historic orthodox Jesus? One must know how historic orthodox Christianity views Jesus in its authoritative Scriptures and creeds to answer this.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notice that the historic orthodox Church calls the mother of Jesus the *Theotokos*,[41] the bearer of God. The Latin words translating *Theotokos* are *Mater Dei*, "Mother of God." Scripture teaches that God is not a creature but the Creator. He cannot be born. He has no origin. He has always been. He is eternal. Yet in the one person of Jesus, the fertilized egg in the womb of Mary is not only truly and fully human but also truly and fully God. Thus, Mary gives birth to no mere human being, but to one who is both God and human in one person, whom theologians have called the theanthropic[42] Christ. For this to be true, God had to be fully and intimately united

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

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

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

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

The Holy Scriptures and Christ's Person

John begins his Gospel with the following declaration in John 1:1-4, 14, 16-18:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

First, Luke begins the Greek text of verse 29 with the word Ἀναστᾶσα (*anastasa*), which is an aorist participle of the Greek verb ἀνίστημι. The English Standard Version (ESV) translates this word as "arose" in Luke 1:39. Luke uses this word in his Gospel and the book of Acts "about sixty times against about twenty-two times in the rest of [the New Testament]."[49] The word occurs hundreds of times in the Septuagint.[50] In various places, this word is used for preparing for a journey,[51] as we see in Luke 15:18, 20, Acts 10:20, and Acts 22:10.[52]

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

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

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

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

New Testament scholar Arthur Just notes that the word "βρέφος" (*brephos*) in verse 41

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What This Means for the Biblical Christian

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

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

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

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

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Notes

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

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

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

20. Ibid.

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

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

A. Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

23. I do not intend to go into detail concerning each of the heretical movements mentioned above. Those who wish to do more study on heresy in the early Church may find the following books helpful: Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984); Bengt Hägglund, *History of Theology*, 4th rev. ed., trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007); Douglas W. Johnson, *The Great Jesus Debates: Four Early Church Battles about the Person and Work of Jesus* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2005); Alister McGrath, *Heresy: A History of Defending the Truth* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009); Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

24. This does not imply that the early heretics would have understood "personhood" as many do in the Twenty-first century. Nor does it suggest that most of these groups would have advocated abortion. Early Christianity was almost unanimously opposed to abortion. For instance, the late first century/early second century *Didache* plainly states, "Do not abort a fetus or kill a child that is born (οὐ φονεύσεις τέκνον ἐν φθορᾷ οὐδὲ γεννηθὲν ἀποκτενεῖς)." *The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 2.2 in *The Apostolic Fathers*, Volume 1: *1 Clement, II Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Didache, Barnabas*, ed, and trans. Bart D. Ehrman (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, UK: Harvard University. Press, 2003), 419, 418. What I am saying is that the faulty Christology of each of the heresies mentioned can lead modern-day people, including Christians, to views on "personhood" and abortion that are at odds with the stand for life. The opposite may also be true, as when a person who advocates abortion ends up latching on to some kind of Christological heresy that could live side-by-side with their stance on abortion. For the early church's stance on abortion, see Michael J. Gorman, *Abortion and the Early Church*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982. For the abortion side, see Margaret D. Kamitsuka, *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019). See also Jack Kilcrease's review of Kamitsuka's book in this edition of *Verba Vitae*, I/3-4 (2024): 171-76.

25. I write the words "logically and theologically challenging" because, while it is true that there are those orthodox Christians who would stand on the side of "non-personhood" of a child in the womb and thus advocate abortion, this is most often not held with rational arguments but with the emotions that go with a specific ideology (i.e., reproductive rights). Thus, John F. Kavanaugh notes, "The question, 'Are we eliminating persons with potentials, and not just potential persons?' is absent from most public discourse, other than to say that abortion is more a matter of feeling than evidence." John F. Kavanaugh, S.J., *Who Count As Persons? Human Identity and the Ethics of Killing* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2001), 130. Even orthodox Christians are not immune from being affected by this "feeling" approach to abortion rather than taking the "evidence" approach, especially if they have embraced a particular ideology.

26. By "historic orthodox Christianity," I am writing of churches and individual Christians who adhere to the authority of Holy Scripture, the normativity of the Ecumenical Creeds, and highly respect the ancient Church Fathers. This would not only include traditional Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians, but also Protestant Christians who continue

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

27. Harold O. J. Brown writes: "Gnosticism produced docetism because it considered it intolerable to think that a pure spiritual being, Christ, could suffer as a man. Hence he must have been human in appearance only." Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 52. The word *docetism* comes from the Greek word *doke* (δοκέω) and means "to appear to one's understanding" or "to seem." Someone embracing docetism would embrace the teaching that Christ only appeared to be human, but in reality, was not. Writing in the first decade of the second century, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, wrote: "And so, be deaf when anyone speaks to you apart from Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David, the son of Mary, who was truly born and ate and drank, who was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate and was really crucified and died in the sight of those 'in heaven and on earth and under the earth.' Moreover He was truly raised from the dead by the power of His Father; in like manner His Father, through Jesus Christ, will raise up those of us who believe in Him. Apart from Him we have no true life." Ignatus of Antioch in Gerald G. Walsh, "The Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch," *The Apostolic Fathers*, trans. Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M.-F. Marique, and Gerald G. Walsh, vol. 1 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 104. The above English translation is from the Greek text of Ignatius's letter to the Trallians. The Greek is as follows: "Κωφώθητε οὖν, ὅταν ὑμῖν χωρὶς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ λαλῇ τις, τοῦ ἐκ γένους Δαυείδ, τοῦ ἐκ Μαρίας, ὃς ἀληθῶς ἐγεννήθη· ἔφαγέν τε καὶ ἔπιεν, ἀληθῶς ἐδιώχθη· ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, ἀληθῶς ἐσταυρώθη· καὶ ἀπέθανεν, βλεπόντων τῶν ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ ὑποχθονίων. ὃς καὶ ἀληθῶς ἠγέρθη· ἀπό νεκρῶν, ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ, κατὰ τὸ ὁμοίωμα ὃς καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς πιστεύοντας αὐτῷ οὕτως ἐγερεῖ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, οὗ χωρὶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ζῆν οὐκ ἔχομεν. Kirsopp Lake, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press & London, UK: William Heinemann LTD, 1912, 1975), 220.

28. "This exceptional elevation, which in primitive adoptionism was usually associated with the event of Christ's baptism, involves nevertheless only a special divine activity upon or in Jesus, not the personal presence in him of a second member of the Trinity bearing the proper name of Word (Logos) or Son." Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, eds. *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 6.

29. J. W. C. Wand, *The Four Great Heresies* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Company, 1955), 42.

30. Mary is thus called *Christotokos*, Christ-bearer, not *Theotokos*, God-bearer. Nestorius, after whom the heresy is named, "argued that the eternal God, who is without beginning and without end, could not have spent nine months in a woman's womb and been born. On the other hand, what was born of Mary was not simply a human being." Ronald E. Heine, *Classical Christian Doctrine: Introducing the Essentials of the Ancient Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 80. In one of Nestorius' sermons, he is reported as saying: "Mary, my friend, did not give birth to the Godhead (for 'what is born of the flesh is flesh' [John 3:6]). A creature did not produce him who is uncreatable. The Father has not just recently generated God the Logos from the Virgin (for 'in the beginning

was the Logos,' as John [John 1:1] says). A creature did not produce the Creator, rather she gave birth to the human being, the instrument of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit did not create God the Logos (for 'what is born of her is of the Holy Spirit' [Matt. 1:20]). Rather, he formed out of the Virgin a temple for God the Logos, a temple in which he dwelt." Nestorius, "Nestorius' First Sermon Against the Theotokos," *The Christological Controversy*, trans. and ed., Richard A. Norris, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 124. For orthodox Christianity, the problem is that if God is not united to the human nature of Jesus from conception, you quickly end up with two natures—divine and human—that have little to do with each other. Even to say that God dwelt in the human nature of Jesus is not enough and can be a subtle way of saying that the man Jesus is not God, but only one in whom God dwelt in a most powerful way.

31. Roger E. Olson, *Counterfeit Christianity: The Persistence of Errors in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), 80.

32. C. FitzSimons Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy: An Affirmation of Christian Orthodoxy* (Harrisburg, PA; New York: Morehouse Publishing, 1994), 107.

33. Philip Schaff writes concerning "the God-man as the result of the incarnation. Christ is not a (Nestorian) *double* being, with *two* persons, nor a compound (Apollinarian or Monophysite) *middle* being, a *tertium quid*, neither divine *nor* human; but he is *one* person *both* divine *and* human." Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The History of Creeds*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1878), 31.

34. T. F. Torrance, *Test-Tube Babies: Morals—Science—And the Law* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1984), 10.

35. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890), 59. The bracketed word [Spirit] has been substituted for "Ghost" used in Schaff's translation. Other brackets in the sentence are Schaff's. The Greek text says: "Καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον ἸΗΣΟΥΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝ, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί· δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο· τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα." Ibid, 57.

36. J. N. D. Kelly, *The Athanasian Creed* (London, UK: Adam and Charles Black, 1964), 20. The Latin is: "*Qui licet deus sit et homo, non duo tamen sed unus est Christus. Unus autem non conversione divinitatis in carne, sed adsumptione humanitatis in deo; unus omnino non confusione substantiae, sed unitate personae. Nam sicut anima rationabilis et caro unus est homo, ita deu et homo unus est Christus*." Ibid.

37. Fulgentius, quoted in Martin Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 209.

38. The Greek text of Acts 20:28 reads **θεοῦ**, ἣν περιεποιήσατο διὰ **τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ ἰδίου**. Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), Ac 20:28. (Bold in the Greek text in this endnote and italics in the English biblical text on page 79 is added for emphasis.)

39. The original Greek used— ὁμοούσιος, θεοτόκος, ὑπόστασις—are in the text edited by Bettenson [see note 40 below]. The other Greek words—ἐν δύο φύσεσιν, ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως—come from Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom,*

with a History and Critical Notes, Vol. 2: *The Greek and Latin Creeds, with Translations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1890), 62.

40. Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., ed., Chris Maunder (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 56-57.

41. "θεοτόκος**,** *God-bearing, who is mother of God*." G. W. H. Lampe, ed., "θεοτόκος*," A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, UK: At The Clarendon Press, 1961), 639. J. W. C. Wand notes that *Theotokos* lays "the stress rather on the delivery than on the idea of parenthood." J. W. C. Wand, *The Four Great* Heresies, London: A. R. Mowbray & Company, 1955), 97. However, while "delivery" may be a good way to describe what the word implies, one can only deliver that which has been in the womb for nine months.

42. The word "theanthropic" comes from the Greek word "θεάνθρωπος" which means "*God-man*." G. W. H. Lampe, ed., "θεάνθρωπος," *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 616. Jesus has always lived as the theanthropic Christ since the time of conception. Everything he does is as the theanthropic Christ. Thus, he is always the God-man; whatever he does, he does as the God-man since he is one *person*.

43. This seems to be the position of Margaret Kamitsuka in her book *Abortion and the Christian Tradition*. She writes, "The Logos assuming Jesus' human nature was not an immediate union of substances but an interactive movement of the divine and human over a lifetime." Margaret D. Kamitsuka, *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 85.

44. John Damascene, "An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith," in *St. Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; trans. S. D. F. Salmond, vol. 9b, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1899), 46. The Greek text is as follows: αὐτὸς ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ Λόγος χρηματίσας τῇ σαρκὶ ὑπόστασις. οὐ γὰρ προὔποστάτῃ καθ' ἑαυτὴν σαρκὶ ἡνώθη ὁ θεῖος Λόγος, ἀλλ' ἐνοικήσας τῇ γαστρὶ τῆς ἁγίας Παρθένου, ἀπεριγράπτως ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ὑποστάσει ἐκ τῶν ἁγνῶν τῆς Ἀειπαρθένου αἱμάτων, σάρκα ἐψυχωμένην ψυχῇ λογιχῇ τε καὶ νοερᾷ ὑπεστήσατο, ἀπαρχὴν προσλαβόμενος τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου φυράματος, αὐτὸς ὁ Λόγος γενόμενος τῇ σαρκὶ ὑπόστασις. Ὥστε ἅμα σὰρξ, ἅμα θεοῦ Λόγου σὰρξ, ἅμα σὰρξ ἔμψυχος, λογική τε καὶ νοερά. Διὸ οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἄποθεωθέντα λέγομεν, ἀλλὰ Θεὸν ἐνανθρωπήσαντα. Ὢν γὰρ φύσει τέλειος θεὸς, γέγονε φύσει τέλειος ἄνθρωπος ὁ αὐτός. οὐ τραπεὶς τὴν φύσιν, οὐδὲ φαντάσας τὴν οἰκονομίαν, ἀλλὰ τῇ ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας Παρθένου ληφθείσῃ, λογικῶς τε καὶ νοερῶς ἐψυχωμένῃ σαρκὶ, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ εἶναι λαχούσῃ, ἑνωθεὶς καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἀσυγχύτως καὶ ἀναλλοιώτως, καὶ ἀδιαιρέτως, μὴ μεταβαλὼν τὴν τῆς θεότητος αὐτοῦ φύσιν εἰς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς οὐσίαν, μήτε τὴν οὐσίαν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν φύσιν τῆς αὐτοῦ θεότητος, οὐδὲ ἐκ τῆς θείας αὐτοῦ φύσεως, καὶ ἧς πρὸσελάβετο ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, μίαν φύσιν ἀποτελέσας σύνθετον. John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa* 3 (PG 94: 985c & 988a. Patrologia graeca. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857-1886). Readers may examine the Greek text for its context by going to this link: https://ia800304.us.archive.org/10/items/patrologiaecurs62mign-goog/patrologiaecurs62migngoog.pdf

45. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 101. The Latin states, "*hoc est, itaim cum caro illa inceperet existere, jam erat per assumption seu unionem facta propri Dei Verbi caro*." Martini Chemnitii, *De Duabus Naturis in Christo* (Francofvrti & Wittebergae: Sumptibus Haeredum D. Tobiae Maevii, & Elerdi Schumacheri, MDCLIII), 34. Reprinted in Doctor

Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici, De Coena Domini, De Duabus Naturis in Christo, Theologiae Jesuitarum* (Chelsa, MI: Lutheran Heritage Foundation, 2000). Italics added.

46. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Being and Nature of the Unborn Child* (Lenoir, NC: Glen Lorien Books, 2000), 12.

47. New Testament scholar Andreas Köstenberger writes: "The Greek verb σκηνόω (*sk*), commonly translated 'dwelt,' more literally means 'to pitch one's tent.' This rare term, used elsewhere in the NT only in the Book of Revelation (7:15; 12;12; 13:6; 21:3) suggests that in Jesus, God has come to take up residence among his people once again, in a way even more intimate than when he dwelt in the midst of wilderness Israel in the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34-36)." Andreas J. Köstenberg, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 41.

48. Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender and Theology in the Gospel of John* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 34.

49. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 1896), 27.

50. Ibid. The Septuagint (LXX) is a third century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. This translation became the Bible of the first-century Christian church as it moved out into the Greco-Roman world.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., 27-28.

55. Graham A. D. Scott, "Abortion and the Incarnation," *Journal of the Evangelical Society* 17, no 1 (Winter 1974): 37.

56. Ibid.

57. St. Maximus of Turin, "Sermon 5: On the Birthday of Saint John the Baptist," in *The Sermons of St. Maximus of Turin*, eds. Walter J. Burghardt and Thomas Comerford Lawler; trans. Boniface Ramsey, vol. 50, Ancient Christian Writers (New York; Mahwah, NJ: Newman Press, 1989), 24.

58. Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1-9:50* in *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 72-73.

59. Ibid, 73.

60. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, 70. Italics added for emphasis. The Latin text says: "*Quae unio adeo arcta, individua, inseparabilis & indissolubilis est, ut divina natura* του λόγου *nec velit, nec possit, nec debeatextra hanc cum carne unionem, sed in arctissimailla unione cogitari , quaeri aut apprehendi. Caro etiam assumpta, non extra, sed intraintimum* του λόγου *assumentis conplexum cogitanda, quaerenda, & apprehendenda est, non quod* λόγος *antea non fuerit per se proptia, singularis perfecta persona, nec quasi individua illa massa naturae assumptae, ante & extra illam unionem, per se subsistens, & propria seu peculiaris persona, ali quando fuerit, sed quod hypostasis beneplacito, massdam illam humanae naturae, propria personalitate destitutam, in ipso momento, cum primum conciperetur & formarctur, in unitatem suae personae assumpserit*." Martini Chemnitii, *De Duabus Naturis in Christo* (Francofvrti & Wittebergae: Sumptibus Haeredum D. Tobiae

Maevii, & Elerdi Schumacheri, MDCLIII), 19. Reprinted in Doctor Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici, De Coena Domini, De Duabus Naturis in Christo, Theologiae Jesuitarum* (Chelsa, MI: Lutheran Heritage Foundation, 2000). The orthodox Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard writes: "*The form of the union consists in the hypostasis* [personality] *of the Word becoming the hypostasis* [personality] *of the flesh*...." Johann Gerhard, *On the Person and Office of Christ*. Trans. Richard J. Dinda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 109. The original Latin text is as follows: "*Formale unionis consistit in eo, quod* ὑπόστασις τοῦ Λόγου *sit facta carnis* ὑπόστασις." Iohannis Gerhardi, Loci Theologici, Tomus Primus, Locus Quartus (Berolini: Sumtibus Gust. Schlawitz, 1863), 498.

61. Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, 48-49.

62. Steven P. Mueller, ed., *Called to Believe, Teach, and Confess: An Introduction to Doctrinal Theology*, vol. 3 in *Called by the Gospel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 197.

63. In 1 Corinthians 2:8, the Apostle Paul writes concerning "the rulers of this age" who "crucified **the Lord of glory** (τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης)." Had Mary aborted her developing child in her womb, no matter what stage of development it was, she would have aborted "the Lord of glory." (Bold added for emphasis.)

64. *New American Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1986), Ps 51:5.

65. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1959), 403.

66. Italics is for emphasis. "[H]e himself likewise partook of the same things" is a translation of the Greek text which reads, "καὶ αὐτὸς παραπλησίως μετέσχεν τῶν αὐτῶν." Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition, Heb 2:14.

67. Italics is for emphasis. The translation "in every respect" is the Greek word ὁμοιωθῆναι from the word ὁμοιόω. The form of the word is an aorist, passive, infinitive. Here, it means "*become like, be like ... someone*." Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd rev. ed., 707. New Testament scholar Simon Kistemaker notes concerning Hebrews 2:17: "In this verse the writer of Hebrews explains the necessity of Christ's identification with man. In order to be of help to sinful man, Jesus had to become like his brothers in all but one way: he was sinless. Full identification was necessary; he was under divine obligation to become like his brothers." Simon J. Kistemaker and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Hebrews*, vol. 15, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 76.

68. John W. Kleinig notes concerning these verses that "[t]o free mankind from the fear of death, Jesus 'had to be made like his brothers in every respect,' Jesus did not just appear to be human; he was totally human in every way, apart from sin (4:15; 7:26).... After undergoing *the whole human life cycle*, the eternal Son of God became High Priest by passing through death to glory (2:10).... Yet even though he was ordained at his enthronement, his whole earthly life, with all that he suffered, prepared him for his work as the great High Priest of humanity (5:7-10)." John W. Kleinig, *Hebrews* in *Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 138. Does not this "life cycle" include conception? Note: Italics in the text has been added for emphasis.

69. Not simply after six weeks, or three months, or birth.

70. *New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1986), 1 Cor 5:19 & 21.

71. Jerome Kromayer, *Theologia Positivo-Polemica*, II, 91 quoted in Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 306. Kromayer's original Latin text says: "*Christus per omnes actatis nostrae gradus venit, ut immundam nostrum conceptionem et nativitatem radicitus curare.*" Quoted in Joh. Guilielmi Baieri, *Compendium Theologia Positivae*, vol. 3 ed. C. F. W. Walther (St. Louis: Luth. Concordia-Verlag, 1879; repr. ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Emmanuel Press, 2005), 26.

72. John Schaller, *Biblical Christology: A Study in Lutheran Dogmatics* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1981), 54.

73. St Gregory of Nazianzus, "The First Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter," *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, ed. John Behr; trans. Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham. Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 158. The original Greek text is, "Τὸ γὰρ ἀπρόσληπτον, ἀθεράπευτον· ὃ δὲ ἥνωται τῷ Θεῷ, πουτο καὶ σώζεται." PG 27, 181 & 184.

74. St Gregory of Nazianzus, "The First Letter to Cledonius the Presbyter,"156. The original Greek text is, "Εἴ τις διαπεπλάσθαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον , εἶθ' ὑποδεδυκέναι λέγοι Θεὸν, κατάκριτος. Οὐ γὰρ γέννησις Θεοῦ τοῦτό ἐστιν , ἀλλὰ φυγὴ γεννήσεως." PG 37, 177 & 180.

AI and Personhood

A Theological Perspective

Daniel Hackmann

What Is AI and Why Is It Called "Artificial Intelligence"?

For the purpose of simplicity and clarity, it would be good to start with a clear definition of AI. First mentioned in a summer school seminar at Dartmouth University in 1956, John McCarthy defined AI as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs. It is related to the similar task of using computers to understand human intelligence, but AI does not have to confine itself to methods that are biologically observable."[1] Many were not happy at that time with the notion of "artificial intelligence," as it sounded like something contrived or less than genuine, as opposed to "real intelligence." Since that early attempt at definition, the answer to the question "What is AI?" has become increasingly complex and complicated, to the point where the question is now being seen as unanswerable.[2] This has not only to do with what AI has become in its development in LLMs (Large Language Models) and generative AI, but what many proponents of AI would like it to become, namely AGI (Artificial General Intelligence) or so-called Superintelligence, far surpassing human intelligence, knowledge and reasoning. Mustafa Suleyman, CEO of Microsoft AI, stated in April of this year that AI "was a new kind of digital species" and that it is "a technology so universal, so powerful, that calling it a tool no longer captured what it could do for us."[3] Leaving aside the question as to whether Suleyman's claim is to be seen as hype or a real statement of what AI currently is, it is clear that his view is radically different than John McCarthy's original definition. The last part of Suleyman's quote raises an interesting question, namely, what is it that artificial intelligence should do, what is its purpose? While McCarthy's definition refers to tool-like qualities of AI ("using computers to understand human intelligence"), which presumably includes making machines that imitate human intelligence, Suleyman's statement points to a view of AI that far surpasses mere "toolness." What, then, does Suleyman and, by extension, Microsoft think that AI could or should do for us?

Many such optimistic and even utopian views of AI are heard in the current period between AI's "innovation trigger" and its "peak of inflated expectations," which we may soon be approaching.[4] Timnit Gebru, the founder of the Distributed AI Research Institute who formerly worked for Google and a growing number of

other voices are less enthusiastic about or outright skeptics of AI's touted abilities.[5] Referring to AI, Gebru has said, "A machine that solves all problems: if that's not magic, what is it?"[6] One reason for this skepticism has precisely to do with the question that has been there from the beginning of work with AI systems: Are machines capable of human intelligence, reasoning, and understanding? There have been some recent claims by Sam Altman, amongst others, that an AI system exhibited behavior that should be called reasonable because it seemed to have discovered a relationship between the name of a national capitol and its corresponding country on its own. But such claims have not been received with open arms, with some researchers claiming that such an AI system is just manipulating lookup tables, but not understanding the connections between what is being looked up and what is being referenced. Similar criticisms have been aimed at LLMs. LLMs are fed datasets with more text material than any human could read in a thousand lifetimes, and statistical models are very good at selecting what word is likely to be the best choice to follow another when we pose specific questions to ChatGTP or Copilot. However, the AI systems filtering and sorting the various combinations of words have no idea what those words mean. "Yes, large language models are built on math—but are they doing something intelligent with it?"[7] It may well be that the various definitions of AI have more to do with what various researchers and corporations want to see in AI and its potential to fulfill their dreams than with reality.

Beyond Artificial Intelligence

This leads to a larger issue that many have observed recently. We humans tend to recognize or infer intelligence in non-human entities, including AI systems, and humans have dreamt and written about such possibilities for millennia. The Greek myth of Talos, more than 2,000 years old, tells of a robot made by a god and tasked with protecting Crete by throwing boulders at enemy ships.[8] Stories from Hebrew folklore mention an inanimate monster, Golem, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* both deal with inanimate beings that humans either create or reanimate. The human tendency to anthropomorphize things has been around for a very long time, and the dream of producing artificial humans has a much longer cultural history than the recent AI boom. Just as in the case of all past tendencies to anthropomorphize, current tendencies to do so with AI are also leading to misunderstandings regarding the nature and potential of these technologies. William Smart and Neil Richards call this tendency to anthropomorphize "the android fallacy."[9] That is, we are making a category mistake regarding the nature of these technological inventions.

Some scholars claim there is more going on here metaphysically and philosophically than just a tendency to anthropomorphize. Timnit Gebru and Émile Torres, in an article entitled "The TESCREAL Bundle: Eugenics and the Promise

of utopia through artificial general intelligence,"[10] argue that the stated goal of an overwhelming majority of high-tech firms is to build AGI,[11] not just AI, and that their goals are based on a series of ideologies which they identify as

1) Transhumanism: the central notion is that humanity can transcend itself.

2) Extopianism: libertarian version of transhumanism.

3) Singularitarianism: a type of transhumanism that emphasizes the melding of humans and machines in a coming utopia.[12]

4) Cosmism: the vision of the future that includes sentient AI, merging of machines and humans, space colonization, etc.

5) Rationalism: not to be confused with the Enlightenment version, this ideology was created in 2009 and concentrates on improving human reasoning and decision-making, mostly through AI.

6) Effective Altruism: Similar to Rationalism, but the altruists want to maximize their positive impact on the world.

7) Longtermism: combines much from the above ideologies, but places moral importance on "becoming a new posthuman species, colonizing space, controlling nature, maximizing economic productivity and creating as much value within the accessible universe as possible."[13]

Before getting into a serious discussion of these ideas, let us note here that many of these notions are ludicrous and considered by many on closer analysis to be outdated and laughable. Gedru and Torres are convinced that the ideological basis of the TESCREAL bundle is very similar to that underlying Anglo-American eugenics in the twentieth century. In addition to the overwhelming ethical issues involved with eugenics, it is also clear that the kind of future personhood advocated by the TESCREAL ideologies will only be open to a very wealthy elite.[14]

Furthermore, they argue that AGI cannot be tested and that it is being built without any clear idea of what goal it should have. It is simply assumed that AGI will be good for humankind.[15] Clearly, their reference to eugenics should raise important critical questions about where the search for AGI is heading. Rather than dealing primarily with the use of algorithms to make better and more intelligent machines, perhaps the real goal for many sponsors of this technology is indeed to upgrade or create a new type of humanity.

AGI Ideologies and Human Personhood

Although many of these ideologies sound much more like science fiction (with the emphasis on fiction) than serious positions, we must recognize that they are

attractive to many and have put people like Ray Kurzweil on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Given the extent of their influence, it is now time to consider what implications such ideas have and how they compare and contrast with other worldviews, especially those expressed in Christian theology and ethics. In this section, I will concentrate on how these discussions relate to discussions of human nature and explicitly with the Christian concept of *imago Dei*. The section following this one will look at the issues from the other way around, discussing whether AI systems could be considered to have personhood.

First of all, let us examine the bundle of TESCREAL ideologies. All of them subscribe to a kind of "improvementism," some with the emphasis on corporeal transcendence (the first four), the others with upgrading, enhancing productivity, and generally making everything better. A seemingly unlimited faith in the power of AI and a bright future pervades these worldviews, and all of them can be characterized as utopic.[16] Not only do utopias not exist, but fundamental questions can be raised about whether they could ever exist, at least based on past history. Is Ray Kurzweil's *The Singularity is Nearer*[17] founded on any real evidence? He states that computer superintelligence will already be achieved by 2029. His claims are predictions that many hold to be far-fetched at best, and are seen by many AI researchers as counterfactual. Many see "AI Hype" and "smoke and mirrors" as being a better description of the current status of AI and AGI than the predictions touted by Ray Kurzweil, Sam Altman, and Yuval Harari.[18] But whether these ideologists of transhumanism are making realistic predictions or merely marketing hype is one thing. What is more disturbing about their utopic claims about humans and the world has to do with the implications and accuracy (or, as I will claim, inaccuracy) of their description of reality.

What logical or philosophical grounds do they have for their optimism? What reason do we have to believe that humans will develop AI technologies in a benign way? Will the technologies become better and more caring if they are designed to think on their own and make complex decisions? What possible reason could we have for believing such claims? With extremely rare exceptions, every technology developed by humans has been capable of being used both for good and very evil ends. Not only are human technologies subject to good or evil usage, but they are also susceptible to good or evil design and, by inference, can embody good or evil values. This means that some technologies may be designed purposefully with evil intent, and benign usage of such technologies is, therefore, very limited or unlikely. One good example is the machine gun. Its stated and designed purpose is to rapidly kill as many humans as possible. In the case of AI systems that are enormously complex, what reason do we have to hope that benign development will be the rule and not the exception? What if these complex systems are allowed to develop themselves further? At the very least, the transhumanists who are already

celebrating the merging of AI and humans are not taking seriously the problem of evil. The problem of evil, of course, begins with those who design AI systems, that is, in the inevitably fallible nature of humans. If the major idea in transhumanism is that humans can transcend their own fallibility, it is hard to see what basis that hope could have. History has shown, again and again, precisely the opposite, that is, that human fallibility has been enhanced and multiplied in the use of destructive technologies, not transcended.

Speaking of transcendence, many of the transhumanists or singularitarians share the article of faith that the technological future will bring the elimination of death. That is, in other terms, humans will become godlike and be capable of deciding just how long they want to stay around on the earth. Describing such views, Mark O'Connell stated the following already seven years ago:

> It is their belief that we can and should eradicate aging as a cause of death; that we can and should use technology to augment our bodies and our minds; that we can and should merge with machines, remaking ourselves, finally, in the image of our own higher ideals.[19]

Yuval Harari expresses it this way:

> Humans don't die … because God decreed it, or because mortality is an essential part of some great cosmic plan. Humans always die due to some technical glitch…. [E]very technical problem has a technical solution. We don't need to wait for the Second Coming in order to overcome death.[20]

Human fallibility is only seen as a lack of technological progress, not as a fundamental limit to our self-transcendence. Given enough technological progress, we shall be like God. Harari, Kurzweil, and many transhumanists, including Julian Huxley, who came up with the position in 1957, are atheists. Some of them are wont to say that God does not exist, YET. Again, where does this overly optimistic view of humans as *homo deus* come from, and is there any evidence for it?

Interestingly, transhumanists generally deny the existence of a benevolent Creator who breathed intelligence and life into humans. A majority are materialists who believe that the guiding principle in the universe is chance, not intelligence, let alone intelligent design. Yet they have incredible confidence in the ability of humans to unlock the secret of life and upgrade themselves to creator gods.[21] There is absolutely no evidence in biological and biochemical science that humans will ever be able to create life, let alone create a god. As John C. Lennox explains, it is self-evident "that evolution did not produce life in the first place. The reason is that biological evolution, whatever it does, can only get going when life (*bios*) is already present! You cannot explain the existence of something on the basis of one of its consequences."[22] No one really knows how life initially started, and that fact is widely acknowledged today.

It should be sufficient at this point to note that the worldviews and faith exhibited by many AGI-optimists or utopians in the benevolent development of these technologies are, at best, ungrounded and, at worst, absolutely chilling.[23] If the guiding principle of human development is chance, their hope in a bright future can only be empty, if not cynical. Furthermore, let us point out that these notions are indeed metaphysically and not empirically based, and the grounds for their faith are less realistic than other options.

What implications do transhumanist notions have for the concept of personhood? One basic assumption made is that there is no given human nature or human personhood. The idea that humans are made in the *imago Dei* is rejected out of hand and replaced with the nineteenth-century notion that humans have created God, not the other way around. Our autonomous human selves are not only responsible for creating ourselves but are in a position to enhance ourselves and create and make new gods of ourselves. The "Longtermist" variety of transhumanism claims not only that this is possible but that it is our moral duty to transcend our own human nature.[24] This view of personhood claims that it is somehow intrinsic to human beings but can give no convincing account of why it should be intrinsic if its basis is material and unintelligent. Furthermore, it provides no account for the problem of evil, unless one considers evil simply to be an inferior level of development. But, as thousands of years of human development have demonstrated, technological development can certainly not be equated with virtue or leading to a more moral or ethical society.

Transhumanist notions actually go further, in that the final goal seems to be the abolition of human nature as it has been defined in the past. Human personhood in the future, enhanced by machine-generated intelligence, is considered by this worldview to be superior to mere biological existence. The Longtermist view considers it to be morally inferior to cling to traditional notions of personhood and human nature.

Now it is time to take a deeper look at the notion of *imago Dei* and contrast this notion and its associated notion of human finitude and fallibility with the prevalent ideas behind the development of AGI. *Imago Dei*, the notion that humans are created in the image of God, goes back to the beginning of the Judeo-Christian worldview. First of all, human nature or personhood is not intrinsic or evolved out of a material substrate. Human personhood is extrinsic to our material or corporeal basis. According to the book of Genesis, God gave humans specific characteristics that were Godlike, that is, similar to that of the Creator. These characteristics have typically been considered to include (not exhaustively) understanding, reasoning, consciousness, and an ability to love or care for that which is not oneself. It should also be noted that the human as *imago Dei* does not include the idea that the human is God, or a part of God. Human beings are similar, yet inferior to God and are finite, not infinite. The notion of finitude as a part of human personhood includes that notion of fallibility. Not only are humans capable of fallibility, but they also, in

fact, demonstrate failure and evil actions throughout the entire scope of history. At the very least, this initial sketch of what personhood means demonstrates not only a realistic analysis of the human condition but also points to a grounding for hope if, indeed, humans behave in accordance with the image of God. The fact that this set of notions locates the source of creativity outside of human nature itself adds humility to this notion of personhood, as opposed to the boundless pride demonstrated in the views expressed in transhumanism.

Furthermore, the notion of *imago Dei* has other advantages. If we are indeed created rather than the ultimate Creator, we should, therefore, be much more averse to the idea of "playing God." Playing God or assigning God-ness to something that is not God has, from the beginning of the Judeo-Christian tradition, been seen as idolatry, a breaking of the first and most important of the ten commandments. "Playing God," of course, means taking on a role that is diametrically opposed to the notion of *imago Dei*. Playing God can only result in injustice, evil, and destruction. The notion of *imago Dei*, therefore, has not only a positive role in assessing the importance of human personhood and life but also provides a curb or limit regarding human behavior.

One can also make the argument that attempting to erase a biological, spirit-endowed human nature and person and replace it with a "superior" transhuman version incorporating machine-like qualities is precisely that: playing God. Philosopher J. Budziszewski wrote already more than twenty years ago:

> To abolish and remake human nature is to play God. The chief objection to playing God is that someone else is God already. If He created human nature, if He intended it, if it is not the result of a blind fortuity that did not have us in mind – then we have no business exchanging it for another.[25]

Imago Dei points directly to the notion that human personhood comes directly from the intelligent and benevolent mind of God, a mind that values all human persons equally, not based on their IQ-levels or usefulness for the world's economic future. Why did the God of the universe create and endow humans with the *imago Dei*? The teleology here includes the notion of caring, of creating an I-Thou relationship, of fellowship with God.

This notion of human personhood can also be helpful in our discussion about AI and AGI. For Christians, the ultimate superhuman is already present in the God-man, Jesus. It is not necessary for us to abolish an outdated notion of humans and replace it with a god we have made. We can rest assured that the notion of personhood presented in TESCREAL ideologies is much less powerful as a description or prediction of the future than the notion of *imago Dei*. The notion of *imago Dei* includes the notion of human creativity, which is grounded in God's creativity. This creativity can be used to create new technologies that can indeed enhance and

improve human life. There are numerous examples of narrow AI that do just that. But *imago Dei* also includes an ontological limiting principle. We are limited and finite as creatures, and playing God is a violation of those principles, which are not accidental technological hurdles to be overcome but part of the design itself that encourages social interaction, humility, and care for one another, as God has done for us.

The Personhood of AI/AGI

Let us now look at personhood and AI from the other way around. To this point we have discussed various implications for human personhood in light of developments in the areas of AI systems and AGI. Many have suggested that the concept of personhood should now be applied to AI systems.[26] That is, AI systems should be seen as persons. Some of this discussion originates from various AI optimists, who argue that Artificial General Intelligence is right around the corner, and thus, we should recognize that this new intelligence is very similar, if not identical, to human personhood. This argument amounts to claiming that our personhood is an evolutionary construction and that there is no good argument other than speciesism that should prevent us from granting AI systems personhood. Others are claiming that the notion of personhood itself is flawed.[27]

This is not the place to lay out all of the current discussions regarding personhood, as a comprehensive treatment of these topics would demand an article at least as long as the present one. But for our concerns, it is important to note that many scholars are advocating the status of personhood for AI systems, and for a number of different reasons. The argument above that AI systems are either already or will be indistinguishable from human personhood in the very near future because of their rapidly developing intelligence amounts to claiming that AI personhood would simply be an extension of natural personhood. Two other arguments for AI personhood have also been voiced. One argument focuses on what AI systems now can do and whether their perceived creativity points to a type of personhood. For example,

> A computer program like a word processor does not own the text typed on it, any more than a pen owns the words that it writes. But AI systems now write news reports, compose songs, paint pictures—these activities generate value, but can and should they attract the protections of copyright law?[28]

Legal scholars tend to answer this question negatively. Still, there are already examples in China (ironically enough) where attempts have been made to protect AI systems with indirect application of copyright statutes. Some note that if AGI or even sentient AI develops, there will certainly need to be new considerations regarding the personhood of AI issues. The argument for declaring AI systems to have personhood also involves protecting the creators of AI systems. Until now, no

AI systems have been recognized as inventors, and patent law universally demands the name and address of an inventor of a patentable technology. These arguments all concern the protection of AI systems, which some believe will be enhanced by assigning them personhood, just as it tries to protect human personhood. What, of course, requires ethical and theological reflection is the assumption that human assignment of personhood to something that is nonhuman is a good strategy and what the implications of such a strategy would be. In a section of issue 55, number 2 presented in *Zygon* in June 2020 and entitled "Artificial Intelligence and Robotics: Contributions from the Science and Religion Forum," there is an article by Michael S. Burdett entitled "Personhood and Creation in an Age of Robots and AI: Can We Say 'You' to Artefacts?"[29] There he argues that a Christian theology of creation should indeed consider understanding AI "artefacts" as more than mere "things." But the authors of the forum do not go so far as to advocate personhood status across the board for AI systems.

This strategy is already being used in other areas, for instance in environmental or ecological law, where various nonhuman entities have been assigned the status of personhood. Already in 2017, after an extended legal struggle, the Whanganui River and the Te Urewera forest in New Zealand were declared to be persons.[30] The reason the status of personhood was assigned was in order to protect these natural resources in a way that their "thingness" was seen as not being able to provide. The arguments for this move were based on the concept of a legal person (as in a limited liability or GmbH company) and proposed as a new type of personhood. The hope was that the river and forest could be defended in court as persons and hence fend off environmental misuse better. By extension, such arguments could also be used to avoid the misuse of AI systems.

The other set of arguments has to do with protection *from* AI systems of the future. Some legal scholars argue that the status of personhood for AI systems would allow us legal protection because the status of personhood provides an agent that can be sued and, if necessary, punished in a way that a non-person cannot. For instance, a dog that maliciously bites a child is not held morally or ethically responsible for its behavior in a court of law. This does not mean that the dog in question would not be punished or exterminated, but the responsibility for its behavior always lies with its owner. In a scenario with a misbehaving sentient AI or AGI that had the status of personhood, it is then argued that the assigning responsibility or blame would be enhanced, as there would actually be an entity present that could be sued or punished.[31] This sounds to some like a wrongheaded strategy that could result in a complete watering down of the notion of personhood or personality. Brandeis Marshall claims that assigning AI the status of personhood is premature for various reasons, not the least of which is that we are really not clear at this point what AI or AGI is or whether AGI or superintelligence will ever exist. She recommends instead

"that we should focus first on building a social framework for AI use that protects the civil rights of all humans impacted by AI."[32]

While there may be some merit in thinking about AI personhood as analogous to legal persons, with their ability to enter contracts, be held legally responsible and able to be sued, there are also a number of distinct disadvantages that should be thought through carefully. Legal persons are able to hold property, buy and sell other legal entities (also persons!), hire and fire employees, and accumulate wealth. Are these the kinds of properties we want to assign to AI systems, and what possible reason do we have to think that these systems would use these faculties in a benevolent way? One argument against the analogy between AI systems as persons and the legal persons exemplified by companies is that the latter are made up of human persons. That is, there is a factual connection between their personhood and human personhood. In the former case, this does not obtain.

It is exactly this construction of an LLC or GmbH that provides a creepy loophole for AI systems as persons. Dr. Lance B. Eliot describes a procedure in which an AI could become an LLC or GmbH:

> Basically, a human goes ahead and forms a type of corporation commonly known as an LLC in the United States (a Limited Liability Company). The human puts in place an operating agreement that specifies the LLC will be entirely and solely governed by AI (or, if you prefer, makes reference to an "autonomous system" as an alternative phrasing). The human that founded the LLC makes sure to transfer the AI as to its originating ownership into the LLC. Finally, the human bows out of the LLC and fully dissociates themselves from the corporate entity.[33]

If this makes AI ethicists and theologians nervous, it should. Eliot states that this sleight of hand is possible not only in the USA but also with GmbHs in Germany and, Switzerland and in other countries. Various legal scholars have already affirmed that such a transformation of ownership would be possible. The result of such a magic trick is that an AI could act just as any other limited liability company does but without any human persons involved. It can hire and fire at will, accumulate wealth and property, and of course, oppress its employees, if it seems fit. The answer to the question of whether assigning personhood to AI can protect us from the excesses of Evil AI should now be quite clear. As a matter of fact, our assigning personhood to any nonhuman entity probably does nothing to that entity's inherent nature or status. The only thing that has changed is our perspective vis-à-vis that entity. Our anthropomorphizing of AI is a particularly dangerous case of what can result when we confuse our vision of what AI is and will become with reality. As Lance Eliot suggests, "Be very careful of anthropomorphizing today's AI," and he points out that Machine Learning and Deep Learning (forms of modern AI) are merely

filtering functions and "there isn't any AI today that has a semblance of common sense and nor has any of the cognitive wonderment of robust human thinking."[34] What we do know is that AI systems pick up the biases of their developers and that these developers may themselves not be aware of the biases they are passing on to the AI systems. Thus, our haste to assign personhood to AI systems is likely to fail or have negative ramifications, especially as we do not seem to know to what we might even assigning status of personhood.

In what ways might Christian ethical and theological notions be useful when considering whether to assign the status of personhood to nonhuman entities? Is something more precious if it is assigned the status of personhood even if it is not human? Or is the category of human personhood with associated human rights something that cannot or should not be assigned to other entities? Does a river in New Zealand or a lagoon in Spain have the same human rights as a human person? It is certainly the case that if I were to, for example, declare the cherry tree in my yard to have personhood, my tree's nature would not change. However, the way I perceive the tree would change. But would purposefully cutting the tree down be the equivalent of premeditated murder? Could the tree be held legally responsible for the damage it did to my house in the case of a storm? We quickly realize that notions of personhood are inescapably tied to ideas like consciousness, understanding, caring, language ability, and so forth. Anthropomorphizing nonhuman entities does not make them human by any stretch of the imagination.

In fact, the anthropomorphism of AI may compromise human dignity rather than enhance it. It is hard to imagine how feeling empathy with a tree, for example, is the equivalent of raising of the tree to human level. It seems more likely that we are lowering ourselves to the level of a tree.[35] But the ontological claim in the concept of the *imago Dei* is that God did not just pretend that human life is something like God's likeness, but that human life actually is in God's likeness. Whether we can similarly imbue nonhuman entities such as AI systems with human life as *imago homo* is symptomatic of something humans have struggled with for millennia, as we have attempted to imitate the creativity of the Creator.

Margaret Boden puts it this way:

> In a nutshell, over-reliance on computer "carers," none of which can really care, would be a betrayal of the user's human dignity.… In the early days of AI, the computer scientist Joseph Weizenbaum made himself very unpopular with his MIT colleagues by saying as much. "To substitute a computer system for a human function that involves interpersonal respect, understanding, and love," he insisted in 1976 is "simply obscene."[36]

On the other hand, the notion of *imago Dei* is all about the caring provision of a loving, Creator God. What a stark difference over against vapid transhuman ideologies.

Conclusion

In examining some of the issues surrounding AI and personhood, we have looked at the implications of our understanding of human personhood in the age of AI and whether AI systems should be considered persons. While it is clear that this whole area of research is vast and quickly developing and that there are many uncertainties even regarding the definition of AI and AGI, it is important and urgent that Christian ethicists and theologians engage not only in reflection about the direction such technologies are taking us but speak out with regard to many of the presuppositions and implications of these technologies for human personhood and life. It will simply not do to take a wait-and-see approach. Ideological, philosophical, legal, and moral arguments are being made for the necessity of accepting an essentially flawed transhuman view of the future of society and humankind. From a theological point of view, the TESCREAL ideologies are all theologies of glory. Based on unwarranted assumptions about what personhood really is, they invoke a teleology that denigrates human dignity and ends in what C.S. Lewis already in 1943 called "the abolition of man." A thoroughly Christian view of personhood with its positive insights and implications is needed now more than at any time in our lifetimes.

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Notes

1. John McCarthy, "What is AI? / Basic Questions," http://jmc.stanford.edu/artificial-intelligence/what-is-ai/index.html. Accessed July 29, 2024.
2. "Narrow AI" is perhaps easier to define as AI which enhances human capabilities, for example in the area of healthcare, where it can be used for more rapid diagnosis or guidance in neurosurgery. Here the goal does not seem to be superhuman intelligence or thinking. But even technological optimists see a need for caution here, especially in such areas as autonomous vehicles.
3. Cited in Will Douglas Heaven, "What is AI?," *MIT Technology Review*, July 10, 2024. https://www.technologyreview.com/2024/07/10/1094475/what-is-artificial-intelligence-ai-definitive-guide/. Accessed July 29, 2024.
4. First two phases of Gartner's famous Hype Cycle research methodology.
5. Gebru was forced out of Google, mainly because of her two articles where she was critical of AI. She had co-led the Google AI Ethics team.

6. Cited in Heaven, "What is AI?," July 10, 2024. https://www.technologyreview.com/2024/07/10/1094475/what-is-artificial-intelligence-ai-definitive-guide/ Accessed July 29, 2024.

7. Ibid.

8. Adrienne Mayor, *Gods and Robots* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 9.

9. N. M. Richards and W. D. Smart, "How Should the Law Think About Robots?" in *Robot Law*, eds., Ryan Calo, A. Michael Froomkin, and Ian Kerr (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), 18-21. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Robot_Law/7YpeCwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Robot+Law&pg=PR3&printsec=frontcover.

10. Timnit Gebru and Émile Torres, "The TESCREAL Bundle: Eugenics and the Promise of Utopia through Artificial General Intelligence," *First Monday* 29, no. 4 (April 1, 2024). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v29i4.13636.

11. Artificial General Intelligence. Ray Kurzweil, for example, says "The 21st century will be different. The human species, along with the computational technology it created, will be able to solve age-old problems…and will be in a position to change the nature of mortality in a post-biological future." Cited in John C. Lennox, *2084* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2020), 44. OpenAI defines AGI in its charter as "highly autonomous systems that outperform humans at most economically valuable work," "OpenAI charter," at https://openai.com/charter. Accessed July 15, 2024.

12. See Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005) and Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Nearer: When We Merge with AI* (New York: Viking, 2024).

13. Gebru and Torres, "The TESCREAL Bundle." https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/13636.

14. This discussion on Reddit in April 2024 reveals such concerns: https://www.reddit.com/r/singularity/comments/1cztcfa/why_would_the_elites_in_control_of_agi_do/?rdt=60199. Accessed July 16, 2024. The view expressed is that there seems to be no reason why wealthy elites should do anything benevolent with AGI. If the creators of AGI cannot be trusted to do anything benevolent with AGI, what hope do we have that AGI or a superintelligence would have a benevolent view of humanity?

15. Ibid.

16. Utopia refers by definition to something that has no place, that does not exist. It is instructive to note that boundless enthusiasm about the progress of science and society was a primary characteristic of 19th century European thought. Much of its optimism was dashed in the onset of World War I.

17. Part 2 of *The Singularity is Near*. The subtitle of the book is *When We Merge with AI*.

18. See for example, Jeffrey Funk, "Are we close to Peak AI Hype?" *Mind Matters*, July 12, 2024. https://mindmatters.ai/2024/07/are-we-close-to-peak-ai-hype/. Accessed July 29, 2024.

19. Mark O'Connell, *To Be a Machine; Adventures among Cyborgs, Utopians, Hackers and the Futurists Solving the Modest Problem of Death* (New York: Anchor, 2017), 2.

20. Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (New York: Harper, 2017), 22-23.

21. Gebru and Torres, in their conclusion, present a definition of AGI as "a system, which …seems to be an all-knowing machine akin to a 'god'" and then state, "We argue that attempting to build something akin to a god is an inherently unsafe practice." "The TESCREAL Bundle," section 8. https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/13636/11599. Accessed September 28, 2024.

22. John C. Lennox, *2084*, 103.

23. Gebru and Torres point out how discriminatory and racist some of the transhumanist ideas are: "The same discriminatory attitudes that animated first-wave eugenics are pervasive within the TESCREAL literature and community. For example, the Extropian listserv contains numerous examples of alarming remarks by notable figures in the TESCREAL movement. In 1996, Bostrom argued that 'Blacks are more stupid than whites,' lamenting that he couldn't say this in public without being vilified as a racist, and then mentioned the N-word (Torres, 2023a). In a subsequent 'apology' for the e-mail message, he denounced his use of the N-word but failed to retract his claim that whites are more 'intelligent' (Torres, 2023a). Also in 1996, Yudkowsky expressed concerns about superintelligence, writing: 'Superintelligent robots = Aryans, humans = Jews. The only thing preventing this is sufficiently intelligent robots.' Others worried that 'since we as transhumans are seeking to attain the next level of human evolution, we run serious risks in having our ideas and programs branded by the popular media as neo-eugenics, racist, neo-nazi, etc.' In fact, leading figures in the TESCREAL community have approvingly cited, or expressed support for, the work of Charles Murray, known for his scientific racism, and worried about 'dysgenic' pressures (the opposite of 'eugenic') (see Torres, 2023a). Bostrom himself identifies 'dysgenic' pressures as one possible existential risk in his 2002 paper, alongside nuclear war and a superintelligence takeover. He wrote: 'Currently it seems that there is a negative correlation in some places between intellectual achievement and fertility. If such selection were to operate over a long period of time, we might evolve into a less brainy but more fertile species, *homo philoprogenitus* ("lover of many offspring")' (Bostrom, 2002). More recently, Yudkowsky tweeted about IQs apparently dropping in Norway, although he added that the 'effect appears within families, so it's not due to immigration or dysgenic reproduction' — *i.e.*, less intelligent foreigners immigrating to Norway or individuals with 'lower intelligence' having more children." https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/13636/11599, section 4.2.

24. Longtermism "emphasizes the moral importance of becoming a new posthuman species." See Gebru and Torres, "The TESCREAL Bundle," section 4.2: https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/13636/11599

25. J. Budziszewski, *What We Can't Not Know: A Guide* (Dallas, TX: Spence Publishing Company, 2003), 56.

26. According to Simon Chesterman, "many of the arguments in favour of AI personality implicitly or explicitly assume that AI systems are approaching human qualities in a manner that would entitle them to comparable recognition before the law." Simon Chesterman, "Artificial Intelligence and the Limits of Legal Personality," *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (October 2020): 831. https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/1859C6E12F75046309C60C150AB31A29/

S0020589320000366a.pdf/artificial-intelligence-and-the-limits-of-legal-personality.pdf Accessed July 15, 2024.

27. Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby argues that the concept of personhood is unhelpful at best and "at the worst it is harmful and pernicious." Her suggestion is that bioethicists stop using the term altogether and look for alternatives. Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, "The End of Personhood," *The American Journal of Bioethics* 24, no. 1 (2024): 3. https://doi.org/10.1080/15265161.2022.2160515.
28. Chesterman, "Artificial Intelligence and the Limits of Legal Personality," 835.
29. Michael S. Burdett, *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 55, No. 2 (June 2020): 349.
30. A good discussion of this is presented in Gwendolyn J. Gordon, "Environmental Personhood," *Columbia Journal of Environmental Law* 43, no. 1 (2018): 87ff. https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/cjel/issue/view/392. Accessed July 15, 2024.
31. Interestingly enough, the notion of protection from environmental persons such as a river is not generally discussed. If the Whanganui River is a person, could it not, by the same logic as presented above also be held responsible for deaths and property damage when it floods its banks?
32. Brandeis Marshall, "No Personhood for AI" in *Patterns* 4, no. 10 (November 2023): Opening paragraph. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666389923002453. Accessed July 29, 2024.
33. Lance Eliot, "Legal Personhood For AI Is Taking A Sneaky Path That Makes AI Law And AI Ethics Very Nervous Indeed," *Forbes*, November 21, 2022. https://www.forbes.com/sites/lanceeliot/2022/11/21/legal-personhood-for-ai-is-taking-a-sneaky-path-that-makes-ai-law-and-ai-ethics-very-nervous-indeed/. Accessed July 29, 2024.
34. Ibid.
35. For an interesting discussion of the clear distinction between us thinking about what it is like to be a bat, which can only amount to our thinking about what we would be like as a bat and what it is like for a bat to be a bat, See Thomas Nagel, "What is it Like to be a Bat?," *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (October 1974): 435-450. https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Nagel_Bat.pdf
36. Margaret Boden, "Robot Says: Whatever," *Aeon*, August 13, 2018. https://aeon.co/essays/the-robots-wont-take-over-because-they-couldnt-care-less. Accessed July 15, 2024.

Law and Personhood

A Biblical and Medical Study from a Two Kingdoms Perspective

John Eidsmoe and Mary Huffman

"I'm not born yet! Am I a person? Can they abort me? Do I have a right to live?"[1]

Introduction

What does the law say about personhood? More specifically, when does one become a person in the eyes of the law, endowed with the right to life and other rights that attach to personhood?

This article focuses on these questions. We will examine not only constitutional provisions, statutes, and cases that address the beginning of personhood but also the deeper principles of law that lead courts and legislators to these conclusions and the sources of these deeper principles of law.

Law and morality are inextricably related. Much law protects moral concepts such as the sanctity of and the right to human life, the right to private property, and the right to be secure in one's own person, even to the point of imposing criminal sanctions on those who violate the rights of others.

And morality is, to a large extent, based upon religious principles. Most Western societies recognize and protect the right of individual persons to believe what they choose in the realm of religion, to express those beliefs freely, and to act consistently with those beliefs, provided that in so doing, one does not violate the rights of others or otherwise violate social norms. But at the same time, Western societies protect rights and moral values rooted in one religion, the Christian religion, because, as we will demonstrate, the Christian religion and the Judeo-Christian Bible have influenced Western societies to a far greater extent than have other religions. These include rights like the right to life; we punish people criminally if they violate that right by unlawfully killing another person. While respecting freedom of conscience in religion, most Western societies still uphold the moral belief that human life is sacred and of infinite value, which is a religious belief, based upon the Holy Bible, Genesis 9:6 and Exodus 20:13.

Much of our Western legal tradition has been shaped by the Judeo-Christian tradition and by the book honored and read by Jews and Christians, the Bible. As far back as the year A.D. 890, Alfred the Great began his law code, the Book of Dooms, with the Ten Commandments.[2] On October 4, 1982, Congress passed Public Law 97-280, declaring 1983 the "Year of the Bible," and the President, Ronald Reagan, signed the bill into law. The opening clause of the bill is: "Whereas Biblical teachings inspired concepts of civil government that are contained in our Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States…."[3]

Joshua Berman, Senior Editor at Bar-Ilan University, contends that the Pentateuch is the world's first model of a society in which politics and economics embrace egalitarian ideals. Berman states flatly:

> If there was one truth the ancients held to be self-evident it was that all men were not created equal. If we maintain today that, in fact, they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, then it is because we have inherited as part of our cultural heritage notions of equality that were deeply entrenched in the ancient passages of the Pentateuch.[4]

It is therefore entirely appropriate to look to the Bible as one of the basic sources of Western law concerning personhood.

Luther recognized the roles of both revelation and reason in matters of civil government. As he wrote in his *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, "Surely, wise rulers, side by side with Holy Scripture, would be law enough."[5] He taught that some portions of the Old Testament are *gesetz* (natural law) and *recht* (natural justice) and are of universal application, others are *sachsenspiegel* (laws unique to Israel). The Ten Commandments are *gesetz*:

> Natural law is the Ten Commandments. It is written in the heart of every human being by creation. It was clearly and comprehensively put on Mount Sinai, finer indeed than any philosopher has ever stated it.[6]

Applying Luther's two-kingdom theology to an issue like abortion, a Christian might appropriately formulate his position based upon revelation (i.e., the Scriptures). But when he enters the secular arena of politics, he will come before people who do not necessarily honor the Scriptures. He need not leave the Scriptures behind because some in civil government will honor the Bible as the Word of God, and still others may recognize that the Bible contains human wisdom. But he must also be prepared to articulate his position in terms of reason and medical evidence.

In this article, we will examine, first, what the Bible says about the beginning of personhood and second, whether this Biblical view of the beginning of personhood is compatible with that of reason and medical science. [Note: We are examining two things: 1. What the Bible says… and 2. Whether this Biblical view is compatible.... For this reason, "examine" should come before "first" and "second."

The Bible on Personhood: Biblical Passages Supporting the Personhood of the Preborn Child

THE AUTHORS BELIEVE THAT many passages of the Bible, taken together as a whole, point inescapably to the conclusion that personhood begins at fertilization.[7] We will examine those passages.

When Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, came into the presence of Mary who was carrying Jesus in her womb, Elizabeth declared that "the babe leaped in my womb for joy" (Luke 1:44). That doesn't sound like a fetus or fertilized egg; that sounds like a child! It reminds us of Rebekah, of whom we read, "And the children struggled within her...." (Genesis 25:21-26). These preborn[8] children displayed traits that would follow them for most of their lives.

The original languages used in these accounts make no distinction between born and preborn children. Of all the Greek words used for child, *brephos* connotes a baby or very small child.[9] That's the word attributed to Elizabeth's baby: "The *brephos* leaped in my womb for joy." We see the same word in the next chapter: "Ye shall find the *brephos* wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Luke tells us in 18:15 that "they brought unto him also *brephe*, that he would touch them," clearly referring to children already born. And in II Timothy 3:15 Paul uses the same word: "From a *brephos* thou hast known the holy Scriptures...." The same word is used for a child in the womb, a child newly born, infants already born, and a child either still in the womb or sometime after birth.

Another Greek word used for "son" is *huios*.[10] In Luke 1:36 the angel tells Mary, "And, behold, thy cousin, Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a *huios*." And the angel tells Mary in Luke 1:31, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a *huios*." Two verbs, "conceive" and "bring forth," with the same direct object, a "son" or *huios*. And years later, when Jesus is a young man, God the Father says to Him, "Thou art my beloved *huios*" (Luke 5:22). Again, the same Greek word used for a preborn child, a newborn child, and a young man.

The same is true of the Old Testament Hebrew. The same word used for the preborn children in Rebekah's womb, *bne*, is also used for Ishmael when he is 13 years old (Genesis 17:25) and for Noah's adult sons (Genesis 9:19).[11] And Job says in his anguish, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man (*gehver*) child conceived" (Job 3:3).[12] The Old Testament uses *gehver* 65 times, and usually it is simply translated "man." Job 3:3 could be accurately translated as "There is a man conceived."

The Biblical authors identify themselves with the preborn child. In Psalm 139:13, David says, "Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb." Isaiah says, "The Lord hath called me from the womb" (49:1). And in Jeremiah 1:5 we read,

"before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." They don't say "the fetus that became me"; that person in the womb is "me."

Job wishes he could have died before he was born: "Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!" (10:18). How can the preborn child die if he or she is not alive?

And David says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). There was nothing sinful about the act of David's conception; this passage establishes that the preborn child has a sinful nature. How can a non-person have a sinful nature? And while other verses establish the child's personhood before birth, this passage shows his or her humanity all the way back to conception!

Clearly the Bible, especially in its original languages, treats the preborn child the same as a child already born. The Bible knows nothing about "potential human beings"; to the authors of Scripture, there are only human beings with potential.

So the Bible, taken as a whole, teaches that the preborn child is a living human being.

Objections: Bible Passages That Some Use to Oppose the Personhood of the Preborn Child

Abortion supporters generally shy away from Scripture, because numerous Bible passages demonstrate that the preborn child is a human person. But grasping at straws, they sometimes point to two passages that they think support the pro-abortion position (The authors decline to use the term pro-choice because the baby isn't given a choice). They cite Genesis 2:7, claiming that this passage proves that life begins at birth rather than at fertilization, and Exodus 21:22-25, claiming that this passage proves that Hebrew law did not provide legal protection for preborn babies. In this section we will demonstrate that these passages, when properly translated and interpreted, strongly support the pro-life position.

Genesis 2:7: The Breath of Life?

The terms translated "living soul" in the King James are *nephesh* and *neshemah*,[13] which mean person or living being. Various translations say "living soul" (World English), "living being" (New International), "living soul" (Aramaic Bible), "living creature" (Literal Standard Version), "and the man began to live" (Good News Translation), "and the man started breathing" (Contemporary English Version), and others.

Some argue from this passage that one isn't fully a human person until he takes that first breath, but an analysis of this verse does not support that position.

First, this is a one-time event. The formation of Adam does not answer the question whether human life begins in the womb, because Adam was never in a womb. He was the first man, and he was formed out of the dust as an adult, mature human being. Obviously God had to give him a soul/spirit, because there was no other way he could get one. Never has anyone else been formed out of dust; not even Eve, who was formed out of Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21-24). Adam was formed out of inorganic matter, the dust of the earth, but Eve was formed out of organic matter, Adam's rib. Before God breathed into Adam the breath of life, Adam was something like a clay statue. This has been true of no one else since the time of Adam, and God has not breathed into anyone else the breath of life.

Second, even if we concede that one must breathe air in order to be human, the fact remains that the preborn child uses oxygen. He just takes it in through a placenta rather than through his mouth and nostrils. There are certain medical procedures by which air is inserted into the womb, and occasionally the preborn child will take a gulp of air during that procedure. Does that mean the child then becomes a person, even temporarily?

Birth is simply a dramatic change of environment by which the child begins to breathe for himself. This by no means makes him any more a person than he was before.

Exodus 21:22-25: Legal Protection for Preborn Children?

In the King James Version, the passage reads:

> If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him: and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

The key phrase is in verse 22, and the King James translation is essentially accurate: "her fruit depart from her." Abortion defenders read this as saying that she has a miscarriage, and they take it that damages are owed for injury to the mother but not for the death of the preborn child. Therefore, they reason, the life of the preborn child is entitled to no legal protection under Biblical law.

But an analysis of the Hebrew words used in this passage demonstrates that the word rendered "fruit" is *yehled*,[14] which is found 89 times in the Old Testament. In every other passage in which the term is used for child, it refers to a normal childbirth. In no other passage does it refer to anything less than a human person.

The word for "depart" is *yatsah*.[15] Wherever this word is used in reference to childbirth (Genesis 25:23-26, 38:28-30, Ecclesiastes 5:14, Jeremiah 20:18), it refers to a normal childbirth, with the possible exception of Numbers 12:12 where it may refer to a stillbirth but not a miscarriage.

Most translations recognize this. These include the New Living Translation ("gives birth prematurely"), Berean Study Bible ("her child is born prematurely"), Geneva ("her childe depart from her"), Holman Christian Standard Bible ("so that her children are born prematurely"), Brenton Septuagint Translation ("her child is born imperfectly formed"), Coverdale Bible ("ye frute departe from her"), New International Version ("she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury"), and many others. The original 1971 New American Standard Bible[16] said, "so that she has a miscarriage," but the 1995 version corrected this error so that it reads, "so that she gives birth prematurely."

A very few translations have erroneously rendered this to mean "miscarriage." The Contemporary English Version reads: "Suppose a pregnant woman suffers a miscarriage as the result of an injury caused by someone who is fighting. If she isn't badly hurt…." The Good News Translation says, "so that she loses her child, but she is not injured in any other way."

If Moses had wanted to speak of a miscarriage, there are two Hebrew words he could have used: *shakol*,[17] which he used for miscarriage just two chapters later in Exodus 23:26 and which is also used for miscarriage in Hosea 9:14. Or he could have used *nephel*,[18] which is used for miscarriage in Job 3:16, Psalm 58:8, and Ecclesiastes 6:3. But instead, Moses used the words which denote normal childbirth, and I am convinced that Moses, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said exactly what he meant and meant exactly what he said – a premature but live birth.

And the word for "mischief" is *ahsohn*,[19] which can mean anything from death to a sore finger. Some dogmatically assert that this refers only to harm to the mother, but the fact that it appears right after normal childbirth demonstrates that it includes harm to the child as well.

Armed with this knowledge, let's look at the passage again. Two men are fighting. One is the husband of a pregnant wife, and the passage presupposes that he is in the right and the other party is the aggressor. Somehow, the wife gets involved; maybe they roll in her direction, or maybe she comes to the aid of her husband. She is struck, goes into labor, and gives birth prematurely. If there is no harm to the wife/mother or child, the aggressor will pay the husband/father the damages he has caused to him by starting the fight. But if there is injury to either the wife/mother or child, the Hebrew *lex talionis* or law of like punishment applies. This is the principle of "let the punishment fit the crime," and it even includes the death sentence for causing the death of the wife/mother or child.[20]

In the current abortion debate, the Exodus passage might be the most important of all, confirming what we said earlier, that the Biblical passages taken as a whole point inescapably to the conclusion that personhood begins at conception.

In summary, many Bible passages establish the personhood of the preborn child.

Church Fathers on Personhood

Church tradition has also been instrumental in the formation of Western law. For this reason, and because Justice Blackmun in *Roe* and Justice Stevens in his Webster dissent cited Catholic Church teaching to justify Roe v. Wade, let us briefly survey church history and its effect on Western law.

The Didache, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, a manual dating as early as A.D. "50...or as late as 80 or 90,"[21] commanded, "You shall not kill a child in the womb, or expose infants."[22] The Church Father Tertullian, writing around A.D. 197, cited extensively from Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures.[23] He also noted that Hippocrates, Asciepiades, Erasistratus, Herophius, and Soranos, "all knew well enough that a living being had been conceived, and pitied this most luckless infant state, which had first to be put to death, to escape being tortured alive."[24]

St. Hippolytus, writing around A.D. 228, condemned those who resorted to drugs "so to expel what was being conceived on account of their not wishing to have a child," declaring them guilty of "adultery and murder at the same time."[25] And St. Basil wrote in his letter to *Amphilochius, concerning the Canons*:

> The woman who purposely destroys her unborn child is guilty of murder. With us there is no nice enquiry as to its being formed or unformed. In this case it is not only the being about to be born who is vindicated, but the woman in her attack upon herself; because in most cases women who make such attempts die. The destruction of the embryo is an additional crime, a second murder, at all events if we regard it as done with intent.[26]

The Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church provides, "A person who procures a completed abortion incurs a *latae sententiae* [automatic] excommunication."[27] The Canon Law developed in the early centuries of the Christian Church out of early Church documents such as the Didache and was based on and interacted with the Scriptures, Roman and Greek Law, Byzantine Law, the Justinian Code, the decrees of emperors, and other sacred and secular legal documents.[28] The above citation from the Didache is evidence that the prohibition against abortion was part of the Canon Law from the beginning and consistently thereafter.

Biblical scholar Michael Gorman has noted in his book *Abortion and the Early Church*, that the "three important themes" that "emerged during" the first three

centuries of the Christian era were, "*the fetus is the creation of God; abortion is murder; and the judgment of God falls on those guilty of abortion*."[29]

The Reformers on Personhood

Nor was this view limited to the Church Fathers or to the Roman Catholic tradition. Martin Luther stated his position forcefully: "For those who pay no attention to pregnant women and do not spare the tender fetus become murderers and parricides."[30] John Calvin was just as clear: "If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a *fœtus* in the womb before it has come to light."[31]

Pennington notes that when King Henry VIII (1491-1547 A.D.) separated the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church, he proclaimed that "he, not the pope, was the source of all canon law henceforward."[32] Pennington adds, "Consequently, the Anglican Church preserved the entire body of medieval canon law and converted it into a national legal system."[33]

Common Law and Personhood

John C.H. Wu, Chief Justice of the Provincial Court of Shanghai, China, and later Professor of Law at Seton Hall, wrote that "…while the Roman law was a deathbed convert to Christianity, the common law was a cradle Christian."[34] Unsurprisingly, the common law of England therefore reflects the Judeo-Christian values of the Bible and the Church.

Why, then, under common law, was "quickening" (the point at which the mother can feel the preborn child move within her) the test for homicide prosecutions involving a preborn baby? Under common law, one could be convicted of homicide for the killing of a preborn child, only if quickening had already taken place. Does this mean the child was not legally a person before quickening?

The authors contend that this common law rule did not mean that the child did not become a person until quickening or that there was a right to abortion before quickening. Rather, it was a procedural matter of proof. One can be guilty of homicide only if the homicide victim was alive at the time of the alleged killing, and at that stage in the development of the common law, medical science had no way of proving the child was alive until the mother had felt the child move within her.[35]

Medical Developments and Personhood

As we noted earlier, following Luther's two-kingdoms model, the believer should first formulate his position on an issue like abortion based on God's revelation, the Scriptures. But when he enters the secular arena, he must be prepared to defend his position based upon reason and medical science. We will therefore next examine the conclusions of medical science on the personhood of the preborn child.

As medical science advanced, so did protection for preborn children. In the 1800s, when medical science was able to determine that the preborn child was in fact alive from the time of fertilization, laws were enacted in England and in the United States to prohibit abortion prior to quickening, in fact, to prohibit abortion at any time after fertilization. Villanova Law Professor Joseph W. Dellapenna, in his monumental *Dispelling the Myths of Abortion History*,[36] documented the changes in state laws in the United States in response to new medical information. For example, Lord Ellenborough's Act of 1803 prohibited abortion after quickening as a capital offense and punished abortion prior to quickening with fines, imprisonment, pillory, whipping, or banishment for up to fourteen years.[37] In 1837 Lord Ellenborough's Act of 1803 was amended to abolish the distinction between pre-quickening and post-quickening and make abortion a crime regardless of when performed.[38]

In 1857 the American Medical Association issued a report stating, "The independent and actual existence of the child before birth as a living being is a matter of objective science."[39] In the 1860s American medical doctors led a movement to criminalize abortion at all stages of pregnancy, and this movement led to the passage of laws prohibiting abortion in all 50 states.[40] Since that time, medical science has advanced further in its understanding of the preborn child, from the discovery of chromosomes (1879-83),[41] the location of genetic material within chromosomes of a cell (1902),[42] the components of DNA (1929),[43] and much more.

Modern medicine and modern science agree with Scripture's teaching concerning the beginning of human life. Consider the following established medical facts:

- From the point of fertilization, the child's DNA or genetic make-up is fixed and remains constant throughout the child's life. This DNA determines, to a large extent, the child's eventual bone structure, skin, eye, and hair color, and many other characteristics.[44]
- Two weeks after fertilization, the brain and the beginnings of the heart appear.[45]
- Three weeks after fertilization, the child already has his own blood supply and blood type. His/her blood and the mother's blood come into contact through a membrane but do not mingle. Three weeks after

fertilization, the heart is beating and a body rhythm is established that will remain constant throughout the child's life.[46]

- Four to five weeks after fertilization, the eyes, lungs, kidneys, and cerebral hemispheres of the brain begin to take shape. The heartbeat can be detected on an electrocardiogram.[47]
- During the sixth and seventh weeks, brain waves begin, and hands, feet, and legs begin to move. The baby can rotate his/her head and have hiccups, and the heart has four chambers. Girls begin to develop ovaries, and boys begin to develop testes.[48]
- By the end of the ninth week, the baby can suck his/her thumb, move his/her tongue, open his/her mouth, sigh, and stretch.[49]
- By the end of the twelfth week (third month, first trimester), the nose and lips are formed, and the child can make facial expressions.[50]

By the end of the third month, the child is about the size of an adult person's thumb, but all basic organs are in place. From this point on, development consists mainly of growth. Clearly, this is not a potential person; this is a person with potential.

In answer to those who claim the preborn child is nothing more than a part of the mother's body, we simply point out that about 50% of preborn babies are boys with male DNA. Common sense tells us that a male baby cannot be part of a female mother's body.

The Scriptural and medical evidence agree (which is no surprise because God is the Author of both): life begins at fertilization.

State Laws

As medical science advanced and the scientific facts of fetal development became known in the mid-1800s, states across the nation began adopting statutes that prohibited abortion from the time of fertilization, usually with an exception if abortion was necessary to save the life of the mother. Many of these were adopted as a result of efforts by the medical community. Harvard Law Professor Lawrence Tribe acknowledges,

> In the mid-nineteenth century regular physicians were the members of society most vocally committed to defending the value of human life. In 1857 Dr. Horatio Storer, a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology who was then the leading American advocate for the criminalization of abortion, launched a national drive by the ten-year-old American Medical Association (AMA)

> to end legal abortion. At its annual convention in 1859 the AMA called for the "general suppression" of abortions, including those performed before quickening. The physicians organized an effective media and lobbying campaign that focused on the fetus's right to life. Over time their efforts altered the prevailing attitudes about the practice in the United States.
>
> A moral component to the doctors' campaign cannot be denied. The movement to end competition for abortion services by having abortions declared criminal was motivated by a reluctance to perform abortions. On a professional level, adherence to the Hippocratic oath and to the ethical vision it implies underlay an important part of the movement to distinguish the regulars from other providers of medical services during this period. The oath expressly forbids giving a woman "an instrument to produce abortion," and it has been interpreted to forbid inducing abortion by any method.
>
> In personal terms, advances in science had given many doctors moral misgivings about abortion. Specifically, their more science-based view of human development as a continuous process rather than as a sudden event led them to question the relevance of the distinction between quick and non-quick fetuses.[51]

Tribe observes that as a result of this mid-nineteenth-century effort, "Within less than two decades, more than forty antiabortion statutes had been passed in the United States."[52]

Of particular significance is the Iowa statute against abortion in 1858. In 1857 and thereafter, Iowa joined other states in affirming this growing respect for the life of the preborn child.

In 1858, at a time when states across the nation were banning abortion because they recognized the personhood of the preborn child, Iowa prohibited abortion by enacting Chapter 165 Article 2 of the Iowa Code:[53]

> Section 4221: *Be It enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa*, that every person who shall willfully administer to any pregnant woman, any medicine, drug, substance or thing whatever, or shall use or employ any instrument or other means whatever, with the intent thereby to procure the miscarriage of any such woman, unless the same shall be necessary to preserve the life of such woman, shall upon conviction thereof, be punished by imprisonment in the county jail for a term of not exceeding one year, and shall be fined in a sum not exceeding one thousand dollars.

Of equal significance – and usually overlooked today — is the title of the Act:

"AN ACT for the Punishment of Foeticide"

The term "foeticide" comes from the Latin words *cedo* (to kill) and *foetus* (preborn child). The first known use of this word was in 1842, the very time in which science began to recognize the personhood of the preborn child.[54]

The framers of this Act recognized that abortion is not just a medical procedure performed on a woman; it is an act of killing a preborn child.[55] If the Framers of the 1857 Iowa Constitution had intended to protect the right to abortion by the Due Process Clause of Article I Section 1 or the Equal Application Clause of Section 6, as has been argued, it is highly unlikely that the Legislature would have enacted, and the Governor would have signed, an Act for the punishment of Foeticide the next year.

No, these provisions of the Iowa Constitution, the amendments of 1868, and the later advances toward women's suffrage, were intended to protect the right of all adults to do those things that were previously extended to white males. They were most definitely not intended to create a "right" to take the life of a preborn child at a time when the American Medical Association and most state legislatures, including the Iowa Legislature, were coming to a recognition that the preborn child is a living human person.

The Movement to Legalize Abortion

During the 1960s, a combination of factors, including the feminist movement and the sexual revolution, led to efforts to liberalize abortion laws. Colorado, North Carolina, and California liberalized their abortion laws in the late 1960s. In 1970, Hawaii legalized abortion before the twentieth week of pregnancy, followed by New York, Alaska, and Washington.

But at that point, the drive toward liberal abortion laws stalled. The Iowa Legislature rejected an abortion bill in 1971, and in 1972, referenda to amend state constitutions to legalize abortion were defeated 2-1 in Michigan and 3-1 in North Dakota. As Tribe says, "…between 1971 and 1973 not one additional state moved to repeal its criminal prohibition on abortion early in pregnancy."[56]

Failing in the legislatures and at the ballot box, pro-abortion forces turned to the courts.

Enter the Courts

Roe v. Wade

In an unprecedented and revolutionary decision, Justice Blackmun and six other Justices concluded in *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), that abortion is a constitutional right and therefore the anti-abortion laws of Texas and other states were unconstitutional. The majority held that the right to abortion, although not mentioned

in the Constitution, is a "liberty" implied in the "emanations" and "penumbras" of the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment.

Justice Blackmun did not exactly rule that preborn children are not persons, only that they are not "persons" within the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment. He presented very little evidence to support that conclusion. Although he mentioned that the American Medical Association had led efforts to suppress abortion in the late 1800s, he ignored the AMA's medical findings about the beginning of human life, findings that had been developed and that had come to light during the very time in which the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted. He acknowledged that states during the 1860s were adopting anti-abortion statutes but ignores the reason – the evidence of the personhood of the preborn child.

He acknowledged that "if this suggestion of personhood is established, the appellant's case, of course, collapses, for the fetus' right to life would then be guaranteed specifically by the Amendment."[57] Unfortunately, Justice Blackmun ignored the very evidence that the personhood of the preborn child was becoming a consensus at the time the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted.[58]

Because abortion is a fundamental right, Justice Blackmun said, it may be restricted only if the state has a compelling interest that cannot be achieved by less restrictive means. He set forth a "trimester" approach under which (1) during the first trimester of pregnancy there can be almost no regulation of abortion; (2) during the second trimester the state may regulate abortion only to protect the health of the mother; and (3) during the third trimester the state may regulate abortion to protect the life of the preborn child, because at the beginning of the third trimester the child is able to survive outside the womb. He did not say preborn children become "persons" at the beginning of the third trimester; rather, he said the state's interest in the life of that child becomes compelling at that point because the child is now viable.

Justice Blackmun presented very little historical, legal, or medical support for the use of the viability test, because very little support exists. Viability is a very subjective and speculative test. The point of viability may vary with the individual child, with the state of technology at the time, and from one society to another. When *Roe* was decided, viability was usually around six months; now it is at least a month earlier. But, in reality, there is no way of knowing for certain, so sometimes we set an arbitrary point like six months, or sometimes we leave it to a doctor's speculative opinion.

But why should viability be the point at which the State's interest becomes sufficient to justify restricting abortion? Viability would be significant only in those extremely rare instances in which a child is born prematurely or is removed from the womb by a C-section or other medical procedure. Otherwise, it is simply one more step toward childbirth.

Furthermore, the question of viability by its very nature is subjective in that it calls for an opinion. The question is whether, in the opinion of a doctor, the child is viable. One doctor might think the child is viable; another doctor might think otherwise. That opinion might vary depending upon the subjective beliefs of the doctor.

As Yale Law Professor John Hart Ely wrote:

> The Court's response here is simply not adequate. It agrees, indeed it holds, that after the point of viability (a concept it fails to note will become even less clear than it is now as the technology of birth continues to develop) the interest in protecting the fetus is compelling. Exactly why that is the magic moment is not made clear: Viability, as the Court defines it, is achieved some six to twelve weeks after quickening. (Quickening is the point at which the fetus begins discernibly to move independently of the mother and the point that has historically been deemed crucial—to the extent any point between conception and birth has been focused on.) But no, it is viability that is constitutionally critical: the Court's defense seems to mistake a definition for a syllogism.[59]

The Retreat from Roe v. Wade

ABORTION ADVOCATES HAVE STUBBORNLY claimed that *Roe v. Wade* set in stone legalized abortion. But ever since it was announced, *Roe* has come under steady criticism from all parts of the country, from legal scholars, judges, congresspersons, the clergy, the medical profession, state legislatures, the general public, and many Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court.

A. *Akron*

In *Akron v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health, Inc.*, 462 U.S. 416 (1983), Justice O'Connor said *Roe v. Wade* was "on a collision course with itself," because the age of viability was already earlier and, due to medical technology, was being pushed closer and closer to conception, while the age at which abortions could be performed safely (for the mother, not for the child) was being pushed closer and closer to actual childbirth.

B. *Thornburgh*

The move away from Roe continued in *Thornburgh v. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists* 476 U.S. 747 (1986). In this case, Chief Justice Burger, who had joined with Justice Blackmun in the *Roe* decision, now dissented, saying, "In my view, the time has come to recognize that *Roe v. Wade* ... 'departs from a proper understanding' of the Constitution and to overrule it."[60] [*Thornburgh* at 788.]

C. *Webster*

The departure from *Roe* became even more pronounced in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, 492 U.S. 490 (1989). In this case, the Court upheld provisions in a Missouri statute that stated that "[t]he life of each human being begins at conception," and that "unborn children have protectable interests in life, health, and well-being"; that before an abortion may be performed, if a doctor reasonably believes a woman is beyond the twentieth week of pregnancy, he must perform tests to determine whether the child is viable; that no public facilities may be used to perform or assist with abortions; and that no public funds may be used to encourage or counsel women to undergo abortions.

Sometimes the full significance of a legal opinion can be gauged by reading the tenor of the dissenting opinions. Justice Blackmun, the author of the *Roe v Wade* opinion, warned in dissent at 538 that "The plurality opinion is filled with winks, and nods, and knowing glances to those who would do away with *Roe* explicitly ... The simple truth is that *Roe* would not survive the plurality's analysis..." He concluded ominously at 560, "For today, at least, the law of abortion stands undisturbed. For today, the women of this Nation still retain the liberty to control their destinies. But the signs are evident and very ominous, and a chill wind blows." What Justice Blackmun called a "chill wind," others might call a refreshing breeze.

D. *Casey*

Planned Parenthood v. Casey, 505 U.S. 833 (1992), involved a Pennsylvania law that required notification of the husband for a married woman's abortion and the consent of one parent for a minor (with a judicial bypass exception), as well as informed consent and a 24-hour waiting period. The Court upheld all provisions of the law except for the husband's consent. The significant part of the case was that the plurality opinion essentially eliminated the strict scrutiny/compelling interest requirement of *Roe v. Wade* and replaced it with a new standard that asks whether a state abortion regulation has the purpose or effect of imposing an "undue burden," which is defined as a "substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion before the fetus attains viability." This represents a sharp departure from *Roe*.

E. *Carhart*

Gonzales v. Carhart 550 U.S. 124 (2007) further eroded *Roe v. Wade* by upholding a federal partial-birth abortion prohibition. The Court said, "Where [the State] has a rational basis to act, and it does not impose an undue burden, the State may use its regulatory power to bar certain procedures and substitute others, all in furtherance of its legitimate interests in regulating the medical profession in order to promote respect for life, including the life of the unborn." As in *Webster* and *Casey*, the

dissents clearly recognized the direction the Court was taking. Justice Ginsburg denounced the majority for their anti-*Roe* sentiments: "The Court's hostility to the right *Roe* and *Casey* secured is not concealed."

F. *Stenehjem*

The case of *MKB Management Corp. v. Stenehjem*, 795 F.3d 768 (8th Cir. 2015) involved a constitutional challenge to North Dakota's law prohibiting abortions after a fetal heartbeat can be detected. Author Eidsmoe wrote an amicus brief supporting North Dakota on behalf of the Foundation for Moral Law and Lutherans for Life, in which he urged the Court to disregard Roe's viability test and adopt North Dakota's heartbeat test instead, because, in contrast to the vagaries of viability, the heartbeat test is rock-hard science: either there's a heartbeat or there isn't. The Eight Circuit considered itself bound by the Supreme Court's viability test, but in an unusual action, the Eighth Circuit urged the Supreme Court to reevaluate the test, stating: "Although controlling Supreme Court precedent dictates the outcome, in this case, good reasons exist for the Court to reevaluate its jurisprudence." The Eighth Circuit noted that "the Court's viability standard has proven unsatisfactory," noting that in the 1970s the state could not protect a 24-week-old fetus because it did not satisfy the viability standard of the time, but because of advanced technology, it would satisfy the viability standard of today.

Akron ... Thornburgh ... Webster ... Casey ... Carhart ... Stenehjem. The move away from Roe v. Wade has been steady over the last forty-eight years.

Dobbs v. Jackson

Finally, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, 597 U.S. ___ (2022) the Court has at last taken the final step of overruling *Roe v. Wade*. Justice Alito's majority opinion could have gone in any of three directions:

(1) He could have held that the right to abortion is guaranteed by the Constitution and therefore abortion must be legal in all states, thus upholding *Roe v. Wade*.

(2) He could have held that the Fifth and the Fourteenth Amendments' protection of "life" encompasses the life of the unborn child, and therefore, abortion should be prohibited in all states.

(3) Instead, he took a middle course, holding that the right to abortion is not found in the Constitution and is not deeply rooted in our history and tradition, and therefore each state may prohibit, regulate, or legalize abortion as it sees fit.

Dobbs, therefore, does not address the question whether the preborn child is a person. The battle over personhood must therefore be waged in Congress, in state legislatures, in hospitals and medical schools, in the courts, in the classrooms, in the media, in the pulpits, and in every element of society. And it has been waged, and is still being waged, in the State of Alabama in a unique way.

The Alabama In Vitro Case

On February 16, 2024, the Alabama Supreme Court, in *LePage v. Center for Reproductive Medicine*, SC-2022-0515, SC-2022-0579, addressed another ramification of the personhood issue.

The case arose out of a lawsuit alleging that an Alabama clinic negligently allowed the destruction of frozen embryos. The parents sued the clinic, alleging the wrongful death of the frozen embryos. So the question arose: are these frozen embryos "persons" under Alabama law?

In 2018, the people of Alabama ratified the Sanctity of Life Amendment to the Alabama Constitution, which reads:

> (a) This state acknowledges, declares, and affirms that it is the public policy of this state to recognize and support the sanctity of unborn life and the rights of unborn children, including the right to life.
>
> (b) This state further acknowledges, declares, and affirms that it is the public policy of this state to ensure the protection of the rights of the unborn child in all manners and measures lawful and appropriate.
>
> (c) Nothing in this constitution secures or protects a right to abortion or requires the funding of abortion."

In keeping with this amendment, the following year (2019), Alabama adopted one of the strongest pro-life laws in the nation.

Protecting preborn human persons, the Sanctity of Life Amendment makes no exceptions for children conceived in vitro. Children conceived in vitro are therefore "unborn children," entitled to "the rights of unborn children, including the right to life." Further, the Amendment establishes that Alabama's public policy seeks to "ensure the protection of the rights of the unborn child in all manners and measures lawful and appropriate."

Ruling that these frozen embryos were unborn children under the Alabama Constitution, the Alabama Supreme Court sent the case back to the trial court for further adjudication. Fearing that they could be held liable for discarded frozen embryos, the University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital suspended its in vitro program, and several other hospitals followed suit.

This prompted Alabama to adopt SB159. This new law does not dispute the court's finding that frozen embryos are human persons, but it exempts IVF providers from liability for the destruction of frozen embryos. Now that SB159 is law, many IVF providers are back in business.

Alabama House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter says "IVF is as pro-life as it gets." The authors might be inclined to agree – unless they were discarded frozen embryos.

The authors sympathize with would-be parents who cannot conceive a child and understand the parents' hope that IVF can enable them to have the family they so desperately want. And the bill would be less troubling if it provided immunity only for the unintentional destruction of frozen embryos, but it appears to protect their intentional destruction as well.

IVF clinics commonly produce multiple frozen embryos so the would-be parents can select one to be their child, while the others are either consigned to labs or discarded. But if the Alabama Constitution is correct – and I believe it is – these frozen embryos are human persons, and they have a right to live. Can we justify a practice that allows the killing of multiple preborn children so that parents can fulfill their dreams of raising families?

As medical science advances, the moral dilemma will become more difficult. At present, a frozen embryo can develop into a full-term baby only if it is implanted in a woman's womb. But that will likely change.

Medical science is working on the development of artificial wombs, or possibly the wombs of animals such as sheep. Once medical science achieves ectogenesis[61] (production of a baby outside the mother's body), this frozen embryo may develop into a full-term baby, and then into a child and an adult, without ever being implanted in a mother's womb. Can we doubt that such a person is a human being?

If we grant that this adult person who was conceived in vitro and was never implanted in a womb and never born is nonetheless a human being, when did that person become human? The answer must be at fertilization, for at that point the child has all the DNA largely determining his sex, skin tone, hair color, and so much about the adult person that child will become. And if so, that child at fertilization has the God-given right to life that the Alabama Constitution recognizes and that the Alabama Supreme Court has affirmed.

Maybe medical science will provide a solution to this dilemma. As Chief Justice Parker pointed out in his concurring opinion in *LePage*, some countries already limit the number of frozen embryos that can be produced. But while we recognize the joy of parents that their hopes for a child can finally be fulfilled, we must also remember that each frozen embryo produced in vitro is a human person whose life must be protected.

Are we really certain that God wants us to venture along these uncharted, trackless paths? Let us proceed with caution.

How Should We Then Respond?

First, we should thank God that courageous Christian jurists like Justice Alito at the U.S. Supreme Court and Chief Justice Parker at the Alabama Supreme Court had the insight and courage to follow the Constitution and to protect the preborn's right to life.

Second, we should consider the practical consequences of their decisions. *Dobbs* led to a backlash, partly among those misled to think the Supreme Court outlawed abortion. (It didn't; it left the issue to the states where it belongs.) Pro-abortion measures were passed and pro-life measures were defeated in legislatures and in popular referenda, even in conservative states. The Alabama *LePage* decision threatens even greater backlashes. If we overrule *Roe v. Wade* (the worst constitutional atrocity since *Dred Scot*), but the result is the defeat of pro-life legislators and other candidates across the board, along with the enactment of abortion-demand laws in every state, have we really scored a victory for the pro-life cause and the lives of the preborn?[62]

I'm still thinking about this. But I'm starting to conclude that, when enacting righteous laws and policies, legislatures and courts cannot get too far in front of public opinion. Otherwise, the people will dig in their heels and rebel.

E. C. Wines, a great Bible scholar whose *Commentaries on the Laws of the Ancient Hebrews* (1853) is a classic, observed that a literal application of the Mosaic Law "overlooks a material distinction – the distinction between laws intrinsically the wisest, and laws which are the wisest only when viewed as relating to times and circumstances." He continued:

> Civil laws, whatever be their source, to be adapted to the wants of any given community, must arise out of circumstances, and be relative to certain specific ends; which ends, under other circumstances, it might be the height of folly to pursue. When Solon was asked whether he had given the best laws to the Athenians, he replied: "I have given them the best that they were able to bear." Sage response! Is it not of much the same nature with that declaration of divine wisdom to the Jews, which has so perplexed biblical inquirers, "I gave them also statutes that were not good," [Ezekiel 20:25] that is, laws not absolutely the best, though they were relatively so. Montesquieu, with that penetration which belongs to all his philosophical reflections, has observed, that the passage cited above, is the sponge that wipes out all the difficulties, which are to be found in the law of Moses. …

> A wise legislator, whether divine or human, in framing a new code of laws for a people, will give attention to considerations of climate, of religion, of existing institutions, of settled maxims of government, of precedent, of morals, of customs, and of manners. Out of all these there arises a general tone, or habit, of feeling, thinking, and acting, which constitutes what may be called the spirit of the nation. Now, a lawgiver shows himself deficient in legislative wisdom, who makes laws which shock the general sentiment of the people, laws which are at war with prevalent notions and rooted customs, which strip men of long-established and favorite rights. …
>
> The principle that laws must be relative to circumstances, that they must grow out of the state of society, and be adopted to its wants, is founded in reason, and confirmed by experience.[63]

Does this mean we give up our legal and political struggle for the civil rights of the preborn? Absolutely not!

But while we litigate and legislate, we must also educate. We must impress people with the personhood of the preborn – and we have the high ground, because Biblical testimony and scientific evidence are both clear.

The battle for preborn life did not culminate with the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision. It now enters an intensified stage – the battle for the hearts and minds and souls of men. But it is a winnable war, so let us press on to victory!

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Notes

1. This statement is attributed to an anonymous preborn child but has not been documented.
2. Commissioners of the Public Records of the Kingdom, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England* (1840), 44-101. The Ten Commandments are on page 45. https://books.googleusercontent.com/books/content?req=AKW5QaeMxrHlRwL6ifCB13e9zQ_Su6QPtCk93Gv-JhNIsOPXi5l9vq2HUBW5WcBg5Dzxh1jlX0D79BNtQTf53vK_zc-ssELmIbfUY1_3h-vNhDiVaPZ_x4YeP06EHVleduCAQ_rCA8iCMWFxn0II-rfCXY__GvPuO-Rn2Cp7M-vB8xjsElNsnwbyLQNwV50gUWcF75EWWXUasCX2FDQpDvuBr8NMM0TbORH-DxvjssjocoimHuFGItLuIKhZBK5BFzy0S8GuRE8oln-_MrbFKQKgCACfijeIxSzmsi-39YFVdQUX7HHmBMaj7rFQ. Accessed August 27, 2024.
3. Public Law 97-280, October 4, 1982. https://www.congress.gov/97/statute/STATUTE-96/STATUTE-96-Pg1211.pdf. Accessed August 27, 2024.
4. Joshua Berman, Created Equal: *How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought* (Oxford, UK; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008),175, See also John Marshall Gest, The Influence of Biblical Texts Upon English Law, an address delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma xi Societies of the University of Pennsylvania June 14, 1910, https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7211&context=penn_law_review. Accessed August 27, 2024. Here Gest quotes Sir Francis Bacon: "The law of England is not taken out of Amadis de Gaul, nor the Book of Palmerin, but out of the Scripture, of the laws of the Romans and the Grecians" (16).
5. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 44: The Christian in Society I*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 203. WA 6, 459: "Furwar, vornunfftige regenten neben der heyligen schrifft werenn ubrig rechtgnug." Martin Luther, *An Den Christlichen Adel Deutscher Nation Von Des Christlichen Standes Besserung: D. Martinus Luther*, edited by Knaake, D. Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1888. http://ilt.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/den-christlichen-adel-deutscher-nation-von-des/docview/2897423640/se-2. Accessed August 27, 2024.
6. Martin Luther, quoted in Ewald M. Plass, *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959, 1994), 772-73. Luther says this in a January 1, 1540 sermon on the day of the Circumcision of Jesus. In this sermon, the text changes between German and Latin. The Weimar text has, "**Naturlich recht ist die 10 gebot. Dasselb** est scriptum in corde omnium hominum per Creationem. Et **ist klar und fein gefasst** in monte Sinai **und feiner** quam a philosophis." See Martin Luther, *Predigt am Tage der Beschneidung, nachmittags/CIRCUMCISIONIS Vesperi in D. Martin Luthers Werke, Schriften*, 49. Band (Weimar: Hermann Bohlaus Nachfolger, 1913), 1-2. Hereafter, WA. The bold indicates the German words. The Latin words are in regular type. http://ilt.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/circumcisionis-vesperi/docview/2897426476/se-2. Accessed July 27, 2024.
7. Until recently, the terms "fertilization" and "conception" were virtually synonymous, but in recent years some have altered the meaning of "conception" to include the period from fertilization to implantation, possibly so they can claim abortion pills do not kill a child. Except when quoting others or when the context requires the term "conception," the authors have chosen to use the term "fertilization."

8. Except when quoting others or when the context requires otherwise, the authors have chosen to use the term "preborn" rather than "unborn." Unborn implies the opposite of born, whereas preborn simply means "before being born."

9. See "Brephos" in Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952, 1967), 146-47.; "Babe" in W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappen, NJ, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940, 1967), 93-94.

10. See "Huios" in Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 841-43; "Son" in Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 47-50; "Child" in Colin Brown; *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1967, 1975), 287-91.

11. See "Ben" in L. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. & Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980, 1981), 113-15, § 254.

12. Ibid., 148-149, § 310.

13. See "Nepesh" and "neshemah" in Harris, Archer, & Walke, *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, 587-91, § 1395a and 605, §1433a.

14. Ibid., vol. 1, 378-80, § 867.

15. Ibid., vol. 1, 393-94, § 893.

16. The New Testament was published in 1963 and the entire Bible in 1971. See Gordon D. Fee and Mark L. Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 147.

17. Ibid., vol. 1, 923-24, § 2385.

18. Ibid., vol. 1, 586-87, § 1392.

19. Ibid., vol. 1, 60, § 138.

20. A survey of Biblical scholarship on Exodus 21:22-25 supports this interpretation. See Russel Fuller, "Exodus 21:22-23: The Miscarriage Interpretation and the Personhood of the Fetus," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 2 (June 1994): 169-94 https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/files_JETS-PDFs_37_37-2_JETS_37-2_169-184_Fuller.pdf. Fuller compares Hebrew law to the laws of other nations of the ancient Middle East, all of which punished the destruction of a preborn child as a criminal offense, among them the Sumerians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and the Hittites. Fuller demonstrates that the prevailing view throughout the Middle East was that the preborn child was a person, although the value of that personhood might depend upon his/her social class. See also, Dr. Thomas Constable, *Constable's Expository Notes, Exodus 21*, https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dcc/exodus-21.html; John Piper, "The Misuse of Exodus 21:22-25 by Pro-Choice Advocates," Desiring God, February 8, 1989, https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-misuse-of-exodus-21-22-25-by-pro-choice-advocates.

21. Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* (SPCK: London, UK; Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 26.

22. Ibid., 162. O'Loughlin has translated the entire *Didache* and placed it at the back of his book, 161-171. The Greek text says, "οὐ φονεύσεις τέκνον ἐν φθορᾷ ·, οὐδὲ γεννηθὲν ἀποκτενεῖς..." Διδαχὴ τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων II.3 in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge MA; London, UK: Harvard University Press, 1912–1913), 310–312.

23. Scriptures cited by Tertullian include Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139:15; Luke 1:41-42.

24. Tertullian, " Treatise on the Soul," in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Peter Holmes, vol. 3, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 206. "Hoc et Hippocrates habuit, et Asclepiades, et Erasistratus, et majorum quoque prosector Herophilus, et mitior ipse Soranus, certi animal esse conceptum, atque ita miserti infelicissimae hujusmodi infantiae, ut prius occidatur, ne viva lanietur." Quinti Septimii Forentis Tertulluliani, *Liber de Anima* (PL2:692A). He declared firmly, "For us murder is once for all forbidden; so even the child in the womb, while yet the mother's blood is still being drawn on to form the human being, it is not lawful for us to destroy. To forbid birth is only quicker murder. It makes no difference whether one take away the life once born or destroy it as it comes to birth. He is a man, who is to be a man; the fruit is always present in the seed." Tertullian and Minucius Felix, *Tertullian's Apology and de Spectaculis*, ed. G. P. Goold and W. C. A. Kerr, trans. T. R. Glover and Gerald H. Rendall, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann, 1931), chapter IX.8 (page 49). "Nobis vero semel homicidio interdicto etiam conceptum utero, dum adhuc sanguis in hominem delibatur, dissolvere non licet. Homicidii festinatio est prohibere nasci, nec refert natam quis eripiat animam an nascentem disturbet. Homo est et qui est futurus; etiam fructus omnis iam in semine est." Ibid., IX.8 (page 48).

25. Hippolytus, circa 228 A.D., quoted in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts, Sir James Donaldson, vol. 5, *Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 131.

26. Basil (c. A.D. 330-379), reprinted in *A Select Library of Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; trans. Blomfield Jackson, vol. 8, *Basil: Letters and Select Works* (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1895), 225. "Φθείρασα κατ' ἐπιτήδευσιν, φόνου δίκην ὑπέχει. ἀκριβολογία δὲ ἐκμεμορφωμένου καὶ ἀνεξεικονίστου παρ' ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔστιν. ἐνταῦθα γὰρ ἐκδικεῖται οὐ μόνον τὸ γεννηθησόμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ ἑαυτῇ ἐπιβουλεύσασα· διότι ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ ἐναποθνήσκουσι ταῖς τοιαύταις ἐπιχειρήσεσιν αἱ γυναῖκες. πρόσεστι δὲ τούτῳ καὶ ἡ φθορὰ τοῦ ἐμβρύου, ἕτερος φόνος, κατά γε τὴν ἐπίνοιαν τῶν ταῦτα τολμῶντων." S. Basilii Magni, "Epistolarum Classis II. Epist. CLXXXVIII. (PG 32:672a).

27. Code of Canon Law, Title VI, "Offences Against Human Life, Dignity and Freedom," Canon 1398, https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib6-cann1364-1399_en.html#OFFENCES_AGAINST_HUMAN_LIFE,_DIGNITY_AND_FREEDOM.

28. Kenneth Pennington, *A Short History of the Canon Law from Apostolic Times to 1917*, http://legalhistorysources.com/Canon%20Law/PenningtonShortHistoryCanonLaw.pdf Although, as Pennington notes that Martin Luther initially rejected the Canon Law, as his thinking developed, he came to appreciate the value of Roman Catholic Canon Law legal scholarship and concluded that that scholarship should be applied to the civil law and the common law; see John Witte, Jr., *Law and Protestantism: The Legal Teachings of the Lutheran Reformation* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 55-85; John Eidsmoe, *Historical & Theological Foundations of Law*, vol. 3, *Reformation and Colonial* (Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press/Tolle Lege Press, 2012), 983-84.

29. Michael J. Gorman, *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 47. In their

book *Not My Own: Abortion and the Marks of the Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 4, Terry Schlossberg and Elizabeth Achtemeier note, "Ironically, as controversial as the subject is today in the church, abortion historically was one matter over which the church never disagreed. Orthodox scholar Alexander Webster wrote that while it is often difficult to discern the patristic conscience on modern moral questions, there is no such hermeneutical difficulty when it comes to abortion. 'It is one of only several moral issues on which not one dissenting opinion has ever been expressed by the Church Fathers.'" Schlossberg and Achtemeier are quoting from "An Orthodox Word on Abortion" (Paper delivered at the Consultation on The Church and Abortion, Princeton, 1992), pp. 8-9. Schlossberg & Achtemeier, *Not My Own*, 4, n. 5. While we were unable to find an English copy of the paper given at the 1995 Consultation, an article by the same title [but in Romanian] can be accessed in *Pe Drumul Credentei Arhimandrit Roman Braga* (Rives Junction, MI: HDM Press, inc., 1995), 45-63. Webster makes a comment similar to the one quoted above by Schlossberg and Achtemeier. On page 51 of his article "Un Cuvant Ortodoz Despre Avort," Webster writes, "Ea este una dintre chestiunile morale asupra cărora Parintii Bisericii nu au formulat nici un fel de parere nonconformista." See Alexander F. C. Webster, "Un Cuvant Ortodoz Despre Avort," in *Pe Drumul Credintei Arhimandrit Roman Brage: Texte omagiale oferite de prelati, prieteni si savanti români si Colectie de texte antologice*, Editie ingrijita de colegiul de redactie al editurii ([Rives Junction, MI]: HDM Press, Inc., 2016), 51.

30. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 5: *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 26-30* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 382. WA 43, 692: "Qui enim gravidarum non habent rationem, nec parcunt tenero foetui, fiunt homicidae et parricidae." https://www.proquest.com/luther/docview/2897405399/Z300013133/9D45F3A5E9C64307PQ/2/luther?accountid=161176&sourcetype=Books. Accessed August 29, 2024.

31. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, vol. 3, trans. Charles William Bingham (Edinburgh: Calvin Tract Society, 1854), 42. Calvin's original words in Latin are, "Quòd si hominem domi suę occidi quàm in agrovidetur indignius, quoniam sua cuique domus tutissimum est receptaculu: multo atrocius censeri debet, foetum qui nondum in lucem editus est in utero necari." Ioannis Calvini, *Commentarii Ioannis Calvini in Quinue Libros Mosis. Genesis Seorsum: Reliqui Quatuor in Formam Harmoniae Digesti*. Editio Secunda (Genevae: Excudebat Gaspar. De Hus., 1573), 383 (780). https://books.googleusercontent.com/books/content?req=AKW5QafcCh3xNvJ-vHamkNUDi6RbgXO23g6a9xHLtJfcssNzobffwF07r98nlEoMzcIoMtKn4Bd8DTf3Gk54jAeJSa1GKUaUFTkrjCKCS8w_i7d7XXYwuHN56FMJ9L9TDgBC3eyiKwLHMYbqbgB-EUcGP2qZGw926uQ2GSxpBck1nwk1DtV-xsFiP7UGGtTLM9cfxIwfpmwyjLSI3fAm3pJPKbj7Pl1Het4CeaT0_CcOvkkc-pl9JFLOeSZI0mctQNNM7X5gte0GYu_70jC8mCAyNMtOuQtGWB-cD_cCTDuf8MB0KFAsA1Q. Accessed August 30, 2024.

32. Pennington, *A Short History of the Canon Law from Apostolic Times to 1917*.

33. Ibid.

34. John C.H. Wu, *Fountain of Justice: A Study in the Natural Law* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1955), 65. Legal scholars sometimes use different definitions of the common law. Professor Wu understood the common law to begin with the Norman rule of England, which began with the reign of William the Conqueror in AD 1066, and he regarded Henricus Bracton, the author of *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae (The Laws and Customs of England)*, as the "Father of the Common Law." Others, such as Sir William Blackstone, believed the common law predated the Norman Conquest and goes back to

the Anglo-Saxon England of Alfred the Great, and to the Anglo-Saxons in Germany before they came to England in the fifth century A.D. Author Eidsmoe develops the latter view in his *Historical and Theological Foundations of Law*, vol. 2: *The Cornerstone* (Ventura, CA: Nordskog Publishing, 2016), 687-960. Using Professor Wu's understanding of the common law, it was clearly Christian from its inception.

35. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England. Book the First* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1768), 129-30, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Commentaries_on_the_Laws_of_England/eK4WAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Commentaries+on+the+Laws+of+England,+Blackstone&printsec=frontcover. Accessed August 28, 2024.; see also Hicks v. State, No. 1110620, 2014 WL 1508698 (Ala. April 18, 2014) (C.J. Moore, concurring specially); see also John Eidsmoe, *Historical & Theological Foundations of Law*, vol. 3, *Reformation and Colonial* (American Vision Press/Tolle Lege Press, 2012), 1197 fn. 110.
36. Joseph W. Dellapenna, *Dispelling the Myths of Abortion History* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press 2006), see especially pp. 125-370 for the development of the law on abortion in England, in the American colonies, and in the United States. Justice Alito, in his majority opinion in Dobbs v. Jackson, ___ U.S. ___ (2022), cited Dellapenna extensively.
37. Lord Ellenborough's Act 1803, Act 43 Geo.3 c. 58, *Pickering's Statutes at Large* (Cambridge University Press 1804 Ed.).
38. Charles L. Lugosi, *When Abortion Was a Crime: A Historical Perspective, University of Detroit Mercy Law Review* 83 n. 2 (2006 Winter; 8): 51, 60.
39. See *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. at 141 (1973).
40. Amy Lind and Stephanie Brzuzy, eds., *Battleground: Women, Gender, and Sexuality*, vol. 1: A-L (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008), 2.
41. See, e.g., Genetic Timeline, https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/educational-resources/timelines. Accessed August 30. 2024.
42. Robert Snedden, *DNA and Genetic Engineering* (Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2002, 2008), 44.
43. See, e.g., Charles H. Calisher, "Sequences vs. viruses: Producer vs. Product, Cause and Effect," *Croatian Medical Journal* 48, no. 1 (2007) 103-106. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2080495/. Accessed August 28, 2024.
44. "Basic Genetics," https://www.hog.org/handbook/section/2/basic-genetics.
45. "First Trimester Babies Aren't Blobs of Tissue – They're Amazingly Complex," LiveAction, November 29, 2017. https://www.liveaction.org/news/first-trimester-babies-complex/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw-O6zBhASEiwAOHeGxRUPrV7EGM-73Fo8LdgF8IaQ-4jp_9ZSD_aX97Ox-ZEhgWZwYOHG8yhoCMf8QAvD_BwE. Accessed August 28, 2024.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid. A survey of the scientific literature reveals broad agreement on the stages of fetal development. However, there are slight differences among authorities as to the precise day or week these developments occur.

51. Lawrence H. Tribe, *Abortion: The Clash of Absolutes* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 30-31.

52. Ibid., 34.

53. Chapter 165 Article 2. *An Act for the punishment of Foeticide. [Passed March 15, 1858, took effect July 4, 1858; Laws of the Seventh General Assembly, Chapter 58, page 93.]. Revision of 1860, Containing all the Statutes of a General Nature of the State of Iowa, Which Are Now in Force or to be in Force, as the Result of the Legislation of the Eighth General Assembly* (Des Moines, IA: John Teesdale, State Printer, 1860), 723-24. https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/shelves/code/ocr/1860%20Iowa%20Code.pdf. Accessed November 4, 2023.

54. "Feticide," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feticide. Accessed August 28, 2024.

55. The use of the term "foeticide" also refutes the myth that abortion was prohibited because it was dangerous to the mother. All surgery was dangerous in those days. But we do not see laws prohibiting appendectomies or hysterectomies, only laws prohibiting abortion.

56. Tribe, *Abortion*, 51.

57. Strangely, this statement of Justice Blackmun is virtually forgotten, while his statement at 159 that "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins" is common knowledge. The possibility of personhood under the law at least partly answers why the majority did not broach the "difficult question," for life would implicate personhood, and personhood and the correlative right to life, by Justice Blackmun's own words, would foreclose any right to abortion.

58. James S. Witherspoon, "Reexamining *Roe*: Nineteenth-Century Abortion Statutes and the Fourteenth Amendment," *St. Mary's Law Journal* 17, no. 1 (1985-86):29-77. This article thoroughly presents this evidence that Justice Blackmun ignored. https://commons.stmarytx.edu/thestmaryslawjournal/vol17/iss1/3/. Accessed August 28, 2024.

59. John Hart Ely, "The Wages of Crying Wolf: A Comment on *Roe v. Wade*, 82," *Yale Law Journal* 25 (1973): 920, 924-25; quoted in Hamilton v. Scott, 97 So.3d 728 (Ala. 2012). See https://openyls.law.yale.edu/handle/20.500.13051/3571. Accessed August 30, 2024.

60. Chief Justice Burger also stated in his Thornburgh dissent at 786-87, "The rule of stare decisis is essential if case-by-case judicial decision-making is to be reconciled with the principle of the rule of law, for when governing legal standards are open to revision in every case, deciding cases becomes a mere exercise of judicial will, with arbitrary and unpredictable results. But stare decisis is not the only constraint upon judicial decision-making. Cases—like this one—that involve our assumed power to set aside on grounds of unconstitutionality a state or federal statute representing the democratically expressed will of the people call other considerations into play. Because the Constitution itself is ordained and established by the people of the United States, constitutional adjudication by this Court does not, in theory at any rate, frustrate the authority of the people to govern themselves through institutions of their own devising and in accordance with principles of their own choosing. But decisions that find in the Constitution principles or values that cannot fairly be read into that document usurp the people's authority, for such decisions represent choices that the people have never made and that they cannot disavow through corrective legislation. For this reason, it is essential that this Court maintain the power to restore authority to its proper possessors by correcting constitutional decisions that, on reconsideration, are found to be mistaken." Burger continued at 787-88: "The Court has therefore adhered to the rule that stare decisis is not rigidly applied in cases involving constitutional issues, see Glidden Co. v. Zdanok, 370 U.S. 530, 543 (1962) (opinion of

Harlan, J.), and has not hesitated to overrule decisions, or even whole lines of cases, where experience, scholarship, and reflection demonstrated that their fundamental premises were not to be found in the Constitution. Stare decisis did not stand in the way of the Justices who, in the late 1930's, swept away constitutional doctrines that had placed unwarranted restrictions on the power of the State and Federal Governments to enact social and economic legislation, see United States v. Darby, 312 U.S. 100 (1941); West Coast Hotel Co. v. Parrish, 300 U.S. 379 (1937). Nor did stare decisis deter a different set of Justices, some 15 years later, from rejecting the theretofore prevailing view that the Fourteenth Amendment permitted the States to maintain the system of racial segregation. Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). In both instances, history has been far kinder to those who departed from precedent than to those who would have blindly followed the rule of stare decisis. And only last Term, the author of today's majority opinion reminded us once again that 'when it has become apparent that a prior decision has departed from a proper understanding' of the Constitution, that decision must be overruled." Quoting Garcia v. San Antonio Metropolitan Transit Authority, 469 U.S. 528, 557 (1985).

61. See https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2017/06/19532/. Accessed August 31, 2024.

62. Despite increasing restrictions on abortion, the number of abortions has increased. After a marked decline in abortions from 1.6 million in 1990 to 865,000 in 2017, the number rose to 930,160 in 2020 and 1,026,690 in 2023. (Selena Simmons-Duffin, "Despite Bans in Some States, More Than a Million Abortions Were Provided in 2023," NPR, March 19, 2024; https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2024/03/19/1238293143/abortion-data-how-many-us-2023). Accessed August 28, 2024.

63. E. C. Wines, *Commentaries on the Laws of the Ancient Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1853; Reprint edition: Powder Springs, GA: American Vision Press, 2009), 118-21.

Arnim Polster's Lutheran Case against Abortion

John Ehrett

Introduction

Historians and commentators regularly argue that conservative Protestant opposition to abortion was a comparatively late-breaking phenomenon. According to such observers, while the Catholic Church's rejection of abortion was a longstanding position, many Protestant denominations did not coalesce around that view until the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling in *Roe v. Wade*.[1] For most conservative Protestants, these observers contend, the resulting rejection of abortion lay essentially downstream of opposition to desegregation and other racial integration policies—such that anti-abortion activism had more to do with building a coalition to defend racial hierarchy than with the status of unborn life.[2]

The case of Arnim Polster offers a notable counterexample to that claim. Polster, a pastor in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, served as co-chair of the Right to Life League during the decade preceding *Roe*, and engaged extensively in political efforts to prevent the liberalization of California's abortion laws.[3] Those efforts took a wide variety of forms, from organizing and writing to testifying before the California Assembly.

Though Polster's stances clearly followed from his theological commitments, his core argument against abortion did not primarily rely on religious claims or startling medical facts. Instead, it was a comparatively dispassionate argument, rooted first and foremost in the principle of the inviolability of human life. This approach to critiquing abortion reflected what, for Polster, was a longstanding concern for grounding emotional appeals in rock-solid first principles—a concern that specifically animated him in his role as a Lutheran minister.

While Polster is a virtually unknown figure today, his work exemplifies a distinctly Lutheran mode of engagement with the moral question of abortion. That question remains as contested now as it was in Polster's day. Now, with *Roe* no longer a live issue, Lutherans once again find themselves debating abortion "on the

merits" in state and federal political arenas alike. In the midst of such controversies, Polster's work may prove to be a valuable lodestar.

Arnim Polster's Life and Career

Arnim Henry Polster was born in 1922 in Antelope County, Nebraska.[4] While an infant, he suffered from a severe case of polio that left him permanently disabled, walking with a serious limp even forty years later.[5] Though the son of a Lutheran minister, Polster did not begin his career in the ministry.[6] Rather, Polster practiced as a lawyer in Missouri for five years before he was called to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.[7] At the Seminary, Polster obtained a Bachelor of Divinity degree and was subsequently ordained in 1956.[8] Following his ordination, Polster pastored three Lutheran churches over the course of a career that ultimately took him to the San Francisco area.[9] In 1962, he was installed as pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in Daly City, a congregation he would pastor for nearly two decades.[10]

Shortly thereafter, Polster's convictions led him to enter the public arena. In 1963, California lawmaker Anthony Beilenson introduced AB 2310, the "Humane Abortion Act," which sought to liberalize California's abortion laws by allowing abortion in cases of fetal malformation, among other rationales.[11] Polster himself, while serving as public relations director for the Missouri Synod's California and Nevada districts, testified against the bill in a 1964 hearing.[12] Before the Assembly, as historian Daniel K. Williams recounts, Polster acknowledged the ambiguity of the question of when exactly human life begins, but argued that policymakers should err on the side of preserving life—albeit with exceptions for cases of rape or where the mother's life was at risk.[13]

Most notably, Polster strongly opposed the bill's provisions allowing for abortions in cases of fetal disability, pointing to his own experience as a rebuttal of the bill's implicit premise that disabled life was not worth living. "My deformity was far worse than some of those for which abortions could be performed under this bill.... Yet I believe my life has been as purposeful as if I had not had polio."[14] A state policy approving abortions in cases where a child might potentially be born disabled, Polster contended, was an essentially eugenic regime that bore an eerie resemblance to prior historical evils. In Polster's words: "How far is it from such destruction of life proposed in this bill to the destruction in force in Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany under the guise of ridding society of the undesirable and defective?"[15] Staunch opposition from Polster and others, however, failed to dissuade then-Governor Ronald Reagan from eventually signing a version of Beilenson's bill into law.[16]

Despite this setback, Polster's testimony before the Assembly was not the culmination of his anti-abortion activism. Rather, it was a beginning. In 1967, the Right

to Life League began meeting in northern California—just a few months after the formation of its southern California chapter—with Polster at its helm.[17] Originally, the organization's board was composed exclusively of non-Catholics—Greek Orthodox and Methodist members were specifically solicited, Williams explains, "in order to convince state legislators that theirs was not merely a Catholic cause."[18] Far from being merely a convenient post-Roe rallying point for southern evangelicals opposed to racial equality, the abortion issue managed to galvanize theologically conservative non-Catholics in much further-flung locales.

Also in 1967, Polster published a bracing article, "Abortion: Mercy or Murder?" which was syndicated across multiple periodicals, Lutheran and Catholic alike.[19] This article represents the most developed treatment of his opposition to abortion. It is a concise philosophical exposition of what Polster viewed as the central issue in the debate—the ontological status of the unborn—and that issue's logical implications. As will be demonstrated, the piece resonates with a distinctly Lutheran theological tone that mirrors Polster's overall philosophy of preaching.

Polster died in 1982, survived by his wife and three children.[20] Hope Lutheran, the church he pastored for almost twenty years, remains an active congregation to this day.[21]

Polster's Theory of Persuasion

Missouri Synod Lutherans are not generally known for their political engagement. But what makes Polster's activism on the abortion issue particularly distinctive is not simply the fact of its existence in the first place, but that his developed arguments against abortion eventually took on a distinctively *Lutheran* form—a form that reflected the philosophy of preaching he had developed nearly a decade earlier at Concordia Seminary.

In June 1956, as part of his Bachelor of Divinity degree program, Polster presented a thesis entitled "The Importance and Means of Achieving a Balance in Appeals to Intellect and to Emotion in Preaching" to the faculty of Concordia Seminary's Department of Practical Theology.[22] In this thesis, Polster outlined a model of rhetoric ostensibly within the context of Lutheran preaching, considering how pastors ought to appeal to their hearers' heads and hearts, so to speak. However, the principles of rhetoric that Polster articulated in his thesis are not clearly restricted to the ministerial context. Rather, they go to the issue of persuasion as such. And Polster's later anti-abortion work in the public sphere would go on to bear them out.

Early in the thesis, Polster avers that, between appeals to the head and heart, one cannot be held up as primary. He insists that "appeals to intellect and appeals to emotion are found to be equally important, inasmuch as each complement and

strengthen the other. Achieving a balance between the two appeals is not only possible, but necessary, in every preaching situation" so as to "engage the total personalities of the hearers."[23] Polster's observation here is likely true, but the bare claim that "both intellect and emotion are important" would not make for a very compelling thesis. And indeed, despite the fact that Polster's introduction pays lip service to the "equal importance" of appeals to the intellect and emotions, a closer read of the thesis suggests a more nuanced position.

For Polster, while emotional appeals may have some merit, intellective appeals appear to clearly enjoy pride of place as the thesis unfolds. In his words, "while there are few who would agree that appeal to emotion can be entirely dispensed with, yet the fact remains that the intellect plays perhaps the fundamental role in the Christian faith."[24] Where Christian preaching is concerned, "the first requirement is the intellectual spadework—the intellectual foundation upon which appeal to the congregation is based."[25] Forgetfulness of this priority necessarily undermines the preacher's credibility, and if one is to err in one direction or the other, it is more suitable to err on the side of stolidity than frivolity: "It is far better to be considered a solid and substantial thinker than to have a reputation as a flashy speaker, who nevertheless is superficial, lacking in deep convictions, and careless with facts."[26]

The underlying reason for this, Polster argues, is that appeals to emotions will produce no lasting results unless they are backed up by objective truth claims. "Content is basic in preaching; ideas must be presented. The need to reach the argumentative can be met primarily by intellectual treatment. And no lasting influence can be hoped for unless an appeal is based on solid conviction."[27] Conversely, emotional appeals run the risk of "sentimentaliz[ing] and soften[ing] spiritual concepts, to offer this sentimentality to tired and troubled people as if it were escape from battle, to make it delicate and tender, or emotionally rousing or absorbing."[28] Where this occurs, the preacher has failed in his work.

To be sure, Polster is by no means an enemy of emotional appeals—he insists that preachers should "examine and study the psychological analysis of emotion, motivation and drive, and the relationship of these to self-interest, wants, needs, and desires."[29] The importance of doing so is especially true in light of the fact that human beings are not purely rational actors: they "will seldom respond to purely logical or rational motives, because of the maze of subconscious motives that constantly affect or influence the power of reason."[30] Consistent with the Lutheran tradition as a whole, Polster is strongly skeptical of humans' own independent critical faculties. In the end, though, for Polster, it remains true that "emotion is always coupled to some sort of conviction—it never stands completely alone."[31]

While Polster does not draw the point as finely as he might, the thesis makes clear enough that this overarching emphasis on the primacy of intellective appeals—that

is, efforts to establish in the hearers certain settled convictions regarding objective reality—is ultimately rooted in Polster's sense of the *objectivity* of Law and Gospel, a recognizable Missouri Synod Lutheran motif.

> Preaching solely to wants is futile when, as is often the case, a preacher must lead his hearers to deny various basic, primitive human wants, and to substitute biologically newer and weaker desires. He must have logical support if he is to produce not only an immediate effect, but also the more remote effect of keeping his hearers from backsliding the next day.[32]

In speaking of "logical support," Polster highlights the need to articulate the *objective reality* of human sinfulness—the Law—in a manner likely to inspire action or, at the very least, rouse his listeners from spiritual apathy.

In parallel fashion, a similar point can be made regarding the Gospel. "The need of man is still conviction—conviction upon which he can rely and upon which he build[s] his life," Polster writes.[33] As C.F.W. Walther and generations of Missouri Synod preachers after him stressed, Christians must be assured of their acceptance by God, and that assurance must be grounded in the objective work of Christ, irrespective of any feelings that ebb and flow.[34] For Polster, this appears to be a primarily intellectual point *from which* emotions arise—not vice versa.

Taken as a whole, Polster's thesis likely reflects the fact that its author was formed by the argumentative standards of the legal profession, and brought those skills with him into the work of Lutheran ministry.[35] In general, law runs on stark facts, not emotions. Doctrinally speaking, the Missouri Synod's emphasis on the objectivity of justification, and the implications of that principle for preaching, allowed Polster to articulate a distinctly Lutheran explanation for a rhetorical method in which he had already been trained. It was an approach he would later take with him into the public square.

Polster's Critique of Abortion

In his 1967 "Mercy or Murder?" article, Polster provided the most developed statement of his philosophical opposition to liberalized abortion laws, considering and rebutting a myriad of potential objections in turn. In so doing, Polster deployed the rhetorical approach he had previously defended in his thesis on the philosophy of Lutheran preaching: immediately identifying the objective reality at the center of the debate through an intellective appeal and working out the logical implications of that principle for other domains.

After framing the ongoing controversy over California's abortion laws, Polster states the central point up front: "One basic issue, however, remains at the heart of

the controversy: Does an abortion destroy a human life?"[36] For Polster, the issue comes down to this. If an abortion does *not* destroy a human life, then no restrictions on it can be justified: "it would be difficult to deny an abortion to any women [sic] who wants one, for whatever reason."[37] But if an abortion does destroy a human life, then "it would be difficult, if not impossible, to justify the taking of that life through abortion," with the lone exception of a case in which one must "choose between the life of the mother and that of the child," which Polster describes as a "tragic dilemma."[38] The nature of the unborn is the relevant objective fact, on the basis of which all other questions regarding abortion become peripheral.

In support of the proposition that the unborn ought to be considered human life worthy of legal protection, Polster puts forward two linked claims. First, there is no clear point during gestation at which something nonhuman abruptly—or even gradually—"becomes human." "From the moment of conception, through 9 months in the womb, birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and up to old age," Polster argues, "we can speak only for phases of growth. At no time is there a change in kind, only in degree of growth."[39] Second, in the *absence* of such an identifiable transition point, Polster argues the law ought to default to treating the unborn as human (and so entitled to legal protection). Though "it can be neither proved nor disproved that human life begins at conception," still the point holds that "human life may exist at conception and that an abortion may destroy the life of a human being."[40] And this *possibility* is all it takes for Polster's legal argument to get off the ground:

> So long as the possibility exists that a human life is at stake, can the law ever legislate the human guess that this possibility does not exist? Must not the law regard the fetus in the womb as a human being and a human life and grant all the rights and protection that our laws extend to all human life? The fundamental principle of the sanctity of human life would seem to demand that conclusion.[41]

A rationally grounded recognition of the humanity of the unborn is the key intellectual scaffold upon which all of Polster's arguments hang. From there, Polster proceeds to rebut the various defenses of looser abortion laws put forward by proponents.

First, Polster addresses the argument that abortion restrictions are "archaic and barbaric" because high numbers of desperate women die in illegal abortions.[42] Against this, Polster points out that "most illegal abortions are obtained by married women who simply do not want another child," undercutting the supposed "humanitarian" rationale.[43] The lives of the unborn are not being sacrificed for some higher goal but in service of convenience.

Second, Polster considers the argument that abortion is justified when the "mental or physical health of the mother" is at risk.[44] Having already acknowledged that abortion may be warranted in the single case where the life of the mother is

endangered, Polster is primarily concerned here with the "mental health" rationale. In his telling, this is an exception so large that it swallows any rule. "The normal mental and physical stresses of any pregnancy could be held to qualify, depending on the individual views of the doctors who make the decision."[45] Indeed, Polster points out that this was already happening, through "a process called dissimulation" in which "a case for the danger of suicide is built up in instances where the real reason is not one which would qualify."[46] Because the mother's life is not really at risk, invoking "mental health" as a justification for destroying unborn life entails that "the value of a human life is made subordinate to a lesser value"—which, for Polster, is unacceptable.[47]

Third, Polster considers the argument that the possibility of fetal deformity justifies abortion. As previously noted, Polster has little patience for this argument: "Can a defect or handicap ever be a legitimate ground for destroying human life? The Nazies [sic] in Germany carried this principle to its logical conclusion."[48]

Fourth, Polster addresses cases of rape or incest—which he describes as "tragic" and "deserv[ing] the utmost in sympathy and concern."[49] However, in a revision of the position he took before the Assembly in 1964, Polster declines to accept this scenario as a justification for abortion, appealing instead directly to his first principle. "If a human life has been created, can the circumstances of its inception be a valid ground for destroying that life? Can we name the crime committed by a newly conceived child, even in cases of rape and incest?"[50]

After offering some comments on the urgency of a Lutheran witness against abortion, Polster concludes the piece with a rousing statement of the full implications of his argument: "To deal with human life as if it were of no value cannot be right in the eyes of God or man. The gift of life is God-given. Can it be mercy to destroy life? Or shall 'liberalized' abortion be given its rightful name—murder?"[51]

Viewed as a whole, Polster's 1967 argument against abortion closely tracks the "Lutheran" rhetorical paradigm elaborated in his thesis on preaching. The article is characterized by an overarching emphasis on the centrality of intellective appeal, rooted in a first objective principle. Emotional appeals leaven the argument rather than constitute it: the conviction that underpins the article's highly charged language—such as "murder" and the invocation of the Nazis—is necessarily the conviction that *unborn life is human life*. There is no sentimentality or shock value here, but merely the sheer stark recognition that if Polster's objective principle holds, his conclusions logically follow.

In short, as far as discursive strategy goes, there is little daylight between Polster's understanding of hortatory preaching as a Missouri Synod churchman and his style of political engagement. For Polster, what matters first and foremost is the underlying reality of the matter in issue, and all else follows from that.

Implications and Conclusions

Both as preacher and activist, Polster captured the distinctively Lutheran insight that human beings always stand within a complex of realities that are always extrinsic to them, and upon which all theological judgments and sentiments ought to be predicated. In the case of abortion, that extrinsic reality is the objective reality of unborn human life, which is thereby worthy of legal protection.

Significantly, Polster did not view engagement on the abortion issue as illicit meddling by the church in public affairs. Quite the contrary, he argued that "Lutherans, as responsible citizens, ought to reflect the unchanging morality of God's law in deciding whether to support or to oppose these drastic changes in official public morality."[52] This is not a call for special privileges or prerogatives for the church. Rather, it is a simple acknowledgment that, given the objectivity of the point in issue, a "middle ground" position on abortion is essentially untenable. Either unborn human life is protected, or it isn't:

> You have the right, under our laws, to believe whatever you choose to believe so long as you do not infringe upon the rights of others. These proposed abortion laws would most certainly infringe upon the rights of the unborn. It thus becomes the moral obligation of all Americans, regardless of religious belief or lack of belief, to urge our lawmakers to protect those least able to protect themselves—the unborn.[53]

While the case for life can be pressed in "religious" or "non-religious" language, Polster was well aware that politics is not a domain somehow untethered from moral concerns. The law, in short, should track the objective reality of God's created order.

That point remains significant today. The objective question that was so foundational for Polster—the nature of the unborn—remains essentially unsettled even after the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, as Hadley Arkes and others have pointed out.[54] In seeking to navigate the complexities of abortion debates, both present and future, Lutherans ought to foreground that question once again—and, in so doing, learn from Polster's thoughtful example.

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Notes

1. See, e.g., Randall Balmer, *Bad Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), ebook ed.
2. See ibid., passim.
3. Sue Bird, "Kessel Co-Chairs Anti-Abortion Group," *San Francisco Foghorn*, April 28, 1967, p. 2.
4. "Rev Arnim Henry Polster," *Find a Grave* (2008), https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/30552894/arnim-henry-polster. Accessed July 30, 2024.
5. "Rev Arnim Henry Polster," *Find a Grave*; Daniel K. Williams, *Defenders of the Unborn: The Pro-Life Movement Before* Roe v. Wade (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 53; see also Charles K. Bellinger, *Othering: The Original Sin of Humanity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 73.
6. "Rev Arnim Henry Polster," *Find a Grave*.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. "About Us," *Hope Lutheran Church and School* (2023). https://www.hopedalycity.org/about-us. Accessed July 30 2024.
11. Williams, *Defenders of the Unborn*, 52–53.
12. Ibid., 53-54.
13. Ibid., 53.
14. Ibid., 53.
15. Ibid., 53-54.
16. See Donald T. Critchlow, *In Defense of Populism: Protest and American Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 155.
17. Williams, *Defenders of the Unborn*, 78.
18. Ibid., 78.
19. Arnim H. Polster, "Abortion: Mercy or Murder?" *The Voice* 9, no. 16 (June 30, 1967): 5. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/community.12943863.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3Ac-416e0cd8c74f619f05d91ac664bf7ab&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1. Accessed August 1, 2024.
20. "Lise Nichols Obituary," *San Francisco Chronicle* (2005). https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/sfgate/name/lise-nichols-obituary?id=8491057. Accessed July 30, 2024.
21. "About Us," *Hope Lutheran Church and School*.
22. Arnim Henry Polster, "The Importance and Means in Achieving a Balance in Appeals to Intellect and to Emotion in Preaching" (B.Div. thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1956). https://scholar.csl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1530&context=bdiv. Accessed August 4, 2024.
23. Polster, "Appeals to Intellect and to Emotion," 2.
24. Ibid., 40.
25. Ibid., 73.

26. Ibid., citing Robert T. Oliver, Dallas C. Dickey, and Harold P. Zelko, *Communicative Speech*, Rev. & Enl. Ed. (New York: The Dryden Press, 1955), 124.
27. Ibid., 77.
28. Ibid., 26.
29. Ibid., 27.
30. Ibid., 43.
31. Ibid., 46-47.
32. Ibid., 41.
33. Ibid., 38.
34. See, e.g., C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929), lecture 19.
35. Polster even writes at one point that, "as a general rule, the most influential and capable members of the audience, the successful business and professional men, the educators, are most susceptible to a reasoned approach, and may be alienated by a speaker who ignores appeal to their intelligence." Polster, "Appeals to Intellect and to Emotion," 39. Given Polster's professional background, it seems highly likely that he is speaking from his own experience here.
36. Polster, "Abortion: Mercy or Murder?"
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. See, e.g., Hadley Arkes, *Mere Natural Law: Originalism and the Anchoring Truths of the Constitution* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 2023), 235-36, 268.

Book Review Essay

Susan Grover Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), xvi + 207 pp. $34.99

Reviewed by Daniel Lioy

Susan Grover Eastman (hereafter "the author") is an Associate Research Professor Emerita of New Testament at Duke Divinity School. In her 2017 book, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology*,[1] she challenges traditional views of the apostle's understanding of humanity. These approaches often portray his anthropology (the study of humans and human behavior and societies in the past and present) as dualistic, separating the body (material) from the soul (immaterial). The author argues for a more holistic perspective, especially by drawing on recent advancements in philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience. Through this heuristic lens, the author offers a fresh reading of Paul's writings, particularly by emphasizing the human person as a unified being consisting of both body and spirit.

The following book review provides a chapter-by-chapter analysis and critique of the author's work. It begins with the volume's Introduction and ends with its Conclusion, followed by an overall assessment of the publication's contribution to the field of study.

Introduction: The Puzzle of Pauline Anthropology

Summary

Paul's view of selfhood is layered and complex. For instance, he viewed it as being shaped by both negative (sin) and positive (Christ) influences. This chapter reinterprets the apostle's concept of participatory (or corporate) identity through the lens of ancient thought (Epictetus) and modern (or contemporary) ideas of embodied, social personhood (yet without anachronism). What follows is a breakdown of the main points.

- *The Puzzle of Pauline Identity*: The author delves into the intriguing concept of a functional Pauline anthropology, exploring how the apostle portrays the self as deeply influenced by its relationships and involvement in both positive (Christ) and negative (sin, death) forces. Paul's unique perspective on identity is particularly evident in specific passages (e.g., Rom 7:15–18, 20; Gal 2:19–20), where he utilizes an unusual grammatical construction (i.e., "I no longer [verb], but [subject plus verb] in me").

- *A Second-Person Perspective*: The author proposes a fresh approach to understanding Pauline anthropology by engaging with ancient thinkers (e.g., the Stoic philosopher Epictetus; c. 55–135 AD) and contemporary ideas about personhood from philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience. This "second-person hermeneutic" emphasizes how relationships, not isolation, shape our identities.
- *Illuminating Paul in New Light*: On the one hand, the author does not think there is any direct influence or complete alignment between Paul's ideas and viewpoints arising outside of Scripture. On the other hand, the book seeks to shed new light on the apostle's teachings by viewing them through the heuristic lens of an interdisciplinary conversation. The goal is not simply to repeat the apostle's words but also to "interpret" them, that is, to express his anthropological insights in terms relevant to people today living in the global North (which is strongly shaped by a focus on self-reliance and personal independence).

Key Areas of Exploration

The author delves into several key issues, as follows:

- *Embodied and Social Identity*: How our physical bodies and social interactions influence the ways in which we think about and understand ourselves.
- *Participation and the Self*: How our involvement in relationships shapes our sense of agency and responsibility.
- *Transformation and Flourishing*: How lasting change and human flourishing occur within this participatory framework, especially in light of Christ's own participation in human existence.

Structure and Approach

The author's treatise is divided into two main sections, as follows:

- *Part 1: A Three-Way Conversation* introduces the key figures in this dialogue (namely, Epictetus, contemporary theorists, and Paul's use of body language).
- *Part 2: Participation and the Self* examines three crucial Pauline texts (Romans 7, Philippians 2, and Galatians 2, respectively) through the preceding interdisciplinary lens.

The author acknowledges the experimental nature of the above approach. It is offered as a provocative and suggestive way to reframe one's understanding of Pauline anthropology.

Chapter 1: The Way of Freedom

Summary

This chapter delves into Epictetus' nuanced perspective on the self. The author dissects how the stoic philosopher emphasized self-awareness, rationality, and individual agency as core components of human identity while simultaneously recognizing the connection people have to something larger. What follows is a breakdown of the main points.

- *Divine Spark and Self-Perception*: Epictetus believed humans possess an innate "fragment of the divine," which grants self-awareness and the ability to analyze incoming stimuli (impressions). This allows people to distinguish between objective reality and their subjective interpretations.
- *Inner Detachment and Prohairesis*: Epictetus advocated disengaging from external factors like wealth, relationships, and even one's physical body. Instead, the focus should be on *prohairesis* (προαίρεσις). This ancient Greek philosophical concept refers to a person's volition or will. It is often translated as "moral character" or "power of choice." It emphasizes control over people's internal judgments and desires, not external circumstances.
- *Freedom through Alignment*: Epictetus maintained that people achieve a profound sense of freedom by aligning their *prohairesis* with the universal reason or *logos* (λόγος) that governs the cosmos (often referred to as divine providence). This freedom comes from accepting what people cannot control and focusing on what they can, such as their own thoughts, judgments, and actions.
- *Social Embeddedness and Education*: The above notwithstanding, Epictetus did not advocate for complete isolation. He recognized the inherent connection people have to the social and cosmic order. The philosopher believed that philosophical education was crucial to rediscovering this "divine spark" within people and fulfilling their role within the larger whole.
- *Individual vs. Cosmic Self*: A central tension exists in Epictetus' view. His emphasis on *prohairesis* suggests an individualistic perspective. However, the concept of aligning with the cosmic logos implies a more participatory, objective view of the self as part of a larger order.
- *Contrasting Interpretations*: The chapter explores the difference between interpreting Epictetus through a modern, individualistic lens versus seeing him as advocating for an integrated self that finds freedom

through rational participation in the divine cosmic order. This distinction is crucial for obtaining a more comprehensive understanding of his philosophy.

Potential Strengths

- *A Holistic Interpretation of Epictetus*: The author's analysis accurately captures core concepts of Epictetus' philosophy, including the "divine spark" (a fragment of the divine within people), *prohairesis* (the faculty of rational choice), alignment with the universal order (logos), and the tension between individual identity and belonging to a larger cosmic whole.
- *Contrasting present-day individualism with Epictetan cosmic integration*: The author provides valuable insight by differentiating contemporary individualistic perspectives (i.e., in a recent, historical sense) with Epictetus' emphasis on integrating with the cosmic order.
- *Clearly communicates complex ideas*: The well-organized structure effectively presents complex ideas in a clear and accessible manner.

Potential Areas for Improvement

- *Further exploration of Stoic social ethics*: While the author's analysis mentions the importance of social connection, a deeper dive into Epictetus' view on relationships and one's duties to others within the framework of the cosmic order would be beneficial.
- *Greater Examination of Stoic emotional control for self-improvement*: The author's exploration of Epictetus' perspective on emotions and their role (or lack thereof) in achieving a well-cultivated self could further strengthen the analysis.
- *Additional Clarification of Epictetus' Nuanced View of Prohairesis*: The author's critique of *prohairesis* as radical detachment could benefit from further refinement. Epictetus likely saw it more as recognizing what falls within one's control—including one's judgments and choices—rather than a complete emotional disengagement from external events.
- *Provision of Alternative Viewpoints*: The author's inclusion of potential criticisms or alternative viewpoints to Epictetus' ideas would add balance and demonstrate a more evenhanded approach to the discourse.

Chapter 2 "Who Are You?": Contemporary Perspectives on the Person

Summary

This chapter delves into contemporary debates about the nature of the self. The author draws on philosophers like Shaun Gallagher (who emphasizes social interaction) and psychologists like Vasudevi Reddy (who explores mirroring and intersubjectivity). What follows is a breakdown of the main points.

To begin, two key perspectives emerge:

- *First-person perspectives*: These approaches view the self as primarily constructed through internal reflection and understanding one's own mental states. This aligns with "simulation theory," which suggests people understand others by projecting their own experiences onto others.
- *Second-person perspectives*: These approaches propose that the self is fundamentally shaped by embodied interactions with others, beginning in infancy. It is argued that self-awareness arises from being the object of others' attention and engagement.

Next, the chapter builds upon the second-person view by highlighting evidence from psychology and neuroscience. The author discusses phenomena like neonatal imitation, mirror neurons in the brain, and the intricate dance between infants and caregivers—all suggesting an inherent social nature of the self from birth.

The chapter then explores how second-person accounts possibly align with Pauline theology. His anthropology (as noted earlier, understanding of humanity) and cosmology (understanding of the universe) emphasize a relational self that is shaped by active connections with others and God. This may have affinities with the intersubjective model presented earlier.

The above observations notwithstanding, the chapter raises a critical question: *Can a purely naturalistic framework (focusing only on natural explanations) fully encompass the unique relationship Paul described between humans and God?* After all, the apostle seemed to envision a connection with God that transcends the natural world, where the Creator is radically "other" yet intimately close. This point of tension sets the stage for further exploration of Paul's specific view on the self in relation to sin, human limitations (the "flesh"), and participation in the life of Christ.

Potential Strengths

- *Self in Philosophy and Psychology*: The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of contemporary debates surrounding the nature of the self, especially by drawing from diverse perspectives in philosophy and psychology.

- *Balanced and Multifaceted View*: The chapter presents a balanced view by examining both first-person and second-person approaches and allowing for a nuanced understanding of the topic.
- *Evidence-Based Perspective*: The chapter effectively synthesizes empirical evidence from psychology and neuroscience to support the second-person perspective, which lends credibility to the author's arguments.
- *Second-Person Theological Lens*: The connections drawn between the second-person view and Pauline theology offer an intriguing theological lens through which to understand the nature of the self.
- *Naturalism's Theological Limitations*: The chapter raises thought-provoking questions about the limitations of a purely naturalistic framework in capturing the unique relationship between humans and God, as described by Paul.

Potential Areas for Improvement

- *Lacks Critical Depth*: While the chapter provides a solid overview, it could benefit from more in-depth analysis and critique of the various perspectives presented.
- *Underdeveloped First-Person Critique*: The critique of the first-person perspective could be expanded, as it currently receives less attention compared to the second-person view.
- *Deeper Implications of Pauline Selfhood*: The chapter could delve deeper into the specific implications of Pauline theology for understanding the nature of the self beyond the initial connections the author made.
- *Nature vs. Faith Gap*: The tension between naturalistic explanations and Paul's conception of the human-divine relationship is identified. Yet, the chapter could further explore potential resolutions or reconciliations.
- *Limited Scope*: While the chapter covers diverse perspectives, it could potentially incorporate additional insights from other philosophical traditions or cultural contexts to broaden the discourse.
- *Lacks Clear Transitions*: Some readers may find the frequent transitions between philosophical, psychological, and theological domains challenging to follow, which is why the chapter could benefit from smoother transitions or clearer signposting.

Chapter 3 Embodied and Embedded: The Corporeal Reality of Pauline Participation

Summary

This chapter delves into Paul's use of the terms σῶμα ("body") and σάρξ ("flesh"), as well as explores how these shape our understanding of embodiment and personhood. The author analyzes the apostle's perspective within its historical context and attempts to connect it to contemporary philosophical discussions. What follows is a breakdown of the main points.

- *The Body as a Conduit*: Paul's use of σῶμα ("body") and σάρξ ("flesh") suggests a profound connection between our embodied existence and larger cosmic realities. These realities include the presence of Satan, sin, and death, along with the believers' redemption through faith in Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit. Here, the body is not merely a passive container for the soul but rather the very medium through which humans interact with and are shaped by these metaphysical verities.
- *Ancient vs. Modern Views of the Body*: Dale Martin highlights the contrast between ancient and contemporary views of the body. In the ancient world, the body was seen as porous, interconnected with the cosmos, and susceptible to social influences. This perspective stands in stark opposition to the contemporary Western Cartesian notion of the individual as a self-contained, autonomous entity. Interestingly, some contemporary theories resonate with these ancient notions, proposing that the self is constructed through our embodied relationships with the environment.
- *Bultmann vs. Käsemann on the Body and Self*: The chapter compares two prominent interpretations of Paul's understanding of the body. Specifically, Rudolf Bultmann views the body as the seat of self-awareness and potential autonomy. This perspective suggests a capacity for self-knowledge that precedes our interaction with others. In contrast, Ernst Käsemann emphasizes the profound vulnerability inherent in our corporeality. We are embedded in forces beyond our control, making our bodies the sites where we experience this radical vulnerability. According to Käsemann, the notion of a self-sufficient, independent individual is an illusion for Paul. Our identity is entirely shaped by and dependent on our subjection to cosmic powers, whether the grip of sin or the transformative gift of the Spirit.
- *Connecting Paul to Contemporary Thought*: The preceding overview suggests intriguing connections between Paul's thought, ancient per-

spectives on the body (including Stoic ideas from figures like Epictetus), and contemporary theories that explore the concept of an interconnected, participatory self. These modern postulates hypothesize that the self is constituted through our embodied relationships with the environment and larger social matrices.

Potential Strengths

- *Embodiment and Personhood*: The chapter offers a thoughtful investigation of Paul's usage of σῶμα ("body") and σάρξ ("flesh"), especially by highlighting their importance in comprehending embodiment and personhood within the apostle's theology.
- *Greco-Roman Parallels*: The chapter effectively situates Paul's views within the historical and philosophical context of the ancient world, particularly by drawing parallels with Greco-Roman conceptions of the body's permeability and interconnection with the cosmos.
- *Interpretations of Two Luminaries*: By comparing Bultmann's and Käsemann's interpretations, the chapter provides valuable insights into contrasting perspectives on the body's role, including self-awareness and autonomy versus vulnerability and susceptibility to external forces.
- *Connections between Ancient and Modern Perspectives*: The chapter establishes intriguing links between Paul's thought, ancient philosophical ideas (e.g., Stoicism), and contemporary theories about the interconnected, participatory self, effectively bridging the gap between ancient and present-day perspectives.

Potential Areas for Improvement

- *Body-Self Analysis Gap*: While the analysis discusses the contrast between ancient and more recent views of the body, a more explicit exploration of how these differing perspectives impact our contemporary understanding of personhood and identity would further strengthen the chapter.
- *Pauline Textual Analysis Needed*: The comparison between Bultmann and Käsemann is intriguing. Yet, delving deeper into specific passages from Paul's writings that support or challenge their interpretations would provide more textual grounding.
- *Greater Integration of Counterargument*s: The chapter could explore critiques or counterarguments to the concept of a participatory self proposed by contemporary theories and how these might reconcile with or challenge Paul's perspective.

- *Inadequate Philosophical Discussion*: The chapter could benefit from offering a more comprehensive and nuanced discussion. This includes incorporating additional perspectives from other ancient philosophers or religious thinkers alongside a broader range of contemporary theories on embodiment and personhood.
- *Insufficient Consideration of Ethical Implications*: In addition to building upon connections between ancient and contemporary thought, the chapter could further examine the implications for our understanding of ethics, morality, and lived experience in the present-day world.

Chapter 4 Rationality Gone Mad: The Evacuation of the Self in Romans 7

Summary

This chapter delves into Paul's depiction of the self in Romans 7:7–25. Here, the apostle portrays an "inner self" (sometimes translated as "the mind" or "inner being") that desires to do good yet finds itself captive to a powerful force he calls "sin." This sin is not just an abstract concept; it is a personified entity with dominion over the self, causing it to act against its own will. What follows is a breakdown of the main points.

- *Relational Self*: Paul rejects the idea of the self as a completely isolated and independent entity (like the Stoic ideal). Instead, the apostle emphasizes a relational self shaped by its interactions within a larger cosmic reality. In this reality, the dominant force is not reason but sin, which has become deeply embedded.
- *Colonized by Sin*: The language of being "sold under sin" and sin "dwelling" within the self is particularly powerful. It suggests that sin has invaded and taken control, overriding the self's own desires and ability to act freely.
- *Beyond Stoicism*: Paul's teaching stands in stark contrast to the Stoic philosophy, which emphasized the self's mastery over emotions and actions through reason alone. For the apostle, reason is not enough. The self is too deeply entangled with sin to achieve liberation on its own. Divine intervention is necessary.
- *Ancient and Modern Parallels*: The concept of sin as an invasive force can be compared to ancient models of disease as pollution that enters the body and disrupts its natural balance. Additionally, Paul's view may also be analogous to contemporary therapeutic ideas about how

unhealthy relational patterns can become internalized, distorting the self's perception and behavior.

- *Redemption through Christ*: Ultimately, Paul offers hope through Christ. Jesus, through his sacrificial death and resurrection, participates in the human struggle with sin (mimetic participation). This paves the way for a new relational matrix centered on communion with God through the Spirit.

Potential Strengths

- *Thoughtful Analysis*: The critique provides an engaging analysis of Paul's depiction of the self in Romans 7:7–25, particularly by exploring various aspects and implications of his perspective.
- *Contextual Framing*: The critique effectively contextualizes Paul's view of the self by contrasting it with the Stoic philosophy of the time, which helps the reader understand the uniqueness and significance of the apostle's perspective.
- *Interdisciplinary Connections*: The analysis draws parallels between Paul's concept of sin and contemporary therapeutic ideas, as well as ancient models of disease, demonstrating the relevance and applicability of the apostle's ideas across different domains.
- *Theological Grounding*: The critique highlights the theological foundation of Paul's perspective, especially his belief in the necessity of divine intervention through Christ for redemption from sin's influence on the self.

Potential Areas for Improvement

- *Limited Scriptural References*: While the analysis focuses on Romans 7:7–25, it could benefit from incorporating additional biblical references or passages that support or further elucidate Paul's view of the self.
- *Expansion on the Redemptive Process*: The section on redemption through Christ could be expanded to provide a more detailed explanation of how this redemptive process unfolds and how it impacts the self's relationship with sin.
- *Alternative Interpretations*: The discourse presents a singular interpretation of Paul's depiction of the self. Acknowledging and addressing potential alternative interpretations or debates within biblical scholarship could add depth and nuance to the analysis.

- *Historical Context*: While the presentation contrasts Paul's view with Stoic philosophy, it could benefit from further exploration of the broader historical and cultural context in which the apostle was writing, as this may shed additional light on his perspective.
- *Practical Implications*: The presentation could be strengthened by discussing the practical implications of Paul's view of the self for individuals or communities, particularly in relation to personal transformation, spiritual growth, or ethical decision-making.

Chapter 5 Divine Participation: The New Christological Agent in Philippians 2

Summary

This chapter proposes a distinctive perspective on Jesus' role in Philippians 2:5–11. The author suggests this passage goes beyond regarding Christ as a mere ethical example. Through the incarnation, crucifixion, and his ongoing presence, Jesus offers redemption and a fundamental transformation of human identity and agency through a participatory and reciprocal relationship with God. What follows is a breakdown of the main points.

- *Preexistent Christ and Hypostatic Union (v. 6)*: The passage begins by establishing Christ's preexistence "in the form of God." Jesus' divinity is not abandoned but united with his humanity in the concept known as the hypostatic union.
- *Incarnation and Assimilation (vv. 7–8)*: Christ "emptied himself" by taking on the form of a bondservant and becoming fully human. This is not mere "impersonation" but a true embodiment (incarnation) that allows him to experience humanity's limitations and suffering ("assimilation").
- *Obedience, Sacrifice, and Redemption (vv. 8–9)*: By humbly submitting to death on a cross, Christ participates in and overcomes humanity's bondage to sin and death (redemption). His obedience is crucial. God's response to this sacrificial act is Christ's exaltation.
- *Reciprocal Participation and Transformed Agency (vv. 12–13)*: While emphasizing God's work in salvation, Paul encouraged believers to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This "reciprocal participation" involves human effort operating in conjunction with God's grace. Through this union with Christ, believers' agency is not taken away but transformed and empowered.

- *Intersubjective Personhood and Relational Identity*: The passage hints at an "intersubjective" understanding of personhood, where human identity is not self-made but rather shaped through a saving relationship with God, particularly through Christ's taking on the human condition.

Potential Strengths

- *Thoughtful Exegesis*: The discourse explores key aspects of Philippians 2:5–11, including Christ's pre-incarnational existence, becoming human (incarnation), obedience, sacrifice, and exaltation. The chapter also delves into the implications for believers' participation in salvation and transformation.
- *Theological Engagement*: The chapter engages with pertinent theological concepts like the hypostatic union, assimilation, redemption, and reciprocal participation, demonstrating an awareness of the passage's theological weight.
- *Transformation Emphasis*: The discussion highlights how Christ's work not only saves but also transforms, impacting human identity, agency, and personhood through the believers' connection with him.
- *Contextual Awareness*: The chapter attempts to situate the passage within the broader context of Philippians and Paul's overall theology, particularly by recognizing its connections to other Pauline themes and ideas.

Potential Areas for Improvement

- *Limited Scholarly Engagement*: While the discourse covers core theological concepts, it could benefit from directly addressing scholarly debates and interpretations surrounding specific phrases or ideas within the passage.
- *Historical and Cultural Context Integration*: The chapter could be strengthened by exploring the historical and cultural context in which Paul wrote the passage. This includes considering potential influences on the apostle's language, concepts from Greco-Roman philosophies, and Jewish traditions.
- *Theological Nuance*: While the discussion attempts to synthesize theological concepts, it is important to avoid imposing an overly rigid and reductionistic theological framework onto the biblical text. In this regard, the author's proposed framework may not fully capture the nuances or original intent of the passage.
- *Literary Devices Exploration*: The discourse could delve deeper into the literary devices and rhetorical strategies Paul employed in this passage. Examples include parallelism, contrast, metaphor, and how these contribute to the overall meaning.

- *Practical Application Consideration*: While the chapter focuses on theological and conceptual aspects, exploring practical implications and applications for believers' lives and the life of the church could further enrich the presentation.

Chapter 6 The Saving Relation: Union with Christ in Galatians 2

Summary

This chapter examines Paul's experiential language in Galatians 2:15–21 about believers being crucified with Christ and having him live in them. The author maintains that the passage depicts the reconstitution of the self through a relational union with Christ, which transcends previous sources of identity. From this perspective, transformation happens through participation in new interpersonal bonds centered on Christ's gift, rather than through individual self-mastery, as well as provides an alternative to more recent notions of the self as an autonomous, continuous ego. What follows is a breakdown of the main points.

- *Salvation by Faith Alone (vv. 15–16)*: Paul emphasized that both Jews and Gentiles are justified by faith in Christ, not by following religious edicts (i.e., Torah observance or works of the law). This concept forms the foundation for Christian unity, transcending ethnic or cultural backgrounds.
- *Death to the Law, New Life in Christ (vv. 19–20)*: Paul described himself as having "died to the law" (meaning the Mosaic legal code no longer defined the apostle's identity and path to salvation). Through his crucifixion with Christ, a profound transformation occurred. Christ now lived within his bondservant, becoming the source of his new identity.
- *Intersubjective Transformation (vv. 19–20)*: Paul went beyond a simple change of beliefs. He suggested a deeper shift in how the self is constituted. The "I" is fundamentally remade through its ongoing relationship with the indwelling Christ, who becomes the source of faith. This "intersubjective" concept emphasizes that the believers' identity is shaped by their relationships, particularly with Christ.
- *Two Realms of Existence (v. 20)*: Paul contrasted two ways of living: "in the flesh" and "in/by faith." Life "in the flesh" refers to the believers' earthly desires and motivations. Life "in/by faith" is a new reality that Christ's sacrificial love generates. These two realms of existence create a continuing push/pull force within believers.

- *Ongoing Transformation (v. 20)*: Living in both realities signifies that the new self in Christ is constantly challenged by the old patterns and desires ("the flesh"). This dynamic tension is part of the ongoing process of Christian transformation.
- *Faith as Relational, not Individualistic*: Paul challenged the idea of an independent, self-made faith. Instead, the apostle emphasized that faith is a gift, nurtured through the believers' connection to Christ's faithfulness displayed on the cross.
- *Relational View of Selfhood*: This passage promotes a relational view of believers. Their identities are not fixed but constantly shaped by the bonds they form. These bonds can be positive (like union with Christ) or negative (like dependence on the law or unhealthy relationships).
- *Remade at the Core*: Paul's imagery suggests that believers are fundamentally transformed through their relationship with Christ. This new identity is not superficial but goes to the core of who they are. It is a gift that pulls them towards God's future plans.

Potential Strengths

- *Clear Emphasis on Justification by Faith*: The chapter highlights that Paul's primary argument in this passage is the doctrine of justification by faith alone, not by carrying out pious deeds or adhering to the Mosaic Law. This principle forms the bedrock of Christian theology, distinguishing it from other belief systems.
- *Vivid Metaphors*: The discourse notes that Paul employs vivid metaphors, such as "dying to the law" and being "crucified with Christ," to convey the profound transformation that occurs in a believer's life through faith in Christ.
- *Intersubjective Transformation*: The chapter stresses the way the passage highlights the idea of an "intersubjective" transformation, where the self is remade through the ongoing relationship with the indwelling Christ. This concept emphasizes the relational nature of personal identity and faith.
- *Two Realms of Existence*: The discourse spotlights Paul's contrast between living "in the flesh" and living "in/by faith." In turn, this emphasis offers a framework for understanding the ongoing dynamic tension and transformation that believers experience as they navigate these two realms of existence.
- *Relational View of Selfhood*: The chapter clarifies how the passage promotes a relational view of personhood, where identities are shaped

by the bonds believers form, particularly with Christ. This perspective challenges individualistic notions of faith and self.

- *Ongoing Transformation*: The discourse indicates how Paul acknowledged the ongoing transformation process in the Christian life, especially by recognizing that the new self in Christ is constantly challenged by the old patterns and desires ("the flesh").

Potential Areas for Improvement

- *Complexity of Metaphors*: While Paul's metaphors are vivid, they may also be challenging for some readers to fully grasp, especially those unfamiliar with the cultural and religious context of the time. The chapter could benefit from more work in this area.
- *Apparent Contradiction*: The passage presents an apparent contradiction between living "in the flesh" and living "in/by faith," which could be confusing or misinterpreted as promoting a dualistic or gnostic worldview. Further exploration and elaboration would strengthen this section of the chapter.
- *Lack of Practical Application*: While the passage offers a rich theological framework, it may benefit from more explicit guidance on how to apply these principles in daily life and navigate the tension between the two realms of existence. This aspect of the chapter requires additional attention and development.
- *Potential for Misinterpretation*: Some concepts, such as "dying to the law" and the role of the Mosaic legal code, could be misunderstood or taken to extremes, leading to potential misinterpretations or imbalances in Christian doctrine and practice. Expanding upon the discussion in this area would enhance the chapter's depth and clarity.
- *Cultural and Contextual Limitations*: The passage is rooted in a specific cultural and historical context, which may limit its immediate relevance or accessibility to some contemporary readers or cross-cultural audiences. More comprehensive coverage is needed to address this issue fully within the chapter.
- *Potential for Oversimplification*: The passage presents a complex and nuanced relational view of selfhood, and there is a risk of oversimplifying or misunderstanding the interplay between individual agency and the transformative power of relationships. Greater detail and analysis are warranted to improve this portion of the chapter.

Conclusion:
Pushing the Reset Button on Paul's Anthropology

Summary

The author contends that a fresh perspective is needed on Paul's view of human existence ("anthropology") and personhood. This reframing centers on a "second-person hermeneutic," particularly by emphasizing that people are fundamentally defined by their relationships with others. This approach challenges the prevailing Western conception of personal identity as a self-contained individual.

The author maintains that for Paul, sin is not merely a matter of individual choices. It is also a powerful social force that distorts our understanding of ourselves and our connections with others. Redemption, then, is liberation from this distorting power. It is a move towards a new life where believers are united with Christ through the Spirit and participate in a shared existence. This emphasis on participation is central to Paul's thought, portraying individuals as "selves-in-relation."

The author claims that the above perspective aligns with some contemporary theories. These argue that individuals are shaped through embodied interactions with their environment. The author goes further, bringing Paul into conversation with both the Stoic philosopher Epictetus and contemporary philosophical and scientific thought. This "three-way conversation" has the potential to open new avenues for articulating Paul's message (the gospel) in the current cultural context prevalent in the global North.

Key Theological Implications

- *Dignity Through Participation*: Our personhood is a divinely bestowed gift grounded in Christ's taking on human form. It is not dependent on our individual traits or abilities. This radically affirms the inherent worth of every human being.
- *Transformation through Community*: Personal growth occurs through the quality of our relationships within a community that embodies Christ's teachings. Individual willpower plays a role, yet it is not the sole driver.
- *Interconnectedness and Hope*: Given our fundamental interconnectedness, complete wholeness or resolution is not attainable in this life. However, there is profound hope rooted in our ultimate identity in Christ, revealed through the concept of the "eschaton" (end times).
- *Fresh Frameworks for Understanding*: The author advocates for further exploration of this "participatory anthropology" across various disciplines, including race, ethics, healthcare, trauma studies, and philosophy of mind. Paul's thought, reinterpreted through this lens, offers fresh frameworks for understanding human identity, suffering, and how we can truly flourish.

Potential Strengths

- *Rethinking Pauline Anthropology*. The author offers a fresh and thought-provoking approach to Pauline anthropology, contesting the prevalent Western notion of the self as an isolated entity.
- *Relational Ontology in Pauline Thought*: The author emphasizes the primacy of relationships and interconnectedness in Paul's view of human existence, aligning with contemporary trends in philosophy and science.
- *Multidimensional Dialogue*: The author skillfully establishes a "three-way conversation" by integrating Paul's ideas with thinkers like Epictetus and embodied cognition theories, fostering new avenues for interpreting the gospel in today's context.
- *Theological Perspectives on Human Flourishing*: The outlined theological implications, including dignity through participation, community-driven transformation, and interconnectedness fostering hope, offer profound insights into human identity, personal development, and our ultimate purpose.
- *The Case for Participatory Anthropology*: The author advocates for a broader exploration of this "participatory anthropology" across various disciplines, especially by highlighting its potential to illuminate diverse topics like race, ethics, healthcare, trauma studies, and the philosophy of mind.

Potential Areas for Improvement

- *Need for Stronger Textual Evidence in Pauline Relational Theology*: Although the author convincingly argues for a relational and participatory view in Pauline thought, the treatise would benefit from more specific textual evidence and exegesis to substantiate the author's claims.
- *Expanding on the Connection Between Paul's Participatory Philosophy and Embodied Cognition Theories*: The link between Paul's emphasis on participation and contemporary theories of embodied cognition deserves further elaboration, as the current treatment tends to be brief.
- *Considering Further the Potential Challenges of Participatory Anthropology*: The author could delve deeper into potential tensions or challenges this participatory anthropology may encounter when interacting with other theological or philosophical frameworks.
- *Providing Additional Concrete Examples Across Disciplines*: While the author mentions implications for various disciplines, the treatise could offer additional concrete examples or suggestions for how this perspective could be applied or investigated within those specific fields.

- *Doing More to Address Potential Critiques and Limitations*: To provide a more nuanced perspective, the essay could explore potential critiques or alternative interpretations of Paul's anthropology, especially by acknowledging and addressing counterarguments or limitations of the proposed participatory framework.

Overall Assessment of the Author's Treatise

In stepping back from the preceding summary, analysis, and critique of the author's treatise, the following overall assessment is offered.

To begin, the author offers an innovative, interdisciplinary exploration of Pauline anthropology, particularly by emphasizing the primacy of relationships in shaping human identity through a reader-response hermeneutic. By engaging thinkers like Epictetus (e.g., the Stoic view of the self) and contemporary theories of embodied cognition, the author skillfully constructs a "three-way conversation" that potentially sheds new light on Paul's portrayal of the self. This self is deeply embedded within cosmic forces (both positive and negative) and fundamentally constituted through participation in Christ.

A particular strength of the author's treatise lies in its thoughtful exegesis of key Pauline passages, such as Romans 7, Philippians 2, and Galatians 2. The author's analysis not only elucidates Paul's metaphorical language and theological concepts but also draws insightful connections to ancient perspectives on the body and modern philosophical frameworks. For instance, the discussion in Romans 7 of sin as a personified, invasive force colonizing the self resonates with both ancient models of disease and contemporary therapeutic ideas about internalized relational patterns distorting the self.

Moreover, in Philippians 2, the author adeptly navigates complex theological terrain, especially by unpacking intricate concepts like the two natures of Christ (i.e., the "hypostatic union") and reciprocal participation. By highlighting Christ's incarnation as a transformative act that reshapes human agency and identity through a participatory relationship with God, the author seeks to demonstrate the centrality of this "intersubjective" perspective in Pauline thought.

While the author's treatise is commendable in its scope and depth, opportunities remain for further development. One area that could be strengthened is providing more explicit textual support and exegetical engagement, particularly in instances where the author makes broader claims about Paul's participatory anthropology. Additionally, directly acknowledging and engaging with potential tensions, critiques, or alternative interpretations within scholarly discourse could lend greater nuance and balance to the analysis.

Furthermore, while the author outlines the theological implications of this participatory framework, such as dignity through participation and community-driven transformation, the treatise could benefit from a more detailed exploration of practical applications across various disciplines. Concrete examples or suggestions for how this perspective might inform or challenge approaches within fields like ethics, healthcare, trauma studies, or philosophy of mind would further highlight the relevance and potency of the author's proposed hermeneutic.

Overall, the author presents a distinctive perspective on Pauline anthropology. The treatise invites readers to reimagine the self, not as an isolated entity, but as a relational, participatory being whose identity is shaped through embodied connections—most profoundly, through the believers' transformative union with Christ. Admittedly, while opportunities exist for further refinement and expansion, the author's interdisciplinary approach and emphasis on the primacy of relationships offer a unique heuristic lens through which to engage Paul's enduring message.

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Note

1. The Logos Research Edition of *Paul and the Person* was used for this book review.

Book Review

Margaret D. Kamitsuka, *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2019), viii + 258 pp. $40.00

Reviewed by Jack Kilcrease

In *Abortion and the Christian Tradition*, Margaret Kamitsuka attempts to develop a pro-choice Christian ethic in order to prove that the pro-life position is not the only option in the Christian tradition. Kamitsuka begins her quest for a pro-choice Christian ethic by critiquing the highly influential essay by John Noonan "An Almost Absolute Value in History," which demonstrated historic Christianity's consistent rejection of abortion. Kamitsuka attempts to undermine this position in a number of ways.

First, she notes that most pre-modern and early modern Christian authors took over Aristotle and Galen's distinction between a "formed" and "unformed" fetus. The former refers to the fetus being ensouled after the quickening, whereas the latter refers to the pre-ensouled fetus prior to the quickening. Many early Christian authors and Canon Law, prior to 1869, did not consider the killing of the unformed fetus to be homicide, since it lacked a soul. What Kamitsuka fails to recognize is that first, this judgment was based on a now discredited medical theory that early Christians absorbed from their culture. It does not represent a lesser commitment to an ethic of life, but rather a historically contextual misunderstanding of the process of gestation. When medical science developed in the nineteenth century to the point where the process of conception was better understood, the formed and unformed fetus distinction was abandoned, and it was no longer justifiable to think that the fetus became an ensouled being any later than conception. It should also be noted that although most premodern Christians did not consider the fetus a human person prior to the quickening, most still considered it a sin to kill the unformed fetus. There are, of course, some rare examples of figures such as St. Jerome who did not consider it a sin to kill the unformed fetus, but it would appear that they were a minority.

Second, Kamitsuka argues that pro-life authors illegitimately assume that the reason why early and medieval Christians were against abortion was because they cared about the murder of the unborn. Since Christians prior to the modern period generally do not give their motives for rejecting abortion, Kamitsuka argues that one could just as easily assume that they wanted to control women's sexuality, make them utterly subservient to their husbands, and cut down on sex for the sake of pleasure. This is a highly ideologically charged argument from silence.

Kamitsuka also tries to discredit arguments from the Bible and the Christian theological tradition. In regard to the Bible, Kamitsuka notes that pro-life exegetes point to verses about God knowing and having a destiny for the speaker in the text from the womb. Without any evidence, she suggests that these passages are merely hyperbolic. There are also passages in the Psalms that describe the sinfulness of the speaker from the womb which have often been employed by pro-life authors to show the fetus is a moral agent and worthy of dignity. Kamitsuka views these passages as also being hyperbolic and, therefore, of no value in establishing the personhood and dignity of the fetus.

Another argument Kamitsuka mounts against pro-life uses of the Bible is their appeal to the fact that all humans are made in the image of God. Hence, following Genesis 9, a fetus cannot be killed without defiling God's image. Kamitsuka is unimpressed with this argument because, whatever the image of God is, the fetus cannot embody it in its underdeveloped state. Turning to the New Testament, the image of God is something that believers are conformed to in Christ by the power of the Spirit. Since the fetus is not an active moral agent, this is impossible for it to do, and hence, therefore, cannot be made or be said to be in the process of being made in God's image. Kamitsuka forgets that Jesus tells believers that they should receive the Kingdom "like a little child," and that John the Baptist received the Spirit and was conformed to the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the womb of Elizabeth.

The section on the image of God is a particularly egregious example of Kamitsuka's tendency toward engaging in rhetorical sleight of hand. In other words, Genesis 1 and 9 are unequivocal that humans bear God's image. There is no restriction or qualification regarding which humans bear God's image. The only possible exception to the Bible's affirmation that all humans bear God's image is the aspect of the divine image that pertains to original righteousness, which, as the Lutheran Confessions affirm, can be eliminated or distorted by original sin. If fetuses are human beings (something Kamitsuka admits in a later chapter), then no logical reason exists to see the biblical texts as excluding them from possessing the dignity of all other human divine image bearers. Nevertheless, Kamitsuka rhetorically places the burden on her opponents to prove that all humans are made in God's image, when in reality the burden of proof lies with her to show that the Bible excludes some from possessing God's image—something she obviously cannot do.

This methodological sleight of hand carries over into her somewhat muddled discussion of the value of fetuses because of the Incarnation. As noted by a number of pro-life authors, if God himself became a fetus in the womb of Mary, this bestows a recognition of the value all fetuses have as possessing humanity and dignity. The presupposition of such an argument is that, in accordance with historic Chalcedonian orthodoxy, Christ exists as a complete substance of true man (body and soul) in full

union with the divine person from the moment of his conception. In tackling this argument, Kamitsuka seems confused about a couple of issues.

First, she insists that she does not believe in the duality of body and soul because it is a Hellenistic philosophical imposition on the biblical faith. The binary of body and soul invariably also makes the body inferior to the soul and therefore denigrates human sexuality. This argument represents one of the more crude examples of the informal logical fallacy of begging the question. Beyond simply assuming the unequivocal goodness of sexual self-expression, Kamitsuka does not seem to be aware either that the distinction of body and soul is present in the biblical texts (see Matt. 10:28), as well as in most world religions. Philosophically and religiously, body-soul dualism says nothing about the value of the body and the soul but simply affirms that ontologically they exist as distinct substances. One need not affirm a Platonic or Gnostic version of the dualism which would denigrate the body. Moreover, without proving it, Kamitsuka also assumes the exercise of sexuality is an unequivocal good and hence anything militating against it must logically be bad.

Second, Kamitsuka seems to confuse several issues with regard to the nature of the Incarnation. She decries traditional substantialist models of the Incarnation which speak of the two natures entering into union immediately at the conception of Christ. She wishes to hold to a developmentalist model where, because there is a gradual deification of Christ's humanity, the divinity only gradually enters into union with the humanity. Likewise, Kamitsuka supports the emergentist theory of the origins of the soul/mind, where the soul emerges from the complexities of the physical organism as a result of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Since both the soul and the union of the divinity and humanity emerge incrementally, the Incarnation or the existence of a soul in the fetus can only bestow value on the fetus gradually and by degrees.

Although there are several complex metaphysical issues here, Kamitsuka makes a series of category errors. Regarding the Incarnation, she confuses the glorification of Christ's humanity with the union of the humanity with the divinity. Orthodox Christians have always accepted that there are stages of glorification and, indeed, deification of Christ's humanity. The key is that in Christ there must always be a union of the divine nature with the human nature in a complete and final sense if one is not to risk the possibility of the early Christian heresy of Adoptionism. In Adoptionism, Christ exists first as true man and then is later adopted as God's Son. In the most sophisticated version of Adoptionism taught by the early Christian heretic Paul of Samosata, Christ's humanity and divinity gradually meld together, a teaching resembling Kamitsuka's proposal. With regard to the origins of the soul, Kamitsuka holds a problematic theory of how the soul comes about, since as J. P. Moreland has noted, it fails to explain how matter that is unconscious and material can give rise to the soul, which is immaterial and conscious.

However, whenever one thinks that the soul comes into union with the body, it does not logically follow that it is the soul that bestows dignity on the body of the fetus. Would not killing a living human entity, even if it theoretically did not yet possess a soul, still be evil? As previously noted, Augustine and many of the Church Fathers thought so. For argument's sake, one could theoretically suggest that it is the soul that bestows personhood on the fetus, and that one also does not know when the soul comes into the body of the fetus. Even if one took such a position, would it not be more ethically prudent to reject abortion and to err on the side of ethical caution regarding whether or not the fetus could be killed?

Moreover, Kamitsuka admits in the final chapter that the fetus is genetically a human being from the moment of conception. Nevertheless, she appeals to the common usage in popular Western culture of the concept of "person" and states that the fetus cannot be considered a person in this conventional sense. Therefore, it can be killed without sin. One wonders, first, why a conventional and popular definition of "person" should have any authority in ethical reflection, much less Christian ethical reflection; and second, why the rich theological resources regarding the concept of personhood (i.e., in Trinitarian and Christological debates) developed by the Christian tradition are never engaged?

Again, we see another rhetorical sleight of hand. With no justification from Scripture, Kamitsuka distinguishes between some human life that is personal and some that does not rise to the level of personhood. At one point, our author rather bizarrely claims that the fetus is neither a person nor a non-person. Historically, the idea that some humans do not have value as "persons" has had a rather bad track record, leading to genocide and slavery. It was the basis of the American and Nazi programs of eugenics in the early and mid-twentieth centuries ("life not worthy of life"). Beyond this, even if the concept of "human life" and "human personhood" could be separated, from where does she get the moral principle that we are under no obligation to respect the lives of only human persons, and not living human beings? It is a leap of logic that she never justifies.

Believing that she has demolished the arguments of pro-life authors in the first half of the book, Kamitsuka now turns to the task of developing a pro-choice Christian ethic. She insists that her goal is not so much to discredit pro-life Christian ethical theorists as it is to show that there is room for a credible pro-choice ethic within the Christian tradition. Not only are the arguments she offers in this section utterly unconvincing, but the major problem is that her theological/ethical resources are not really rooted in the principles of any of the historic streams of Christian ethics. The arguments that our author makes in favor of abortion as a valid option could be made by any secular ethical theorist.

Kamitsuka outlines three possible justifications for abortion:

1. One secular feminist theory holds that pregnancy is burdensome and harmful to women, so it is the moral equivalence of being under attack. One is, of course, morally justified in defending oneself against attack.
2. The second argument is that pregnancy is a phase of "pre-mothering" decision-making, wherein one still has a chance to decide whether or not one wants to be a parent. Kamitsuka rejects both arguments.
3. Instead, she feels one should fully admit that the decision for or against an abortion is a "mothering" decision. Since the fetus is physically dependent on the mother, it is subordinate to the will and best interests of the mother. It can therefore be legitimately killed if the mother (who is a full person, as opposed to the fetus) feels that it is in her best interest to kill it.

Pregnancy places mothers in danger and imposes extraordinary burdens on a woman. It is a matter of supererogation and heroics to be pregnant—and although noble, heroics can never be a moral requirement.

As dependent on the mother, the fetus has as much value as the mother subjectively accords the fetus. Hence, if the mother experiences the fetus as not possessing value as a person, then it will not have value as a person and can be put to death. This formulation raises two issues. First of all, if dependency means that one's existence is at the mercy of the one on whom they are dependent, then Kamitsuka has the problem that she is not just justifying abortion, but also infanticide. Those of us who have had children know the radical dependency and constant attention needed by an infant. Likewise, an elderly spouse or parent may reach the point where they are radically dependent on another person for their continued life. Is Kamitsuka saying that the burden created by these persons would justify abandoning them to their death? Probably not—but based on her standards, how would these individual's radical dependency not lower them to sub-personal status or mandate their possible abandonment to death if convenient?

Second, Kamitsuka's concept of personhood as autonomous individuality is very much out of joint with that of historic Christian orthodoxy's conception. Humans are human in their recognition of their radical dependency on God. One becomes a Christian precisely by receiving the kingdom like a "little child," as Jesus states. Moreover, Kamitsuka assumes throughout the book, in a manner not dissimilar to the Enlightenment social contract theorists, that the only valid moral obligations are ones we enter into voluntarily. This is not biblical because Scripture consistently teaches that God's commandments represent obligations for us irrespective of our choice. Neither is it true to the common human experience that our moral obligations are the only ones we choose to possess. Daily we are confronted with the fact that we are born into a society we do not choose and have obligations to past and future

generations. This being said, the autonomy of the individual appears and disappears conveniently when her argument depends on it. Not giving the option to abort is "enforced pregnancy"—but she forgets that, apart from those pregnancies that are the result of rape, every woman who is pregnant consented to the possibility of pregnancy by engaging in sexual activity, which by definition carries with it the risks and responsibilities of motherhood. Likewise, she oddly asserts that one cannot simply expect women to offer their children up for adoption if they cannot care for them, since they rarely do this and might find it too emotionally distressing. Of course this does not negate the fact that the choice not to give their child up for adoption is an autonomous one, or that it is as immoral as it is bizarre to argue that one should murder their own child rather than feel the distress of giving them up for adoption.

Throughout this book, not only is Kamitsuka's reasoning fallacious and tangential, but it has precious little to do with the Christian tradition that it seeks to draw upon. Her chief argument for abortion could be articulated by any secular abortion advocate and makes no references to the Bible. Neither does she find any justification for her position in Christian tradition apart from the most tangential references to matters unrelated to her position. In the end, there is nothing within Christianity for her to draw upon because her foundational view of ethics, that humans autonomously pursue their own self-chosen individual good, is completely out of joint with the worldview and value system of the Bible and historic Christian orthodoxy.

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Book Review

Nancy R. Pearcey, *Love Thy Body: Answering Hard Questions about Life and Sexuality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018), 336 pp. $19.99

Reviewed by Patrick Steckbeck

Summary

Pearcey's *Love Thy Body* is a clear and engaging introduction to contentious issues surrounding the body in the West today—issues like abortion, euthanasia, transgenderism, homosexuality, and hook-up culture. She writes from a generally conservative Christian perspective, and her goal is to lay bare the underlying worldview assumptions of those who take a positive stance toward these issues, critique those assumptions, and demonstrate the superiority of a conservative Christian alternative.

Throughout the book, Pearcey explains and applies the worldview assumption she calls *personhood theory* to lay bare the hidden commitments at play when someone takes an affirmative stance toward the contentious issues listed above. According to Pearcey, personhood theory is a view of the developed human being wherein person and body are split in two. She states, "The key to understanding all the controversial issues of our day is that the concept of the human being has been likewise fragmented into an upper and lower story" (16). In personhood theory, the person is the center of value and is radically independent of the body, which is the slave of the person, to be used at the person's whim. The person—the ghost in the machine—is free to do whatever with his or her own body. Moreover, the person can do what he/she wants with other bodies, provided no one else owns that other body. For a personhood theorist, the body is not a being with intrinsic value deserving of respect.

Pearcey believes that personhood theory hinges on a non-teleological perspective of the world without any rational agent guiding beings toward their goals. According to this view, human "persons" are the exclusive entities capable of rational decision-making and holding rights. There is no higher being, such as a God, to judge their treatment of their bodies. Thus, human persons are autonomous individuals, responsible for their own actions concerning their bodies and others' bodies, provided they do not infringe on others' rights to do the same (yet, it is hard to see why these various "persons" are not ethically free to subjugate one another!).

Throughout the book, Pearcey contrasts this view of body devaluation with traditional Christianity's view. Whereas traditional Christianity has said wherever there is a living human body, there is also a human person intimately connected to that body, personhood theory states that it is possible that there is a living human body without it being directly connected to a human person. One implication of this is that there are potentially human beings without personhood. To state it another way, a personhood theorist could say, "This being is a human," and simultaneously affirm that the human has no rights with no ethical qualms.

Throughout the book, she articulates, expands upon, and applies personhood theory to various contentious issues regarding the body. She mixes anecdotal stories with statistics and philosophical analysis to reduce her opponents to absurdity by taking their position to its logical conclusion. At the same time, she promotes her view of a biblical worldview regarding the body, wherein the body is to be respected and loved as an integral aspect of the human person.

Evaluation

Pearcey's book is helpful for those looking for a deep introductory analysis of these issues. She interweaves engaging stories about these issues throughout her argument, making the book readable and informative. Further, she repeatedly re-articulates, expands on, and reapplies personhood theory throughout the book so that even a casual reader is bound to understand her main point. In this, she exemplifies her abilities as a seasoned master teacher, building upon prior knowledge in each chapter so that the unknown must be explained through the known.

In addition, the explanatory power of her notion of personhood theory as the worldview assumption behind the contentious spins she critiques makes the truth value of her case intuitively plausible. From gluttony to transhumanism, she connects the underlying philosophical assumptions with the surfacing views and actions. Overall, the book is an excellent buy for an intellectually engaging introduction to contentious issues surrounding the body for those who want to move beyond the surface of slogans and bickering to genuine insight.

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Book Review

Joseph Torchia, O.P., *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), xv + 295 pp. $56.00

Reviewed by Robert Henry

The question of personhood and how it relates to being human is rarely addressed in many philosophical circles, preferring instead to investigate issues of the nature of consciousness in its stead. And while consciousness is undoubtedly related to the question of one's identity, the human person can hardly be reduced to such a specific analysis. And so, in his book *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature*, Joseph Torchia, a Dominican priest and professor of philosophy, seeks to uncover the mystery behind humanity and personhood. Torchia starts in the preface with the observation that many regard the question of personhood as obvious but suggests that it is not. He briefly addresses how he tackles this mammoth task and then offers a historical treatment of the human individual. Examining the Pre-Socratic emphasis on the intelligibility of nature over the poetic myth writers, we see a Socratic-Platonic shift towards humanity. This is distinct from natural phenomena, the Aristotelian grounding of humanity in natural philosophy and the Christian positioning of theological perspectives on humanity from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas. Consequently, repositioning humanistic reflections in Cartesian dualism, the humanistic is pitted against the mechanistic. Thus, given the former emerges from the latter, there is an empirical denial of the self in Hume to postmodern themes of subjective notions of the self and their problematic implications. Torchia offers a solution to the problems that developed from its history through Thomistic teleological anthropology, which presumably recaptures the unified self, its moral foundation, and its meaningful grounding.

Torchia begins by suggesting that there are "two fundamental questions that one must answer when addressing the issue of personhood [which] are: What does it mean to be a person? And…What does it mean to be fully human?" (xi). He quotes paleoanthropologist Ian Tattersall: "What distinguishes the human species from other species, including Neanderthal, is their ability to think symbolically rather than intuitively and instinctively alone" (xii). He defines humanness as what we can do, not what we are by nature. And yet, this begs the question of how this nature is exhibited in behavior that represents unique symbolic thinking. Therefore, it is best to unpack this notion of behavior in a being elicited by symbolic thinking. Torchia

examines the historical development philosophically of how to distinguish a thing, an object in nature that is observed, and a person.

To understand the human, one must understand the world in which the human is situated. And so, the earliest Greek philosophers, the Milesian Pre-Socratic thinkers, as Torchia observes, established the issue's foundations. In the section "The Milesian Response," Torchia informs the reader that the Pre-Socratics were preoccupied with the empirical and the inductive. Chief among them, as relevant to the conversation on the human being, is Anaximander. In contrast to Thales, he identified the cause of all things as being outside of the observed phenomena as the *apeiron* or moving, infinite. This conversation led other contemporary philosophers such as Xenophanes and Parmenides to expose the problems of polytheism with the supremacy of being as One and not the many and motion as illusory. In responding to Parmenides, Empedocles tried to show that while there are static and eternal beings, such as the four elements, these are moved by Love and Strife, which gave movement and expression to these elements. Pythagoras and Pythagoreans rooted the essence of humanity in the soul, but this soul transmigrated from one state to another like reincarnation.

And while the Anaximanderian insight as the quintessence of reality being situated outside of phenomena contributed a substantive development towards a theory on humanity and personhood, Torchia distinguishes the work of Socrates and his pupil Plato with the former's shift towards interest in the human individual and the latter's situating human knowledge outside of the empirical and in a transcendent formal realm. And yet, Plato's student Aristotle held to a contrasting vision. For, "Plato points upward, while Aristotle extends his arms outward" (71). Thus, Aristotle's project was to understand the world, including the human individual, as a combination of the metaphysical form and the natural biological phenomenon.

These two competing outlooks found their expression in the Christian world. Theologians from Augustine of Hippo to Thomas Aquinas captured these philosophical views in a theological tone but with different results. Torchia addresses some problems that arise in contrast to Christian theology in the early church, which relates to the nature of the individual human and the Greek perspective. As Tertullian suggested, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" (99). Scripture indicates that the individual is a whole thing but hints at things suggesting that certain parts of the person can be affected by one thing and not the other. While Augustine shares the denigration of the body or its demotion in light of the soul, he maintains its importance as something more than just an instrument of the soul. However, for Augustine, the initial question is where evil comes from. Therefore, he finds that the transcendent realm of spirit provides the harmonious union of person. But centuries later, Thomas Aquinas would, like his Greek counterpart, situate the harmonious

union of humanity in the composite of rational animal. The essentia and the esse identify God as the grounds for the latter through which all things possess being. However, the former is assigned primarily to creation, which includes humans. And so, we share in the esse of God, but our essentialistic grounding in the esse or being of God distinguishes us.

However, with the age of enlightenment, we find a move away from theological metaphysics grounded in Greek thought and Scripture towards a scientifico-rational method of inquiry. Modern sciences called into question the unity between teleology and mechanistic causes. Thus, as Torchia reminds his readers, the French enlightenment thinker Renes Descartes comes at a time when the popular notion is to reduce "the universe to a vast collection of quantifiable, measurable facts subject to efficient causality" (159). However, this calls into question the importance of the individual, the person, and humanity itself as the center of the created universe. Therefore, we are nothing more than simply one more emergent being in a blind system of natural laws and their causes. Taking this a step further, the Scottish empiricist philosopher David Hume ontologically denies the self entirely. "Hume's account of personal identity is wholly consistent with the Newtonian perspective and its challenges to fundamental presuppositions about reality (or at least as supported by an Aristotelian worldview and a traditional substantialist metaphysics)" (187). For Hume, one had to reduce complex systems, including humanity, to a series of basic, simple parts. Consequently, an empirical, observational method is employed to test patterns observed through the rigors of scientific analysis and investigation.

The self faces a final challenge from postmodern thinkers who, as Torchia argues, reject objectivity for reasoning and the self, as these concepts lack metaphysical grounding (223). Thus, this attitude impacts many bioethical concerns, which may not recognize the human as a biological entity. Hence, issues such as abortion would mark a distinction between embryonic developmental tissue and a human person. Likewise, the incommensurability of scientific theories is predicated on purely empirical observations. Without a metaphysical foundation, we cannot understand what it means to be human, creating tension with conflicting views and preventing a consensus from being reached. However, Torchia believes that the nature of a human person is best recaptured by Alasdair C. MacIntyre's suggestion of a return to a teleological anthropology rooted in Thomistic philosophy. Therefore, Torchia suggests that the best way to address the current postmodern crisis of defining the human person is to revisit a Thomistic perspective on identity, as articulated by MacIntyre.

In summary, Joseph Torchia's *Exploring Personhood: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Nature* presents a fascinating and insightful historical analysis of what a person is. It also provides recommendations for defining humanity through this lens. I would have appreciated a more in-depth exploration of the concept of

personhood beyond the modern themes of humanity and individuality portrayed in examples like the movie *E.T.*, as well as discussions about robots and consciousness. Despite this, Torchia's scholarly treatment of the subject, his breadth of knowledge and academic expression, and his solutions to the postmodern definitional dilemma in Thomastic teleological anthropology make this book a must-read for anyone serious about delving into a philosophical analysis of human nature and personhood from a theological perspective.

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Book Review

Christina Bieber Lake, *Prophets of the Posthuman: American Fiction, Biotechnology, and the Ethics of Personhood* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), xix + 263 pp. $38.00

Reviewed by Nils Borquist

Imagination Innovation or Violation?

With *Prophets of the Posthuman*, Christina Bieber Lake wishes readers to consider the possibility that people's intelligence should not be glorified as their saving grace but rather their capacity and willingness to love and be loved. Whereas the gifts treasured by society for the benefit of humanity often emerge from technological advancements, the elements that convened to cultivate civilization frequently get dismissed as relics of primitive man. Stories, myths, and religions, as the foundations of inspiration and interconnectivity, are judged as insignificant compared to possibilities of longer lives, pharmaceutical saviors, and joy delivered by social media stars. With such a contemporary wealth of digital life enhancers and vicarious living through the lens of another, who needs visionary literature, artistic invention, or God? Lake provides a blunt reply: To discover the good life, we all do.

The book avoids completely damning technology, instead pointing out the ill-advised worship of all things computerized. Through weaving a narrative wherein Lake braids the threads of fear of the inevitability of death, nefarious goals and outcomes of technological enhancement, ethical challenges, the potential of liberal arts, and the power of God, a clear picture materializes: Pixels forming a yellow thumb's up, and the checking of a "like" box replace man's true happiness and respect for his neighbor and himself. The ideas of being careful, thoughtful, and dedicated to the self, the other, and God burn on the altar of recklessness, selfishness, and the swiping from one face to the next to appease the spirits of social acceptance and conformity. Additionally, Lake chose several works of literature as the tools utilized to construct her messages, the primary focus being the power of story to incur a greater understanding of life's complexities, confusions, and ecstasies.

Lake immediately links the underlying premise of man's infatuation with death—especially his own—with technological pursuits. As "the inevitability of death has always shaped human psychology, philosophy, religion, and the arts," including technological advancements is no surprise (xii). However, the response, the legitimately believed notion that ultimately death can and will be conquered by

the ingenuity and hard work of humanity, shocks the practical portion of the mind. Within this idea lies the reality that the quest for greater longevity is merely a toll booth on the highway to the desire for infinite life. Scientists appear quite mad at times, and they can embody this wish to overtake death. Humanity often creates a version of itself in the form of a machine to defy nature and God. Lake cites Aylmer from Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" as a prime example of the genius capable of manipulating human biology while also failing to consider all potential outcomes; this is the person who "dedicates his science to overcoming" humankind's most significant problems, "human finitude and death," but also destroys beauty and life in the maniacal chase (49). As Aylmer discovers, two major consequences emerge from such ventures: death eventually becomes something that loses significance literally and symbolically for society, and humanity fails, usually dramatically and painfully.

Furthermore, a supplemental realization points to the decline of religion in society, especially Christianity. Perhaps the rejection of God derives from the introductory story involving people in the Bible, the birth and fall of Adam and Eve. This opening sequence highlights the fact that regardless of choices and decisions, each human being indulges in selfishness. Hence, death remains inevitable—God will simply not allow immortality for the creature intent on inflicting moral and physical damage to itself and others. Sinful humanity does not accept this recourse, so it returns to the drawing board, searching for another solution.

With humans persistently turning to technology to overcome perceived shortcomings, such as dying or cosmetic discomfort, Lake considers the numerous potential true overall goals of apparent advancement, some shocking, some scary, and all worrisome. Her first hypothesis, which essentially encapsulates all others, concerns the dream of absolute control over life in all facets. The end-all and be-all of proving human authority becomes verifiable through the recognizable fingerprint of humanity on all existence. If we can control and manipulate nature, what more can be done to prove to present and future humanity, nature itself, or even God that we are the pinnacle of both the physical and metaphysical realms?

Another possibility deals with creating a perfect society, the utopian dream. With so many progressive and productive inventions, and with the "fact" that "nearly all enhancement technologies...are viewed as quick and painless routes to healthy self-esteem" and tools for easing all difficulties for society, what should stop us from accepting widespread digitalization of all components of life? (69). Nothing, it would seem. However, a question does arise in this community—what is a perfect society without ideal humans to inhabit it? Therein lies the third aspect—engineering human perfection. "We have in contemporary America … a society of individuals who think that their bodies are essentially plastic, who think of their lives as a project, who look to technology to solve their problems," writes Lake (18). Weakness

abounds in every single human as well as every human group, or, to be thorough, in humanity in its totality. Once the technology exists that eliminates such weaknesses by inserting a microchip into a brain or via a simple procedure, the obvious course of action for people young and old alike (though advanced age will likely be one of the ultimate "weaknesses" to eradicate) is to accept the glorious changes with no questions asked.

Next, and perhaps most alarming, many inventive creators, those who believe humanity produced God rather than the other way around, wish to continue this process of pushing an explicit evolutionary agenda, fashioning the next step in intelligent development. The willingness to "play God" and disregard future implications seems quite acceptable to many today. Lake points out that the mindset of superiority residing in the minds of many has grown to be considered tolerable and absolutely reasonable. A side effect of this loss of faith emerges in the isolation of many people, especially the young. The comfort and connections from fellowship that once alleviated possible anxiety and loneliness have been replaced by millions of kids and adults sitting alone in the dark in front of one screen or another, playing games, indulging in base gratifications, or wasting precious moments.

The likeliest reason may be the most deplorable: Supreme financial gain. Money, of course, drives innovation, perhaps more than any other reason, save power, though the two are likely neck-and-neck down the home stretch. Of course, the effect of this race involves creators putting blinders on their faces and shutting out the negatives, such as diminishing the value of society. Citing theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, Lake writes that "if we view the world as being under the dominion of science, then science and technology 'will overpower and suffocate the forces of love within the world' because everything in the world will come to be viewed 'solely in terms of power or profit-margin'" and everything else will be categorized as "useless" and require "wiping out" (130). One could make a convincing argument, which Lake provides, that included in this "everything else" group will be civilizations around the planet, biological entities and natural formations alike.

Lastly, and most frighteningly, the attitude that overcoming humankind's fallibility and fragility will never occur and is, thus, a waste of effort to attempt to alter results in the genocidal notion that ridding the world of humans and replacing them with a robotic version capable of infinitude in life, software upgrades, and without emotions, sympathy, and weakness should be the ultimate goal. Unfortunately, a key factor is either forgotten or entirely missed for so many brilliant minds: Science without human imagination and criticism, without the infusion of personhood and morality, is doomed to dehumanize. As Lake contends, with such inevitable dehumanization, foundational ethics disintegrate as well, and with no ethics, society crumbles into a formless, structureless, and, ultimately, lifeless void.

Lake offers a clear explanation regarding the necessity of ethics as a connecting aspect of people within a community and even within the larger global community: "Ethics requires a definition of 'persons' that insists on persons as wholes that exist within, and depend on, society as a whole, not merely as materially independent 'individuals'" (4). While this determination may appear quite obvious, the fact that in today's vernacular, a phrase such as "individual truth" (or, more explicitly, people believing that they have legitimate personal truths that override societal ethics) may be heard multiple times per day with tones of seriousness. Such statements certainly display a lack of general understanding of responsibility to the other and the structures of rules, expectations, and pleasantries. What Lake discusses that should cause distress for thoughtful citizens concerns the reality that architects of developing technologies, as well as the technologies themselves, exclude ethical considerations or how the technologies may negatively affect human progress and interactions at the person-to-person level, especially concerning young people. Once marketers, investors, and corporations get involved, they tend to tell consumers about the greatness of products and that these products will be the most beneficial items ever purchased. Lake expresses surprise at the blind willingness to accept such propaganda from strangers whose interests clearly focus wholly upon financial gain.

Submission arises as a keyword for Lake midway through the text, which she masterfully employs explicitly and connotatively. Citizens who love neighbors, care for the community, and trust in God must submit themselves to an extent for the betterment of others and their own lives. Instead, consumers today are "rewarded" for submitting to the demands of commercialism and sacrificing scrutiny for the sake of lining up to buy the newest iPhone. The tension created by a lack of understanding of one's own emotional capacity causes confusion. The contentment that results from holding a door open for a fellow human or binge-watching an exciting series instead of facing the world feels eerily similar. How does one discern what is "right" from what is utterly meaningless? Lake states that a major problem in this struggle results from the desire "to embrace and promote quick fixes and easy enhancements," an issue that entices scientists "to think of individuals as patients who need their problems to be solved rather than as persons who need to be loved and cared for" (133). The message delivered and adopted by many disregards building long-term connections and even appropriate cultural habits wherein the promotion of species relies on kindness instead of convincing consumers that their wishes deserve to be fulfilled because their importance is so often under-appreciated or even neglected altogether. Therefore, the care that should be applied outward from the person ends up getting redirected inward. Unfortunately, acts performed for the other are replaced by "things," and the individual loses sight of his or her role in a functional community. Lake, citing the venerable C.S. Lewis, provides a lovely and haunting summation: "The goal of modern science applied through technique is to

'subdue reality to the wishes of men'" (153). In this light, reality becomes one of "my truth" being thrust to the fore of prominence. However, when millions of people place themselves first, what happens to ethics or care for the neighbor or, generally speaking, the good life? Quite simply, it suffers. Thankfully, Lake does not solely point out the downward trajectory of the human spirit and the human community, instead reiterating that the good life primarily comes as a result of sharing one's love with others. She also gives the solution for brightening societal gloom, pointing us to the wisdom contained in texts found in libraries and on the shelves in homes.

Countering the demands for self-sacrifice and conformity that constantly inundates citizens' senses is difficult, and understandably so. Heeding the words of those whom Lake deems prophets, artists, and theologians gives us direction and instructions for navigating life's difficulties, primarily through literary invention and a relationship with God. The prophets seek to guide rather than condemn, which means destroying technology is not the goal, but rather, "what unites them is their desire to oppose the dominant consciousness of an advanced technological society" (12). Having wheels on a car to travel across the country produces efficiency and safety, which is good; conversely, believing that because I own a car, I should never walk again or, when driving, my destination should be regarded by all other drivers as the most important, appears delusional. The superficiality of such notions tears us away from being a part of the greater society. Fortunately, art shows "the way to a richer reality," as does belief and trust in God (21). Revelation surfaces as a standard and imperative element found in art and faith. The power of revelatory experiences overwhelms and satisfies as secrets cease to be entirely hidden and complexities become understood. Ways to live harmoniously, both within the self and within community, are clarified via the ancient connecting tools that are stories encouraging "people to think about the purpose of human life" (111). The vehicle story utilizes for instruction remains, as through time, language. Words possess power and value, and meaningful interactions occur only via thoughtful language employment. Perhaps, as Lake stresses, the devaluation and bastardization of language today have damaged the arts and religious literature above all else, and leaders of technological advancement have been all too happy to join in the fray, pulling people away from deeper understandings to keep them on the level of superficiality. Art and faith fight through the attack by "integrating the problems of experience and the ordering of experience" (184). Essentially, we are helped to make sense of our existence through the word and the Word. What, then, is the predominant message regarding our lives on earth, considering literature, music, or the Logos? Live a life of grace.

Simply put, "the cost of the truly good life is sacrificial love" (179). Grace is the key. In the end, Lake delivers a beautiful and impactful message: "The way to return to being human is not to win the scientific debate…. It is instead to return...

to an ancient idea with the power to encourage humanity to be humane: that human existence...is personal. And where persons are concerned, love is always the highest and best choice" (187). While nice and useful in minimal quantities, technology gives us no true revelation. Art, community, and God—these show us how to live with grace, love, and togetherness. We connect via story, not through social media; we love through laughter and affection, not through heart emojis and likes; we find grace in the faces of our neighbors, not on the screens of our phones. Through the decades, prophets have shown the way—we need only look in the eyes of our fellow human beings, listen to their voices and their stories, learn to practice forgiveness and develop faith in God to reach true happiness and a life of fulfillment.

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