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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Introduction

This first issue of 2025 comprises four articles that loosely deal with issues pertaining to the so-called "mind/body problem." The problem pertains to the relationship between *minds*—consciousness, thoughts, mental states and causation—and *bodies*—the biological, physiological and neurophysiological, and so forth. Pertinent to the problem are questions as to the nature of mind, its relationship to the body—are they separate or somehow identical?—the capacity of the mental to act freely and to bring about physical changes, and the nature of consciousness and its emergence from, and relationship to, the physical. The problem is relevant to the issue of life because we generally tend to value human agency and action (agent-act causation) as different from, and higher than, the event-event causation of the physical. We see ourselves as free, and with this freedom comes moral responsibility and *dignity*.

Dennis Bielfeldt's article, "What Life has Mind in a Physical Universe," explores agent freedom and its assumed compatibility with contemporary positions in the philosophy of mind, that is, reductive physicalism, non-reductive physicalism, and functionalism. After surveying the promise of supervenience and downward causation for protecting freedom and mental causality, it argues the Kantian view that the issue of freedom and determinism pertains to the adoption of a *standpoint*, and that, accordingly, the unity of the person, both free and determined is not a synthesis of content issuing into a unity, but rather a statement of unity in the articulation of differing standpoints. Interestingly, this unity can be connected better to classical Christology, with its identity of person in a difference in natures, than can either reductive or non-reductive physicalist views.

Dan Lioy's "Embodied Souls: Exploring Human Personhood in an Age of AI," deals with the issue of artificial intelligence and personhood. Within the philosophy of mind, functionalism downplays the intrinsicality of mental experience and emphasizes the functionality of mind and its capacity to output appropriately to functional states and behaviors from inputs from functional states and sensations. Daniel Lioy's article argues that the holistic nature of human existence, the promise of resurrection, and the notion that humans are made in the image of God point to a notion of personhood that cannot be understood functionally. Therefore, AI cannot be a person or replace persons, but it can only be an instrumental tool that human persons might employ in their service to God and neighbor.

Peter Beckman's article, "Made to Be in God's Presence," discusses how Adam and Eve, in their embodiment and humanity, both abide in the presence of God and protect His sanctuaries. God's purpose is for created human beings to dwell in the world and tend to God's presence within it. The divine intends for human beings to be truly human and in relationship with Him. Despite the disobedience of sin, God, through Jesus Christ, restores all that was lost and, accordingly, human dwelling in the world becomes human dwelling with God.

In "The Resurrection of the Flesh," Nicholas Hopman notes that the mind/body problem, as understood in the West, has theological roots. Unfortunately, while the ancient church sought to confront the denigration of material reality by confessing "the resurrection of the flesh," a problematic dualism between the incorporeality of the "higher" spirit and the corporeality of the "lowly" flesh remained. It fell to Martin Luther to reorient Christian vocation away from the abnegation of the flesh and the biological family toward discerning divine calling within the fleshly state of marriage itself. Hopman concludes by indicating that Luther's doctrine of the sacraments clearly rejects any inherent contradiction between the spirit and the flesh.

Seven book reviews, including one book review essay, offer readers insights into books that delve into significant life issues, many of which tackle the mind/body or soul/body debates.

We hope you find enjoyment, benefit, and challenge in the content of this issue of *Verba Vitae*.

Dennis Bielfeldt

General Editor, *Verba Vitae*

What Life Has Mind in a Physical Universe?

Dennis Bielfeldt

Imagine that you are held responsible for something that you could *not* have done. Somebody killed Mary, and the police think it is you. However, you have a solid excuse because you were out of town on the fateful night. Unfortunately, the police don't seem to grasp the significance of your exculpatory evidence. They believe that Mary died because someone killed her, and that you are the one who committed the crime—even though they know that you were not in the vicinity of the murder. But what kind of reasoning is this? Would it not be grossly unjust to be accused and charged with such a crime?

Now imagine that you are on trial, and the prosecuting attorney is detailing your guilt to the jury. He points to you: "Bob is the one who killed Mary, and the person sitting here is Bob!" The attorney continues, "I admit that that the defense will likely argue that Bob's being out of town on that night is somehow relevant to the question of his guilt, but do not be confused by this underhanded maneuver. You can see clearly that the man before you is the person who killed poor Mary. You have eyes, after all!"

You now await the verdict. Finally, the jury foreman reads, "On the issue of first-degree murder, the jury finds the defendant guilty as charged." At sentencing, the judge asks if you have any final words before incarceration. You spin around and see Mary's family in attendance. You begin, "I am so sorry that somebody killed Mary, but know that since I was not in town on the night of the murder, I could not have killed her. I would apologize to you were I guilty, but it is not possible for me to be guilty because I was not present at the crime. I cannot apologize for an action for which I cannot be responsible." You wait hopefully to discern the effect of your words. But Mary's family shake their heads sadly, and then the judge interrupts, "Since you still exhibit no remorse in this matter, I must hand out the harshest sentence available. You are hereby sentenced to death by lethal injection. Guards, take the prisoner away!"

What a crazy story! This could never happen, right? Clearly, you could not have done the dastardly deed because you are not causally connected to the act that was

done. It does not matter that it might *appear* to some that you did it, for you are causally disconnected from the crime and thus simply could not be guilty. Appearances do not always track with reality. *In reality*, you did not and could not kill Mary.[1]

Reflect upon the story and consider that in our everyday experience and decision-making we think that we can do other than what we did. (Clearly, the jury thought Bob could have chosen not to kill Mary.) We have *freedom*, and this ability to do other than what we did carries with it *responsibility*. There is something that we ought to do, and since we have the *freedom* either to do it or not, we are praiseworthy if we do so and blameworthy if we do not.[2] It is indeed part of the *manifest image* of our world that we are *agents* who could do other than what we did, and accordingly we deserve praise and gratitude if we do what is good and/or right. This manifest image of the world is how things *seem* to us.

But unfortunately, it is part of the *scientific image* of the world that my body and brain are complicated physical systems whose processes are realized by more basic physical entities whose behavior obeys inexorable laws of nature. The agent who seemingly acts freely is, we are told, actually a complex system of neurophysiological entities, properties and events whose occurrences are caused by other neurophysiological entities, properties and events.[3]

Thus, while I might admit that my body is part of that fateful causal chain issuing in the death of Mary, I clearly could not have caused it. Why? Even though witnesses say that I was there, my mind, my actual "I," which is classically conceived not to be in space at all, was nowhere near this event. Thoughts and intentions are mental events, not physical events, and since it makes no sense to say *where* they precisely are, they must be deemed not to be denizens of the spatial. It is not that the real "I" was thousands of miles away from the event, it is rather that it is absurd to suggest it could ever be spatially proximate to it.

So, Bob's position seems *prima facie* justified. Mary died, but Bob is not an agent with contra-causal agency and thus could not have *caused* the dying event. Accordingly, he has no *responsibility* for the event. In truth, *agent* Bob does not exist at all, at least not in the way often assumed. What is it that could be Bob apart from the complex physical processes comprising him? Clearly, agent Bob can have no *causal agency*. Bob has no *I* that *as an I*, can perform act X or ~X.

While Bob is confident that he could hot have killed Mary, the jury finds otherwise: He did it! Bob is judged culpable, though surely it cannot be. Analogously, we widely conceive ourselves to be free moral agents, deserving praise or blame. But neuroscience seemingly finds otherwise. It assumes that each and every brain state is caused by other brain states and relevant environmental inputs. Accordingly, we have neither agency nor freedom and thus could not have done it!

A Sketch of the Problem

THE CANONICAL MIND/BODY PROBLEM ARISES in part because we are prone to offer mental explanations for our behavior. Consider the best explanation of why Sally went to the airport today. Arguably, she went because she *believes* that her friend Monica is on a plane landing today, and she *desires* to see her. Such belief-desire explanations are common in our everyday life—so common, in fact, that many philosophers who deny their explanatory value term them "folk psychological ascriptions." Just as the common folk once attributed evil befalling them to demons—though there never were demons—so do commoners today attribute their actions to *mental causation* —though neuroscientists generally deny the existence of such causation.[4]

Sometimes theologians are unaware of the philosophical consensus on the contour and scope of the mind-body problem, and they try to solve or evade some of its difficult problems without fully understanding the issues motivating them. The mind-body problem arose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as natural philosophers began to conceive the possibility that nature is *causally closed*. Consider the following ordered pair: $<\{x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots x_n\}, C_{xy}>$. The first member of the duple lists all the entities, events or property instantiations in the universe, while the second claims that the members of this set are related causally.[5]

Denied by the formula is that there are entities, events or property instantiations outside the sum of natural entities, events or property instantiations, that cause natural entities, events or property instantiations. Also denied is that there are natural entities, events or property instantiations that can cause non-natural entities, events or property instantiations. The *causal closure of the physical* assures that putative non-natural or supernatural entities, events or properties are causally disconnected from natural entities, events or properties. The proscription against causal relations defined over the domains of the natural and non-natural is the problem with which Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, and Kant had to deal. How is human freedom possible when *only* natural entities, events and properties causally connect? *A fortiori*, and recalling our question in the first section of this paper, how is moral reality conceivable without human freedom?

One response to this problem is to deny that the physical is causally closed. Descartes advanced such a position, sometimes called *dualistic causal interactionism*. Accordingly, there are material things in space and time (*res extensa*) and mental things in time (*res cogitans*), and they somehow causally interact. Accordingly, the explanation why I raised my right arm might be that I desired to raise it, and I believed by moving my arm in certain ways it would raise. My desiring and believing (or perhaps willing) to move my body in a particular way thus explains the moving of it in a particular way.

Descartes further adhered to *substance dualism*, the view that everything that is can ultimately be sorted into one of two domains: There are mental substances (thoughts, desires, knowings, experiencings, believings, etc.) and material substances (entities, mass, velocity, shape, position, etc.). Causal relations are drawn only between members of these two disjoint sets.

Descartes, however, admitted to not knowing the mechanism by which causal connection between disparate ontological domains was possible and finally resorted to the perhaps tongue-in-cheek idea that the pineal gland, itself a physical substance, was somehow a "shuttlecock" between the mental and the physical.[6] Descartes' idea is simple enough: the soul *qua* soul is free as much as God is, but the soul is connected to the body in various ways limiting both its epistemic powers and its powers of movement. Being free is, for Descartes, what it is to be made in the image of God. The soul, like God, is immaterial and wholly free.

The problems of substance dualism and dualistic causal interactionism are legion and were mostly already appreciated in Descartes' time and immediately afterward. How is a causal connection definable between disparate ontological domains? How does a mental event cause a physical event without somehow introducing more energy or momentum into the physical system? How can we regard nature and brain as causally closed physically if there is yet an immaterial substance that brings about different events or properties in the natural order that would not have otherwise been brought about?

Because of the problems with dualistic causal interactionism, Spinoza embraced a "dual aspect theory." He espoused a neutral monism in which God is the single substance having two known attributes, the mental and the physical. God's being can be discerned in the mental order in His various nodes having epistemic agency and in the physical order in His world that knowers come to know. With this move, dualism is rejected along with much that is consonant with dualism, e.g., freedom and personal immortality.[7]

There were other early views much more compatible with dualism, notably the options of *occasionalism* and *pre-established* harmony. However, both avoided dualistic causal interactionism. Malebranche argued that our mental lives and physical lives run in parallel to each other because God "occasions" the bringing about of physical events and properties that are appropriate to the mental events and properties agent's experience. Leibniz's views are more complex, holding that God has coordinated a universe of panpsychic entities (monads) such that there appear to be causal connections between the mental and physical when, in fact, they are causally isolated. Every monad is "windowless," as it turns out. No genuine relations can exist among entities and events because all relations are actually monadic properties of substances. Instead of causal relations among substances (monads), there is a pre-established harmony coordinating them.

It was left to Kant, however, to bequeath to posterity a mind-body view that influenced the nineteenth century and the very early part of the twentieth century. Kant argued that while each and every event within the universe is caused by other events in the universe—and thus the causal closure of the physical is retained and personal freedom denied—our experience of ourselves is such that we can legitimately assert freedom, for we are immediately confronted with duty, and since "thou ought presupposes thou can," with freedom as well. From the standpoint of pure reason, we are without freedom, but from the standpoint of practical reason, we are entitled to regard ourselves as free. Simply put, we are phenomenally determined, but noumenally free.[8]

The solution that Kant, along with later thinkers such as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, adopts is that while the pure concepts of understanding must apply to the empirical ego—to the self as it is acted upon and acts within its environment—these concepts cannot apply to the transcendental field or ego, to the thinker whose pure concepts of understanding grasp the causal relations of the self in its context. The reason is simple: Both these pure categories of the understanding and the thinker thinking them are systematically illusive to being thought because they themselves are presupposed in any such thinking.[9]

The nineteenth century was an age of idealism, and it proved relatively easy to hold idealist-inspired monisms or dualisms by pointing to the obvious fact that the phenomenal world could not include within it the synthesizing ego from which it itself resulted. While the relationships among natural entities, events and properties resulted from that synthesis, the synthesis itself did not *cause* those relationships, for the category of cause was reserved for inter-worldly connections. Natural science was thus made consonant with the transcendental idealistic standpoint, as idea was regarded more fundamental than matter. Accordingly, neo-Kantianism could hold sway in philosophy departments in Germany with fundamental investigations of nature taking place down the hallway in German physics departments.

Beginning in Britain, however, the early twentieth century rejected much of the idealism of the nineteenth century and embraced *realist* and *materialist* assumptions. The effect in the mind/body discussion was immediate and recalled the Cartesian problematic: If ultimate reality is material, then how is the mental possible? How could it be that the physical processes of neurons and synapses in our brains can eventuate in thoughts about human equality, global warming, and the judging of a legal matter? How is it that the extensional and descriptive can give rise to the intensional and normative?[10] Physical reality is comprised of objects behaving in certain ways according to particular laws. How can such an unconscious collection of physical processes account for judging one logical proof superior to another? As Donald Davidson famously remarked, normativity and rationality "find no echo in

physical reality."[11] So how is critical judgment possible in a world that is ultimately constituted by physical entities, events, properties and processes?

The Contemporary Landscape

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF APPROACHES TO the mind/body problem in the twentieth century, many of which flesh out more deeply what the tradition had previously suggested. Notice that none of the positions I distinguish below retain overt appreciation for the Kantian "solution" regnant through much of the nineteenth century.

- *Dualism*. Some continue to point out that the mental and the physical are *different*, and thus there can be no reducibility of one to the other. To gain insight into contemporary dualism, it is important to distinguish between *substance dualism* and *property dualism*. While few today subscribe to the former view (*Cartesian dualism*), many nonetheless want to claim that mental properties do exist and that these properties cannot be reduced to the physical. For instance, my thinking of a golden mountain in France really is a mental event and not the firing of a batch of neurons. However, property dualists deny that there is an immaterial substance that accounts for, or causes, the thought. Rather, the thought, while mental, is somehow *physically realized*. Accordingly, the mental can neither be semantically nor metaphysically reducible to the physical, but it is nonetheless realized within a physical system. The precise nature of this realization is, of course, the question.
- *Logical Behaviorism*. This once popular view simply understands mental ascriptions as complex sets of stimulus-response conditionals. John is smart – has the mental property of being bright – if and only if when John is stimulated in appropriate ways, he responds in appropriate ways. He is hungry if and only if when presented with particular stimuli such as roast beef, he will eat the roast beef *ceteris paribus* ("all things remaining the same").[12] The salient point—what makes this behaviorism *logical*—is that mental terms are thought to *just mean* their appropriate stimulus-response realizers. What is the meaning of 'smart' when applied to a student? It is nothing more than 'if the student S is stimulated X-ly, student S responds Y-ly,' and 'if stimulated Z-ly, S will respond W-ly,' etc.
- *Identity Theory*. This view claims that there is one thing that manifests itself in both mental and physical ways, or more popularly, that the mental *just is* the physical. One type of identity theory espouses *type-type identity (or reduction)*, claiming that each and every *type* of mental event can be reduced to an appropriate type of physical event. While

it might seem that mental events are different than physical events, if whenever a particular mental state arises a particular physical state is present, one can go further and in principle do away with the mental, claiming it to be another way of talking about, or referring to, the physical. The *eliminativist* claiming that mental events and properties do not exist stands close to the reductive identity theorist. For both, there is only the physical. But whereas the type-type *reductionist* nonetheless thinks that one can still employ mental talk, the eliminativist rejects such talk altogether.

- *Non-Reductive Physicalism*. Because of its popularity, I present it as a separate view, but really it is a species of *identity theory*. It asserts, in fact, a *token-token identity*, claiming that while each mental event is coextensive with some physical event or other, there is no possibility of reducing the mental to the physical because of the *multiple realization* of the mental in the physical. Such multiple realization seems to be empirically verifiable, in fact. There are many occasions when a brain-damaged person seems to have the same thoughts, experiences or attitudes with different parts of the brain active than those areas that had been damaged.[13] *Token-token identities* guarantee that only the physical ultimately exists, but the *multiple realization* of the mental scuttles any reductionist agendas.
- *Functionalism*. This view, which can be combined with various others, claims that the identity conditions of mental states are found in the complex relationship such states have with inputs, outputs and other mental states. While Logical Behaviorism could only individuate mental states in terms of input/output conditionals, functionalism realizes that oftentimes there are mental processes occurring even when there are not specific inputs and outputs. Functionalism captures the fact that mental states of people can change without changes to the external environment. In most versions it is consistent with non-reductive physicalism. The idea is simple enough: The human mind, and its mental events, properties and states, is realized by the neuro-machinery of the brain just as the Word program I am using right now is realized by the Mac Pro hardware on which this program is running. A Word program is multiply realizable, of course, because it can be run on many different machines and many different platforms. Any system that can emulate "~, v, &, →, ↔" can run the program, though it might be ungainly to do so with levers and pulleys.

This general overview should give the reader a sense of the scope of the contemporary mind/body discussion. The questions remain, however. How is it that what

seems closest to us—our thoughts, fears, aspirations, dreams and judgments—is all physically realized? How is the normative possible in a physical universe without normativity? How does *ought* emerge from *is*? The pre-Kantian problematic reasserts itself with a vengeance. To better understand the magnitude of the problem, it is helpful to unpack two crucially important notions that occur throughout the contemporary discussion: supervenience and downward causation.

Supervenience

Those espousing non-reductive physicalism oftentimes employ *supervenience*, a metaphysical (though sometimes semantic) notion supposedly asserting an asymmetrical dependency relationship between groups of entities, events or properties. The idea is simple enough. Property group *A* supervenes on *B* if and only if a complete specification of *B*-properties determines the distribution of *A*-properties. This means that whenever the B-properties are set, so are the A-properties, or alternately, if any two domains are A-discernible, they must be B-discernible as well.[14] Thus, if the mental supervenes upon the neuro-physiological, then molecule-by-molecule brain replicas *must* be in the same mental state. Supervenience offers a kind of constraint upon the mental, keeping it non-reducibly tied to the physical.

At this point it is useful to review the standard supervenience formulations with an eye to understanding the supervenience of the mental upon the physical. Below are Jaegwon Kim's classic formulations of *weak* and *strong supervenience*:

- A *weakly supervenes* on B if and only if, necessarily, for any object *x* and any property F in A, if *x* has F, then there exists a property G in B such that *x* has G, and if any *y* has G, it has F.[15]
- A *strongly supervenes* on B if and only if, necessarily, for any object *x* and any property F in A, if *x* has F, then there exists a property G in B such that *x* has G, and *necessarily*, if any *y* has G, it has F.[16]

Weak supervenience disallows placing in the same world B-duplicates that are not A-duplicates, while yet permitting B-duplicates that are not A-duplicates in other possible worlds. Accordingly, it asserts an *intra-world*, but not *cross-world* constraint. *Strong supervenience*, on the other hand, claims a cross-world or inter-world constraint by asserting a *rigid covariance* of lower-level and upper-level properties. Accordingly, strong supervenience supports counterfactuals of this form: *were y* to possess G in B, it *would* possess F in A. Without this inter-worldly constraint, the higher-level A properties could seemingly vary widely with a slight modification of the lower-level B properties. While weak supervenience disallows two indiscernible individuals occupying the same world to be discernible with respect to their super-

vening properties, strong supervenience disallows any two possible individuals to be subveniently indiscernible, yet superveniently discernible.

Another way of understanding the difference is to conceive of weak supervenience as claiming an accidental regularity between the subvenient and supervenient, while understanding strong supervenience to express a nomological connection between the two. This can be easily seen in these two supervenience formulations where '□' means 'necessarily,' and 'P' and 'M' range over physical and mental properties respectively.

- [Weak Supervenience] $\Box (\forall x)(\forall M)\{Mx \rightarrow [(\exists P)Px \,\&\, (\forall y)(Py \rightarrow My)]\}$
- [Strong Supervenience] $\Box (\forall x)(\forall M)\{Mx \rightarrow [(\exists P)Px \,\&\, (\forall y)\,\Box\,(Py \rightarrow My)]\}$

Weak supervenience states that *as a matter of fact*, the tokening of mental properties correlates with the tokening of physical properties, not that they *must* so correlate. Thus, while it is true that John displays certain mental properties when certain physical properties are instantiated, it need not be the case. Strong supervenience declares that for any x, and any mental property M, if x has M, then there is some natural property P that x also has, such that any x having P necessarily has M. This claims that M and P *must* be coninstantiated. Strong supervenience seems to offer constraints on the assignment of mental properties given what is physically realized. Accordingly, we *cannot conceive* that John tokens a set of mental properties when displaying some set of neuro-behavioral properties, and not say he is tokening these mental properties on each and every possible tokening of those neuro-behavioral properties. Because of this, strong supervenience is often regarded as the better candidate for mental supervenience than its weaker counterpart. It must be noted, however, that for both the tokening of mental properties in the agent is somehow determined by the tokening of some set of physical properties in that agent.[17]

Unfortunately, neither formulation can likely account for the instantiation of supervening mental properties on the physical base of the agent. The problem is that "meaning is not in the head." Hilary Putnam famously pointed out that two thinkers indiscernible with respect to their physical properties can still differ with respect to their mental properties. The reason for this is that being in mental state M_1 regarding object O, is to bear certain representational properties toward O—one might say the "look" of O—*and* to possess *nonrepresentational* properties towards O—normally considered to be causal. Accordingly, to *mean* water is not simply abstractly to mean something that is wet, colorless, odorless and tasteless, but also to *mean* that which *causes* those particular representations in the utterer.[18]

Say that earth John has a concept of water. He has proper representations of it and stands in the appropriate causal relations to it. Now John* on twin earth, a molecule-by-molecule replica of John on earth, also has representations of a colorless,

odorless and tasteless liquid comprising twin earth lakes and rivers. However, when John* utters 'water,' he does not refer to water as John does on earth because there is no H_2O on twin earth, only XYZ. Since XYZ causes John*'s representations on twin earth, John* means XYZ and not H_2O. While John and John* are in the same neurophysiological state, John refers to H_2O with 'water' while John* refers to XYZ. Moreover, since the individuation of mental states is via the *content* of those states, John saying 'water is wet' is not the same thing as John* saying it, for John asserts 'H_2O is wet' while John* declares 'XYZ is wet.' Since by stipulation John and John* are in identical neurophysiological states, semantic supervenience fails; there is a supervenient semantic difference without a subvenient physical difference.[19]

The upshot of this is that semantics cannot be merely internal, but rather it must be understood externally (content externalism).[20] Accordingly, weak or strong supervenience seemingly must give way to *global supervenience* in semantics. While the first two apply indiscernibility conditions *locally*, global supervenience expresses *global* indiscernibility. Kim formulates the latter notion as follows:

- A *globally supervenes* on B if and only if, any two worlds indiscernible with respect to B-properties are indiscernibility with respect to A-properties.[21]

This more holistic sense of supervenience simply asserts that no two possible worlds are physically but not mentally indiscernible. While there are philosophical problems with global supervenience, it can take into account both what is going on inside and outside John's head.[22] Clearly, the total physical states do differ for John and John*, for John is causally related to H_2O and John* to XYZ.

What is important is to realize that supervenience provides the physicalist with what he or she needs to make progress in the direction of a "unity of science" approach holding that the special sciences are somehow *dependent* upon physics even if they cannot be *reduced* to physics. The idea is that the ultimate constituents of reality are those things (points? particles?) quantified over by our most fundamental physical theory. It is here that one finds the most profound *causal map* of reality, here that one encounters the deepest laws of nature. Accordingly, psychology is supervenient upon neurophysiology, which supervenes upon biochemistry, which supervenes upon chemistry, which supervenes upon physics. (I could add more rungs to this ladder.) Simply put, mental events are what they are because of the distribution of neuro-properties, which are what they are due to biochemical properties, etc. Supervenience seemingly precludes the possibility of downward causality, a bringing about of a particular distribution of neuro-properties because of the tokening of certain mental properties.[23] What supervenience seemingly precludes is the notion of downward causality, the idea that the mental, in so far as it is mental, can causally affect the physical.

Downward Causation

Imagine any mental event M_1. If one is not a substance dualist, one must assert that M_1 is realized by some physical event P_1. Now let us say that the particular mental event M_1 causes another mental event M_2. (My thought of Wanda reminded me of a fish.) But if one is not a substance dualist then M_2 must be realized by some physical event P_2. Notice how odd it is to say that 'M_1 causes M_2' when we know that P_1 is sufficient for M_1, and P_2 is sufficient for M_2. It seems, in fact, that if we were to use the word "cause" at all, we might want to say that the physical realizers cause the mental events. But now consider P_1 and P_2. Clearly, the fact that M_1 can be said to cause M_2 is that M_1 is realized by P_1 that itself causes P_2 which is itself sufficient for M_2. There does not, in fact, seem to be any *downward causation* at all in this system. M_1 does not downwardly cause P_2 but is realized by P_1 that simply causes P_2.[24]

This problem is generalizable into the problem of human agency. If my willing of raising my arm (M_1) is to cause my arm's movement (P_2), then it cannot be due to some physical realizer P_1 causing P_2, for then the mental has not been causally efficacious in the movement of my arm. What is important is that mental *qua* mental does *not* causally bring about P_2. While one might say that M_1 is causally *relevant* for P_2–P_1 would perhaps not have been present without M_1—causal *efficacy* does not follow. For an event to be causally efficacious for another event, it must be the case that if the former had not happened, the latter would not have happened either. Clearly, P_2 would not have happened without P_1, although it could have happened without M_1.[25]

Taking Stock and Theological Misunderstanding

So, where has this rather technical discussion led us? For Bob to be responsible for his actions, he must have agency, that is, he must be an entity that causally connects to his external environment and can freely have done other than what he did in fact do. Since much of the contemporary work in the philosophy of mind has sought to explain or account for our mental life without violating the causal closure of the physical, the discussion has assumed as wrongheaded or hopelessly misguided the intuition that many non-philosophers have that morality demands *contra-causal freedom*, the idea that one can choose to do X rather than ~X, and that one's choosing and doing is not necessitated by antecedent natural conditions or causes. Just as we no longer believe in phlogiston, so can we no longer indulge the fantasy that there are incorporeal agents (souls) that freely choose to move the physical world in different ways.

It is important to point out that no matter how technical the discussions become in the contemporary philosophy of mind, they take place upon the same ground

marked out by Descartes almost four centuries ago. Moreover, the same problems long ago recognized continue to mount serious challenges to moral life today, at least in so far as people still reflect upon them.

Unfortunately, theologians have consistently avoided entering the technical discussions in the philosophy of mind and have, accordingly, oftentimes not understood fully what is at stake. For instance, a recent article by theologian Sybille Rolf shows initial promise in dealing with the intractable issue of how to think personhood when human freedom, mental causation and moral responsibility must be realized within a physical universe where neuroscience seemingly offers the deepest "causal map" of human experiencing, thinking and behaving. In "Die Kommunikativität des Menschlichen: Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Leib und Seele im Anschluss Martin Luthers,"[26] Rolf sketches a possible way to overcome the current impasse in the mind/body discussion by appropriating a specifically *theological* resource, the *communicatio idiomatum*. Moreover, she suggests that Luther had something very interesting to say about all of this. Could Luther somehow be a resource in the face of this most difficult of problems?

Below I sum up Rolf's argument for a "communicative model," showing how her model fails to address the profound issues confronting the mind/body theorist. I conclude with a reflection on her use of the Joest/Ebeling relational model of personhood, and her commitment to a linguistic ontology, suggesting that this way of proceeding does not take seriously enough the problem with which men and women have been dealing since the Enlightenment: How is mind (mental causation) possible in a physicalistic universe?

Communicative Relationality and Evaluation

Instead of conceiving the problem as how to square the immateriality of mental causation with a physical brain—the classic body/soul approach—Rolf asks us to take the two natures of Christ as a starting point into the problem: "Christ is the true image of God, [so] it is theologically legitimate to look to the reality of Jesus Christ in examining the reality of human being."[27] Rolf suggests that human personhood is similar enough to Christ's personhood to grant *prima facie* legitimation for employing the *communicatio idiomatum* in understanding the mind/body problem. Rolf points out that the unity of the two natures of Christ prohibits an interpretation of those natures *dualistically* and suggests that the unity of Christ's person in His divine and human natures can be a hermeneutical key to unpack the unity of the mind/body in each person. Accordingly, "the communication between God and human being [in Christ] is interpretable as a test case for the question of the possibility of mental and physical processes in general."[28]

Rolf quotes Luther at length in the first passage from his sermon on John 6:51, where Luther addresses the well-known image of the unity of fire and iron.[29] Just as fire penetrates the iron, so too does the divine nature penetrate the human (*durchgöttert*). There is neither a dualism of natures in Christ nor a reducibility of one nature to the other (monism). Rolf points out that Luther carries over the structural characteristics of the iron interpenetrated by fire into a discussion of soul (*Seele*), body (*Leib*), and spirit (*Geist*) in his 1521 Magnificat.[30]

For Luther, the soul and spirit concern reason. While the spirit has insight into the eternal and invisible, the soul is the living principle of the person concerned with natural reason. While Luther explicitly says that the soul can exist without the body, but not the body without the soul,[31] Rolf believes that this does not commit Luther to substance dualism and all of its attendant problems: "Had the Reformer employed the image of heated (*glühenden*) iron explicitly not only for the reality of the person of Jesus Christ, but also for the relation of body and soul, he would have avoided an obvious dualism."[32]

Rolf wants to understand the soul as the living principle (*Lebensprinzip*) of the body, and to hold that there exists a reciprocal dynamic exchange between soul and body characterized by a *communicatio idiomatum*.[33] Moreover, there is a reciprocal dynamic exchange between the soul and Christ making them "one body" (*ein Leib*). All of this means, thinks Rolf, that we can affirm *Kommunikativität als Strukturmerkmal des Menschlichen bei Luther*.[34]

But what does this putative communication of natures amount to? Is there a divine reality perichoretically interpenetrating human reality in Christ grounding some kind of interpenetration by mind of the body? Is any of this relevant to saving mental causation?

Clearly, Rolf wants to escape the intractability of the mind/body problem by moving the discussion into a new key, one taking a cue from Joest and Ebeling. She claims that the soul is human being in its relationality (*Bezogenheit*), its "being for" (*Für-Sein*) the other and itself, a relationality constituted as well by the soul's relation to the ground of its own possibility as "being for."[35] Predictably, Rolf connects this relationality to Luther's proclamation of the Gospel, for the *performative* power of Gospel proclamation emphasizes the communication between human being and God accomplished in the soul through the medium of the Word. Having established a connection back to Luther, she declares: "Body and soul are to be sure distinguishable, but neither separate from each other nor bound into a third thing, a new unity, nor graspable as a substantial entity distinguished from them. They form distinctive aspects of human *Dasein*, that on their own have different effects upon the other."[36] Modeling body and soul as distinctive aspects of *Dasein* can be aided

by developing a linguistic ontology where communication becomes an *existentielle Wesensmitteilung* inside a matrix of relations.

Rolf has more to say about her model, pointing out repeatedly that it overcomes the dichotomy between dualism and monism in a way that can be made consonant with the analogy of heated iron and the reality of the two natures of Christ. She assumes that Luther held to a view of personhood and substance that separated him from the Catholic theologians of his day, a view that asserts that relations and their relata are equally primordial.[37]

Unfortunately, there is nothing she can say about her model that improves its chances of either being true to Luther or aiding in the mind/body problem. I spent a great deal of time in this paper talking about the mind/body problem in order that any position putatively addressing it could be fairly evaluated in light of the actual problem and not some caricature of it. The general situation is this: *There seems no way short of substance dualism (or perhaps panphysicism) to allow for the mental (or perhaps consciousness) to have causal characteristics*.[38] But if mental causation is not possible, it is difficult to see how the will could be contra-causally free. So how does Rolf's communicative model help in granting mind causal powers?

The short answer, lamentably, is that what she writes is basically irrelevant to the problem at hand. The question is not that of the psychosomatic unity of soul and body, but rather how the mental is possible in a causally closed physical universe. More to the point, the question is a *causal* one. For there to be a true communication of idioms entailing mental properties affecting the distribution of neuro-properties, as well as vice-versa, there must be specifiable a *mechanism* by which this is possible. But she suggests none. Rolf's model does not help us in conceiving downward causation, the *sine qua non* of physicalist mental causation. To say that soul and body are distinctive aspects of existence (*Dasein*) does not really engage the metaphysical presuppositions of much of neuroscience holding that the ultimate causal map of "mind" is neural.

The move to find in the back-and-forth of language a key to the mind/body problem begs the question as well because, presumably, language itself is physically realized. Simply put, the entire mind/body problem is logically prior to language. To say x rather than to say y is itself metaphysically dependent on some neuro-actualizations, themselves caused by other neuro-actualizations and environmental inputs. Language might be necessary to articulate and express the problem of mind, but it does not *create* it. One must distinguish the phenomenology of human existence from the subvenient neuro-actualizations metaphysically sufficient for that phenomenology. Human phenomenology in all of its complexity is precisely a supervening higher-level property group metaphysically dependent upon a subvening

lower-level physical region. Given the importance of the Other in phenomenology, one's subvenient property group would likely need to be wide enough to include both neuro-events and the external environment causally connected to those neuro-events. Accordingly, one might say that phenomenology, including language, globally supervenes upon brains and other particulars causally connected to them.

The other basic problem with Rolf's analysis is her commitment to the Joest/Ebeling model of the ontology of personhood. In my opinion, it is not likely that Luther held a relational personalist ontology asserting that the being of a person is determined by the relationships that person has to a congeries of significant other entities. Luther was trained at Erfurt and studied logic from *via moderna* teachers who held that what ultimately exists are particular substances having particular qualities. I have found no evidence to suggest that Luther in his semantics ever departed from this understanding.[39] The notion of a relation without relata would have been, for Luther, simply incoherent. Relationships are defined by what they relate. Relationships do not *create* relata, because without relata, there cannot be a relationship in the first place.[40]

It is important to recall that Luther was familiar with the category of *relatio* because he was trained in Aristotle. Because of this, it would have been natural for him to conceive a relation as monadic relational property, not a dyadic property relating discrete substances.[41] The idea of an *internal relation*, where the being of the relation determines the being of the relata, is unknown to him. Moreover, Luther's Ockhamist training would likely have taught him an *anti-realism* with respect to relations, for as a term of second intention, a relation always signifies a being of reason and not a thing.

For Luther and thinkers before him, the person Paul is a particular substance having particular accidents. Secondary substances like 'man' can be said of Paul, and any number of accidents can be present in him. While Luther did not invent a new ontology to understand personhood, he did, however, grasp that human beings also have a theological dimension, a way of being in God that cannot facilely be expressed in Aristotelian categories. It is here that sense can be made of Joest's claims in *Ontologie der Person bei Luther*[42] that the person *coram Deo* is not constituted by the righteousness he or she might have as an accidental property, but rather the person has that righteousness only by the activity of God in him or her. This activity of God in the believer is the latter's ex-centric existence, an existence not merely efficiently caused by the external agency of God, but one in which the agency of God is intimately involved in, with, and under the agency of the believer.

Modeling body and soul as "distinct aspects of *Dasein*" that "have their effects on each other" may make some sense in Joest's analysis of Luther, where *spiritus*

concerns the basic decision before God for belief or unbelief and *corpus* the person's relationship to the world, but it has very little to do with the classic mind/body problem which has been my concern. Pointing to the psycho-somatic unity of mind/body and finding a theological image to bespeak such unity does not touch the question of how the psyche can ultimately escape either being *eliminated* in the face of contemporary physicalism or being *reduced* to or *identified* with physical processes. If mental causation is not possible, then putative "communicative activity" will surely not help us at all.

What Kind of Life is Available?

It is now time to treat the question at hand. What does the mind/body problem have to do with personhood and issues of life generally? Why have we spent so much time on non-reductive physicalism and its variants?

We have done so because if substance dualism is a nonstarter and we deny that consciousness itself is basic to the universe, we are left with property dualism and various compatibilist strategies in conceiving the relationship of the mental to the physical. In the face of this, I wish to explore a slightly different option, one that does not begin confidently with the truth of the scientific image of the world – while trying to make our manifest image somehow compatible with it -- but rather commences in the immediacy of the manifest image itself, daring to claim that the particularity of human experience itself has implications for both truth and ontology.

I wish to suggest that it is our first-person perspective on experience that grants life its preciousness. After all, to be a child of God is finally to *enjoy* creation.[43] This means that our particular seeings, conceivings, and knowings are precious. When thinking about ending the life of another (or our own lives), or when considering death generally, what is lost is not for us the realities of our brain and their functioning, but rather our *experiences* of thinking, loving, fearing, discovering, and feeling. Death is an end to the physical and mental, to be sure, but it is primarily significant in ending the mental, the *what-it-is-to-be-meness* that we cannot put into words. What is ultimately lost are not those regions of being to which our experience can be *reduced*, or which otherwise physically account for our experience, but that which is *irreducible*. Moreover, what is lost are not irreducible things in general, but *my* irreducible experiences, *my* continuity of consciousness, *my* ability to think X rather than ~X. In other words, what is lost is my very *freedom*, my sense of being able to be other than what I am. What is lost is finally *the irreducible features of me*.

There are billions of human brains in the world, and billions of human brains have existed before mine. There are tens of billions of animal and reptile brains that

have lived, all hardwired for outputting efficiently beneficial behaviors as functions of relevant inputs. While there have been many more human synapses formed than there are elementary particles in the universe, there has been only one *me*, only one person with this precise set of proclivities, experiences, memories, feelings, actions, affections, hopes, and passions. Only one person exists and will ever exist that has precisely *this* set of *experiences*.

Nonreductive physicalist strategies purport to allow for personhood while yet claiming that everything that exists is physical. Such attempts are motivated by a deep commitment to the scientific image of the world, a commitment to materialist or physicalist metaphysics. While such strategies can, in various degrees, provide insight into what it is to be a person, they tend ultimately to downplay the preciousness of that person, *his* or *her* life, and *his* or *her* right to live. While Bob might have the only brain that ever existed with this exact arrangement of physical entities, properties, processes, events, etc., the *constituents* of his particular arrangement are nonetheless extraordinarily common.

Commitment to nonreductive physicalist assumptions privileges certain questions and suggests certain trajectories of adjudication. For instance, the question of mental particularity becomes a question of how constituent parts should be ordered. While one might grant that a particular physical system can realize the particularly mental, can one facilely develop a set of defeaters for the perpetuation of a particular arrangement of the physical? For example, what if the physical system is *deficient* or *degraded*? What if its actualization will cause a real experience of suffering either in the mental life realized by the physical system or in the mental lives realized by other physical systems? If the reality of the physical is primary, and we must graft the mental somehow onto or into this physical reality, then our view of what is precious will have to run through the physical. Lamentably, this perspective can obviate what stands right before us.

This is not likely the way forward, however, if what we have said about the problems of nonreductive physicalism have been grasped. What is important is precisely the *mental qua mental*, and it is the perpetuation of this reality that is at issue with any defeaters. It is true that sometimes the *subjective experience* of a person is degraded to the point that they themselves opt to end their own experiences. This is the situation where one might try to give good arguments against suicide. However, for most people, this is not the case. We oftentimes seek to end, or counsel to end, the subjective experience of others or seek to prevent, or counsel to prevent, the subjective experience of others. If the *mental qua mental* is *prima facie* precious, then on what basis can we do this? What arguments from the experience of the mother can weigh against the very possibility of subjective experience for her would-be offspring?

A Concluding Less-than-Scientific Epilogue

HUMAN BEINGS LIVE IN THE WORLD OF the phenomenological, in the region of that which is given to consciousness. We live in the phenomenological knowing that causal connections are mostly not drawn at the level, but at the level(s) below that level. It's a feature of our time that the subvenient is thought to present a more accurate causal map than the supervenient. As we have seen, the problem with nonreductive physicalist views is that it becomes difficult to see how irreducible causal connections can be drawn between mental events, causal connections consonant with our first-person mental experience. Since we live in a time in which to be is to have causal powers, non-reductive physicalism with its denial of downward causation, downplays the very reality of the mental, and accordingly, suppresses those issues of life dependent upon the mental.

In ages past, the reality of God reinforced the reality of the mental. If human beings were made in the image of God and God is not material, then the being of man and woman was not considered to be ultimately material either. The basic dualism between God and world, creator and creature, is replayed in the life of the creature who can either love the immaterial from which he or she ultimately came or become enmeshed in the material from which he or she was proximately built. A human being's *psychosomatic unity*, seemingly gives priority to the latter, and that human being grows and dies like other material beings.

But the *imago Dei* calls humans back into a dualism not so easily resolved, a dualism as irreducible as the two natures of Christ Himself. I believe that the only way to make real progress on the issue of the "life of the mind" in our time is to be as scientific as Kant was while remaining as open as he was to the reality of human experience itself. Non-reductive physicalism attempts to make harmonious what is clearly dissonant. I believe it better to address the dissonance forthrightly.

From the standpoint of the best science of our day, the best *neuroscience*, Bob should not be held wholly responsible for what he has done. After all, he is a complex of physical actualizations whose causes are physical. There is no possibility of freedom outside the empirical order and, thus, no moral responsibility. Yet, from the standpoint of his immediate experience, he is an agent with contra-causal freedom whose mental life connects with the world around him. He is a child of God guilty before divine judgment yet liberated by grace. These two perspectives cannot be synthesized by unity of science proposals (e.g, non-reductionisms, functionalisms) seeking to account for the *particularity* of experience by appealing to *general* or *universal* features of the brain. But what exactly motivates the search for compatibility?

Famously, Kant argued in the third antinomy in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that moral experience and its attendant freedom can be thought as consistent with

empirical determinism, but that consistency is not found in the *content* of what is thought but depends upon a recognition of the *standpoint* we occupy in doing the thinking. We are clearly denizens of the empirical with its universal determinism, and we simultaneously inhabit another world, one that cannot be accessed scientifically but is in some way *deeper* than the scientific because it plays at the level of the transcendental conditions of science.

Neuroscience can indeed give us the causal map of human behavior, but reflection upon this causal map shows that it cannot be simply identified with *how things are*. While it is the nature of human beings to *understand* the world in this way, human beings have another nature, one that *experiences* the world in all its particularity, in its tones, its moral successes and failures, its beauty and ugliness, and this experience is prior to human cognition, especially the cognition of the universal law of causation. Children clearly encounter the particularity of experience and do not doubt their own freedom—until they come to appreciate the principle of universal causality. So why do we so quickly abandon the ontology of the phenomenological to that which supposedly realizes it?

What if we could recover the Kantian perspective in the philosophy of mind, a perspective that recognizes the *incompatibility* of the physical and mental while at the same time not downplaying one of those perspectives in favor of the other? What if, like Kant, we searched for the conditions for the simultaneous incompatibility of the physical and the mental: what Kant called the *sensible* and the *intelligible*? What if we took seriously that there really is an *ought*, an *ought* that is not accounted for on the basis of the *is* of nature, an *ought* that nevertheless truly exists?[44] What I am suggesting is to run the Kantian solution without adopting its associated idealistic ontology.

Consider the two natures of Christ. They seemingly form incompatible property groups coninstantiated by the hypostasis of the second person of the Trinity. Notice that their disparate natures are not taken up conceptually by the person of Christ, but merely coninstantiated in Him.[45] Heresy results in trying to account for one nature on the basis of the other. The way to Chalcedon is paved by recognizing that the dualism of the creative and created is held together in the particularity of the Christ who unites these natures in and through their difference. There is no *compatibility* of natures, but simply the recognition that the *incompatible* can be united.

The point is that we must avoid the temptation too quickly to claim a *compatibility* or a *unity* of the natures, a compatibility towards which the contemporary mind/body discussion aims. Maybe it is time to remind ourselves simply of the *disunity* of these perspectives. Maybe all we can do is confess that we are "wholly determined," yet "wholly free," and that our identity as human beings is found in the simultaneity of these perspectives. If so, perhaps we might discover that the very nature of human life in a physical universe is found in the disparity of these perspectives and the

incompatibility of the natures that each suggest. Ultimately, just as we cannot understand the Christ without grasping His disparate natures, so we cannot understand our own life without understanding this unity of the disunity of perspectives in which it is lived. Starting here means that everything remains precious, and clearly decisions about life depend upon what we regard ultimately to be precious.

Bob is thus always guilty and paradoxically not guilty. What judgment we proffer depends upon context, the identification of which demands wisdom. The point is that Bob, like all of us, cannot escape the moral perspective with its freedom and agent causality, for ultimately that perspective is ingredient in who we profoundly are.

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Notes

1. Arguably, the distinction between appearance and reality is fundamental in Plato, and did not Whitehead say that Western philosophy is merely a "footnote" on Plato? See Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 39: "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato."

2. The freedom to which I refer here is what Kant meant when characterizing freedom "in the cosmological sense" as "the power to begin a state *on one's own*" (A533/B561). See *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN; Cambridge, UK: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 535ff. Hereafter, CPR. Kant continues, "*Freedom in the practical meaning* of the term is the independence of our power of choice from coercion by impulses of sensibility.... The human power of choice, is an arbitrium not brutum but liberum; for its action is not made necessary by sensibility, but the human being has a power to determine himself on his own, independently of coercion by sensible impulses." CPR, 536 (A534/B562).

3. The distinction between the manifest and scientific image of the world was made very clear by Wilfrid Sellars. See "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," 1-40, in Wilfrid Sellars & Richard Rorty, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1963). The manifest image is "the framework in terms of which man came to be aware of himself as man-in-the-world. It is the framework in terms of which, to use an existentialist turn of phrase, man first encountered himself—which is,

of course, when he came to be man" (6). Sellars continues, "the scientific image presents itself as a rival image. From its point of view the manifest image on which it rests is an 'inadequate' but pragmatically useful likeness of a reality" (20).

4. While eliminativism of the mental had been suggested by Sellars, Quine, Feyerabend and Rorty, the contemporary discussion builds particularly upon the work of Paul and Patricia Churchland and Stephen Stich. See William Ramsey, "Eliminative Materialism," The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/materialism-eliminative/. Accessed November 2024.

5. My example is overly simple, showing that *one* entity, event or property is causally related to another entity, event or property. In reality, 'x' and 'y' in 'Cxy' likely refer to conjunctions of other entities, events or properties.

6. Gilbert Ryle once likened Descartes' pineal gland to a "shuttlecock." Some have suggested that a philosopher of the stature of Descartes could not have truly believed that a physical entity, the pineal gland, could somehow account for the connection between the mental and the physical. The problem with any dualism is how to connect the disparate regions. So, is that which connects them a member of one of them? If so, how is it connected to the other? If not, then dualism itself is sacrificed. Analogously, consider Plato's Demiurge in the *Timaeus*. Is the Demiurge a member of the world of becoming or the world of being? How can it fashion being into becoming without in some sense standing outside both being and becoming?

7. Spinoza understood that we are free when we come to understand the necessity of all things. Clearly, he rejects *contra-causal freedom*, the notion that a person (or a node) could really be other than what he is or could have done other than what he did. In fact, for Spinoza, freedom is found in grasping the necessity of all things

8. Kant argues that universal determinism characterizes the "world of appearances," that is, empirical reality actualized through sensibility in time and space. We have, however, no warrant to claim that such determinism holds of things in themselves. Hence, we are allowed to claim a freedom in reason that, while consistent with empirical determinism, is of a different order, an *intelligible* one rather than a *sensible* one. Kant writes: "But such an intelligible cause is not, as regards its causality, determined by appearances, although its effects appear and thus can be determined by other appearances. Hence this cause, along with its causality, is outside the series of empirical conditions, whereas its effects are encountered with the series. Hence the effect can be considered as free with regard to its intelligible cause, and yet with regard to appearances be considered simultaneously as resulting from these according to the necessity of nature." CPR, 538 (A537/B565).

9. The question of the ontological status of transcendental conditions quickly surfaces. Transcendental conditions are not part of empirical reality because they putatively ground such reality by constituting necessary conditions for its possibility. Yet, they are also clearly not a transcendent supersensible metaphysical reality about which metaphysics aims to make claims but can never rightly assert.

10. One might think of the intensional as that by virtue of which the extensional is picked out. The intensional accordingly specifies properties, and the extensional is comprised of entities possessing those properties.

11. Donald Davidson, "Psychology as Philosophy," in *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 231.

12. It turned out to be extremely difficult to articulate precise *ceteris paribus* clauses, one of the reasons that Logical Behaviorism is no longer popular.

13. There is much to be concerned about in my use of "the same" in this expression. Perhaps it is better to say that tokens of a particular type normally associated with one region of the brain are now associated with another region.

14. At its simplest, the supervenience relation defines a function from subvenient group B to supervenient group A, such that every x in B maps to a unique y in A. What is precluded is some x in B mapping to two different y in A. Broadly conceived, one can think of supervenience as asserting either a semantic relationship between meaning groups, between meaning and physical marks, or as asserting a metaphysical relationship among groups of properties.

15. Jaegwon Kim, *Supervenience and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 80.

16. Ibid.

17. Early on it was assumed that the supervenience relation entailed an asymmetrical dependency relation of the supervenient upon the subvenient. However, Kim has shown that supervenience is indifferent to which way metaphysical dependency relationships are drawn or even if they are drawn. Supervenience merely expresses a covariance of property groups, not the dependence of one upon the other. For instance, just because metric weights supervene on English weights does not entail that English weights do not supervene on metric weights. They, in fact, do. Clearly, supervenience becomes less interesting to those wanting it to impose physical constraints on the mental when the two property groups are covariant. For an excellent introduction to the current supervenience discussion see Brian McLaughlin and Karen Bennett, "Supervenience," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/supervenience/.

18. See Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of Meaning," *Philosophical Papers, Vol. II: Mind, Language, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

19. For a summary of the standard attacks upon, and defenses of, Putnam's externalism, see Lance Hickey, *Hilary Putnam* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009).

20. The situation is not nearly so clear as I suggest. The philosophical literature distinguishes many species of externalism and solid arguments against on both sides of the issue. For an overview see Mark Rowlands, Joe Lau, and Max Deutsch, "Externalism About the Mind," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/content-externalism/. Accessed December 6, 2024.

21. Kim, *Supervenience and Mind*, 82.

22. It has been pointed out that global supervenience seems to allow that a minor difference in the subvenient base set between W_1 and W_2 can result in a major difference in the su-

pervenient set between the two. For example, a difference in the ionization of one atom in a ring of Saturn in W_1 with respect to W_2 is consistent with there being no consciousness (or moral properties) at all in W_1. But it seems that the same problem arises for strong or weak supervenience as well. Imagine two brains that are molecule-by-molecule replicas except for one the presence of an extra atom in the first. It is consistent with local supervenience that the first brain has consciousness and the second does not.

23. Notice how this view precludes the truth of such commonsense statements as "studying Sanskrit in one's sixties and seventies can help protect against the ravishes of Alzheimer's Disease."

24. Jaegwon Kim has presented this argument in many of his publications. For an overview on the problems associated with mental causation, see David Robb, John Heil, and Sophie Gibb, "Mental Causation," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/mental-causation/.

25. For another critique of downward causality see Dennis Bielfeldt, "Downward Causality: How Does the Mental Matter?" *Center for Theology and Natural Science Bulletin* 19:4 (Fall 1999): 11-21.

26. Sybille Rolf, "Die Kommunikativität des Menschlichen: Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Leib und Seele im Anschluss Martin Luthers," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 53:2 (2011): 119-136.

27. Rolf, "Die Kommunikativität des Menschlichen," 123 (my translation).

28. Ibid., 124 (my translation).

29. Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009) 33, 191:3-32. Hereafter, WA.

30. WA 7, 550:21 ff.

31. WA 7, 551:1-3.

32. Rolf, "Die Kommunikativität des Menschlichen," 127 (my translation).

33. Rolf believes that Luther distanced himself from the traditional Catholic assertions that the soul is the form of the body and that the soul is immortal.

34. Rolf, "Die Kommunikativität des Menschlichen,"129.

35. Ibid., 132.

36. Ibid., 133 (my translation).

37. Ibid., 131.

38. It should be noted here that some like David Chalmers have simply admitted that consciousness really does not fit at all within the regnant scientific image of the world and have moved to regard consciousness as a basic ontic category irreducible to, or explicable by, some more fundamental ontological domain. See David J. Chalmers, "Panpsychism and Panprotopyschism," at https://consc.net/papers/panpsychism.pdf.

39. For a classic treatment of the influence of *via moderna* presuppositions on Luther's ontology and semantics, see Graham White, *Luther as Nominalist: A Study of the Logical Methods used in Martin Luther's Disputations in the Light of their Medieval Background* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1994).

40. Simply put, relations and their relata cannot mutually presuppose each other. Relata are always logically prior to relations.

41. Cf. Aristotle's discussion on "the relative" in the *Categories*.

42. Wilfried Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).

43. Emmanuel Levinas develops this theme in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

44. See Kant, CPR, 545-546 (A548/B576).

45. Kant would say that the natures cannot be synthesized.

Embodied Souls

Exploring Human Personhood in the Age of AI

Dan Lioy

1.0 Introduction: A Biblical Perspective on Body and Soul

What does it mean to be human in an era increasingly defined by artificial intelligence (AI)? This question calls believers back to the clear teaching of Scripture regarding human nature—that people are uniquely created in God's image (Gen 1:26–27), comprised of body and soul in profound ontological unity. While AI technology raises new questions about intelligence and capability, God's Word provides unchanging truth about human personhood, fundamentally distinguishing people from any humanly-created technology.

This essay examines the biblical teaching about human nature, particularly as understood through Lutheran theology's faithful adherence to the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Rather than adopting Greek philosophical frameworks of mind/body dualism, Lutheran theology recognizes that Scripture presents humans as whole persons—body and soul together—created by God, corrupted by sin, and redeemed in Christ. As discussed at length below, the Hebrew terms *nephesh* (soul/living being) and *ruach* (spirit/breath) describe not separate parts but unified aspects of the whole person under God.

Three key questions guide this exploration: (1) What does the Judeo-Christian canon, along with the writings of Second Temple Judaism, reveal about the essence of human personhood? (2) What do these ancient religious texts teach about the relationship between body and soul? (3) How should believers understand these truths in contrast to various philosophical traditions and the increasing prevalence of AI within the societal context of the global North?

Central to this discussion is the Lutheran commitment to the primacy of Scripture—both Old and New Testaments—as the source and norm of doctrine (*sola Scriptura*; 2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pet 1:20–21). This means examining key biblical concepts on their own terms: the human as God's image-bearer, the reality of both

body and soul, and the promise of bodily resurrection. While Greek philosophy historically influenced Christian thought, Lutheran theology looks first and finally to Scripture's clear witness about human nature. Similarly, in addressing modern questions about AI and human personhood, this essay grounds its response in the authoritative Word of God rather than human philosophical frameworks.

So then, considering the preceding observations, the focused line of inquiry becomes: *How does Scripture's teaching about humans as embodied creatures, made in God's image and redeemed by Christ, inform our understanding of human personhood amid technological change?* Through careful attention to biblical teaching, it is possible to address contemporary challenges while holding fast to Scripture's divinely inspired truth.

Throughout the essay, the intentional repetition of key insights serves several purposes: maintaining a clear and coherent argument, emphasizing core ideas, and smoothly transitioning between earlier points and new developments in thought. Doing so also aids diverse readers in grasping and retaining fundamental concepts, contextualizes complex arguments within the essay's overall narrative framework, and encourages revisiting main themes as new information emerges, ultimately deepening analytical understanding and intellectual engagement.

2.0 The Hebrew Understanding of Humanity in the Old Testament: A Holistic Perspective

2.1 Creation of Humanity

The Old Testament provides foundational insights into human nature, emphasizing the inseparable unity of body and soul. Genesis 1:26–27 proclaims that humanity was created in the "image of God" (*imago Dei*). Scripture reveals that this image consisted primarily in original righteousness, true knowledge of God, and perfect holiness—qualities that distinguished humans as the Lord's unique creation. Though this image was marred through the Fall due to original sin, human beings retain dignity as God's creatures, not because of any inherent worth, but because of God's continued sustaining and redeeming work. Through union with Christ, the image of God is progressively restored in believers, though this restoration remains incomplete in this life, reaching perfection only in the resurrection. God called humanity to exercise responsible stewardship over creation as his ruling representatives, a vocation that, while impaired by sin, continues to reflect his creative intent.

Genesis 2:7 offers further detail, recounting how the Lord formed "man from the dust of the ground" (*ʿāphār*, עָפָר).[1] This statement highlights the physicality and creatureliness of humankind's origin. God then "breathed into his nostrils the

breath of life" (*neshamah*, נְשָׁמָה). This divine act animated Adam but did not impart a divine spark or portion of the Creator's essence. Rather, it established humans as living beings wholly dependent on the Lord's sustaining power. Through this sovereign act, man became a "living being" (*nephesh*, נֶפֶשׁ), a term that encompasses the totality of the human person. Individuals do not merely have souls but are simultaneously body and soul, an integrated creation of matter (i.e., material) and spirit (i.e., immaterial).

The Fall into sin corrupted human nature in its entirety, affecting both body and soul, yet without destroying the fundamental unity of humanity's ontology. This unity continues until death, when body and soul are temporarily separated, awaiting reunification at the resurrection of the dead. Christ's own incarnation affirms the goodness of humankind's bodily nature, while his bodily resurrection prefigures the future resurrection of the righteous at the end of the age. This sure hope shapes Christian personhood and ethics, providing comfort in suffering and guiding the life of faith and sanctification. The Spirit works through Word and Sacrament, particularly Baptism and the Eucharist, to renew both the inner and outer nature of believers. Gradually, believers are conformed to Christ's image while they await the final redemption of their bodies.

2.2 Key Hebrew Terms and Their Meanings

Several Hebrew terms are crucial for understanding the integrated view of humanity in the Old Testament. These terms align with the biblical anthropology central to Lutheran theology, emphasizing the unity of body and soul, humanity's total dependence on God for existence, and Luther's understanding of humans as simultaneously physical and spiritual beings (*simul corporalis et spiritualis*).

Nephesh

Often translated as "soul," *nephesh* primarily denotes a whole living being. It encompasses physical life, emotional states, the individual person, or even an animal. For example, *nephesh* can express physical hunger (Prov 27:7) or the principle of life itself (Gen 35:18).

Importantly, *nephesh* should not be narrowly equated with the modern concept of the "soul" as a separate, immortal entity. Instead, *nephesh* reflects the entire living being, dependent on God for existence and sustained by his providence. The term underscores the Creator-creature relationship, as all *nephesh* derive life and purpose from the Lord (e.g., Ps 42:1–2). This holistic understanding shapes Lutheran eschatology (i.e., teaching on end-time events), particularly the doctrine of the resurrection, which anticipates not merely spiritual survival but also the restoration of the whole person—body and soul united—in union with Christ.

Ruach

Meaning "spirit," "wind," or "breath," *ruach* typically represents the divinely given life-force or human vitality. It connects both physical and spiritual aspects of existence, illustrating the unity of life as created and sustained by God. While *ruach* is distinct from *neshamah* (the breath given in creation), the two terms often overlap in meaning, both pointing to the Lord's bestowal of the breath of life (Gen 2:7).

The term *ruach* encompasses emotional states, intellectual capacity, and volition, further highlighting its broad semantic range. It often describes God's active and energizing presence, as seen in Ezekiel 37:14, where the Lord breathes life into dry bones, symbolizing spiritual renewal. This connection is particularly significant in Lutheran theology, which emphasizes the Holy Spirit's work through the means of grace—Word and Sacraments—to bring faith, life, and renewal. This understanding reinforces the Lutheran teaching that conversion and spiritual life are entirely God's work through his chosen means, not human effort or decision.

Lev

Literally meaning "heart," *lev* denotes both the physical organ and the center of human consciousness. Unlike modern distinctions between mind and heart, *lev* integrates cognitive, emotional, and volitional capacities. For example, Proverbs 4:23 presents the heart as the wellspring of life's activities: "Above all else, guard your heart carefully, because your life flows from it." This integration highlights *lev* as the inner person and the seat of thought, feeling, and will.

In Lutheran theology, *lev* plays a vital role in understanding both human nature and divine grace. The natural heart, enslaved to sin according to Luther's doctrine of the bondage of the will, cannot turn to God by its own power. Yet, through the Spirit's work, the heart becomes the place where faith is kindled and nourished. Psalm 51:10 captures this divine initiative: "Create in me a pure heart, O God. Renew an unwavering spirit within me." The heart, therefore, is not merely an emotional or intellectual center but also the locus of God's transformative work in sanctification—an ongoing process entirely dependent on divine grace.

This integrated anthropology profoundly shapes Lutheran theology, particularly in its understanding of the means of grace, the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and the hope of bodily resurrection. It reinforces that God deals with whole persons through physical means (water, bread, and wine) united with his Word, bringing both spiritual and physical blessing to his people.

2.3 A Holistic View of Humanity

The Old Testament consistently upholds a holistic understanding of humanity, rejecting mind-body dualism. In Deuteronomy 6:5, the *Shema* calls for love of God

with all our "heart" (*lev*), "soul" (*nephesh*), and "might" (*me'od*). These terms illuminate various aspects of human existence while emphasizing their fundamental unity. For instance, the term *me'od* (might) encompasses strength, resources, and intensity, stressing the comprehensive nature of devotion to God.

The interconnectedness of physical and spiritual reality permeates the Old Testament. Psalm 63:1 vividly depicts the yearning for God through both bodily expression ("My flesh longs for you") and spiritual imagery ("My soul thirsts for you"), illustrating how the whole person responds to and needs God. Similarly, Ecclesiastes 12:7 portrays death as the return of the "dust" (*ʿāphār*, material existence) to the "ground" and the "spirit" (*ruach*, immaterial existence) to God. This describes not a permanent separation but a temporary rupture of human wholeness—a tragic disruption caused by sin and death, which Scripture consistently describes as unnatural and contrary to the Creator's original design. The Christian hope, grounded in the Messiah's resurrection, specifically anticipates the restoration of bodily wholeness in the resurrection of the dead.

So then, the Old Testament presents humanity as an embodied whole—created in the image of God (*imago Dei*). This image is fundamentally relational, reflecting both our vertical relationship with the Lord and our horizontal relationships with fellow creatures. Humans are not assemblages of distinct physical, emotional, and spiritual "parts" but unified beings who can be described from various perspectives while maintaining their essential wholeness. This biblical anthropology stands in contrast to later dualistic philosophies, such as those of Greek origin, which artificially separate material and immaterial aspects of human nature (discussed at length in section 3.0).

For confessional Lutherans, this understanding remains foundational, affirming both the goodness of God's creation and the comprehensive effects of sin, which impacts the whole person. This framework proves especially valuable when engaging modern bioethical and technological discussions about human nature. Questions about embodiment, personhood, and relationality must be approached through the distinct lenses of Law and Gospel: the Law revealing how sin has corrupted every aspect of human nature, and the Gospel proclaiming Christ's redemption of the whole person. This anthropology reminds us that technological and medical interventions, while potentially beneficial, cannot address humanity's fundamental need for reconciliation with God through Christ, in whom our full humanity is restored.

This holistic understanding carries significant implications for pastoral care and ethics. It suggests that spiritual care must attend to both physical and spiritual needs, recognizing their interrelation. In sanctification, the whole person—body and soul—is being conformed to Christ's image, even as we await the final resurrection when our humanity will be fully restored.

3.0 Mind and Body in the Greco-Roman World

3.1 Philosophical Foundations

The Greco-Roman world, under God's providence, provided the historical context for philosophical traditions examining human nature, including the relationship between body and soul. While Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism developed sophisticated frameworks, these systems fundamentally reflected humanity's fallen reason, particularly in their attempts to grasp divine truth outside of biblical revelation.

While some Church Fathers like Augustine integrated elements of Greek philosophy to articulate Christian doctrine effectively, this engagement often led to a dangerous blending of pagan human wisdom with divine truth. The early church's interaction with Greek philosophy demonstrates how easily human reason can be elevated above Scripture's authority. As Luther and the Lutheran Confessions teach, natural reason, though a gift from God, is profoundly corrupted by sin (Eccles 9:3; Jer 17:9; Matt 13:15; Mark 7:21–22) and incapable of fully understanding and accepting the "truths taught by God's Spirit" (1 Cor 2:14).

The Fall affected all of creation, including human reason and the natural world. Philosophy must remain subordinate to God's Word, the sole source of true and saving knowledge about the Creator, his will, and humanity's salvation. While ancient philosophers raised important questions about human nature and reality, their answers remained trapped in spiritual blindness apart from the light of biblical revelation. That said, the proper role of philosophy in Lutheran theology is not entirely limited. While it should never shape or determine doctrine, which comes solely from Scripture (*sola Scriptura*), philosophy can be a valuable tool for engaging with the contemporary intellectual and cultural horizon, especially by articulating the Christian faith in a meaningful way.

3.1.1 Platonism: Metaphysical Dualism

Plato, particularly in works such as *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus*, enunciated a metaphysical dualism that fundamentally conflicts with Scripture's teaching about human nature. He posited that the soul (*psyche*) is an immortal, preexistent entity distinct from the material body (*soma*). This dualism contradicts the biblical account in several key ways.

First, Plato's doctrine of the soul's preexistence (*anamnēsis*) and inherent immortality denies the clear teaching of Scripture that God created humans—body and soul together—at a specific moment in space-time history (Gen 2:7). The soul is not naturally immortal, but receives life and immortality as the Lord's gift.

Second, Plato's *Theory of Forms* (*eidē*) suggests that the soul can attain divine knowledge through philosophical reasoning apart from God's Word. This contradicts Scripture's teaching that since the Fall, natural man is incapable of knowing either the Creator or spiritual truth except through the revealed Word (1 Cor 2:14; Rom 10:17).

Third, Plato's view of the body as a prison (*sōma sēma*; "the body is a tomb") directly opposes Scripture's teaching that along with the rest of creation, the Lord made the human body "very good" (Gen 1:31) and that Christ took on human flesh (John 1:14). This denigration of the physical world highlights the fundamental paganism of Platonic thought.

Fourth, Plato's hierarchical metaphysics, which elevates the immaterial over the material, contradicts God's design of humans as unified beings of both body and soul. Scripture teaches that we are not souls trapped in bodies, but embodied creatures made in God's image (Gen 1:26–27).

While Platonic thought significantly influenced Western philosophy and some Church Fathers, its anthropology is incompatible with Scripture and Lutheran theology. The Bible teaches that:

- Humans are created as a unity of body and soul (Gen 2:7).
- The body is not evil but good, though corrupted by sin.
- Christ redeemed both body and soul through his incarnation, death, and resurrection.
- The Christian hope is not the soul's escape from the body, but the resurrection of the body (1 Cor 15:42–44; Phil 3:21).
- In the resurrection, we will be fully human—body and soul together—glorified according to Christ's promise.

The Lutheran Confessions, particularly in the Formula of Concord's treatment of original sin (FC SD I), carefully maintain the biblical teaching that human nature consists of body and soul in unity, both created good by God, both corrupted by sin, and both redeemed by Christ. This stands in direct opposition to Platonic dualism's denigration of the body and its teaching of the soul's natural immortality.

For confessional Lutherans, while Plato's writings may have historical and philosophical significance, his metaphysical framework must be rejected where it contradicts Scripture's clear teaching about human nature, sin, and salvation. The biblical doctrine of creation, incarnation, and redemption presents a radically different understanding: humans as whole persons—body and soul together—created by God, fallen into sin, and redeemed wholly through Christ's efficacious work at Calvary.

3.1.2 Aristotelianism: Hylomorphic Unity

In contrast to Plato, Aristotle developed a hylomorphic theory in works such as *De Anima* and the *Metaphysics*, offering an integrated understanding of the relationship between body and soul. While his philosophical framework includes valuable observations about the natural world, it requires significant theological correction from a confessional Lutheran standpoint.

Aristotle's key concepts include the soul as entelechy (the actualization of bodily potential), a tripartite structure of soul functions (nutritive, sensitive, and rational), the unity of form and matter, and nous (active intellect) as humanity's highest natural faculty. However, confessional Lutheran theology, grounded in Scripture, substantially differs from and goes beyond this natural philosophical framework.

The Lutheran understanding, drawn from the Judeo-Christian canon, teaches that God created humans as a unity of body and soul (Gen 2:7), where the soul is not merely a form or function of the body, but a distinct spiritual entity created directly by God. This soul continues to exist after death until the resurrection of the body (Eccles 12:7; Matt 10:28). The Formula of Concord affirms that humans consist of body and soul in one person, yet these are distinguishable.

While Aristotle's observations about the integration of human physical and mental functions have some validity for understanding natural life, they cannot account for crucial theological realities:

- The image of God (*imago Dei*) in which humanity was originally created
- The origin of the soul through direct divine creation
- The reality of the soul as a distinct spiritual entity
- The total corruption of human nature through original sin
- The need for supernatural regeneration through the Holy Spirit
- The resurrection of the body and its reunion with the soul
- The eternal destiny of both body and soul

Furthermore, Lutheran theology rejects the notion that human reason (*nous*) can, by its natural powers, grasp transcendent spiritual truths. As Luther emphasized in his *Heidelberg Disputation*, human reason is dramatically limited in spiritual matters due to sin and requires illumination by God's Word and Spirit. Therefore, while Aristotle's categories may serve as helpful philosophical tools for discussing certain aspects of human nature, they must be fundamentally reshaped by and subordinated to the teaching of Scripture.

This theological perspective preserves both the unity of human nature and the reality of the soul's continued existence after death, while positioning the entire

discussion within the broader narrative of creation, fall, and redemption through Christ. Such an approach allows us to appreciate philosophical insights about natural human functions, while maintaining the supremacy of biblical teaching about humanity's spiritual nature, condition, and eternal destiny.

3.1.3 Stoicism: Rational Materialism

Stoic philosophy, originating with Zeno of Citium and evolving through Roman thinkers, developed a system of ethics and cosmology centered on reason and virtue. Key concepts include:

- *Logos*: A universal, rational principle governing all reality, evident in both cosmic order and human reason.
- *Hegemonikon*: The ruling faculty within humans, responsible for reason and judgment, grounded in pneuma (vital breath).
- *Apatheia*: Freedom from passive emotions, achieved through rational self-mastery and alignment with the cosmic order.

From a confessional Lutheran perspective, this framework presents significant challenges:

- *Misunderstanding of human nature*: Stoicism, while acknowledging a degree of determinism, ultimately overemphasizes human reason's capacity for self-governance and virtue. Lutheranism, however, teaches that after the Fall, human reason is fundamentally corrupted by sin (Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 2:14). The Formula of Concord emphasizes that in spiritual matters, natural human reason is "completely blind" and incapable of understanding or assenting to God's truth without the work of the Spirit.
- *False hope in self-effort*: The Stoic emphasis on achieving *apatheia* through reason contradicts the biblical understanding of humanity's total spiritual helplessness (Eph 2:1; Col 2:13). While acknowledging that natural reason may retain some capacity in worldly matters (as Luther recognized regarding civil righteousness), Lutheranism maintains that even the most impressive works of human reason remain tainted by original sin.
- *Misconstruing the nature of God*: Stoicism posits a universal, impersonal rationality as the governing principle of the universe. In contrast, Lutheranism affirms that the true *Logos* is the eternal Son of God, incarnate in Christ (John 1:1–14).

True human flourishing, according to Lutheran theology, is not achieved through Stoic self-mastery, but through the atoning work of Christ on the cross and is received only by faith. This faith is not a product of human reason or effort, but a gift

of God's grace (Eph 2:8–10). The Spirit, working through Word and Sacrament, creates and sustains this faith, enabling believers to begin the process of sanctification —conforming regenerate human personhood to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 3:18; Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

So then, while Stoicism offers valuable insights into human psychology and may contribute to ethical living in the world, it ultimately presents a false hope of salvation through human effort. Only the Gospel of Christ, received by faith alone, provides true wisdom, righteousness, and the power to overcome sin.

3.2 Early Christian Synthesis and Transformation

3.2.1 The Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy

Early Christian teachers encountered Greco-Roman philosophy while proclaiming the Gospel. This interaction discloses important theological distinctions:

- *Biblical authority*: The Scriptures alone (*sola Scriptura*) serve as the only rule and norm for Christian doctrine. While the early Church Fathers used philosophical terminology to communicate truth, Scripture's inspiration and authority supersedes human reason and philosophy.
- *Christ-centered*: The Gospel reveals that salvation comes through Christ alone (*solus Christus*), by grace alone (*sola gratia*), and through faith alone (*sola fide*). This stands in stark contrast to Greek philosophical systems seeking wisdom through human reason.
- *Law and Gospel*: Christian teaching distinguishes between God's Law, which shows our sin, and the Gospel, which proclaims Christ's atoning work. This fundamental distinction is absent from Greek philosophy.
- *Original Sin*: Scripture teaches that human nature is totally corrupted by sin (Formula of Concord, Article I). This corrupted nature cannot cooperate in conversion or contribute to salvation, contrary to Greek philosophical optimism about innate human potential.

Paul indeed used terms familiar to his Greek hearers, such as "flesh" (*sarx*) and "spirit" (*pneuma*; discussed at length in section 4.1). However, he filled these terms with distinctly biblical content. "Flesh" refers to our sinful nature inherited from Adam, while "spirit" primarily refers to the Holy Spirit's work through the means of grace (Word and Sacraments). Most significantly, justification—God declaring sinners righteous for Christ's sake through faith—stands as the chief article of Christian doctrine. This teaching of salvation by grace through faith alone fundamentally contradicts all human philosophical systems that seek righteousness through reason or works.

3.2.2 Hebrew-Greek Anthropological Integration

The relationship between Hebrew and Greek anthropological concepts requires careful theological discernment. While the Hebrew term, *nephesh*, importantly conveys the fundamental unity of the human person as body and soul together, Lutheran theology maintains that humans do consist of both body and soul as functionally distinct yet inseparable aspects of God's creation. This understanding stems directly from Scripture, where Christ speaks about body and soul as distinguishable (e.g., Matt 10:28, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear the one who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell").

The Greek philosophical categories must be evaluated strictly according to their conformity with Scripture. Lutheran theology rejects Platonic dualism which views the body as a prison of the soul or views matter as inherently evil. Instead, Scripture affirms that both body and soul are God's good creation, though both are thoroughly corrupted by sin after the Fall. This corruption affects the whole person—body and soul together.

Lutheran anthropology particularly emphasizes that redemption encompasses the whole person. Christ affirmed a complete human nature—body and soul—to redeem the whole human person. The bodily resurrection of the Messiah and the promised resurrection of the body demonstrate God's intent to restore and glorify both the physical and spiritual aspects of human nature.

In the present life, the means of grace (Word and Sacrament) engage both body and soul. In Baptism, water combines with the Word to work faith and regeneration. In the Lord's Supper, Christ's true body and blood are physically received for the forgiveness of sins, demonstrating the unity of physical and spiritual in God's work of salvation. This Lutheran understanding maintains the scriptural witness about human nature without falling into either Greek dualistic extremes or modern materialistic reductions. It recognizes both the unity and distinction of body and soul while keeping the focus on Christ's work of redemption for the whole person.

3.2.3 Incarnational Theology and Bodily Resurrection

The Christian understanding of human embodiment, grounded in Scripture, presents a distinct view that differs from Greek philosophical assumptions. From a Lutheran perspective, the following key points need to be emphasized.

The Incarnation demonstrates that God the Son took on human flesh in the person of Christ (John 1:14). While this affirms creation's goodness, it is important not to suggest that the Incarnation itself sanctified or redeemed human nature. Rather, Christ's active and passive obedience—his perfect life and sacrificial death—accomplished humankind's redemption (Rom 4:25).

Regarding the resurrection, Scripture teaches that all people, both believers and unbelievers, will be raised bodily on the last day (Dan 12:1–2; Matt 25:46; John 5:28–29). For believers, our resurrected bodies will be glorified and imperishable (1 Cor 15:42–44), but this is through Christ's merit alone, not through any inherent dignity of human nature.

Indeed, the Christian hope includes the restoration of all creation (Rom 8:20–23). Yet, Lutheran theology emphasizes that this comes purely through God's gracious action in Christ, not through any natural process or human effort. This contrasts with humanity's repeated failed attempts throughout history to fabricate innumerable utopian communities. Each unsuccessful effort to create heaven on earth (an overly realized eschatology)—including social, cultural, economic, and political advances fostered by science and technology (including AI)—is fueled by Satan-inspired optimism, greed, and hubris.

Concerning the Sacraments, Lutheran theology teaches that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not merely signs and symbols but are actual means of grace through which God delivers his promises. In Baptism, God produces faith and forgives sins (Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38). In the Lord's Supper, Christ gives his true body and blood for the pardon of iniquities (Matt 26:26–28). These Sacraments are efficacious, not because they bridge a material-spiritual divide, but because they are connected to God's Word and promise.

While Christianity does present a different view than Greek philosophy, the key distinction is not primarily about anthropology or the body-soul relationship. Rather, the fundamental difference is in how salvation is understood: not as human ascent to the divine through philosophical enlightenment, but as God's gracious descent to save sinful humanity through the person and work of Christ (Rom 5:8, 10; 1 John 4:10).

3.2.4 Patristic Synthesis

The Patristic period marked an important yet complex era in Christian theological development. While the Church Fathers made valuable contributions to defending biblical truth, particularly against heresies, their work requires careful evaluation in light of Scripture.

For example, though zealous in defending the faith, Origen deviated significantly from biblical teaching through his speculative theories about preexistent souls and universal salvation. These ideas conflict with clear scriptural teaching about original sin (Rom 5:12, 15–17; 1 Cor 15:21–22) and salvation through faith in Christ alone (Rom 4:2; Eph 2:8–10; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5). Origen's belief in the eventual salvation of all, including Satan and demons, contradicts the biblical descriptions of eternal punishment for the wicked (Matt 25:46; Rev 20:10).

Augustine provided crucial insights into human depravity and divine grace that would later influence Lutheran theology. His emphasis on the necessity of God's prevenient grace (from the Latin term, *praevenire*, meaning "to come before" or "to precede") in enabling human beings to respond to the Gospel has been particularly influential (John 1:9; 6:44; 12:32; Rom 2:4; Titus 2:11). However, his incorporation of Platonic concepts, such as the inherent goodness of the soul and its ultimate destiny to return to its divine source, sometimes obscured the biblical understanding of human nature. This led to an overemphasis on the spiritual at the expense of the bodily, which can minimize the significance of the incarnation and the resurrection.

The biblical doctrine, clearly articulated in Lutheran theology, teaches that humans were created as unified beings of body and soul in God's image (Gen 1:26–27). Through the Fall, human nature became thoroughly corrupted in all its aspects—both spiritual and physical (Rom 5:12, 14, 18). This total depravity means humans cannot come to Christ in saving faith by their own reason or strength.

The Gospel proclaims that Christ redeems the whole person—body and soul. Through Baptism and the Word, the Spirit creates saving faith and begins the restoration of God's image in believers. This renewal will be completed in the resurrection when believers receive glorified bodies (1 Cor 15:42–44), uniting them perfectly with their redeemed souls.

Lutheran theology insists these truths must be drawn from and measured against Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*), not philosophical speculation or human reason. While the Church Fathers provide valuable historical witness to the Christian faith, their writings must always be subordinate to the inspired, authoritative Word of God as the sole source and norm of doctrine.

The Formula of Concord rightly emphasizes that we must maintain both the unity of human nature and the devastating effects of original sin, avoiding both Platonic dualism and Pelagian optimism about human spiritual capabilities. Our anthropology, our understanding of what it means to be human, flows directly from our soteriology, our understanding of salvation. Since we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone, our view of human nature must reflect this profound dependence on God's unmerited favor for our redemption.

4.0 Embodied Personhood in Second Temple Jewish Thought

The literature of the Second Temple period (roughly 516 BC–70 AD, though some related texts extend into the early rabbinic period) provides a rich and complex backdrop for understanding Jewish conceptions of human personhood, particularly concerning the relationship between body and soul. During this period, Jewish thought was shaped both by its theological traditions and by its interactions with

surrounding cultures, including Hellenistic philosophy. Certain schools of thought, such as Platonism, often emphasized a radical separation between body and soul. In contrast, many Second Temple Jewish texts primarily stressed the unity of the human person as an embodied soul, though some texts reflect nuanced or dualistic perspectives.

While the Old Testament lays the groundwork for understanding human nature, the intertestamental writings further develop the concept of human beings as unified entities. This holistic view is particularly articulated in texts such as Sirach and the Wisdom of Solomon. Sirach 17:1–2 emphasizes the divine formation of humans from the earth, affirming the goodness of the created body. Similarly, Wisdom of Solomon 2:23–24 affirms that God created humans for incorruption, underscoring the embodied nature of human existence and reflecting engagement with Hellenistic ideas about immortality and the corruption introduced by sin.

Unlike certain Platonic traditions, which viewed the body as a hindrance to the soul, many Jewish texts from the Second Temple period affirm the body as an integral part of God's creation. The Dead Sea Scrolls (particularly 1QS 3:13–4:26), written between the second century BC and the first century AD, reflect a worldview in which bodily existence plays a meaningful role in divine purpose and eschatological restoration. Similarly, the depiction of the afterlife in Jubilees suggests a renewed existence in which both spiritual and physical elements are emphasized. The righteous are envisioned as experiencing a restored and blessed life in an Eden-like setting, free from the troubles and suffering of the present world.

During the Second Temple period, particularly from the 3rd–2nd centuries BC onward, the belief in bodily resurrection became more clearly articulated, especially among the Pharisees. Daniel 12:2 provides one of the earliest explicit biblical references to this concept, describing a resurrection of both the righteous to "everlasting life" and the wicked to "shame" and "everlasting contempt." This belief was further developed in texts like 2 Maccabees 7:9–14, where martyrdom narratives express hope in bodily resurrection as part of divine justice.

Josephus, in *Antiquities* 18.1.3, describes Pharisaic beliefs in the soul's immortality and posthumous rewards and punishments. While his account may have been influenced by efforts to frame Jewish beliefs in terms familiar to Greco-Roman audiences, it reflects a conviction in continued personal identity after death. This notion of resurrection differed from predominant Greco-Roman philosophical concepts, which often emphasized an immortal, disembodied soul rather than bodily restoration.

The unity of body and soul in Second Temple Judaism carries significant ethical implications, particularly in relation to moral behavior, religious observance, and communal responsibilities. The Torah's commandments regulate both ritual and

interpersonal conduct, addressing the physical and spiritual dimensions of life. For instance, the laws of kashrut (dietary regulations) combine physical acts with spiritual significance, while commands regarding charity (*tzedakah*) unite material giving with moral obligation. This integration reflects the belief that holiness encompasses the whole person.

Such a holistic perspective appears in several Second Temple period texts. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs advocate for integrity in thought, action, and worship. While manuscript traditions vary, the Testament of Naphtali emphasizes the harmonious relationship between body and soul in pursuing righteousness. This theme of unified human nature finds fuller expression in the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly in 4Q Instruction (Musar leMevin). This sapiential text presents wisdom as encompassing both practical living and spiritual understanding, teaching its readers to view daily conduct, ritual observance, and mystical knowledge as interconnected aspects of divine instruction. This approach is characteristic of Qumran literature, which consistently presents human flourishing as requiring the integration of physical and spiritual dimensions.

This understanding of human personhood illuminates the biblical vision of identity and destiny by affirming the unity of body and soul. While direct influence is difficult to establish, this perspective shares important parallels with later Lutheran approaches to theological anthropology.

5.0 Holistic Anthropology in New Testament Theology

The New Testament, in harmony with the Old Testament and the literature of Second Temple Judaism, teaches that humans are deeply integrated and holistic beings created by God, fundamentally corrupted by original sin, and in need of complete redemption through Christ alone. The key focus is not on abstract anthropological categories but on our complete dependence on the Messiah's redemptive work—in both body and soul—for salvation. This perspective is made evident through several key dimensions.

5.1 Key Lexical Terms

In harmony with the Old Testament, the literature of Second Temple Judaism, and the New Testament, Lutheran theology presents a holistic understanding of human nature, emphasizing the unity of body, mind, and spirit in both creation and redemption. Key lexical terms—such as *psychē*, *nous*, *sarx*, and *sōma*—illustrate this integrated perspective, highlighting the profound interplay between humanity's fallen condition and the transformative work of Christ.

Psychē (ψυχή): The living person in their entirety, encompassing their physical body, emotions, will, and intellect. Scripture presents *psychē* as the whole self in

relationship with God. While medieval scholasticism often emphasized a clear soul-body distinction, Luther returned to Scripture's more holistic anthropology. He emphasized the unified human creature before God while still acknowledging the reality of both material and spiritual aspects of human nature. This unity is especially evident in Luther's understanding of death as the temporary separation of body and soul until their reunion in the resurrection.

Nous (νοῦς): The mind or understanding, particularly in its capacity for spiritual comprehension and moral judgment. Lutheran theology emphasizes that the *nous* is not merely corrupted but also entirely blind in spiritual matters (i.e., totally depraved). Apart from the Spirit's work through Word and Sacrament, the human *nous* cannot grasp spiritual truth or truly know God (1 Cor 2:14). Even after conversion, the renewal of the *nous* remains incomplete in this life due to ongoing sin, though the Spirit gradually transforms it through the means of grace (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23; Col 3:10).

Sarx (σάρξ): The whole person under sin's dominion, representing not just physical desires but also our entire fallen nature. Lutheran theology understands *sarx* as describing humanity's total corruption by original sin—what Luther termed the "old Adam" or "old creature." This affects every faculty of human nature, including reason and will. The *sarx* remains active even in the baptized as a constant source of opposition to the Spirit (Rom 7:15–23; 8:5–8; Gal 5:17), though its dominion is broken through union with Christ (Rom 6:4–11).

Sōma (σῶμα): The embodied person as created by God. Lutheran theology strongly affirms the body's goodness as the Lord's creation while acknowledging its present bondage to sin. The body is not merely a shell, but also an essential aspect of human nature, integral to God's good creation and Christ's redemptive work. This is especially evident in Lutheran sacramental theology, where the Messiah comes to us through physical means (water, bread, and wine) to redeem both body and soul. The body will be transformed and glorified in the resurrection, not abandoned. This counters both ancient gnostic and modern spiritualistic tendencies to devalue physical existence.

The key Lutheran emphasis across all these terms is the unity of human nature—both in its fall into sin and its redemption in union with Christ. This unified anthropology shapes Lutheran understanding of both Law and Gospel, as well as sacramental theology, where God works through physical means to redeem the whole person.

5.2 Christological Foundations in Jesus' Ministry

Jesus' teachings and ministry affirm the biblical and Lutheran understanding that humans are an integrated unity of body and soul, not divisible "parts," but a complete person created by God. This foundational truth is demonstrated in the following ways.

5.2.1 The Great Commandment (Matt 22:37–39)

When Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5, he uses three terms—"heart" (*kardia*), "soul" (*psychē*), and "mind" (*dianoia*)—not to divide the person into separate components but to emphasize the total devotion of the whole person to God. As Luther explains in the Large Catechism, this command calls us to fear, love, and trust in the Lord above all things with our entire being. This understanding aligns with Scripture's teaching that God created humanity—body and soul—in his image (Gen 1:27). Faith, therefore, involves the whole person in relationship with the Lord, not merely intellectual agreement with doctrinal truths.

5.2.2 Christ's Healing Ministry

Jesus' healing miracles, such as the paralytic (Mark 2:1–12) and the man born blind (John 9), reveal Jesus' authority over both physical and spiritual restoration. These healings are not merely physical cures but also attesting signs pointing to the Messiah's complete work of redemption. The forgiveness of sins and physical healing are united in Christ's ministry, demonstrating his concern for the entire person. This wholeness finds its ultimate fulfillment in the resurrection of the body, where, as confessed in the Third Article of the Small Catechism, the Son will raise all believers to eternal life. The incarnation itself—where Christ took on human flesh while remaining true God—underscores the Lord's commitment to redeem both body and soul, united in one person.

5.3 Pauline Theological Anthropology

Paul's writings present humans as unified beings created by God, fallen into sin, and redeemed in Christ. While the apostle uses various terms to describe human nature, Lutheran theology understands this as teaching about the whole person rather than dividing humans into separate components.

5.3.1 Romans 12:1–2

This passage teaches that the entire person—body included—is involved in the life of faith. The renewal Paul describes comes through the means of grace (Word and Sacrament), by which the Spirit works faith and its fruits in believers. This is not about transforming separate parts but about God's work in the whole person.

5.3.2 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

The "temple" imagery emphasizes that the entire person belongs to God through Christ's redemption. Lutheran theology understands this as teaching the dignity of the body and its inclusion in God's redemptive work while avoiding any notion that the Spirit only indwells an "immaterial" or "metaphysical" component of the person.

5.3.3 1 Thessalonians 5:23

While this verse uses three terms (spirit, soul, and body), Lutheran theology understands this as teaching the completeness of God's sanctifying work rather than establishing a rigid, three-part division of human nature. Sanctification encompasses the whole person, worked by the Spirit through the means of grace, not through human effort or progressive improvement of different "parts."

5.3.4 Key Lutheran Emphases

- Humans are unified beings, not an assortment of separate components.
- Sin affects the entire person, not just certain aspects.
- Justification and sanctification involve the whole person.
- God works through means (Word and Sacrament) to create and sustain faith.
- The body is integral to human nature and will be raised in the resurrection.
- Sanctification is the Spirit's work through the means of grace, not human effort.

This understanding preserves the biblical witness while avoiding philosophical divisions of human nature that can lead to various theological errors.

5.4 Resurrection and Eschatological Anthropology

The doctrine of the resurrection stands at the heart of Christian hope, proclaiming that through the Messiah's victory, believers will be raised bodily from the dead (Col 3:13–15). This physical resurrection affirms God's original creation of humans as both body and soul, and his redemption of the whole person through union with Christ. This truth is substantiated by 1 Corinthians 15:42–44 and Philippians 3:20–21.

5.4.1 1 Corinthians 15:42–44

Paul presents the resurrection body through four contrasts, each highlighting God's transformative work:

- The perishable body will be raised imperishable, freed from death and decay.
- The dishonorable body will be raised in glory, cleansed from sin's corruption.
- The weak body will be raised in power, no longer subject to illness and frailty.
- The natural body will be raised a spiritual body, fully renewed while remaining truly physical.

The passive voice "is raised" (*egeiretai*) emphasizes that God alone accomplishes this resurrection, consistent with the Lutheran teaching of salvation by grace alone through faith alone, which is how God declares a sinner righteous in Christ, the foundation for the hope of resurrection. The "spiritual body" (*soma pneumatikon*) does

not mean a non-physical body, but rather the physical body now perfectly restored and fully enlivened by the Spirit. It is crucial to note that this understanding refutes any "gnostic" misinterpretation of the resurrection as a purely metaphysical event.

5.4.2 Philippians 3:20–21

By his divine power, Christ will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body. This transformation preserves the personhood and materiality of our bodies while perfecting them. Lutheran theology emphasizes that just as the Messiah's resurrection body was physical yet glorified (Luke 24:39; John 20:24–27), so too will our resurrection bodies be our own physical bodies, now freed from sin and death.

5.4.3 Continuity and Transformation in the Resurrection Body

The resurrection body demonstrates both continuity and transformation:

- It is the same body that died, now raised and glorified.
- It remains a true physical body, though transformed beyond present limitations.
- It is freed from all effects of sin while retaining its created goodness.
- It reflects Christ's own resurrection body as the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20).

This understanding affirms several key Lutheran emphases:

- The goodness of God's physical creation against any form of spiritual-material dualism.
- The real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper as a foretaste of resurrection life.
- Salvation as the redemption of the whole person—body and soul together.
- The centrality of Christ's physical resurrection as the guarantee of our own.
- The resurrection of the body informs the church's mission and its understanding of the communion of saints.

The bodily resurrection gives concrete hope to believers, assuring us that death will not have the final word. Our bodies, though now subject to death because of sin, will be raised immortal through union with Christ, who has conquered death. This hope shapes how we view our present bodies and our eternal future in communion with God in heaven.

5.5 Theological Implications

The New Testament's holistic anthropology may be summarized as follows:

- *Unity of body and soul*: Humans are created as unified beings of both body and soul, inseparably joined until death. This reflects Luther's teaching

that we are simultaneously physical and spiritual creatures created for life in both realms. While Greek philosophy and modern materialism err in different directions, Scripture teaches that humans are whole persons under both God's creation and Christ's redemption.

- *Sanctification through Word and Sacrament*: Lutheran theology emphasizes that sanctification primarily comes through the means of grace—Word and Sacrament. The Spirit works through these means to create and strengthen faith, as well as to transform the hearts of believers.
- *Bodily resurrection as Gospel promise*: The Christian hope centers on God's promise of bodily resurrection, where we will be raised as whole persons just as Christ was raised. This is not merely spiritual renewal but also the restoration of the whole person—body and soul—as the Lord intended in creation, glorified and free from the limitations of our present physicality.
- *Christian life in two kingdoms*: The Christian lives simultaneously in two kingdoms (Luther's two-kingdom doctrine), serving God through both spiritual and physical vocations. Faith expresses itself through love and service to neighbor in bodily, concrete ways within our various callings. While distinct, these realms are not entirely separate. Christians are called to live out their faith in all areas of life, especially by seeking to bring God's justice and love to bear on all of creation.

This theological understanding shapes Lutheran practice in several ways. First, it emphasizes that God comes to us through physical means—water, bread, and wine—united with his Word. Second, it reminds us that we serve God not primarily through pietistic, spiritual exercises but through faithful service in our earthly callings. Third, it maintains the proper distinction between justification (God's work for us in union with Christ) and sanctification (the Spirit's work through the means of grace), avoiding confusion between our response to grace and grace itself.

This theological framework aligns with both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, particularly the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord. These carefully articulate how God works through means to create and sustain faith while preserving the central doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone.

6.0 The Implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the Biblical View of Human Personhood

6.1 Introduction: AI and the Mind/Body Question

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is advancing rapidly, raising profound theological and philosophical questions about human cognition and the nature of personhood. By

mimicking aspects of human thought—including reasoning, learning, and problem-solving—AI invites theological reflection on the unique characteristics that define humanity according to Christian anthropology. From a Lutheran theological perspective, rooted in biblical revelation, human beings are created as holistic, integrated beings—a profound union of body and spirit (Gen 2:7). This divinely ordained unity reflects the *imago Dei* (the image of God), which extends beyond mere rational capabilities to encompass relationality (our capacity for love and community), moral agency (our ability to discern and choose good), and our vocation to reflect God's glory in the world.

In contrast, AI fundamentally differs from human beings in its ontological essence. From the perspective of Lutheran theology, AI lacks both a physical body and, more critically, a soul—the pneumatic dimension that distinguishes humans as spiritual beings created for relationship with God. While AI can simulate cognitive processes with increasing sophistication, it neither possesses genuine consciousness nor participates in the divine image. This essential distinction emphasizes that AI functions as an advanced technological tool capable of processing information and executing tasks, but fundamentally different from human beings.

These theological considerations compel a deeper exploration of the uniqueness of human personhood within the context of AI. They challenge believers to affirm human existence as a sacred gift from God, recognizing human dignity not through computational capabilities but through our distinctive ontology as the Lord's beloved creation. While acknowledging potential concerns about AI, such as job displacement, algorithmic bias, and the misuse of technology, this perspective encourages faithful and prudent engagement with technological advances. It is possible to use AI responsibly. This includes recognizing its potential to serve humanity in areas like AI-assisted diagnostics in medicine, AI-driven climate modeling in scientific research, and AI-optimized resource distribution to address global hunger while maintaining a uniquely Christian understanding of human personhood grounded in Scripture and the redemptive hope of the Gospel.

6.2 AI in the Modern World

Modern AI systems, particularly large language models and neural networks, use sophisticated computational approaches to process information and solve complex problems. These systems rely on several fundamental technologies and methods:

Neural networks form the foundation of modern AI, using interconnected layers of artificial neurons to process information. While inspired by biological brains, these networks operate quite differently, using mathematical functions to transform and transmit data between layers.

Deep learning extends neural networks by employing multiple specialized layers. Each layer progressively identifies more abstract features in the data, allowing the

system to recognize complex patterns. For example, in image recognition, early layers might detect basic edges while deeper layers identify complete objects like faces or cars.

The transformer architecture revolutionized AI by introducing mechanisms that help models better understand context and relationships in data. This architecture excels at processing sequential information by considering how different elements relate to each other, making it particularly effective for language tasks.

Reinforcement learning enables AI systems to improve through experimentation. The system performs actions, receives feedback about their outcomes, and adjusts its behavior to maximize positive results. This approach mirrors how humans learn from experience, though the underlying mechanisms differ significantly.

Building on these foundational technologies, modern AI exhibits several key capabilities:

- *Natural Language Processing* (NLP) allows systems to work with human language, supporting tasks like translation and summarization. However, it is important to note that AI does not truly "understand" language the way humans do, as in possessing genuine comprehension. Rather, AI recognizes patterns and statistical relationships in text.
- *Pattern recognition* enables AI to identify regularities and structures in various types of data, from images to sound waves. This capability powers applications like facial recognition and speech-to-text conversion.
- *Adaptive learning* describes how AI systems can update their behavior based on new information, though this typically requires specific training procedures rather than the continuous, organic learning humans exhibit.
- *Creative generation* refers to AI's ability to produce novel content by recombining and transforming patterns learned from training data. While these systems can generate impressive outputs, they do not possess human-like creativity or any real understanding of the meaning of what they create.

These advancements raise profound questions: What constitutes genuine intelligence? What is consciousness, and how does it differ from mere computation? How does biblical revelation illuminate the unique nature of humanity? From a Lutheran perspective, humans are created as *nephesh* (Gen 1:26–27), an integrated unity of body, soul, and spirit, reflecting the *imago Dei*—the image of God. This holistic view stands in contrast to:

- *Cartesian dualism*: This philosophical view erroneously separates the mind (or soul) from the body.
- *Materialistic reductionism*: This worldview denies the existence of a spiritual dimension, reducing human beings to mere biological or mechanical processes.

While AI systems can exhibit remarkable abilities, they lack the *imago Dei*. They possess no soul or spirit, no consciousness, and no moral accountability. They are tools, products of human ingenuity, not living beings with inherent value and purpose. This distinction calls Christians to approach AI with wisdom and discernment. We should acknowledge the potential benefits of AI while maintaining a clear theological understanding of human dignity and the unique relationship between God and humanity.

6.3 Reexamining Dualism in the Age of AI

The emergence of AI necessitates a critical reexamination of mind-body dualism, prompting a deeper inquiry into its implications through both theological and philosophical lenses. While AI's capacity to simulate facets of human cognition, such as learning and problem-solving, might superficially seem to corroborate certain Greek philosophical traditions that prioritized the mind over the body, this resemblance ultimately proves deceptive.

Lutheran theology, being rooted in the biblical understanding of creation, unequivocally rejects a strict mind-body dualism. It affirms the inseparable unity of body, soul, and spirit as fundamental to human personhood. Indeed, Scripture consistently presents a holistic view of human existence, particularly by emphasizing the integral role of the embodied experience in shaping human consciousness, relationships, and spiritual life. AI, being devoid of a physical body and the attendant embodied experiences that profoundly influence human cognition and interaction, inevitably fails to capture this holistic understanding of human personhood.

6.4 Consciousness: A Biblical and Neurological Perspective

The advent of AI compels us to delve deeply into the nature of human consciousness, particularly as these inquiries intersect with theology, neuroscience, and technology. From a Lutheran perspective, these discussions must be grounded in both biblical truths and the insights gleaned from scientific understanding.

Scripture teaches that human consciousness is intimately linked to the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26–27), the divine image. This encompasses more than mere intellectual capacity; it includes spiritual and relational dimensions that reflect God's own nature. Unlike humans, AI lacks a soul and the capacity for genuine moral agency, both essential aspects of bearing God's image. In biblical understanding, consciousness is not merely a byproduct of physical processes but a reflection of humanity's unique role in creation and its inherent capacity for a relationship with the Creator.

Neuroscience research has demonstrated that the human brain is a marvel of complexity, comprising approximately 85–100 billion neurons interconnected by trillions of synapses. This intricate network underlies human consciousness through

coordinated patterns of electrical and chemical signaling within and across various brain regions. The human brain exhibits remarkable properties, including neuroplasticity—its ability to reorganize itself in response to experience—and the emergence of consciousness, where subjective awareness arises from complex neural processes (though the precise mechanisms remain an active area of research). These features contribute to advanced human capacities such as self-awareness, moral reasoning, and a wide range of emotional experiences.

In contrast, artificial neural networks, while capable of simulating certain aspects of brain function, differ fundamentally from biological neural systems. AI systems operate based on algorithmic processes and weighted connections, which, despite their impressive computational power, lack the self-organizing principles, biological substrates, and subjective experiences inherent in the human brain. AI systems cannot engage in genuine moral reasoning or cultivate authentic relationality, aligning with the biblical understanding that human consciousness transcends mere information processing.

The integration of neuroscientific insights with biblical anthropology reinforces the understanding that human consciousness is both embodied and transcendent. While neuroscience illuminates the material mechanisms underpinning consciousness, theology affirms its metaphysical dimensions, with the soul serving as the bridge between physical brain processes and spiritual realities. This perspective emphasizes that humans, created in the image of God, possess unique qualities such as moral agency, spiritual awareness, and the capacity for genuine relationships with God and others. These aspects of consciousness surpass the capabilities of AI, which is rooted solely in physical mechanisms.

Ultimately, while AI may excel in performing specific cognitive tasks, it cannot attain the full depth of human consciousness. The biblical perspective asserts that consciousness is inextricably linked to humanity's divine origin and spiritual nature. Any exploration of AI's capabilities must, therefore, acknowledge these inherent limitations, recognizing the profound mystery of what it means to be human in the light of God's sovereign, all-encompassing, creative work.

6.5 The Significance of Embodiment

Lutheran theology, being grounded in a biblical understanding of personhood, emphasizes the inseparable union of the human spirit and the physical body. This concept stands in stark contrast to the disembodied nature of AI. Central to this theological framework is Jesus' incarnation. Christ, being fully God and fully human, assumed a human body, revealing the profound significance of embodiment within the Creator's redemptive plan. Jesus' bodily resurrection further affirms the enduring importance of the physical body in God's eternal purpose for humanity.

Similarly, the Old Testament consistently employs the Hebrew term *nephesh* to convey the embodied nature of human existence, illustrating the integral relationship between the physical and spiritual dimensions of human existence. This holistic view of personhood further highlights the limitations of AI. As a purely incorporeal entity, AI fundamentally lacks the embodied reality essential to the scriptural depiction of humanity. Consequently, AI cannot fully reflect or participate in the holistic personhood affirmed by biblical teaching.

6.6 AI and Human Uniqueness: Theological and Ethical Considerations

The rise of artificial intelligence presents profound challenges and opportunities that necessitate careful theological reflection. While AI can process vast amounts of data and simulate interactions, it remains incapable of experiencing spirituality, making moral judgments, or forming genuine connections rooted in love and divine purpose.

Theological reflection on AI must reaffirm human dignity and exceptionalism. Scripture teaches that humanity, as God's creation, possesses inherent worth and responsibility. As AI advances, ethical frameworks grounded in biblical anthropology are essential to ensure technology serves humanity rather than diminishes it. Issues of fairness, justice, and accountability must be evaluated in light of God's moral order, preventing AI from being used in ways that dehumanize individuals or erode ethical responsibility.

Moreover, the increasing reliance on AI raises concerns about idolatry. The Bible warns against placing undue trust in human creations (Isa 44:9–20), reminding Christians that wisdom and security ultimately come from God. While AI can enhance various aspects of life, it must not be elevated to a position of authority that undermines divine sovereignty or human accountability. Instead, engagement with AI requires discernment, humility, and a commitment to Christ-centered values.

At the same time, AI presents opportunities for evangelism, apologetics, and pastoral care. Conversations about artificial intelligence invite deeper discussions on the nature of human existence, providing a platform to articulate the biblical view of personhood, purpose, and redemption. The Church has a crucial role in guiding individuals through the ethical and existential implications of AI, offering spiritual direction that remains anchored in Scripture.

Ultimately, the development and use of AI must align with principles of ethical stewardship that honor the sanctity of human life. A robust theological understanding of human nature—one that affirms the integration of body, mind, and spirit—provides a necessary foundation for engaging with AI in a way that upholds human dignity and fosters communal flourishing. Technological advancements should serve as tools for human good while remaining firmly rooted in the theological truths revealed in the Old and New Testaments.

7.0 Practical Implications for Integrated Christian Living

In Lutheran theology, human life is understood as an integrated whole, a unity of body and soul inseparable in God's creative and redemptive design. This perspective, rooted in the biblical narrative of creation and redemption, affirms that human beings, created in the image of God, are embodied creatures whose physical and spiritual dimensions are intrinsically intertwined.

The doctrine of vocation exemplifies this holistic understanding. Daily life—work, rest, and service—becomes a sacred calling, a means of glorifying God and serving others. Caring for one's body is not mere vanity but faithful stewardship. It recognizes that our physical existence is a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19) and an expression of God's grace.

Central to this theology are the means of grace: Word and Sacrament. Baptism and Holy Communion are profound demonstrations of how God uses physical elements to convey spiritual blessings. In Baptism, water and the Word cleanse and renew, while in Holy Communion, the Messiah's true body and blood are received, nourishing the entire person—material and immaterial.

Ministry and pastoral care reflect this comprehensive approach. The interplay of Law and Gospel spotlights our fallen condition while simultaneously demonstrating Christ's solidarity with human suffering. The Office of the Keys, exercised through the spoken word of absolution, provides spiritual comfort that extends beyond merely psychological or physical boundaries. Worship itself is a holistic experience, engaging the entire person through physical acts of communion, confession, and receiving divine grace. This participation emphasizes how God's redemptive work touches both body and soul.

The incarnation of Christ is the foundation of this understanding. By uniting the divine and human natures, Jesus of Nazareth sanctifies physical existence and prefigures the future resurrection. Lutheran eschatology affirms the resurrection as a tangible reality where body and soul will be fully restored at the Second Advent, reflecting the comprehensive nature of redemption.

The third use of the Law further illuminates this integrated understanding. Good works, flowing from faith, are not merely spiritual abstractions but concrete acts of service shaped by the Lord's will. Sanctification encompasses the whole person, demonstrating how faith is lived out through physical engagement with the world.

Ultimately, the Christian life is not a dualistic struggle between physical and spiritual realms but a unified journey of faith. God works through physical means to deliver spiritual gifts, grounding believers in the hope of resurrection. This confident expectation is centered on the risen Christ, whose victory secures the eternal unity and restoration of body and soul.

8.0 Conclusion: Body and Soul United—A Biblical Response to Technological Dualism

The biblical understanding of human nature, in stark contrast to Greco-Roman dualism, profoundly shapes our understanding of existence, particularly in an age increasingly dominated by AI. Genesis 2:7 presents humanity as a unified creation, a harmonious union of body and soul. While sin has marred this unity, the biblical narrative consistently affirms the goodness of God's creation, including the physical realm. This holistic view stands in opposition to the dualistic philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, which prioritize the spiritual over the material and often advocate for human salvation through reason or moral effort.

The Lutheran doctrine of *sola gratia* and *sola fide* emphasizes that salvation is a gift of God's grace received through faith in Christ. Jesus, fully God and fully human, assumed humanity in its entirety—including the physical—and secured redemption at Calvary for the whole person. This redemption is mediated through the sacraments of Baptism, which claims the entire person for Christ, and Holy Communion, which nourishes believers with the body and blood of Christ.

AI, while a powerful tool, lacks the soul and cannot participate in the Lord's redemptive plan. AI's creation, however impressive, does not diminish the unique value of human beings, who are made in God's image, and for believers, who are destined for eternal life. Lutheran doctrine, as articulated in the doctrine of *simul justus et peccator* (simultaneously saint and sinner), acknowledges the ongoing reality of sin while affirming the believer's righteousness in union with the Messiah. This theological perspective provides a balanced approach to technology. It neither idolizes human reason nor dismisses the physical world but rather grounds all of life in the redemptive work of Christ.

Ultimately, believers are called to use technology as a tool for service to God and neighbor. Guided by the dialectic tension between Law and Gospel, we are taught to recognize our limitations while trusting in God's grace. This theological framework prevents both the idolatrous worship of technology and the misguided pursuit of salvation through human achievement.

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Note

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Made to Be in God's Presence

Peter Beckman

Introduction

Throughout time women and men have pondered, what does it mean to be human? The Psalmist strikes at the heart of this question when he states: "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained; What is man that you take thought of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God" (Ps 8:3-5; NASB). The Psalmist recognizes that on the one hand women and men are part of creation, yet they occupy a special place; humanity is only placed slightly below God.[1] This Psalm invites us into the question of asking "who are we as humans?" As we explore the first chapters of Genesis, we will unpack the fundamental truths of what it means to be human in this paramount biblical origin story.

A foundational idea nascent in the Hebrew Scriptures is that all human beings, both women and men, are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27). A bit of context may help us flesh out the biblical descriptions. Within the ancient world of the Old Testament, other nations had persons or statues made in the image of God. When referring to a person, being in the image of god was associated with upper-class power or religious authority, such as a king or ritual specialist. When referring to a stone statue, the image of god was a stone representation or image of the deity who dwelt in that particular sanctuary.[2] It should not be surprising that kings were understood to be made in the image of god because they were the focal point of ancient society. In the ancient world, human and divine society was divided between those who demanded tribute and those who provided it. Kings were at the center of this relationship in the world as they collected tribute and labor from the lower classes whose role in life was to engage in menial backbreaking tasks for them. This relationship also extended to worship, as the king uniquely represented the people in worship. In ancient Egypt, "the king was the visible image of a god and assumed a divine role on earth. Only the king had access to the world of the gods, and indeed he is a ubiquitous figure in scenes of worship inscribed on temple walls."[3] Similarly "in Mesopotamia, portents of evil, for example an eclipse or an earthquake, mandated human action to placate the gods, but the action mandated

was solely that of the king. Only he recited prayers, offered sacrifices, or shaved his body in obeisance. Nothing was required of the people at large. It was not the people the Mesopotamian gods held accountable but their king."[4] In the ancient world, the king uniquely represented god in his image and uniquely worshiped before god in the sanctuary. Furthermore, in only one example outside of the Old Testament, is all humanity archetypally made in the image of God.[5]

In light of this ancient context, the profound contribution of the Hebrew Scriptures is that that all humans are created to worship and commune with God: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27; NASB). As we will see, representing and communing with God is essential to what it means to be human and to have a body, as expressed in the story. In this account, being human is enmeshed with their embodied engagement with God in the garden

The initial chapters of Genesis offer valuable insights into the purpose of mankind that remain relevant as we contemplate our beings and bodies. Modern readers encounter the Old Testament Scriptures as a unified text that presents itself as a cohesive narrative. This literary masterpiece contains several intentional similarities between the features of the Garden of Eden and those of the Wilderness Tabernacle. These elements emphasize the Garden of Eden as a primordial sanctuary where God dwelt with his people. The literary setting of the initial chapters of Genesis set the canonical stage of what it means to be a man or woman. As we examine the figures of Adam and Eve, we will observe that they fulfilled priestly duties with implications for the people of Israel and, eventually, all members of the people of God, including today's followers of Jesus.

Reading the Pentateuch as a Unit

Methodologically, we must present a rationale for reading the Pentateuch as a unified storyline, given many of the historical questions of our day. Most modern Christians read the Pentateuch as a coherent narrative through a translation. This starting point sometimes makes it difficult to perceive the plurality and development of this text. Our word Bible hints at this plurality because, on the one hand, our singular word *Bible*, comes from the Greek plural word *Bibles* (τα βιβλια); this highlights its plural composition within a unified structure.[6] Similarly, the Pentateuch, a collection of five books, reflects this editorial design through its unification of ancient stories about the people of Israel and their relationship with God in a coherent narrative. Despite some unanswered historical questions, we can note the historical environment that gave rise to this unified document.

From a historical perspective, we know that the Pentateuch consists of several ancient texts. From a literary standpoint, Moses is presented as the author of various

passages of the Pentateuch (Exod 24:18; 34:28; Deut 9:9–10; 10:10; 2 Chron 25:4) and is presented as the main character of these books. At the same time, the book of Genesis and several sections of the other books do not explicitly mention their authors.[7] The presence of various editorial comments as well as grammatical updates from a later time accentuate the preservation, application, and re-contextualization of these stories within a later era of God's people.[8] In light of this literary process, we can affirm that the Hebrew Masoretic Version contains a reliable and preserved re-transmitted and re-contextualized voice of the ancient people of Israel.[9] While acknowledging the historical development of the Pentateuch, we can study the text in its developed format in the Masoretic Version upon which our modern Bible translations are made.[10] This recognition of historical layers provides a foundational starting point for our biblical-theological analysis of the Pentateuch as a unified story.[11] With this methodology in mind, we will examine the function of humans within a sanctuary context in the Genesis narrative.

Woman and Man in God's Sanctuary

Throughout Jewish and Christian tradition, several authors have noted that the Garden of Eden was a sanctuary of God's presence.[12] The geographic location of the creation of man and woman informs us about the purpose of man and woman. The Genesis story interconnects with later narratives in the literary masterpiece of the Masoretic Text. Methodologically, we can notice that the Garden of Eden contains similar features as later sanctuaries through the repetition of (a) words, syntactic patterns, and themes, as well as (b) the repetition of allusions to the same passage.[13] As we will explore, several studies reveal that the narrative depicts the Garden of Eden with characteristics resembling those of the Tabernacle and, later, the Jerusalem Temple.

There are several geographical and architectural elements within the narrative that underline Eden as a sanctuary. Temples and other shrines in the ancient Near East were built towards the east.[14] In like fashion, the Mosaic Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple reflect this orientation through the placement of their entrances toward the east (Exod 27:13-16; Ezek 47:1-12).[15] Not surprisingly, the entrance to the Garden of Eden faces toward the east. The flow of the rivers in the garden flows eastward (Gen 2:14), probably towards the entrance of the garden. Likewise, we see that when God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden, they exited from the entrance: "at the east of the Garden of Eden" (Gen 3:24; NASB). Cherubs guard the entrance to the garden on the east, marking the eastward orientation of the garden.[16] Using commonly recognizable temple imagery, the direction of the stream and the location of the cherubim characterize Eden as a sanctuary that the people of God would recognize from the accounts of the Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple.

We also see in the structure of Eden a similarity to that of the Tabernacle and the Temple. Temples in the ancient Near East and almost without exception in Mesopotamia were built with a three-part structure. According to this pattern, there are often three parts: the inner sanctuary, the inner court, and the outer court.[17] A primary function of a temple in the ancient Near East was to provide a place or a location where the deity could relate to humans. This was a place where the divine and earthly worlds could blend in harmony.[18] We note this three-section pattern in the descriptions of the Wilderness Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple. Both possessed a holy of holies, a holy place, and an outer court (Exod 26:33, 27:9; 1 Kgs 8:6; 2 Kgs 21:5). In the Tabernacle and Temple there was a path of holiness for the believer to move into the presence of God through the mediation of the priesthood. We observe this pattern of three distinct spheres also in the description of the Garden of Eden. Inside the sanctuary, there is a division between Eden and the garden: "The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden…Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden" (Gen 2:8, 10; NASB).[19] Likewise, there exists a division between Eden, the garden, and the land outside. The divine presence that existed in Eden and the garden did not exist outside. For this reason, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they were expelled from the garden. Just as there existed a trajectory toward the divine presence in the Tabernacle and the Temple as one progresses from the outside to the holy of holies, likewise, the creation account depicted increasing levels of sanctity from the outside, to the garden, to Eden itself where the tree of life and the presence of God dwelt.[20]

Finally, sanctuary imagery is present in the Edenic descriptions of cherub protectors. Two cherubim guard the entrance to the garden (Gen 3:24), fulfilling the ancient Near Eastern task of protecting the holy location of a deity from impurity.[21] This pattern is repeated in the Tabernacle and Temple where statues of the cherubim are erected on the ark of the covenant and in the holy place (Exod 25:18-22; 2 Sam 6:2; 1 Kgs 6:23-35; 2 Kgs 19:15; 2 Chron 3:7; Ezek 41:18-19). Additionally, cherubim are stitched into the veil that separates the holy place from the holy of holies (Exod 26:31).[22] Cherubim imagery at the entrance to the garden highlights their role as protectors of God's presence in the Edenic sanctuary.[23] The presence of cherubim indicates that this place was a location where God dwelt with his people, similar to that experienced in the Wilderness Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple.

The literary descriptions of the eastward orientation, the three-part structure, and the cherubim protectors in the Garden of Eden, the Wilderness Tabernacle, and the Jerusalem Temple portray them as sacred spaces of the divine presence. Within the pentateuchal narrative this portrayal communicated to God's people that they could experience God's presence that was lost in Eden through the recreated sanctuaries in the Tabernacle and in the Temple while at the same time informing them of God's original purpose for woman and man when they dwelt in God's presence.

This context can help us in our study today when we think about what it means to be human. Now that we have established this literary horizon to the creation story, we can examine the role of Adam and Eve as ideal humans dwelling with God.

The Priestly Vocation of Adam and Eve

In the creation account, God created Adam and Eve to reside in a sanctuary that housed the presence of God. This temple environment will inform us of the roles of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve, the representative members of the human race, will be stylized in the text as engaging in priestly activities. God created them with the aim of fulfilling sacerdotal tasks.[24] This primordial calling will help us understand God's creation and calling for what it means to be human.

The Divine Presence

When the God of Israel dwelt in a sanctuary, his presence was mediated by a priest to the lay worshiper. Just as a modern nuclear reactor provides powerful and life-giving energy to a city but must be correctly approached with precaution through various levels and safety measures, so the nourishing and sanctifying divine presence was sacred and could only be advanced toward with the correct procedure and approach. This attitude is practiced in the Tabernacle where God's tangible presence existed among his people (Exod 25:9). The three parts of the Tabernacle did not separate human beings from God; rather, they allowed the people to safely draw closer to God through the necessary offerings (Lev 16).[25] Likewise, we see in the inner sanctuary of Eden that human beings could access the Lord's presence directly. Noteworthily, before the introduction of evil and their expulsion from the garden, they did not need to offer a sacrifice to be in God's presence because they did not possess a damaged relationship with God. The Lord's unmediated presence is evident in his direct engagement with the first humans. Just as in the Wilderness Tabernacle, God "walks" (מִתְהַלֵּךְ; a *hithpael* participle or perfect verb) expressing his bodily presence (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14; 2 Sam 7:6-7),[26] likewise, he "walks" (מִתְהַלֵּךְ) with Adam and Eve (Gen 3:8). When the subject of "walking" is the Lord in the Old Testament, this action always occurs in connection with the Tabernacle or in the garden. This suggests that the presence of God that humans enjoyed in the sanctuary of Eden was restored in the sanctuary of the Tabernacle.[27] When we return to our question of what it means to be human, we note that Adam and Eve experienced an intimate relationship with God that corresponds to that which the people enjoyed in the later Wilderness Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temple. As the representative forefather and foremother of the human race, this account signals the original intention of God for all mankind to experience his presence like that of later priests. Women and men, body and soul, are made to dwell with God.

Priestly Actions

In the creation account, God assigned Adam two roles as the caretaker of the garden: "Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it (עבד) and keep it (שׁמר)" (Gen 2:15; NASB). In their immediate context, these verbs refer to the agricultural duties of "cultivating" and "caring for" the land of the garden.[28] However, if we carefully study this passage, we can see an intentional literary reference. Whenever the Old Testament mentions these verbs or their nominal cognates elsewhere within a range of fifteen words, they indicate either (a) "serving" God and the duty of the Israelites to "keep" his word or (b) "serving" God and "keeping or maintaining the service" of the Tabernacle and Temple.[29] Within the greater horizon of a sacred space in Genesis 1-3, these verbs link the tasks assigned to Adam and those of the priests in the Tabernacle and Temple (cf. Num 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chron 23:32).[30] For instance: "They shall perform (וְשָׁמְרוּ) the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service (לַעֲבֹד) of the Tabernacle" (Num 3:7).

In a priestly context, the verb "to serve" (עבד) denotes the daily Levitical tasks of maintaining the Tabernacle (Num 3:7-8; 4:23-24, 26). In the same context, the verb "to keep" (שׁמר) designates the protection of the Tabernacle or Temple from invaders (Num 1:53; 3:8; 8:26; 31:30; 1 Sam 7:1; 2 Kgs 12:9) or the keeping of divine laws and obligations (Lev 18:5; Num 3:7). It is easy for us to forget that in the ancient world a primary task of priests was to protect the divine sanctuary from intruders: "the Levites who keep guard over the Tabernacle of the Lord" (Num 31:30; ESV).[31] The serving, caring, and protection of the Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple were integral to the identity of the priests. Like later Levitical Priests, we observe in the Garden of Eden that God commanded Adam to guard and care for his sanctuary. In Eden, Adam was charged with the responsibility of protecting the garden against forces of evil (Gen 2:15). When he failed to perform this priestly responsibility, God transferred this duty to the cherubim who were now to guard (שׁמר) the garden (Gen 3:24).[32] Within his sanctuary, Adam's duty to guard and care for the divine presence is paradigmatically similar to those of the later priests of Israel. When we think about the purpose of mankind, we see again that mankind is created to dwell in and care for the divine presence.

Priestly Clothing

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they became aware of their nakedness. In response, God provides them with coverings (Gen 3:7, 21). These coverings appear to be allusions to priestly garments. The noun "garment" (כֻּתֹּנֶת) and the *hiphil* verb "to dress" (לבשׁ) are repeated in both the account of Eden and the Tabernacle (Exod 28:4, 39-40; 29:5, 8; 39:27).[33]

> And the Lord God made garments (כָּתְנוֹת) of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them (וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם) (Gen 3:21).
>
> Then Moses brought Aaron's sons near and clothed them (וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם) in robes (כֻּתֹּנֶת) (Lev 8:13).

The *hiphil* verb "dress" (לבשׁ) is used to denote the honoring of a person by a king (Gen 41:42; 1 Sam 17:38) or the dressing of a priest in holy garments (Exod 28:41; 29:8; 40:14). Because of the presence of other links, this likely refers here to priestly garments. Before Adam and Eve's disobedience, their nakedness did not bother them (Gen. 2:25; 3:11). But after they disobeyed, they were ashamed of their nakedness. The divine act of providing garments for humans supplied them with a way to approach God.[34] Likewise, Levitical priests were covered in appropriate garments to officiate worship in the Tabernacle (Exod 20:26; 28:42).

Links between the vocabulary in both accounts underscore both Adam and Eve as dwelling in the primordial sanctuary with priestly tasks. This should surprise us because the Levitical priesthood of the Tabernacle and Temple was only male, and women could not enter the holy of holies of the Tabernacle or Temple.[35] Perhaps this highlights the relationship between Adam and Eve to the common priesthood of all the people of Israel (Exod 19:4-6). We can appreciate the value and dignity this narrative extends to all men and to all women in particular as mankind is created to enjoy, dwell in, serve, and guard the divine presence in the Lord's sanctuary.

Implications

The creation account provides us with clues for understanding what it means to be human. We explored several intentional links between the Garden of Eden, the Wilderness Tabernacle, and the Jerusalem Temple woven into the narrative. Within this primordial sacred space, we notice that Adam and Eve are placed in a sanctuary and perform priestly tasks. They dwell in the sacred space of the divine presence and participate in the serving and guarding of God's presence. Within the literary narrative, Adam and Eve express the experience of the people of God and specifically aspects of that of Levitical Priests in the Wilderness Tabernacle and in the Jerusalem Temple.

When we recognize that these stories are part of a cohesive narrative, we are able to notice their theological implications. The creation account is more than an ancient story that expresses the ancestral history of the people of Israel; rather, the creation account reveals God's original purpose for humanity before their deviation. God creates his people to dwell in his presence and in his sanctuary. He creates a priestly people to maintain and enjoy his presence in the world. Although human

disobedience disrupted this task, the knowledge of this original course meant that the people of God could understand the purpose of the Wilderness Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple. Starting with the Tabernacle, God re-established a sanctuary for the first time since the expulsion of humanity from the Garden of Eden.[36] These sacred spaces were a restoration of what was lost in Eden. Eden was an ideal world where God, humanity, and nature existed in harmony. This divine ecosystem was repeated in the Tabernacle where God dwelt with his people (Exod 29:42-46; 35:21-29).[37] The Tabernacle signals that God does not abandon his people because of their disobedience; rather, he provides a way for them to experience his presence.[38] By obeying the Lord's instructions, the people of God could foster an environment where God could dwell with them despite their disobedience and corruption.

The continuity between Eden and the other sanctuaries highlights God's original plan for all humanity to participate in the care of his sacred space (Gen. 1:28; 2:15; 3:23).[39] Within God's redemption of his people, the Levitical Priests specifically, and in some ways all the people as a general priesthood, were tasked with guarding, caring for, and mediating God's holy presence (Exod 19:4-6).[40] When God rescues fallen humanity and restores his people, their original purpose of enjoying and abiding in his presence is reinstated. Likewise, in the climax of God's redemption in the revelation of Jesus, these realities are extended and expanded. In the incarnation, Jesus himself is the Tabernacle where God dwells with his people (John 1:14; Rev 21:3). Consequently, believers, who are part of his body, are part of God's restored humanity who are empowered as a general priesthood to abide in and mediate God's presence in the world (1 Pet 2:5-9; Rev 1:6, 5:10).[41] As we contemplate what it means to be human, we can affirm that since creation, God has desired to dwell with his people, and despite the failures of his people, he works to restore his people so that they can be brought back into his presence. This reality climaxes in and is available now in the revelation of Jesus and is experienced by all who join his body.

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Notes

1. Jason Maston, "Introduction," in *Anthropology and New Testament Theology*, ed. Jason Maston and Benjamin E. Reynolds, LNTS 529 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 1.
2. John Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 84.
3. Joshua A. Berman, *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 40–41.
4. Ibid., 27.

5. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*, 84.

6. Brent Strawn, *The Old Testament: A Concise Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 2–4.

7. In the book of the Psalms, David is considered the literary author because he is the main character; nevertheless, at the same time, several psalms are known to have been written by other authors. Strawn, *The Old Testament*, 19–20. The ancient Near Eastern context of the Old Testament suggests that there was the capacity to write books at the time of the Exodus; however, we unfortunately do not possess primary documents from that time. Robert I. Vasholz, *The Old Testament Canon in the Old Testament Church: The Internal Rationale for Old Testament Canonicity*, ANETS 7 (Lewiston, NT: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 1–30.

8. Several editorial comments highlight the updating and renewal of the text until the end of the Babylonian Exile. This does not mean that scribes invented these stories, rather they translated and re-communicated ancient stories in a format understandable to successive generations. Some examples include the following: the Pentateuch includes the updating of names (Gen 11:28, 31; Gen 14:2); the genealogy of Gen 36:31 was written at a time when a king reigned in Israel, which could only be during Solomon's reign at the earliest; the formulation of Gen 12:6 indicates that the passage was written at a time when there were no Amorites; and the old Hebrew script and language is updated to a dialect after the Babylonian Exile. Strawn, *The Old Testament*, 26–27; Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 1–4; Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 1992), 26–29; Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 56–61; Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 50–52; T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 42–61, 80; Michael Grisanti, "Inspiration, Inerrancy, and the OT Canon: The Place of Textual Updating in an Inerrant View of Scripture," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 4 (2001): 577–598.

9. Bill Arnold, "The Book of Deuteronomy: Pseudepigraphy, Pseudonymity, or Something Else Altogether?," in *Sepher Torath Mosheh: Studies in the Composition and Interpretation of Deuteronomy*, ed. Daniel Block and Richard Schultz (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017), 145–160; Bill Arnold, "Deuteronomy as the 'Ipsissima Vox' of Moses," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4, no. 1 (2010): 53–74; John Walton and Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 33–35, 65.

10. Despite the fact that there are several stages in the development of a text, we can study the text in each of these historical moments with a synchronic analysis. James Barr, "The Synchronic, the Diachronic, and the Historical: A Triangular Relationship?" in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor, OtSt 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1–6; Koog Hong, "Synchrony and Diachrony in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (2013): 522–524.

11. Mark Boda, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*, 2017, 160–162; Christopher Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, STI (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 28–39.

12. *Jub*. 4.23-36, 8.19; Ephraim of Syria, *Hymns* 3.16-17. Several ancient authors note that the Tabernacle typologically reflects the creation narrative. Philo, *Somni*. 1.215;

Josephus, A. J. 3.180-182. Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. Paul Radin, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1911), 151; Gary Anderson, "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden," *Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 2 (1989): 129, 143–144; Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 96; Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 76–77; Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology* (London: SPCK, 2004), 16–17; Jacques Van Ruiten, "The Garden of Eden and Jubilees 3:1-31," *Bijdragen* 57, no. 3 (1996): 315–316.

13. Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, MA: Yale University Press, 1989), 29–31.
14. Donald Parry, "Garden of Eden Prototype Sanctuary," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2004), 131.
15. Gordon Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood*, ed. Richard Hess (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 400.
16. Seung Kang, "The Garden of Eden as an Israelite Sacred Place," *Theology Today* 77, no. 1 (2020): 90–91; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 174; Parry, "Garden of Eden," 132–133.
17. In the case of Egypt, the labels of the three spheres are different, but the structure remains the same Michael Hundley, *God in Dwellings: Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East*, SBLWAWS 3 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 37, 51, 56.
18. Hundley, 47, 83–84; Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, 63–65.
19. Kang, "The Garden of Eden," 90–91; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I*, 174; Parry, "Garden of Eden," 132–133.
20. Gregory Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 84–85; Parry, "Garden of Eden," 134–135.
21. John Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 230; Tryggve Mettinger, *In Search of God*, trans. Frederick Cryer (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 128, 135; Tryggve Mettinger, "Cherubim," in *Dictionary of Demons and Deities in the Bible*, 2nd ed., ed. Karel Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. Horst (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 190–191; Beale, *The Temple*, 70.
22. Sandra Richter, *The Epic of Eden* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 123–124; Kang, "The Garden of Eden," 91–92; Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 401; John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 303; Nicolas Wyatt, "A Royal Garden: The Ideology of Eden," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 28, no. 1 (2014): 18; David Wright, "Holiness, Sex, and Death in the Garden of Eden," *Biblica* 77, no. 3 (1996): 310.
23. Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2-3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*, CBET 25 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 294; Edmund Clowney, "Final Temple," *Westminster Theological Journal* 35, no. 2 (1973): 160.
24. Throughout Jewish and Christian traditions, various theological commentators have claimed that Adam and Eve acted as priests: LXX Ezek 28:13 (cf. LXX Exodus 28:17-20);

Tg. Ps.-J. Genesis 8:20; *Jub*. 3:27; Revelation of Moses 29.3; *Rabba Numbers* 4.8; *Tanḥuma Toldot* 12. Gregory Beale, "Adam as the First Priest in Eden as the Garden Temple," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22, no. 2 (2018): 10; Jan Dochhorn, "Adam als Bauer, oder: Die Ätiologie des Ackerbaus in Vita Adae 1–21 und die Redaktionsgeschichte der Adamviten," in *Literature on Adam and Eve*, ed. Gary Anderson and Michael Stone, SVTP 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 327; Rachel Elior, "The Garden of Eden Is the Holy of Holies and the Dwelling of the Lord," *Studies in Spirituality* 24 (2014): 63–118; Martin Luther, *Predigten über das 2 Büch Mose*. 1524-1527, LW 16 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1899), 414; Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, TAB 1B (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 43–44; Gina Pearl, "Adam's Garments, the Staff, the Altar and Other Biblical Objects in Innovative Contexts in Rabbinic Literature" (MA Thesis, McGill University, 1988), 11–19; Stephen Ricks, "The Garment of Adam in Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Tradition," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Maxwell Institute Publications, 1994), 709–714; Terje Stordalen, "Heaven on Earth - Or Not?," in *Beyond Eden*, ed. Konrad Schmid and Christoph Riedweg, FZAT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 32–33, 38; Rivka Ulmer, "The Jerusalem Temple in Pesiqta Rabbati: From Creation to Apocalypse," *Hebrew Studies* 51 (2010): 233–234; James VanderKam, "Adam's Incense Offerings," *Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls* 5–6 (2008): 141–156.

25. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 298.

26. Lifsa Schachter, "The Garden of Eden as God's First Sanctuary," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2013): 74; Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 401; Wright, "Holiness, Sex, and Death," 307; Parry, "Garden of Eden," 144; Sergio Silva, "Creation and Sanctuary," in *The Book and Student: Theological Education as Mission*, ed. Wagner Kuhn (Berrien Springs, MI: Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2012), 160; Kang, "The Garden of Eden," 90; Jahisber Peñuela-Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3: A Reevaluation of the Biblical Evidence" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2019), 90–95.

27. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23-27, AB 3B (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2301–2302.

28. Ney Brasil Pereira, "Cultivar e guardar a criação: Estudo exegético de Gn 2,15," *Encontros Teológicos* 31, no. 3 (2016): 488–90; Giuseppe De Carlo, "Servire e custodire, responsabilità originaria (Gen 2,15)," *Parola Spirito e Vita* 68 (2013): 17–19; Gianantonio Borgonovo, "La grammatica dell'esistenza alla luce della storia d'Israele (Gen 2,4b-3,24)," in *Torah e storiografie dell'Antico Testamento* (Torino: Leumann, 2012), 436.

29. Beale, *The Temple*, 67.

30. Jeff Morrow, "Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3," *Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies* 2, no. 1 (2009): 12; Parry, "Garden of Eden," 153; Schachter, "The Garden of Eden," 75; Dan Lioy, "The Garden of Eden as a Primordial Temple or Sacred Space for Humankind," *Conspectus* 10 (2010): 37; Manfred Hutter, "Adam als Gärtner und König (Gen 2,8.15)," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 30, no. 2 (1986): 259; Jacob Rennaker, "Dressed to Impress: Adam as a Priestly Figure in Eden," in *Sacred Space, Sacred Thread: Perspectives Across Time and Traditions*, ed. John Welch (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 165; Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 85–87; Luis Alonso Schökel, "Motivos sapienciales y de alianza en Gn 2-3," *Biblica* 43, no. 3 (1962): 306; Carlo, "Servire e custodire," 20–21. *Contra* Daniel

Block, "Eden: A Temple?," in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Daniel M Gurtner (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 10–11.

31. Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 67; Wright, "Holiness, Sex, and Death," 307–308; Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 181–184; Beale, *The Temple*, 68; Peñuela-Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple," 71–72.
32. Walton, *Genesis*, 230; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 85–86; Rennaker, "Dressed to Impress," 166–167.
33. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 401–2; L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus*, BTS 15 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 99; Parry, "Garden of Eden," 145; William Dumbrell, "Gen 2:1-17: A Foreshadowing of the New Creation," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 61; Rennaker, "Dressed to Impress," 167; Peñuela-Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple," 96–103.
34. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 84–85; Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 337.
35. Jacques Doukhan, "Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence," in *Women in History*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 36–37; John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 112. In contrast, Block suggests that in a patriarchal context, Eve could not have been described with priestly characteristics. Block, "Eden: A Temple?," 12.
36. Walton, *The Lost World*, 49, 51; Rennaker, "Dressed to Impress," 161.
37. Erik Elnes, "Creation and Tabernacle: The Priestly Writer's Environmentalism," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 16, no. 1 (1994): 151–153.
38. Thomas Mann, *The Book of the Torah* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1988), 112.
39. Dumbrell, "Gen 2:1-17," 59–60; Dan Lioy, *Axis of Glory: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Temple Motif in Scripture*, SiBL 138 (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 14; Beale, "Adam as the First Priest," 20.
40. Dumbrell, "Gen 2:1-17," 61–62.
41. Beale, "Adam as the First Priest," 21–22; Block, "Eden: A Temple?," 27–29.

The Resurrection of the Flesh

Nicholas Hopman

Christian theology has consistently failed by denigrating creation. Wendell Berry (1934–) accurately reports the popular perception of the Christian faith when he "often laments that Christianity has contributed to rather than hindered the contemporary flight from creatureliness."[1] While he is certainly correct that this is a contemporary problem, its roots in Christian theology are deep. Viewing the body, marriage, and normal social relationships negatively dates back to the early church. The Lutheran tradition provides the brightest ray of hope in this Christian theological darkness.

Perhaps the problem goes back to the translation of the Christian message from its native Aramaic into Greek, which was most effective for the mission to the gentiles. As Paul contended against the super apostles who were trying to convince his churches that circumcision was necessary, he found the distinction between the spirit (πνεῦμα) and the flesh (σὰρξ) to be quite useful (Gal 3:3). Circumcision, which Paul identified as a matter of the law, was an actual slicing of flesh. He opposed such fleshliness with the Holy Spirit, who gave himself to the Galatians by faith alone in the good news of Christ alone (Gal 3:2).

The Christian tradition has generally misunderstood Paul's distinction. He was distinguishing law, flesh, works, and sin on the one hand from spirit, gospel, faith, and righteousness on the other. Instead, many Christian theologians have used Paul's spirit versus flesh distinction anthropologically, dividing human beings into a higher or better part or parts over against the lesser lower part, namely the flesh. Depending on the theologian and which Greek philosopher he was relying on,[2] the higher part was defined as the soul (ψυχή), the mind (νοῦς), the spirit (πνεῦμα), or a combination of the former. The quest for Christian righteousness then became the attempt to discipline the flesh and avoid its temptations while the higher aspect(s) of human nature could give God his due.

Martin Luther (1483–1546), a rare exception in the history of Christian theology, instead understood that according to Paul's distinction between spirit and flesh, "the whole man is flesh."[3] Luther continued, "we know that in the whole human race are included body and soul with all their powers and works, all virtues and

vices, all wisdom and folly, all righteousness and unrighteousness. They are all flesh (*carnem*)."[4] For Luther, the spirit aspect of Paul's spirit versus flesh distinction was not the spirit, soul, or a higher aspect of human nature, but instead, the Holy Spirit who delivered Christ for sinners from outside of themselves in life-giving words.

However useful Paul's distinction was against the super apostles, and however well a few Christian theologians have understood it, thankfully, the word "flesh" is also used very positively in one of the most important verses in the New Testament. John the Evangelist describes the eternity and divinity of God's Son, his Word, and then proclaims, "the word became flesh (σάρξ), and dwelt among us." Christ has come down from heaven above in order to redeem human being, including the very flesh. Indeed, John emphasizes that there is nothing inherently sinful about created flesh. He does not claim that the Word became "human," but he claims that the Word of God became "flesh."

Christ fully assumed flesh but without sin. This proves that the "fleshiness" of humanity was not inherently sinful. Flesh became the opposite of spirit not because it was created material but because human creatures lost their faith in the living God (Genesis 3). As Genesis relates the story, Adam and Eve were not content to be flesh; they desired "to be like God."

John wrote his Gospel's famous prologue as a polemic against Cerinthus (fl. second half of the first century AD) an early Christian Gnostic. According to Irenaeus of Lyon (c.130–c.202) Cerinthus taught that the true God did not create the world. John countered Cerinthus' teaching with the double claim that Christ was the Word through whom the whole world was created and that this God Himself became a creature, specifically a bearer of human flesh.

The Apostles Creed also attacked Gnosticism. Although it did not assume its final form until the fifth century, much of its content had been composed during the second century at the height of the battle against Gnosticism. The Nicene Creed's (325/381) "resurrection of the dead (νεκρῶν)," was generally preferred in the East after the earliest centuries, perhaps because it was often used in scripture itself. The phrase "resurrection of the flesh" was probably first used by Ignatius of Antioch, who died sometime in the first half of the second century. He perhaps based this phrase on Luke 24:39, the only literal biblical connection between resurrection and flesh, where the resurrected Christ says, "Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch and see; for a ghost does not have flesh (σάρκα) and bones as you see that I have."[5]

The Old Roman Creed, from around the middle of the second century, confessed the "resurrection of the flesh" in both its Latin (*carnis resurrectionem*) and Greek (σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν) forms.[6] Tertullian also (c.155–c.220) used the phrase *resurrec-*

tionem carnis.[7] The Old Roman Creed eventually evolved into the Apostles Creed (Fifth Century), which entered Latin liturgies in the eighth century and maintained "the resurrection of the flesh."

This language was lost in many Western churches during the Reformation. Martin Luther thought that the Creed's reference to "flesh (German: Fleisch)" would only make people think of the butcher (Metzger), and he changed the "resurrection of the flesh" to the "resurrection of the body (Leib)."[8] Luther's enemy, King Henry VIII of England, without explanation, similarly changed the "resurrection of the flesh" into the "resurrection of the body."[9] Henry's change was ultimately more consequential than Luther's for English-speaking Lutherans, as American English-language hymnals have adopted a great deal of verbiage from England's *Book of Common Prayer*, which inherited "the resurrection of the body" when the Apostles Creed was included for the first time in the 1549 version in the confirmation service.[10]

Why was the term "resurrection of the flesh" adopted and what might we have lost when it was discarded from the Apostles Creed? Origen (c. 185-c. 253) provides an interesting case study. Origen and his spiritualizing school accepted the resurrection of the body, but this did not necessarily mean that he confessed the orthodox Christian faith in the resurrection of the body. For example, Origen held that "there are celestial bodies…even air, according to its nature, is called body."[11] The word "body" did not necessarily ensure orthodoxy.

There is no evidence that the language of "resurrection of the flesh" was used against Origen. Instead, the early forms of what became the Apostles Creed were composed during the church's struggle against Gnosticism. Gnostics were generally even more slippery than Origen when it came to bodies or matters of creation. For Gnostics, salvation was the salvation of the soul through its separation from the physical human body. Perhaps they could have justified faith in "the resurrection of the body" along the lines of Origen's statement, but "the resurrection of the flesh" was simply the antithesis of Gnostic faith. The confession of "the resurrection of the flesh" separated the catholic church from Gnostic interlopers.

Considering that America is inherently Gnostic,[12] teaching the resurrection of the flesh should be helpful in the current context. Gnosticism has recently achieved such heights that human beings have been told that they (their souls) were born in the wrong body and that their bodies need to be carved up for the sake of their mental health. This even becomes scientific medical dogma in Western nations. Here "the mind-body problem" has been taken to a new level.

Theologians have claimed an inherent tension between St. Paul's proclamation that the resurrected body will be a spiritual body on the one hand and the ancient church's and medieval Western church's claim of "the resurrection of the flesh,"

possibly including the Gospel of Luke, on the other.[13] However, flesh in the sense of John 1:14 and Luke 24:39 is not inherently opposed to the Spirit of God. Therefore, the transformed spiritual body of the resurrection can have a new type of flesh.

Nor should slippery slope arguments be allowed to scare the church away from "the resurrection of the flesh" by means of Augustine's (354–430) overly cellular view of the resurrection, that every particle of the body will be reassembled in the resurrection.[14] Claiming "the resurrection of the flesh" does not necessarily lead to such a view, which can simply be denied without giving up the greater claim.

Returning to Luther, even though he removed the word "flesh" from the Apostles Creed, he made the Christian church a much fleshlier place in the positive John 1:14 sense. Before the Reformation, the ideal Christian was celibate and removed from his or her biological family in a monastery, often engaged in extreme disciplines against the flesh. Only the celibate had vocations, callings from God. Luther instead made marriage the primary location of Christian vocation. And much like the early church cursing the Gnostics by confessing faith in "the resurrection of the flesh," Luther made sure everyone understood his point by claiming that God was pleased with parents washing diapers.[15]

All other Evangelicals, soon to be Protestants, followed Luther in his denunciation of monasticism and elevation of the estate of marriage. However, the non-Lutheran Protestants all had concerns about the connection between created bread and wine and Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. Most of the reformers had been humanists before the Reformation, and humanism was infused with neoplatonic philosophy. While Neoplatonism did not inherently have as negative of a view of material things as did Gnosticism, it had been part of the mixture in the early church that necessitated the profession of "the resurrection of the flesh."

For Neoplatonism, differentiation from the eternal "One" was the problem and returning to it was a sort of "salvation." This caused inherent tensions with the multiplicity of creation as early theologians attempted to Christianize Neoplatonism. In its pure form, it certainly did not believe in a resurrection of the body, as it saw death as the soul's escape from the body. Protestants highly influenced by late medieval Neoplatonism tended to have difficulties accepting the church's historic teaching that the communion elements were actually Christ's body and blood. Holy communion should be a spiritual communion, which they understood as inherently opposed to an oral and bodily communion.

On the other hand, Luther's doctrine of the real presence, which he saw as inherently connected to the early church's Christology and understanding of "the Word became flesh," arguably had a more positive view of creation than the Ro-

man church's Transubstantiation. According to Transubstantiation, the host could only become Christ's body by ceasing to be bread in everything but appearance. Luther's teaching of Christ's real presence allowed the bread, as bread, to bear the very body of Christ.

In conclusion, the essence of "the mind-body problem" is that everyone likes the mind and dislikes the body.[16] Luther's teaching of the incarnation and the real presence in the Lord's Supper provide the proper glory to Christ, body and all. His teaching on vocation, which comes from the freedom of (justification by) faith in Christ, allows Christians to view the world as God's good creation. Luther made human life in the biological family the center of Christian vocation in God's good creation.

In an era in which Gnostic presuppositions about human beings are ascendant, and in which these presuppositions are having catastrophic effects on human bodies, the church would do well to reemphasize the original version of the Apostles Creed and its resurrection of the flesh. The Lutheran theological tradition provides the strongest bulwark against Neoplatonism and negative views of creation and the body that have always played a significant role in the larger Christian tradition. The Lutheran teaching on the sacraments denies that the spiritual and the created are somehow antithetical.

The human body is a special aspect of creation as human beings have become sinners and the body will pay for this sin with death (Rom 6:23). However, those who trust in Christ can look forward to the resurrection of the body. The resurrected body will be a spiritual body (1 Cor 15), but a spiritual body is very much a body, a body of spiritual flesh (Luke 24:39).

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Notes

1. William G. Fredstrom, "Wendell Berry and Martin Luther on Creatureliness in a Technological Age," *Lutheran Quarterly* 39:1 (Spring 2024): 1-20, 2.
2. No doubt the Hebrews also had thoughts on these matters. Daniel Austin Napier's discussion of the "parts" of a human being in the Bible is thought provoking. However, his distinctions are too clean, do not make room for the plurality of texts within the Bible, and are too influenced by modern phenomenology and psychology. Daniel Austin Napier, *Soul Whisperer: Jesus' Way among the Philosophers* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023), 17-28. For a better analysis of the biblical concept of the soul, see Oswald Bayer, "The Soul as Answer," trans. Nicholas Hopman, *Lutheran Quarterly* 33:4 (Winter 2019): 399-412.

3. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson, eds., *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 273.

4. Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [*Schriften*], 73 vols. (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883–2009), 18:742.8; Rupp and Watson, *Luther*, 273.

5. George Robert Wynne, "The Resurrection of the Body," *The Irish Church Quarterly* 2, no. 5 (Jan. 1909): 27-41, 29.

6. Wynne, "Resurrection," 28.

7. Wynne, "Resurrection," 28.

8. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 439. Lutherans did not immediately or necessarily follow Luther's preference for "Leib." See Wynne, "Resurrection," 36.

9. Henry VII, *The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for Any Christian Man* (London: Thomas Barthelet, 1543), Gii(v). It is an oversimplification to say that Henry changed the confession from "flesh" to "body." See Wynne, "Resurrection," 35-36, 38. However, his book is the source for the subsequent dominance of "body," where before the two terms were roughly used equally before, with various forms of *carne* and "flesh" the more ancient terms in England.

10. Wynne, "Resurrection," 39.

11. Translated by Wynne, "Resurrection," 31.

12. See, e.g., Peter M. Burfeind, *Gnostic America: A Reading of Contemporary American Culture and Religion According to Christianity's Oldest Heresy* (Union City, MI: Pax Domini Press, 2014).

13. E.g., Robert M. Grant, "The Resurrection of the Body," *The Journal of Religion* 28, no. 2 (April 1948): 120-130, 124; Wynne, "Resurrection," 31.

14. See Wynne, "Resurrection," 34.

15. E.g., *On the Estate of Marriage* (1522), LW 45:40.

16. This is true for Christian theology. There are many body idolaters (e.g., Romans 1) who prefer the body to the mind, but this is generally a case of open sin rather than bad theology. The sin of bad theology seems to always side with the mind or whatever is allegedly the better part of human beings over against the body.

Book Review Essay

Margaret D. Kamitsuka, *Unborn Bodies: Resurrection and Reproductive Agency* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2023), ix + 226 pp. $28.99

Dan Lioy

Margaret D. Kamitsuka (hereafter "the author") is the Francis W. and Lydia L. Davis Professor Emeritus of Religion at Oberlin College. In her 2023 book, *Unborn Bodies: Resurrection and Reproductive Agency*,[1] she examines how Christian beliefs about the resurrection intersect with questions about reproductive choice. The author argues that both a right to life and the possibility of the resurrection extend to unborn bodies at all developmental stages. By reexamining traditional biblical interpretations, she seeks to build a more compassionate theological framework that respects human dignity throughout all stages of life. This approach aims to bridge divides in conversations about faith and reproductive rights.

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

Summary

The Introduction presents a critical feminist theological exploration of resurrection doctrine as it relates to reproductive loss and agency. The author challenges traditional Christian approaches to understanding the afterlife of unborn bodies, arguing that the church has historically failed to adequately address or theologize about reproductive loss. She positions her work at the intersection of feminist theology, traditional Christian doctrine, and contemporary reproductive issues.

Key Areas of Exploration

1. *Historical Religious Context*
   - Women's historical relationship with reproduction and religious authority
   - The tension between patriarchal religious structures and women's lived experiences
   - The historical development of resurrection doctrine

2. *Theological Gaps*
   - The absence of substantial theological reflection on reproductive loss
   - The church's historical ambivalence about the eternal destiny of unborn beings
   - The lack of pastoral and liturgical resources for reproductive loss
3. *Contemporary Challenges*
   - The politicization of fetal afterlife by conservative Christian groups
   - The disconnect between modern scientific understanding and traditional resurrection doctrine
   - The need for a "nontoxic eschatology" that addresses reproductive realities

Potential Strengths

1. *Historical Awareness*
   - Exhibits a functional knowledge of Christian theological traditions
   - Acknowledges the complex historical development of doctrine
   - Recognizes the influence of cultural contexts on theological formation
2. *Pastoral Sensitivity*
   - Identifies real pastoral needs in contemporary church contexts
   - Acknowledges the complexity of reproductive experiences
   - Shows a concern for the spiritual well-being of believers
3. *Theological Rigor*
   - Engages substantively with longstanding Christian doctrines
   - Acknowledges the challenge of reconciling modern and traditional perspectives
   - Attempts to articulate accurately various theological positions

Potential Areas for Improvement

1. *Theological Foundations*
   - Could better acknowledge the traditional Christian understanding of human dignity from conception
   - May underemphasize the church's historical care for mothers and children
   - Could more fully engage with traditional biblical hermeneutics
2. *Historical Balance*
   - Portrayal of church history could be more nuanced regarding women's roles
   - Could better acknowledge positive historical contributions of the Christian tradition to women's welfare
   - May oversimplify historical theological positions on ensoulment and personhood

3. *Doctrinal Clarity*
   - Could more clearly affirm the traditional Christian teaching on the sanctity of life
   - May need stronger engagement with biblical texts on the resurrection
   - Could better integrate more traditional articulations of systematic theology about eschatology

4. *Methodological Considerations*
   - Risk of allowing contemporary concerns to overshadow longstanding Christian doctrines
   - Could better balance feminist critique with traditional theological methods
   - May need stronger grounding in traditional Christian anthropology

Synthesis and Critique

The Introduction surfaces an important lacuna in Christian theological reflection—namely, the question about the resurrection as it pertains to unborn life and reproductive loss. The author identifies how the church's historical ambivalence and silence on this matter has left a pastoral and theological void, often filled problematically by politically charged rhetoric, rather than careful theological consideration. Her emphasis on taking seriously the lived experiences of women who have endured reproductive loss while maintaining the centrality of bodily resurrection in Christian doctrine demonstrates sensitivity to both theological orthodoxy and contemporary pastoral needs.

However, from a traditional Christian perspective, there are concerns about how the author frames the relationship between women's reproductive agency and longstanding church doctrine. While she appropriately critiques certain historical distortions regarding female bodies and fertility, her apparent openness to abortion as a legitimate reproductive choice sits uneasily with traditional Christian teaching about the sanctity of life from conception. The author's characterization of longstanding orthodox beliefs as primarily patriarchal control, while containing elements of historical truth, potentially understates the genuine theological and ethical principles underlying Christian positions on reproductive issues.

Finally, the author's call for "nontoxic eschatology" that can speak meaningfully to reproductive loss while honoring women's agency raises vital questions for contemporary doctrinal deliberations. However, a traditional Christian response would argue that such an eschatology must be grounded in the church's consistent life ethic and understanding of human dignity rather than primarily in modern-day notions of reproductive autonomy. While the author's desire to provide pastoral and theological resources for women experiencing reproductive loss is laudable, an

orthodox Christian framework would seek to do so while maintaining clear ethical boundaries regarding intentional pregnancy termination, even while extending grace and understanding to those who have made such choices.

Chapter 1: Leveraging Heaven when a Pregnancy Fails

Summary

The chapter examines the complex intersection of theology, reproductive loss, and feminist thought through multiple lenses. The author critiques how religious institutions and society construct various identities for women who experience reproductive loss, particularly focusing on how heaven is leveraged in these constructions. The text challenges traditional binary distinctions between miscarriage and abortion while exploring feminist theological perspectives on reproductive endings.

Key Areas of Exploration

1. *Identity Construction*
   - Examines four main constructed identities:
     - Murderous mother
     - Traumatized victim
     - Inconvenient mourner
     - Rights-bearing person
   - Analyzes how religious authorities and society shape these identities
   - Critiques how the role of heaven is used as a tool to enforce conformity
2. *Binary Opposition*
   - Challenges the traditional dichotomy between miscarriage and abortion
   - Demonstrates how this binary harms women and oversimplifies complex experiences
   - Explores real-world examples that blur these distinctions
3. *Feminist Theological Perspectives*
   - Examines the tension between bodily experience and ecological justice
   - Discusses the role of community and anger in healing
   - Explores various approaches to eschatology and reproductive loss

Potential Strengths

1. *Theological Framework*
   - Engages with traditional Christian concepts while maintaining a critical analysis

- Demonstrates an understanding of diverse theological perspectives
- Considers the role of heaven in reproductive discourse

2. *Pastoral Sensitivity*
   - Acknowledges the complex emotional and spiritual needs of women experiencing reproductive loss
   - Recognizes the importance of community support
   - Highlights the need for better pastoral care and resources

3. *Balanced Analysis*
   - Presents multiple viewpoints without oversimplification
   - Acknowledges validity of different experiences
   - Maintains academic rigor while remaining accessible

Potential Areas for Improvement

1. *Theological Concerns*
   - Could more deeply engage with traditional Christian doctrines of personhood
   - May benefit from stronger engagement with biblical texts on life and death
   - Could further explore orthodox Christian perspectives on the resurrection

2. *Pastoral Implications*
   - Could provide more concrete recommendations for pastoral care
   - May benefit from additional discussion of practical ministry applications
   - Could offer more guidance for a meaningful congregational response

3. *Traditional Christian Response*
   - Could more thoroughly address traditional Christian ethical frameworks
   - May benefit from deeper engagement with historical church teachings
   - Could explore more fully how traditional Christian communities might respond constructively

4. *Methodological Considerations*
   - Could strengthen engagement with systematic theology
   - May benefit from more extensive scriptural analysis
   - Could provide clearer theological guidelines for addressing reproductive loss

Synthesis and Critique

The chapter presents a complex exploration of how religious and social constructs shape women's experiences of reproductive loss, particularly by focusing on the

intersection of theology, bodily autonomy, and eschatology. The author effectively demonstrates how various Christian frameworks have historically constructed and policed women's identities around pregnancy loss, whether through miscarriage or abortion, often leveraging concepts about heaven and salvation to enforce particular moral narratives. Her analysis reveals the problematic nature of rigid binaries between miscarriage and abortion, showing how these distinctions often fail to capture the complex realities of women's reproductive experiences.

While the author's evaluation of how the role of heaven has been "weaponized" in some contexts is valid, her deconstruction risks undermining legitimate Christian hope in the resurrection and eternal life. The orthodox understanding of the sanctity of life from conception, grounded in Scripture and church tradition, cannot be entirely reduced to a social construct or tool of control. While pastoral sensitivity is crucial, the author's apparent relativization of the moral status of unborn life poses challenges to longstanding doctrinal emphases.

The author's feminist theological framework provides intriguing insights into the pastoral inadequacies of many Christian responses to reproductive loss. Her call for more nuanced, compassionate approaches to women experiencing both miscarriage and abortion highlights real deficiencies in church practice. However, from a traditional Christian perspective, the solution lies not in abandoning clear moral distinctions, but in developing more sophisticated theological and pastoral responses that maintain ethical principles, while extending grace and understanding.

The author's treatment of eschatology raises important questions about how Christian hope intersects with bodily experience and social justice. While she rightly critiques simplistic or manipulative uses of the role of heaven, traditional orthodox teachings would maintain that hope in the bodily resurrection and eternal life remains fundamental to the faith, not merely a construct serving political ends. The challenge is to articulate this hope in ways that neither minimize present suffering nor weaponize eschatology against women's reproductive experiences.

Finally, while the author offers valuable insights into the complexities of reproductive loss and the need for more nuanced pastoral responses, her underlying theological framework appears to prioritize contemporary feminist theory over traditional Christian anthropology and ethics. A more constructive approach might seek to maintain a clear orthodox moral teaching, while developing more sophisticated pastoral responses. These would acknowledge the complex realities of women's reproductive experiences, yet without compromising core theological commitments regarding the sanctity of life and the hope of the resurrection.

Chapter 2: Closing Heaven to the Unborn

Summary

The chapter explores the historical Christian theological treatment of unborn and unbaptized infant salvation, revealing a consistent pattern of theological uncertainty or outright denial regarding their eternal destiny. The author traces this thread through major periods of Christian thought:

- *Early Church*: Demonstrated significant ambivalence about fetal personhood and salvation
- *Medieval Period*: Developed complex theories about limbo and the afterlife that generally excluded the unborn
- *Reformation Era*: Both Luther and Calvin remained notably reticent about fetal salvation
- *Modern Era*: Witnessed some softening of positions, but maintained fundamental theological tensions

The author contrasts official theological positions with what she terms "counterstories"—the lived experiences and perspectives of women throughout church history dealing with pregnancy, loss, and reproductive issues.

Key Areas of Exploration

1. *Theological Frameworks*
   - *Ensoulment Theories*
     - Traducian view (soul transmitted through conception)
     - Creationist view (soul directly created by God)
     - Timing debates (immediate vs. delayed ensoulment)
   - *Sacramental Issues*
     - Necessity of baptism for salvation
     - Emergency baptismal practices
     - Burial rights and consecrated ground
   - *Personhood Questions*
     - Hominization theories
     - Hylomorphic understanding of human nature
     - Development of fetal personhood concepts
2. *Historical Progression*
   - *Early Church*
     - Ambiguous attitudes toward the unborn
     - Development of baptismal theology
     - Influence of Greco-Roman cultural context

- *Medieval Period*
  - Aquinas' theoretical framework
  - Development of limbo concept
  - Sacramental practices and restrictions
- *Reformation*
  - Luther's incomplete treatment
  - Calvin's systematic silence
  - Protestant theological shifts

Potential Strengths

1. *Historical Depth*
   - Comprehensive coverage of major historical periods
   - Detailed examination of key thinkers
   - Recognition of the historical context's influence
2. *Theological Analysis*
   - Careful attention to theoretical frameworks
   - Recognition of theological complexity
   - Clear explanation of technical concepts
3. *Integration of Women's Perspectives*
   - Inclusion of historically marginalized voices
   - Recognition of lived experience
   - Balance of theoretical and practical concerns
4. *Methodological Approach*
   - Well-documented sources
   - Clear progression of argument
   - Balanced treatment of different perspectives

Potential Areas for Improvement

1. *Theological Concerns*
   - Could better engage with biblical texts supporting infant/fetal salvation
   - Might examine Eastern Orthodox perspectives more fully
   - Could explore contemporary theological developments more extensively
2. *Historical Balance*
   - Could provide additional positive examples of church engagement with these issues
   - Might acknowledge cultural constraints more fully
   - Could explore regional variations in practice

3. *Methodological Issues*
   - Risk of anachronistic readings of historical sources
   - Possible overemphasis on a conflict narrative
   - Could provide more contextual balance

4. *Contemporary Application*
   - Limited engagement with modern theological responses
   - Could explore current pastoral approaches more fully
   - Might address contemporary ethical implications more directly

Synthesis and Critique

The chapter delves into the theological ambiguity that surrounds infant salvation and fetal personhood, highlighting how historical doctrines often reflect discomfort with women's reproductive bodies. The author argues that while the church has been silent or vague on issues surrounding the salvation of unbaptized fetuses, women have developed counterstories rooted in their own lived experiences, demanding that their unborn children be included in the hope of the resurrection. This author brings to light the tension between doctrinal tradition and the experiential reality of reproductive loss.

The author critiques Augustine's uncertainty about the resurrection of unbaptized fetuses, which reflects both his personal theological struggles and the church's broader hesitation to address reproductive loss. Augustine's influence, particularly on infant baptism, led to the exclusion of unbaptized infants from heaven, and the eventual development of the concept of limbo. The author's treatment of Augustine is incisive, showing how his theology set the stage for centuries of theological confusion. However, the analysis could benefit from deeper engagement with Augustine's own soteriological framework, which balances divine grace with human sinfulness, offering the possibility of a more generous interpretation of infant salvation.

The author's exploration of medieval theology, especially through the lens of Aquinas, is illuminating. Aquinas's hylomorphic anthropology, which views the human being as a composite of body and soul, raised questions about the status of fetuses that had not yet undergone "hominization"—the point at which the fetus is considered to have received a soul. This theological framework led to the conclusion that unborn souls could not participate in the resurrection. While the author's critique highlights the limitations of Aquinas's perspective, the author could engage more with the sacramental context in which these ideas developed, particularly the notion of baptism as the ordinary means of salvation, which shaped much of the church's thinking about fetal salvation.

The author then turns to the Reformation, noting that Protestant Reformers like Luther and Calvin remained largely agnostic on the fate of unborn souls. Despite Luther's emphasis on sola gratia (grace alone), which could have opened the door to a more inclusive theology of salvation for the unborn, neither he nor Calvin fully addressed the issue. The author rightly critiques this theological silence. Yet, a more charitable reading might acknowledge the Reformers' focus on the broader concerns of soteriology and ecclesial reform. The evaluation, while promising, could more thoroughly explore how Protestant views on predestination and election might indirectly impact the question of fetal salvation.

Finally, a key strength of the chapter is the integration of women's counter-stories, which challenge the church's historical abjection of women's bleeding and reproductive bodies. These stories offer a poignant reminder of the embodied reality of pregnancy and loss, and they push back against male-dominated theological narratives that have often dismissed women's experiences. The author's argument that women's lived experiences demand a rethinking of theological assumptions about the resurrection of the unborn is noteworthy. However, her critique of traditional theology could benefit from a more robust engagement with contemporary theological responses to these issues, particularly from longstanding pastoral perspectives.

Chapter 3: Finding Resurrection in Buried Grain

Summary

The chapter critically examines the role of the soul in Christian theology, particularly in relation to bodily resurrection. The author argues that the traditional concept of an immaterial soul has hindered rather than helped an understanding of the resurrection. The text explores biblical, historical, and philosophical perspectives, ultimately advocating for a materialist approach to the resurrection that draws on Paul's seed metaphor, rather than soul-body dualism.

Key Areas of Exploration

1. *Biblical Analysis*
   - Challenges the substance-dualist interpretation of soul in the New Testament
   - Examines Paul's use of the seed metaphor in 1 Corinthians 15
   - Questions whether New Testament writers promoted a disembodied soul state
2. *Historical Development*
   - Traces various soul concepts through the patristic and medieval periods
   - Examines the impact of Aristotelian hylomorphism
   - Highlights the diversity of soul interpretations in Christian history

3. *Philosophical Arguments*
   - Critiques both simple and Thomistic substance dualism
   - Explores materialist alternatives to a soul-based resurrection
   - Examines the challenges of maintaining personal identity in the resurrection
4. *Metaphorical Significance*
   - Emphasizes the power of the seed/grain metaphor
   - Contrasts metaphorical with conceptual approaches
   - Suggests a return to organic metaphors for understanding the resurrection

Potential Strengths

1. *Historical Depth*
   - Provides comprehensive coverage of historical developments
   - Demonstrates a working knowledge of patristic and medieval sources
   - Shows an awareness of various philosophical traditions
2. *Analytical Rigor*
   - Carefully examines different interpretations of the soul and the resurrection
   - Engages seriously with substance dualist arguments
   - Considers implications for personal identity and continuity
3. *Theological Innovation*
   - Proposes distinctive approaches to understand the resurrection
   - Integrates biblical metaphor with contemporary materialist thought
   - Suggests new ways of thinking about bodily continuity

Potential Areas for Improvement

1. *Theological Concerns*
   - May underestimate the theological significance of soul language in church tradition
   - Could more fully address the church's historical reasons for maintaining its soul doctrine
   - Might benefit from deeper engagement with Eastern Orthodox perspectives
2. *Biblical Interpretation*
   - Could further explore the full range of biblical soul language
   - Might oversimplify Paul's complex anthropology
   - Could more fully address other New Testament resurrection texts
3. *Philosophical Considerations*
   - May not fully address the metaphysical challenges of strict materialism

- Could more thoroughly explore alternatives to both dualism and materialism
- Might benefit from deeper engagement with the contemporary philosophy of the mind

Synthesis and Critique

The chapter presents a theological exploration of the concept of the resurrection by engaging critically with the traditional Christian notion of the soul. The author traces the historical development in Christian thought of the soul and its relationship to the body, scrutinizing the legacy of substance dualism and introducing materialist alternatives rooted in biblical metaphors. Her work provides a thoughtful examination of the tension between body and soul in Christian theology, while proposing a return to more organic metaphors for understanding the resurrection.

The author critiques the dualist interpretation that has long associated the soul with an immaterial, disembodied existence after death. She suggests that New Testament writers, particularly Paul, do not advocate for a disembodied soul, but instead emphasize the resurrection of the body, drawing upon metaphors such as the seed and grain in 1 Corinthians 15. These metaphors suggest a continuity between the physical and the spiritual, challenging the idea of an independent soul. This critique highlights the nuanced and metaphorical language of biblical texts, though it might oversimplify Paul's broader anthropology, which also reflects complex views about the spirit, body, and soul.

The author traces the shifting concept of the soul from early Christian thought through the medieval period, particularly as it encountered Aristotelian hylomorphism, which integrated body and soul as a single entity. She argues that the prominence of the soul in Christian tradition often came at the expense of a positive view of the body, reinforcing asceticism and misogyny. This historical approach is one of the potential strengths of the author's work, as it highlights the diversity of views on the soul across Christian history. However, her critique of substance dualism might underplay the reasons the church maintained its doctrine of the soul, which had theological significance in debates about personal identity and the nature of salvation.

The author engages with substance dualism, particularly its Thomistic variant, which posits the soul as essential for the continuity of personal identity in the resurrection. She raises valid concerns about the metaphysical challenges of dualism, especially in reconciling the relationship between body and soul in a doctrine of bodily resurrection. The author proposes materialist alternatives, which emphasize the resurrection of the body without reliance on an immaterial soul. While this

materialist view aligns with biblical metaphors of the seed, it raises philosophical questions about how strict materialism can account for personal identity after death, a topic she addresses, but could engage with more deeply.

Finally, the author advocates for a shift away from the soul toward a more embodied understanding of the resurrection, drawing on the organic metaphor of the seed. This metaphor, she argues, resonates with the biblical vision of the resurrection as a transformation of the body, rather than the survival of a disembodied soul. This proposal is intriguing, offering a distinctive perspective that integrates contemporary materialist thought with Christian doctrine. However, it may underappreciate the theological depth of the soul concept in Christian tradition, particularly in how it addresses human personhood and continuity beyond death.

Chapter 4: Emerging into Resurrected Life

Summary

The chapter presents a materialist emergence theory of the resurrection that attempts to address how bodily resurrection might work without relying on the concept of an immortal soul. The author develops the concept of "budding emergent resurrection," where cells from a deceased body are divinely enabled to emerge into resurrected life through a gradual process rather than an instantaneous transformation. This approach particularly aims to address the challenging question of the resurrection for embryos and fetuses who die before birth.

Key Areas of Exploration

1. *Materialist Emergence Framework*
   - Rejects traditional soul-body dualism in favor of a purely materialist understanding
   - Proposes that the resurrection occurs through a gradual emergence process rather than instantaneous transformation
   - Uses the metaphor of seeds and organic growth from Pauline theology
2. *Personal Identity and Narrative*
   - Develops a theory of narrative identity where personhood is maintained through God's preservation of individual life stories
   - Argues that God maintains the "story" of each person until their resurrected body can receive and remember it
   - Addresses how this might work for embryos and fetuses who lack extensive personal narratives

3. *Theological Integration*
   - Attempts to reconcile a materialist emergence with traditional Christian doctrines
   - Engages with biblical texts, especially Paul's seed metaphor in 1 Corinthians 15
   - Proposes reinterpretation of traditional creeds and catechisms through the emergence lens

Potential Strengths

1. *Scientific Integration*
   - Makes a serious attempt to engage with contemporary scientific understandings
   - Provides a potential bridge between Christian theology and a materialist worldview
   - Addresses modern biological understandings of death as a process rather than occurring in a moment of time
2. *Ethical Consideration*
   - Offers a theological framework for addressing the status of embryos and fetuses
   - Provides hope for grieving parents who have lost children before birth
   - Maintains the dignity of the human body without requiring soul-body dualism
3. *Biblical Engagement*
   - Creative use of the Pauline seed metaphor
   - Careful attention to the resurrection narratives
   - Thoughtful engagement with scriptural metaphors and imagery

Potential Areas for Improvement

1. *Theological Concerns*
   - Departure from the traditional understanding of soul may be too radical for many Christians
   - Tension with biblical passages suggesting immediate post-death existence with Christ
   - Challenge to a traditional understanding of the intermediate state between death and resurrection
2. *Philosophical Issues*
   - Questions about how personal identity is truly maintained without a soul
   - Complexity of the proposed mechanism may violate the principle of parsimony (also known as Occam's razor, which suggests that when there are multiple explanations for a phenomenon, the simplest one—requiring the fewest assumptions—should be preferred)

- Unclear how "story" preservation differs substantially from a soul concept

3. *Practical Considerations*
   - May be too abstract for pastoral care and comfort of bereaved
   - Complex theoretical framework might not translate well to congregational teaching
   - Potential confusion about the timing and nature of the resurrection process

Synthesis and Critique

The chapter presents a materialist Christian framework for understanding the resurrection, specifically through the lens of emergence metaphysics. The author navigates a potential theological resolution to the tension between traditional Christian beliefs in the resurrection and a materialist worldview that rejects the soul-body dualism. She suggests that the resurrection should be understood as a gradual process, akin to the development of life itself, where living matter can "emerge" into resurrected existence over time. This emergent resurrection, built on Pauline metaphors of seeds and organic growth, attempts to propose a more integrated view of human embodiment and postmortem survival.

From a traditional Christian perspective, however, this framework raises significant concerns. Central to orthodox Christianity is the belief in an immediate and personal resurrection, often tied to the immortality of the soul. The author's rejection of soul-body dualism in favor of a purely materialistic process seems to depart radically from this foundational doctrine. While her emphasis on the body's material continuity has biblical echoes, particularly in Paul's discussions in 1 Corinthians 15, the idea of a gradual, emergent resurrection may sit uncomfortably with passages that suggest a more instantaneous transformation upon death. The theological implications of delaying full resurrection in favor of a slow, evolutionary process may challenge the traditional Christian understanding of being "with Christ" immediately after death (Phil 1:23).

A possible upside of the author's emergent resurrection theory lies in its scientific engagement. By incorporating modern biological understandings of life and death, she offers a materialist alternative to traditional dualistic views, providing a framework for the resurrection that speaks to contemporary concerns. In particular, her ethical consideration for embryos and fetuses, who lack fully developed personhood, is a thoughtful extension of her theory. The author posits that even these unborn beings possess a narrative identity that God preserves and develops in the afterlife, providing theological hope for parents who have experienced miscarriage or stillbirth. This reframing of narrative identity is a compassionate and inclusive approach to understand the value of life before birth.

Despite its potential merits, the author's approach to narrative identity presents a philosophical challenge. The idea that God preserves an individual's story in place of the traditional soul is imaginative. Yet, it raises questions about how personal identity is maintained without the soul as a metaphysical anchor. If a person is merely the sum of their life story, it is unclear how the author's theory fundamentally differs from the soul concept that she seeks to replace. Moreover, her reliance on divine intervention to ensure the coordination of living matter in the resurrection seems to complicate the process, potentially violating the principle of parsimony. Simpler, more traditional views of bodily resurrection and soul continuity may be more theologically and philosophically straightforward.

Finally, while the author's emergent materialist framework is innovative, its complexity may limit its practical application within Christian pastoral care. The abstract nature of her proposal, with its detailed metaphysical and biological considerations, might be too difficult to convey effectively in congregational settings. For Christians grappling with the loss of loved ones, particularly those mourning the death of infants or unborn children, the emergent process of the resurrection may not offer the immediate comfort and hope provided by traditional doctrines of the soul's presence with Christ after death. The theory's intricate theological and scientific framework may require further development before it can serve as a pastoral tool that resonates with the lived faith of believers.

Chapter 5: Envisioning Disabled Bodies in Heaven and Reproductive Agency on Earth

Summary

The chapter examines the intersection of disability theology, reproductive ethics, and eschatology through the lens of what the author terms "emergence theory." Key themes include:

- The theological status of disabled bodies in heaven
- The moral complexity of selective abortion in cases of prenatal disability diagnosis
- The role of divine providence in reproductive decision-making
- The importance of women's moral agency and self-trust in reproductive choices

The author argues for a position that simultaneously affirms:

- God's ultimate welcome of all unborn beings (including those with disabilities) into heaven
- Women's Spirit-guided moral agency in making reproductive decisions
- The compatibility of these two positions within an "emergence" framework

Key Areas of Exploration

1. *Theological Anthropology and Eschatology*
   - Challenges both "elimination" and "retention" models of disability in heaven
   - Proposes an "emergence" view where bodies cross death's threshold with their distinctive marks
   - Rejects soul-based anthropology in favor of material emergence
2. *Providence and Moral Agency*
   - Questions traditional models of divine providence in reproduction
   - Argues for epistemic humility regarding God's will in specific cases
   - Emphasizes the role of Spirit-guided discernment
3. *Reproductive Ethics*
   - Frames pregnancy as a "supererogatory act" requiring consent
   - Critiques mandatory pro-life positions
   - Defends selective abortion as potentially compatible with Christian faith

Potential Strengths

1. *Pastoral Sensitivity*
   - Acknowledges the complexity of reproductive decisions
   - Shows compassion for women facing difficult pregnancies
   - Avoids simplistic moral pronouncements
2. *Theological Innovation*
   - Develops a novel approach to bodily resurrection
   - Integrates pneumatology with reproductive ethics
   - Attempts to hold together seemingly opposing values
3. *Engagement with Tradition*
   - Draws on diverse theological sources
   - Demonstrates a knowledge of historical positions
   - Maintains a focus on a Christian theological framework

Potential Areas for Improvement

1. *Theological Concerns*
   - Weakening of the traditional pro-life position without sufficient theological justification
   - Potentially problematic view of divine providence
   - Unclear grounding for moral authority of the individual conscience
2. *Methodological Issues*
   - Over-reliance on "emergence" as an explanatory framework

- Insufficient engagement with biblical texts on the sanctity of life
- Limited interaction with magisterial Christian teaching

3. *Ethical Considerations*
   - Risk of undermining disability rights advocacy
   - Tension between affirming fetal value and justifying abortion
   - Possible overcorrection against traditional moral frameworks

Synthesis and Critique

The chapter navigates the intersection of feminist disability theology, reproductive ethics, and eschatology, offering a nuanced framework for understanding the moral and theological complexities surrounding pregnancy, disability, and the resurrection of the body. The author's central claim, informed by disability theology, challenges both traditional Christian views of bodily resurrection and the ethics of selective abortion, framing the agency of pregnant women and the eschatological future of disabled bodies as central theological concerns. Her work seeks to honor the intrinsic value of all unborn beings, including those with disabilities, while simultaneously affirming the moral agency of women, particularly in the context of selective abortion.

The emergence model, which the author uses to envision postmortem identity continuity, is one of the intriguing innovations in her chapter. Instead of adopting the classical view that resurrected bodies will be perfected or free from disability, she proposes that disabled bodies will carry their distinctive marks into the afterlife, but with the possibility of transformation. This model counters romanticized or ableist views of heaven by reframing eschatology in terms of mutual care and vulnerability, rather than physical perfection. However, this shift poses a theological challenge. While it attempts to dignify disabled bodies, it remains ambiguous as to whether the "emergence" model sufficiently addresses the Christian hope of the resurrection, which has traditionally emphasized the renewal of all creation in the eschaton, including the healing of all infirmities.

The author's treatment of divine providence and moral agency also provokes both praise and critique. She argues for epistemic humility when discerning God's will in specific cases, particularly around reproduction, thereby resisting overly deterministic views of providence that link the divine will directly to biological events, such as conception or disability. The author's appeal to Spirit-guided discernment seemingly allows for the possibility that selective abortion could be an ethical act in some circumstances. While this reflects pastoral sensitivity, critics may argue that it risks weakening the traditional pro-life stance, which holds that life's intrinsic value should be preserved from conception. The author's rejection of a more deterministic providential view opens space for moral agency. Yet, the theological grounding for

this shift remains somewhat tenuous, particularly in relation to classical Christian teachings on the sanctity of life.

A notable contribution of Chapter 5 is the author's framing of pregnancy as a supererogatory act—that is, one that goes beyond moral obligation and requires consent. This approach challenges the mandatory pro-life positions that often emphasize the duty to bring all pregnancies to term, regardless of circumstances. Her defense of selective abortion within a Christian framework highlights the importance of consent and self-trust in reproductive decision-making. This move aligns with feminist theology's emphasis on bodily autonomy. Yet, it presents potential tensions when considering the theological affirmation of fetal value. How can one simultaneously affirm the value of unborn life, especially those with disabilities, while also defending the moral permissibility of ending such life?

Finally, while the author engages with a variety of theological traditions and sources, her over-reliance on the "emergence" model as an explanatory framework may limit the broader theological applicability of her arguments. The model risks straying from traditional Christian anthropologies that emphasize the soul's immortality and the body's resurrection. Also, her limited engagement with biblical texts on the sanctity of life may leave some readers questioning the scriptural foundations of her claims. Additionally, the author's treatment of divine providence, though suggestive, might benefit from deeper interaction with magisterial Christian teachings, particularly those related to the moral authority of individual conscience in decision-making.

Conclusion

Summary

The Conclusion of the author's work presents a radical reimagining of resurrection theology through the lens of reproductive agency and embodiment. The author argues for abandoning traditional soul-body dualism in favor of an "emergent resurrection" framework that emphasizes bodily continuity and development. This approach is positioned as being particularly relevant to questions about fetal and maternal resurrection following pregnancy loss or termination.

Key Areas of Exploration

1. *Doctrinal Reconstruction*
   - Advocates for maintaining a connection to tradition while reformulating core concepts
   - Challenges soul-body dualism as inadequate for addressing reproductive realities
   - Proposes emergence theory as an alternative theological framework
2. *Embodiment and Vulnerability*
   - Emphasizes the centrality of bodily experience to human identity

- Critiques traditional soul-based anthropology as neglecting bodily reality
- Highlights the maternal-fetal relationship as being uniquely significant

3. *Reproductive Agency*
   - Addresses the theological implications of pregnancy loss and termination
   - Considers the resurrection hope in the context of reproductive decisions
   - Proposes divine acceptance rather than judgment in afterlife reunification

Potential Strengths

1. *Pastoral Sensitivity*
   - Shows a genuine concern for women's experiences of pregnancy loss
   - Addresses difficult questions many believers struggle with
   - Attempts to offer hope while acknowledging complexity

2. *Contemporary Relevance*
   - Engages with modern scientific understandings
   - Addresses pressing bioethical questions
   - Considers the intersection of theology with current social issues

3. *Theological Creativity*
   - Attempts to maintain a connection with church tradition while proposing new frameworks
   - Engages seriously with historical sources
   - Demonstrates a careful attention to theological method

Potential Areas for Improvement

1. *Theological Foundations*
   - Dismissal of the soul concept may be too sweeping
   - Could better engage with traditional theological anthropology
   - Risk of reducing the resurrection to a purely material process

2. *Biblical Integration*
   - Limited engagement with biblical resurrection accounts
   - Could better incorporate broader scriptural testimony
   - Need for stronger connection to the New Testament concept of hope

3. *Doctrinal Coherence*
   - Tension between emergence theory and the traditional Christian doctrine of the resurrection
   - Questions about personal identity preservation
   - Need for clearer articulation of the relationship between the natural and the supernatural

4. *Ethical Framework*

- Risk of minimizing the moral weight of reproductive decisions
- Could better address the relationship between divine and human agency
- Need for clearer ethical guidelines while maintaining pastoral sensitivity

Synthesis and Critique

The chapter challenges traditional Christian doctrines surrounding the resurrection of the body by focusing on the precarious realities of pregnancy and women's reproductive agency. The author's critique of the soul-body dualism in Christian thought highlights how this framework often neglects the embodied experiences of women, especially in the context of pregnancy, miscarriage, and abortion. By embracing an "emergence" model of the resurrection, she suggests that the resurrection is a dynamic, bodily process that transcends the limitations of the classical doctrine of the soul. This proposal engages with contemporary science and feminist thought, offering a more materialist view of the resurrection that prioritizes bodily experiences over abstract spiritual concepts.

From an orthodox theological perspective, the author's insistence on rejecting the concept of the soul may seem too sweeping. The soul, a foundational component of Christian anthropology, is deeply embedded in Scripture and doctrinal tradition as a means of explaining personal identity and the hope of eternal life. By relegating it to irrelevance, the author risks diminishing the theological depth of the resurrection as a holistic renewal of both the body and the soul. Moreover, while her proposal of an emergent bodily resurrection addresses the material realities of pregnancy and bodily vulnerability, it may overly rely on materialist philosophy, potentially undermining the transcendent aspects of Christian eschatology. The tension between her approach and the biblical hope of the resurrection, as seen in texts like 1 Corinthians 15, raises questions about the preservation of personal identity and the continuity between earthly and resurrected life.

Finally, the author's synthesis of feminist theology and contemporary science brings a much-needed pastoral sensitivity to the realities of women's reproductive health. Her recognition of maternal vulnerability and her critique of patriarchal structures offer an important corrective to traditional theological narratives that often neglect women's agency in reproductive decisions. However, her work would benefit from a deeper engagement with biblical and doctrinal sources to ensure a more coherent integration of Christian hope in the resurrection with ethical considerations around life and death. The author's theological method is distinctive. Yet, a stronger connection to the testimony of Scripture and traditional understandings of eschatology could provide a more balanced and theologically grounded approach.

Overall Assessment of the Author's Treatise

In stepping back from the preceding synthesis, analysis, and critique of the author's treatise, the following overall assessment is offered.

To begin, the author explores the intersection of Christian theology, especially the doctrine of the resurrection, and contemporary debates about reproductive ethics. She offers a framework that seeks to reconcile traditional Christian beliefs with modern reproductive experiences, particularly by addressing the theological status of unborn bodies. The book touches on themes such as the resurrection, personhood, reproductive loss, and the role of women in theological discourse. While the author attempts to be pastorally sensitive and intellectually rigorous, a traditional Christian perspective may find several strengths and areas of concern in her approach, including the following.

1. Strengths of the Author's Work

- *Historical Awareness and Depth*: The author demonstrates a keen understanding of the historical development of Christian doctrines related to personhood, the resurrection, and salvation. By exploring various theological periods—ranging from the early church to modern times—she presents a broad view of how Christian thought about the unborn has evolved. This historical depth is essential for understanding the complex ways in which the church has wrestled with the destiny of the unborn, especially those who die before baptism.
- *Pastoral Sensitivity*: One of the primary strengths of the book is its sensitivity to real-world pastoral concerns. The author acknowledges the emotional and spiritual weight of reproductive loss—such as miscarriage and abortion—and the need for the church to provide better pastoral care. Her efforts to develop a compassionate theological framework that integrates the lived experiences of women, including the tension between traditional doctrine and modern experiences, is a notable attempt to bring healing and support to those in difficult situations.
- *Engagement with Resurrection Doctrine*: The author's exploration of the resurrection and the fate of unborn bodies is thought-provoking, especially in light of Paul's seed metaphor (1 Corinthians 15). The author's materialist approach to the resurrection, which challenges traditional soul-body dualism, presents an innovative way to consider bodily continuity. This has the potential to bridge theological gaps between contemporary scientific understandings of the body and longstanding Christian eschatology.
- *Feminist Theological Insights*: By addressing the patriarchal dimensions of traditional theological frameworks, the author highlights the often-overlooked experiences of women in relation to reproductive choices. Her feminist

critique adds an important layer of reflection on how Christian teachings about life, death, and the resurrection have been shaped by male-dominated interpretations, calling for a more inclusive theological approach.

2. Areas of Concern

From a traditional Christian perspective, the author's work raises several areas of concern, particularly in terms of theological foundations, scriptural engagement, and doctrinal coherence, as follows.

- *Theological Foundations and Personhood*: Traditional Christian theology holds that personhood begins at conception, and that every human life, regardless of its stage of development, bears the image of God. The author's more fluid treatment of personhood, particularly in her rejection of soul-body dualism and emphasis on bodily continuity, may challenge this foundational belief. By downplaying the theological significance of the soul, her framework risks undermining the traditional understanding of the sanctity of life, especially for the unborn. A stronger engagement with traditional doctrines of ensoulment, original sin, and the intermediate state between death and the resurrection would enhance her argument's theological grounding.
- *Biblical Engagement*: While the author uses Paul's seed metaphor to construct her materialist resurrection framework, her overall treatment of Scripture is selective and, at times, oversimplified. A traditional Christian perspective would call for a deeper engagement with biblical texts that affirm the sanctity of life and the nature of the soul, particularly passages that speak about God's foreknowledge and care for the unborn (such as Ps 139:13–16 and Jer 1:5). Additionally, biblical teachings about the immediate post-death existence with Christ (such as Phil 1:23 and Luke 23:43) are left largely unaddressed, creating a tension between the author's materialist resurrection theory and the traditional understanding of the afterlife.
- *Doctrinal Clarity and Coherence*: The author's emergent resurrection theory, while innovative, may lack coherence with traditional Christian eschatology. By rejecting the idea of an immortal soul and instead focusing on a gradual process of the resurrection, her theory departs significantly from the church's historical teachings about the resurrection of the body and the eternal destiny of souls. This raises concerns about the preservation of personal identity in the afterlife—a key aspect of Christian hope. Traditional theology affirms the unity of the body and the soul, as well as the resurrection as an act of divine power that transforms the individual at the eschaton, rather than a gradual material process. Clarifying the relationship between her materialist views and traditional supernatural doctrines would help bridge this gap.

- *Moral and Ethical Concerns*: The author's ethical framework surrounding reproductive choices—particularly her defense of selective abortion—could be seen as undermining longstanding Christian teachings on the sanctity of life. The traditional pro-life position, rooted in biblical teachings and centuries of church teaching, holds that all human life is sacred from conception to natural death. By framing pregnancy as a "supererogatory act" requiring consent and defending selective abortion in cases of prenatal disability, the author risks overemphasizing individual autonomy at the expense of moral absolutes. This is particularly concerning from the perspective of Christian anthropology, which upholds that human dignity is not contingent on circumstances, but is inherent in every person as made in the image of God.
- *Divine Providence and Human Agency*: The author's treatment of divine providence and human moral agency raises additional concerns. Her emphasis on women's Spirit-guided agency in making reproductive decisions could be seen as diminishing the role of divine providence in guiding all life decisions, including those related to reproduction. The traditional Christian understanding holds that while human beings exercise free will, their moral choices must align with God's revealed will, particularly in areas of life and death. The over-reliance on individual conscience as the arbiter of moral decisions could lead to moral relativism and undermine the authority of Scripture and church tradition in guiding ethical behavior.

Overall, then, the author's work is a thought-provoking and pastorally sensitive exploration of how Christian theology can respond to the complex realities of reproductive loss and the status of unborn bodies. However, from a traditional Christian perspective, the book presents significant theological, ethical, and doctrinal challenges. While the author's work is commendable for its historical depth, feminist insights, and creative engagement with resurrection doctrine, it may ultimately be seen as diverging too far from core Christian teachings on the sanctity of life, the soul, and divine providence.

Traditional Christians would likely call for a stronger integration of Scripture, a more robust defense of life from conception, and a clearer articulation of the church's teaching on the resurrection and the afterlife. The author's work invites valuable conversation, yet may require significant theological recalibration to align with the core tenets of the Christian faith.

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Note

1. The Logos Research Edition of *Unborn Bodies: Resurrection and Reproductive Agency* was used for this book review.

Book Review

Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer, eds. *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2005), 223 pp. $19.82

Reviewed by Rodney L. Ford

The mind-body problem is a major issue in the philosophy of religion. Some questions explored within this topic include the nature of the mind or soul and the body, the existence of the soul after death, moral responsibility, and religious experience. There are many variations of arguments, including property dualism, substance dualism, materialism, and physicalism.

The book titled *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem*, edited by Joel B. Green and Stuart L. Palmer (2005), focuses on substance dualism, a variant known as emergent dualism, non-reductive physicalism, and a variant of physicalism referred to as the constitution view of persons. This book provides a strong introduction to these four views, including the arguments supporting them and how each view addresses the critical issues in the mind-body debate.

This 215-page book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the mind-body problem, while the last chapter concludes with a focus on the implications of the mind-body problem for Christian life. The four middle chapters present arguments for the four views of the mind-body problem, each authored by a different writer. The book features a unique format where each view is presented alongside a response from each of the other three authors. All authors aim to incorporate their Christian backgrounds into their arguments.

The authors of the four viewpoints are:

- Substance Dualism: Stewart Goetz, Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Ursinus College
- Emergent Dualism: William Hasker, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Huntington University
- Non-reductive Physicalism: Nancy Murphy, Professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary
- Constitution View of Persons: Kevin Corcoran, Philosophy Professor at Calvin University

At the time the book was published, both editors were faculty members at Asbury Theological Seminary. Joel Green currently serves as a senior professor of

New Testament Interpretation at Fuller Theological Seminary, while Stuart Palmer works as a psychologist in Kentucky.

The book provides the reader with a table of contents, footnotes, an author index, and a subject index but does not include a bibliography.

With this background in mind, let's briefly review the four arguments discussed in the book: substance dualism, emergent dualism, non-reductive physicalism, and the constitution view of persons.

Substance Dualism

Substance dualism posits that the soul is a substance, which Goetz defines as an entity or thing, though not necessarily material. From this perspective, the mind/soul possesses essential properties that cannot be lost, including the ability to act and the capacity to be acted upon. The mind also holds psychological powers such as the ability to think about something, consider or focus on issues, and choose to act. Goetz examines the essential capacities of the mind/soul from this viewpoint, including experiencing pain or pleasure, desiring, and believing. He also discusses issues related to substance dualism, arguing that these essential powers and capacities need not be exercised continuously to exist.

Goetz is a self-described antecedent soulist, which he defines as someone for whom belief in the soul is fundamental. He bases this belief on an "introspective awareness of oneself as a soul" (43). Goetz summarizes his argument in four statements (44):

1. I (my soul) am (is) essentially a simple entity (I have no substantive parts).
2. My body is essentially a complex entity (my body has substantive parts).
3. If two entities are identical, then whatever is a property of one is also a property of the other.
4. Thus, since I possess an essential property that my body lacks, I am not identical to my body.

In building his case for this argument, Goetz effectively summarizes and engages with René Descartes and David Armstrong, who critiques Descartes' perspective.

Goetz also addresses the issue of causal interaction (the mental explanation of physical events), which is one of the critiques of substance dualism. This critique engages with arguments from neuroscience and philosophy. The examination of this critique aims to demonstrate why he believes the arguments against substance dualism from this perspective are flawed.

Unlike other books, such as William Lane Craig's *Philosophy of Religion*, which engage with the mind-body argument, The Four Views book does not employ modal logic to defend substance dualism. The only reference to modal logic occurs when Goetz critiques it for its "weak form of conceivability" (45).

Emergent Dualism

For Hasker, emergent dualism is a form of substance dualism. (Other writers who use similar arguments lean closer to property dualism.) Emergent dualism posits that the physical human brain consists of ordinary atoms and molecules, which are governed by the standard laws of physics and chemistry. However, the mind or soul emerges when specific arrangements of those atoms and molecules in the brain give rise to new laws and systems of interaction among the atoms (77). Through this arrangement and interaction, a new entity - the mind- emerges, which is not composed of atoms, molecules, or any other physical constituents. The new laws associated with this emergent mind play a crucial role in mental activities, such as rational thought and decision-making.

To demonstrate that emergence has foundations in other contexts, Hasker's argument includes examples such as the logical emergence of a fractal when the coordinates of a mathematical equation are plotted on a chart, or the causal emergent of highly organized crystals that form when certain chemicals are dissolved under the right conditions.

When considering the question of life after death, Hasker admits that substance dualism has an advantage over his viewpoint. However, he suggests that, similar to a magnetic field that continues to be held together by gravity after the magnet is removed, this provides the possibility that the emergent mind could survive death. Ultimately, he proposes that belief in the power of God can render emergent dualism viable and credible without sacrificing the doctrine of the resurrection.

Non-Reductive Physicalism

Nancey Murphy defines non-reductive physicalism (NRP) through two negations: a) the denial of dualism; and b) the denial of the supposition that physicalism lacks human meaning, responsibility, and freedom. She also suggests that her use of the term physicalism is distinct from materialism, which often carries connotations of atheism. Of course, Murphy does not deny that humans possess the capacities and powers described by Goetz in the argument for substance dualism. She accounts for these through brain functions, human social interactions, cultural factors, and God's action in our lives (116).

In explicating her view of NRP, Murphy draws from quantum physics and other sciences, arguing that the natural world is best understood as a hierarchy of levels of complexity. These levels include atoms, molecules, cells, lower-level organisms, and eventually conscious organisms. From this perspective, she believes that an immaterial mind or soul is necessary for fully understanding what a human being is (117).

The focus of this article is human moral responsibility and its compatibility with physicalism. Murphy achieves this by analyzing the cognitive abilities necessary for moral responsibility. At the top of her list of these capabilities is the ability to evaluate our own actions, which she breaks down into constituent abilities, including:

- Running behavioral scenarios
- Changing goals in light of experience
- Recognizing the feelings and likely thoughts of others
- Using sophisticated symbolic language
- Having a developed self-concept
- Having a self-representational capacity of the brain
- Representing where one is in space-time and the social order
- Having a continuous personal identity
- Using abstract concepts and syntactic competence

Murphy's argument is that these capacities make it possible for "social influences in the form of rewards and punishments" to influence reasoning, goals, and evaluate our plans (127). These factors and others contribute to human reasons for acting in morally responsible ways.

In her analysis of NRP, Murphy admits that some Biblical texts seem to suggest a different understanding of the human. However, she questions exegesis that leads to the conclusion of an immortal soul.

Constitution View of Persons

While Kevin Corcoran asserts his theological convictions related to a traditional understanding of the doctrine of the resurrection, he also expresses his belief that humans lack an immaterial composition. He specifically rejects substance dualism, stating, "While I do not identify myself with an immaterial soul or a compound of soul and body, neither do I believe that I am identical with the physical object that is my biological body" (156).

The Constitution View of Persons (CVP) argues that a human person is constituted by a body but is not identical to that body. Corcoran uses several examples to clarify this concept. One of his examples is that a statue may be made of copper, but it is not identical to copper. The statue could be destroyed while the copper remains. He provides a similar example of a diploma that is made of paper but is not identical to the paper. Following these examples, he demonstrates how the human person, the statue, and the diploma possess properties that the body, the copper, or the paper lack.

Having explained what CVP is, Corcoran shifts his focus to how his view relates to the doctrine of the resurrection. Although he engages with Thomas Aquinas here, he ultimately asserts that his own exegesis concludes that death marks the end of the existence of the human person, implying that immediate survival in the presence of Christ is not resurrection but survival. His solution is what he refers to as "gappy existence."

In a gappy existence framework, the human person ceases to exist at death but exists again at the resurrection. He describes the continuity of the pre-gap and post-gap body as God's reassembly of the body composed of the same constituent parts. Corcoran imagines a decree from God could be something like "Let there be a resurrected body that is composed of the same parts, propertied [*sic*] and related just the same way, as the parts that composed Saint Paul's body just before his death" (170).

In wrapping up his essay, Corcoran acknowledges two significant issues with CVP. The first is the lack of necessary and sufficient reasons for moral obligations. He simply states that dualist views face the same problem. The second issue appears to lead Corcoran to reconsider his position. In his final footnote, he admits to being personally challenged by the doctrine of the communion of saints. He indicates that this has caused him to rethink his commitment to gappy existence. Corcoran and I have exchanged initial emails regarding his current position on this, but he was unable to reply before my publication deadline.

Conclusion

While the philosophy of religion encompasses more than four perspectives on the mind-body problem, this book offers a solid introduction to these four arguments and their related issues. Each author presents an insightful description of their viewpoint, the supporting arguments, and analyses of key challenges to those arguments. Each presentation opens up opportunities for new questions to be explored and for further research to gain deeper insights into the arguments.

While the responses to each perspective are initially helpful, they become repetitive as the book progresses. Personally, I would have preferred the editors to omit the responses to each viewpoint, allowing each author to use the space to delve deeper into their own perspectives while addressing any arguments from the writers that warranted attention.

I believe this book could be a valuable resource for any course that requires an overview of these viewpoints. The book's organization of arguments and responses facilitates a variety of engaging academic assignments. However, these and other authors have also contributed extensively on these topics in academic journals. It is likely that an instructor could find additional resources that would achieve similar objectives.

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Book Review

Daniel K. Williams, *Defenders of the Unborn: The Pro-Life Movement before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), xiv + 365 pp. $40.99

Reviewed by John Ehrett

In American battles over abortion rights, pro-life Protestants regularly face the same charge: *Just a few short decades ago, your whole branch of Christianity didn't care about stopping abortion. In fact, they supported it! This means that, no matter what you say today, you're not really concerned about unborn life at all. Your "pro-life politics" are really about other issues, and abortion is just a convenient proxy*.

What are those "other issues" supposed to be? Answers vary. Some characterize the backlash to *Roe v. Wade* as merely a convenient rallying point for social conservatives, masking a far more robust backlash against school desegregation and the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. That is to say, the pro-life movement was *actually* about race. Others claim the pro-life movement is about preserving the patriarchy. Either way, the claim is clear: Protestant opposition to abortion began in bad faith.

In *Defenders of the Unborn: The Pro-Life Movement Before Roe v. Wade*, historian Daniel K. Williams demonstrates the opposing view that challenging pro-choice views promotes a positive ethical decision. While the early pro-life movement was indeed led mainly by Catholics—though with a smattering of notable Lutherans in the mix—those who found themselves fighting pro-abortion perspectives were motivated by a complex constellation of values, many of which map uneasily onto contemporary partisan categories. In particular, Williams argues that the American pro-life movement was not always joined at the hip with social conservatism, instead constituting a distinctive bloc courted by Democratic and Republican presidential candidates alike. As such, Williams's volume is a welcome corrective to accounts of the abortion debate that see cynical maneuvering beneath every stone.

For the most part, Williams locates the origins of the modern pro-life movement in Catholic opposition to contraception. Once the abortion question emerged as a discrete issue, however, Catholic intellectuals made their public cases by blending two different juridical discourses, the traditional Catholic language of "natural law" and the liberal framework of individual rights inherited from the U.S. Constitution and the American political tradition (4–5). This move was prescient; Catholic or-

ganizing against contraception *as such* was kneecapped by the Supreme Court's 1965 decision in *Griswold v. United States*, which effectively put an end to anti-contraception activism, and by the modernizing effects of Vatican II (5). As a result, the abortion battle came to be framed as a clash of liberal values within a shared liberal tradition—the right to life versus the right to autonomy (4).

What initially inflamed American political battles over abortion, Williams argues, was the 1959 move of the American Law Institute to endorse abortion legalization through revisions to its Model Penal Code (39). Generally speaking, the Model Penal Code serves as a sort of "best practices" benchmark for state legislation, and its recommendations are highly influential across the U.S. Shortly after the Institute's revisions, an abortion legalization bill in California—the first of its kind—was filed (41).

At that point, Catholic opponents of abortion found themselves at odds with most Protestants—but not all (41). Notably, Missouri Synod Lutheran pastor Arnim Polster, one of the leaders of California's nascent pro-life movement, testified in 1964 against abortion liberalization, arguing for the value of all life, even disabled life, on the basis of his own experience as a polio survivor (53–54). The pro-life cause also began attracting support from some leading Protestant intellectuals, including influential Methodist theologian and Princeton University professor Paul Ramsey, Unitarian leader and Harvard Divinity School professor George Huntston Williams, and left-leaning Lutheran minister and Vietnam War opponent Richard John Neuhaus (later, the founder of *First Things* magazine) (98). However, those were isolated voices at the time, and many Protestant clergy joined in with the emerging abortion-rights movement (66–67). Mirroring those trends, mainline denominations grew increasingly institutionally supportive of abortion rights, with the United Methodist Church going so far as to endorse the legalization of abortion "upon request" (108). A string of successes for the abortion-rights movement followed, which included, perhaps most strikingly, California governor Ronald Reagan's signing of an abortion liberalization measure (83–84). Abortion rights advocacy, with the historical winds seemingly at its back, grew more and more aggressive.

The rise of fetal photography, Williams contends, proved a real game-changer for the pro-life movement, and that finally started to move the needle. "Instead of simply rehashing the philosophical and constitutional arguments against abortion legalization, the pro-life movement would use the power of fetal photography to convince the public that every abortion killed a human baby" (133). Opposition to abortion became not merely an emerging proxy for other cultural issues. The abortion rights movement, in shifting the battlefield from *liberalization* to the *removal of all abortion restrictions*, had overreached, and public opinion reflected this shift (142–45).

Between the late 1960s and the Court's 1973 decision in *Roe*, events unfolded at a feverish pace with momentum swinging back and forth between the two sides. Though sixteen states took steps to liberalize their abortion laws within a span of three years, the tide swiftly turned. In 1971, abortion liberalization measures failed in *twenty-five* states. Hence, the scene with which *Defenders of the Unborn* begins describes a 10,000-person rally in Central Park protesting New York's abortion law, signed into law two years previously by a Republican governor (1). Following that rally, New York legislators voted to *repeal* New York's abortion law (but the repeal was vetoed by the governor) (2). The momentum had shifted so dramatically that by 1972, Democratic presidential candidate George McGovern felt the need to attempt to "convince pro-lifers—and particularly pro-life Catholics—that he was not their enemy" (187). Today, with the partisans of the abortion debate firmly entrenched, it is hard to conceive of an issue cutting so starkly across partisan lines. However, Williams insists, that is exactly what history reveals.

Roe, of course, changed everything. The Supreme Court's 1973 decision immediately forced the pro-life movement to commit to a new top priority, overturning the ruling (205). From there, the partisan politicization of the issue was a forgone conclusion. Democrats favored *Roe*, and Republicans promised to reverse it. That didn't mean the pro-life movement was enthusiastic about this shift. In 1980, the pro-life movement's support for Ronald Reagan—who'd let down the cause in California— was a grudging bet that, perhaps, his election might give them "an opening to transform the Republican Party into the party of life" (241).

Something like that same political bargain has been repeatedly struck, election after election, as Democratic Party support for expansive abortion rights has grown more and more entrenched. Both Republicans and Democrats make their arguments about abortion within the matrix of liberal rights-discourse, Williams stresses, but the two sides simply argue for incommensurable positions. To affirm the priority of fetal life is necessarily to reject the priority of bodily autonomy (248). Along the way, the cluster of other Catholic-inflected "life issues" that animated much of the early pro-life movement—from healthcare reform, to federal support for mothers, to poverty relief initiatives, to antiwar organizing—was deprioritized (251–53). Williams notes wryly that, in the case of Neuhaus, "the once-liberal, antiwar Lutheran protestor became a conservative Catholic defender of the Iraq War" (253).

Revisiting this history from the vantage point of the 2020s, two elements are particularly noteworthy. First, the pro-life movement traditionally understood its relationship to politics as basically transactional. Many of the movement's early leaders were open to supporting whomever would advance the cause of unborn life, irrespective of partisan alignment. Second, many in the early pro-life movement understood the pro-life message to be embedded in a larger constellation of political commitments to the value of human life, such as opposition to the Vietnam

War. In light of this, Protestants inclined to view a "transactional" approach to the abortion question as morally compromised or (conversely) tempted to suspect that talk of a "seamless garment" of pro-life issues reflecting hesitance regarding the abortion question itself should have their opinions challenged by the history Williams recounts.

Defenders of the Unborn was published in 2015, with *Roe* still an active law and a Supreme Court largely disinclined to revisit its post-*Roe* abortion jurisprudence. Today, the landscape of the abortion debate looks radically different. In the wake of the Court's 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned Roe and its progeny, pro-life organizers find themselves once again making the case for protecting unborn life at the state level. For the most part, the pro-life side finds itself on the defensive. A string of ballot referenda has sought to overturn existing restrictions and enshrine abortion rights in state constitutions.

Today, the American pro-life movement stands at a crossroads. Can it once again appeal to a liberal tradition of "respect for human life" that *logically* cuts across party lines? As Williams reminds his readers, such a strategy came very close to succeeding once before. Contrastingly, and more worrying, have those common commitments degraded so profoundly that the abortion issue can *only* be conceived in starkly partisan terms? Time alone will tell.

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Book Review

John W. Kleinig, *Wonderfully Made: A Protestant Theology of the Body* (Washington: Lexham Press, 2021), xvi + 235 pp. $27.99

Reviewed by Patrick Steckbeck

Kleinig's aim in *Wonderfully Made* is to paint a positive vision of the body, not primarily to critique various issues related to the body with which he disagrees. His book is relatively short "pastoral-theological" meditation written from, in his words, a "classical Lutheran" perspective. What he means by classical Lutheran is synonymous with "confessional Lutheran," where the Book of Concord is viewed as an accurate interpretation and exposition of the inspired and infallible Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (16-18). Throughout the book, Kleinig is faithful to this vision; his book evidences a mind thoroughly versed in the Scriptures, and his command of the epistle to the Hebrews is especially notable. He also weaves quotations from Luther and the Lutheran confessions throughout the work as a helpful summary of what the Scriptures teach on the body as applied to contemporary concerns. He does this all while incorporating authors outside the Lutheran tradition when helpful, notably C.S. Lewis.

Regarding its form, the depth of his thought enhances the clarity of presentation through an organized exposition of various topics related to the body, expressed in a characteristically pastoral tone. His meaning is discernible via his use of logically ordered lists and his avoidance of overuse of technical terminology. Moreover, the book generally resonates with an aesthetic sense thanks to his ability to paint beautiful pictures by drawing on Scriptural images (notably, the Song of Songs in chapter 5, "The Sexual Body"). In doing so, he creates a sense of connection and engagement with the reader. His pastoral voice resonates throughout. Regarding its content, the book deals with multiple topics: the body in creation, the body in redemption, the spiritual body Christians are promised, the sexual body, the spousal body, and the living body. Throughout these chapters, a recurring theme and its implications surface multiple times. *Christians are united to the physical body of Jesus Christ.* He states, "How then, in light of Christ's redemption of our bodies, does God the Father regard our bodies? … He regards them as holy, just as holy as the human body of Jesus…" (92).

This reviewer sees one section of Kleinig's book as problematic from the perspective of his commitments to the Scriptures and Lutheran confessions. On pages 203-210, he engages the issue of homosexuality. There is much good in this section,

yet as to same-sex attraction, he writes, "we should not condemn people for…their physical attraction to people of the same sex. That would only drive them to despair at their seemingly hopeless condition or to reject God's word. Rather, our focus should be on the salvation of their souls by repentance for their sexual sins and the cleansing of their conscience through the blood of Jesus. We are all sinners who need to be pardoned for sin" (204). This section raises some questions. Does he believe that same-sex attraction is truly sinful? Or does he only believe that the act of homosexuality is sinful? If he does believe same-sex attraction is sinful, doesn't that mean that Christians should condemn it as an application of the ministry of the Law for the sake of repentance? While the gentleness in the pastoral approach toward the broken is commendable in this section, one wonders what Kleinig thinks about the accusatory use of the Law regarding cases of same-sex attraction among those who do not believe they are in sin. Accurately answering these questions is important because it applies to who is and is not condemned by God's law. In this section on homosexual acts, Kleinig also asserts that God "...judges all men alike in their sexual misbehavior without regarding one kind of it as more sinful than another" (209). Considering Kleinig's commitments, this assertion raises questions in light of biblical texts that discuss the inequality of sins (John 19:11; Ezekiel 8:15) and the seriousness of homosexuality in particular (Leviticus 18:22, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and Romans 1:18-32). While Kleinig's pastoral concern that Christians do not self-righteously stand over their sexually sinful neighbors is commendable, this should not undermine the points of God's Word that distinguish between sins; failing to do so will lead to a lack of gratitude for the Gospel among those who have sinned grossly in a sexual manner. "Those who are forgiven much, love much" (Luke 7:47; the woman in Luke 7 is likely sinning via sexual immorality). If all sin is equal, you can't have "forgiven much."

One of the glories of Kleinig's book, which sets it apart from other works on the Theology of the Body, is its incorporation of the Lutheran doctrine of imputation with regard to Christ's body and our bodies. For Kleinig, when God sees our bodies, he sees the body of Christ. In his chapter, "The Redeemed Body," he thoroughly diagnoses an illness of the modern age – most people do not like their bodies. In his words, "All too often, people are dissatisfied with their bodies because they are dissatisfied with themselves" (60). Aesthetic transformation and pop psychology are not enough to cover our shame. Sinners stand in need of the body of Christ. Thankfully, Jesus redeems the body. Through his incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and ongoing intercession, Jesus saves our bodies by uniting them with his body. Through the Word, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and our communal life, God cares for us bodily. How does God, in Christ, regard our bodies? "He regards them as holy, just as holy as the human body of Jesus, for he does not consider us apart from Jesus, nor does he consider Jesus as our head apart from us" (92).

As a student of the Lutheran confessions, Kleinig is better able to incorporate this emphasis on imputation into his book than other writers.

Evaluation

Kleinig accomplishes what he sets out to achieve. He paints a positive vision of the body from a classical Lutheran perspective. His book serves as a valuable resource for catechumens, laypeople, pastors, and academics seeking a meditative respite from our excessively hostile and contentious culture regarding issues related to the body. At the same time, in the view of this reviewer, his section on homosexuality should be read critically if one accepts the presuppositions about the Bible and the Lutheran confessions stated at the beginning of the book. His section on the holiness of Christ's body being "imputed" to us by God is a wonderful section that sets his book apart from others in the same category.

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Book Review

Felicia Wu Song, *Restless Devices: Recovering Personhood, Presence, and Place in the Digital Age* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021), xii + 216 pp. $25.99

Reviewed by Nils Borquist

Desiring Communion over Connections: *Restless Devices*

In *Restless Devices*, Felicia Wu Song conveys multiple reservations concerning society's rise, use, and reliance on rapid technological applications, particularly those devices used by the masses. Fortunately, she also provides useful and achievable solutions to reduce the dependence on digital preoccupations.

The various issues Song raises may sound quite familiar to anyone who questions contemporary society's dependence on—and even faith in—technology. Song delves deeply into the dangerous potential of people replacing their relationships with God with relationships with digital partners. She highlights the increasing infusion of technology in all aspects of life, the possible legal and ethical concerns, the generational divide driving technology, and the impact overuse can have on the human body and mind. However, her ultimate concern lies in the detrimental effects on children and their growing connections with God and Christianity.

Specific questions must be asked and answered in order to biblically engage a digital version of what Jurgen Habermas deemed the "colonization of the life-world" (2). This may refer to any system seeking to replicate and replace the existing environment. Above all else, what needs to be addressed is the simple question, "What is the point of technology?" Perhaps greater ease and efficiency come to mind as the primary values, but while these benefits may be initially correct responses, what often becomes the norm is the use of technology as a virtual butler to take care of numerous needs and desires. With simplicity of use and societal pressure to incorporate computers into all aspects of life, a "soft tyranny" of digitization creeps into life (22). As the mobility of technology erupted with cell phones, multiple problems arose. One issue is that perpetual access to professional emails has brought about the feeling that work never ends. Additional anxieties come with the numerous social media news feeds, all delivering varying agendas, as well as the ever-present love of "likes."

While good intentions may have propelled digital advancements, various social media sites also realized unbelievable revenue could be produced by distracting users and diverting their attention to social media. Much effort began to be put into

exploiting human fragility. Rapid developments aimed at the constant entertainment of the masses brought about "hyperrealism," a term coined by philosopher Jean Baudrillard that refers to the "glamorous, alluring," and addictive world of virtual living, resulting in a "doom that comes with anonymity and lack of accountability" (114).

Devastating effects understandably arise from such cultural changes. Initially, the generation behind accelerated technological innovation created it primarily to invent valuable tools to aid humanity. Yet, along with this technological boom, a subtle and steady "gamification" of life emerged, wherein an influx of entertaining pastimes wrested control away from utility (74). Unfortunately, over the history of progressive ideas coming to fruition, humankind has proven incapable of wholly staying on the path of ethical faithfulness. Instead, the course has often veered from ethical faithfulness to attaining wealth, power, and prestige. Human frailty is exploited by getting people to believe that "boredom is a sin" that must be remedied (157). With access to almost unlimited information, desires, and social interactions, the most recent generation often views time solely as a commodity and relationships as fleeting and "upgradeable" (79, 119). This is done all while being devoted entirely to believing the digital social experience to be the portal to the ultimate good life. The results of hollow pursuits eventually lead to divisiveness between people and various social groups and, even worse, damage to the individual's physical, emotional, social, and spiritual life.

The negatives associated with the overuse of, and infatuation with, technological tools are commonly known today. This is especially true when it comes to physical and emotional well-being. Song clearly relays the detrimental effects of such outcomes as a reminder for readers. The most problematic are the physiological and mental issues and neurological damage. If asked how much time one spends staring daily at a screen, most people will give a vastly underestimated amount of time. Many digital users believe the time they spend is only an hour or so rather than the reality of six hours or more. By spending more and more hours every day staring at screens, other life issues are left behind. People end up rarely reading complex texts, getting little exercise, and allowing disruptive lights to hinder the ability to sleep productively. The outcome of such a life is an undernourished body, an essentially illiterate and unchallenged mind, and a spiral into irreparable neurological disorders. Emotionally, gluttonous digital consumers find themselves "constantly irritable," stressed, afraid of missing something "important" (FOMO, or "fear of missing out"), disconnected from reality, and suicidal (155). Also, when blending the emotional, physical, and mental carnage, the outcome is often an individual who feels sick, isolated, lonely, and lost, all of which defies the promises of a fruitful social existence, one of hope and enduring happiness.

For Song, beyond the more obvious bodily-related problems is the potential decline and even complete eradication of people's spiritual lives, the most harmful

side effect of overwhelming technological stimulation. Song considers God the solution to many pressing concerns and questions regarding how to live one's life in a righteous and empathetic manner. Today, many people define themselves almost totally by their externalities rather than who [they] are internally, which refers to one's senses of Self and spirituality as connected. This focus conflicts with faith in Christ and undermines the saving power of giving up the "selfish Self." Song provides a convincing commentary about the positive impact of reciprocal divine love developed through Christianity and its story as a "theological anthropology" wherein the "journey" of faith is long, complex, and fulfilling (105). Rather than a simple superficial connection with the Lord, Song advocates an intimate communion with God through Jesus via liturgical lessons and learning. For Song, the appropriate use of technology, along with self-control, is acceptable and can even bring a deeper and more profound relationship with the Heavenly Father. It takes time (observing the holiness of the Sabbath), effort, and "spiritual discipline" (13).

Throughout the text, Song provides advice and plans—deemed the Freedom Project—that may be applied to create a more stable and long-term relationship with God. The plans describe conversations with the self about quality needs, the concerted effort to forge lists of goals that must be met, and how to engage in discourse with loved ones and respected spiritual leaders. Ultimately, Song reveals the devastating direction humanity is heading toward by giving over ourselves to technology. Still, she also gives salient advice for redirecting our lives into a more God-centered existence, one of love for ourselves, our neighbors, and our Savior.

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Book Review

Monica Meijsing, *A Philosophy of Person and Identity: Where Was I When I Wasn't There?* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2023), ix + 183 pp. $93.50

Reviewed by Robert Henry

Questions of personhood and identity have consistently intrigued the philosophical community, especially in our modern era. While the terminology has evolved, the core theme of what it means to be a person and how that identity persists amid transitory change is as ancient as the Greek dilemma of the Many and the One. Addressing this issue and establishing a stance on personhood and identity is Monica Meijsing's primary objective in her book, *A Philosophy of Person and Identity: Where Was I When I Wasn't There?* Meijsing is dedicated to rejecting the extreme positions presented in Cartesian dualism, as well as the contemporary view often distorted by a misinterpretation of the scientific perspective on personhood in metaphysical physicalism and materialism. She dismantles the Cartesian concept of the disembodied self and the Lockean view of personhood as the *unique* identity of consciousness in memory. However, Meijsing's ambitious and ultimately effective critique of classical and modern notions of self-identity and personhood may not fully engage with some theological implications of the soul as eternal, the incorruptible body transformed by Christ's death and resurrection, and the interplay of ethics with metaphysics. This review will explore many commendable, articulate, and significant reflections on these themes in Meijsing's work and examine their theological implications.

Meijsing begins with the issue of gaps in consciousness. She reflects on an event during her surgery when she experienced a lapse of time when she was unconscious. Where was she during that time? She then comments on Daniel Dennett's observations regarding the discontinuity of consciousness due to these lapses. However, she later reflects on Thomas Nagel's perspective that consciousness is entirely first-person, and thus it has no lapse; one moment you are here, and the next, you are there... to you. The third person is not aware of the other person's experience. First-person consciousness remains continuous. She says, "It is therefore impossible to experience a discontinuity in consciousness" (2). Furthermore, if from the third person perspective, there was a lapse of consciousness, but to the first person, there wasn't, where was she during that time? She suggests the better question is not "Where am I?" but "What am I?" If one is identical with his or her body, there is a discontinuity of consciousness. However, if one is identical with consciousness,

what happens to the body is not always what happens with one's consciousness. Ultimately, can a lapse in consciousness bridge the moments during said lapse to where we maintain our identity, our personhood, during this period? In short, is the slab of meat on the operating table still a person? Meijsing's purpose here is to highlight the need for a Cartesian perspective of personhood, which is lacking in a purely physicalistic sense, while, as we will see later, distancing her stance from Descartes' overemphasis on a disembodied self.

In the subsequent chapter, this reviewer appreciates the manner in which she tackles the issue of dualism and the soul early on rather than a lengthy build-up to some crescendo. This tends to leave the reader unsatisfied with the seemingly pedantic, logical wrangling. She informs the reader that among hominids, humans and Neanderthals share a belief in the afterlife with burial rituals, presumably with the view that there is something about the individual that survives bodily decay. She then discusses out-of-body experiences and how the experiences are not culture-specific and boasts of 10-15 percent of the population experiencing a sense of leaving their body with "a lighter, floating body…" or "completely disembodied…." The "subtle body is called the astral body…." Meijsing reminds us that there's no concrete evidence proving the existence of anything leaving the body. Nevertheless, the prevalent belief in it, coupled with the frequent occurrence of out-of-body experiences, supports the widespread belief in dualism.

While Plato views the soul as transcending into some formal, spiritual realm, Aristotle argues that the soul is not separate from its existence in the body or matter. It is separate in the sense of being distinct, yet it is symbiotic in that one cannot exist without the other. However, Aristotle found that in perception, an organ corresponds specifically to a particular sensory phenomenon, such as the eye to light. Nevertheless, the intellect must be attuned to all sensations, leading Aristotle to conclude that the intellect must not be material. Meijsing suggested that this epistemological enterprise inspired Descartes to seek a foundation for the certainty of knowledge. She links Aristotelian conceptions of the human body to Descartes' division of it into two entities, the *res extensa* and the *res cogitans*; one may be mistaken in feeling something but not in thinking that one feels something. "Whereas Aristotle believed feeling belonged to the body, and only the intellect was (perhaps) something separate, Descartes combined feeling and thinking in the *res cogitans*" (12).

In contrast to Descartes, John Locke is focused on understanding what a person is, rather than what a body, soul, or intellect entails. Locke identified the problem as the distinction between qualitative and numerical identity. The former refers to possessing the same properties, while the latter signifies something that exists as a single entity through time, irrespective of its properties. Under qualitative identity, an embryo and an adult cannot be considered the same entity; however, under

numerical identity, they can be. Meijsing quotes Locke as saying, "An animal is a living organized body; and consequently the same animal, as we have observed, is the same continued life communicated to different particles of matter, as they happen successively to be united to the organized living body" (20). For man is not the same as *person* with respect to judgment or moral obligation. Man is not obligated for punishment as a person is. This obligation and sameness of consciousness is not determined by its substance but by its consciousness, memories, and so on. Locke provides a functional definition of a person as a conscious thinking thing rather than merely referring to man, which is defined by the substance of which the person is composed of.

Meijsing examines the variety of contemporary views on consciousness as well. Some find that only self-awareness equates with consciousness, while others suggest that there is a primitive form of consciousness, such as first-order conscious states, which are also common to animals, as in this pain, the taste of this steak, etcetera. Also, state consciousness refers to inner states of consciousness that are about things but do not necessarily elicit those external states' immediate presence. In the subsequent chapters, "Cartesian People 1-2" and "Lockean Persons,"' she examines the specific themes of both Cartesian dualism, as in the problem of phantom limbs and the disembodied self-struggling with visual perceptions of body and propioceptual ones establishing the false conclusions of dualism as if consciousness can somehow exist outside of bodily instantiation. Likewise, the memory criterion for personhood and its autobiographical requisite from John Locke and Neo-Lockean perspectives suggest that distinguishing self-consciousness from consciousness (as discussed in detail in Meijsing's chapter entitled "The Gradual Origin of Self-Consciousness") is not possible if predicated on memory recall and autobiographical recognition of one's life.

Meijsing ultimately lands on a broader definition of self-consciousness in her final chapter, arguing "that the use of the pronoun 'I' presupposes both full self-consciousness and the competent use of language, but that it refers to the sensomotoric, spatially extended self that is constituted by an autopoietic organism in an environment; a self that already has a first-person point of view" (157). Furthermore, "Life and the first-person are not so very different as criteria for identity…It is only if you adhere to an over-Cartesian, over-mechanistic view of the body, that one is apt to stress the difference between body and mind, or human organism and person, or life and the first-person perspective, or biology and psychology" (159). This is a mitigation between two extreme views that emerge only when one embraces an unbalanced view of self-identity predicated on consciousness as disembodied or purely bodily in a mechanistic sense. Meijsing suggests that our reliance on others in a human environment shows that, as autopoietic organisms, we need others. But is it the case, as Meijsing suggests, that "not every human organism is a person…a foetus…a new-born baby…a dementia patient…we do depend on others." Further-

more, Philosopher Harry Frankfurt "also thinks that we are, essentially and most fundamentally, persons, because personhood is about the characteristics of ourselves that we most cherish. And these characteristics are different from the mere fact that we are just as much the bearers of bodily properties as of mental properties" (166). "The concept of a person is not a metaphysical concept; it is a moral concept" (167).

And yet, discussion of bodily existence without any reflection of the theological implications of the body fails to encompass a broader understanding of life and death. Meijsing writes, "The question of what we are has a metaphysical answer: what we are, most fundamentally, is living organisms. We are made of organic matter, with occasionally a non-organic screw or plate or tube put in it, in order to keep the organism alive. We will exist as long as that living organism exists, and we stop existing when that organism dies and therefore is no longer a living organism" (171). However, this metaphysical answer reduces empirical analysis to the secular without regard for the religiously empirical revelation that Christ has overcome the world, and His death and resurrection have promised an end to this decay of the body she mentions. If we assume that the narrow picture presented to the senses—without considering the *sensus divinitatis*—is all that exists, then the person's physical body has no incorruptible counterpart to provide coherence to the person's transcendence of the "body," which Meijsing acknowledges early in her book as a significant challenge to physicalism.

In summary, Meijsing's work, *A Philosophy of Person and Identity: Where Was I When I Wasn't There?*, presents a reasonable and promising alternative to the prevailing arguments of modern idealists and physicalists, who are locked in a hopeless, irresolvable conflict. By demonstrating the problems with Cartesian dualism as a purely disembodied self and with Lockean personhood, which is identical to conscious memory and an articulate autobiographical sketch, Meijsing illustrates a sensible alternative in embodied personhood informed by a community of humans that needn't articulate an "I" in self-conscious first-person experiences but is sufficiently grounded in the ethical obligation of being a person, informed by others embodied as human organisms. However, Meijsing's work does not consider theological articulations of personhood as embodied in an incorruptible body contingent on the act of Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. All in all, Meijsing's book provides an impressively detailed argument for embodied persons as human organisms. She does this without appealing to Cartesian dualism, Lockean personhood, or physicalistic reductionism despite her failure to address the theological considerations present in a rich history of Christian theology.

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Book Review

Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe, *The Person in Psychology and Christianity: A Faith-Based Critique of Five Theories of Social Development* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022), vii + 256 p. $31.99

Reviewed by Ricky Phillips

As a Lutheran pastor and a student of *Dasein* Analysis, I was excited to see a book that explores Christian faith and human development in the realm of psychology. The author, Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe, asserts that the book's objective is to "examine the intersections of Christian theology and theories of social development as proposed by Erik Erikson, John Bowlby, B.F. Skinner, Albert Bandura, and Evolutionary Psychology" (3).

The book is divided into two parts. The first part examines the person through the lens of theology, while the second part explores it through the framework of developmental theories.

Gunnoe's four organizing themes in the first part are essential to her examination and discussion of five theories, which include

(1) Essence—The characteristics indispensable to personhood (6).

(2) Purpose—What humans are supposed to do (6).

(3) Moral-ethical tendencies—Are humans inclined toward good or evil? (6).

(4) Agency and accountability—Is human behavior volitional or determined? (6).

She offers a comprehensive biography of each theorist, providing a concise summary of their most significant contributions to human social development. Additionally, she applies the four themes to each theory, demonstrating how they are relevant to the theorists' perspectives.

The biographies of each theorist are enjoyable reads for this reviewer. They provide insights into how their personal experiences shaped their theories. The developmental theories were particularly captivating.

The biographies turned out to be the best part of the book. In the case of Erik Erikson, the reader learns that he always believed his biological father was Theodor Homberger. Later, he discovers that his father was someone his mother had an affair with (44). Chapter Five examines other aspects of his life. We find that Erikson had a child with Down Syndrome. Instead of revealing this, Erikson stated

that the child had died. When his children later discovered that their brother Neil was still alive, it undermined their trust in their parents. In Erikson's later social development theories, we find that trust and mistrust form an eight-stage model of social development. When we consider all these biographies, we can see how their experiences contributed to their theories of social development.

In Chapter Seven, Gunnoe explains that Skinner believed humans are neither good nor bad, but that our moral tendencies are learned. Skinner rejects the concept of original sin in Christian theology, arguing that most of our behavior is determined (126). In Chapter Eight, this view is challenged by Albert Bandura, who introduces his idea of "triadic reciprocal determinism," which involves three factors: personal, behavioral, and environmental (147). However, he also asserts that humans possess a form of free will and are not entirely subject to external forces, as Skinner suggests. In Chapter Nine, the focus shifts to the perspective of Evolutionary Psychology, which emphasizes that human beings are shaped by natural selection without any existential purpose.

However, theologians examining these various ideas will encounter some profound questions. Skinner's behavioral theories focus on observable behaviors without reference to any metaphysical or spiritual dimensions. He seeks to modify behavior through reinforcement and conditioning, without incorporating concepts of sin or redemption. Erikson acknowledges the significance of religion in providing a framework for morality and identity, yet he sees it merely as a cultural and psychological phenomenon. He does not base his understanding of human development on any theological framework. With Gunnoe and Bandura, there arises a question of whether their perspectives are likewise too reductionistic, neglecting the full theological depth of what it means to be human. Bandura emphasizes the role of human agency, suggesting that individuals possess the power to shape their own lives and influence their environment through their actions. As a reader, I wonder about the role of God in human history and personal salvation, as well as the issue of human autonomy and the failure to recognize dependence on divine grace. The concepts of evolutionary psychology contradict the biblical notion of God's saving grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus, where true hope is found.

The author struggles at the beginning to define what it means to be human in the image of God, and the book's lack of a strong focus on the Trinity creates issues for its overall coherence. If the author had begun with the Trinity, it would have helped readers understand how the Trinity intersects with theories of social development.

Robert Jenson, who is not in the book, reminds us that human beings are created to participate in the life of the Triune God. Our true selves are realized not in isolation but in relation to God, particularly in the relationships within the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in perfect communion, and humanity, through

the work of the Holy Spirit, is invited into this community of love through Jesus Christ. If I want to find out who the true human is, I look at the risen Jesus Christ.

In the Trinity, the conversation between the Father and the Son, led by the Spirit, is also a word about us. Since I am both talked about and spoken to, I am established not just as an object but also as a subject. Humans are those to whom God speaks, and to be human is to hear the law and the gospel. As humans, we are called to respond to God, which is prayer. We are praying creatures.

There is also an important distinction in Christian anthropology concerning human freedom. The community mediates that freedom. We were created to dwell in the love of the Trinity. When we gather for worship, we witness the risen Jesus coming from the future, and we hear him in the preaching of the Word and in the sacraments. We also hear Jesus in the reading of the Scriptures, and we experience him in the Eucharist. We observe his touch in the baptism of the child, and we also see, hear, and taste Jesus as we engage in the mission of the church. The fact that Jesus is risen, and that we can hear, touch, see, and feel him, profoundly impacts the individual baptized into Christ within the love of the community of the Trinity. This new creation in Christ is something that this reviewer believes needs to be emphasized more in the book.

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