
Pro Rege

Volume 36 | Number 1


Article 2

September 2007

Are Human Embryos One of Us? An Exploration of Personhood

James Rusthoven

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege

 Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rusthoven, James (2007) "Are Human Embryos One of Us? An Exploration of Personhood,"

Pro Rege: Vol. 36: No. 1, 8 - 17.

Available at: http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol36/iss1/2

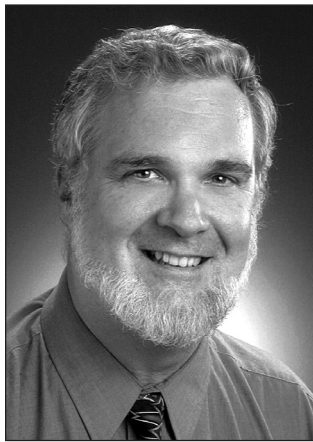
This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.



A quarterly faculty publication of
Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa

Are Human Embryos One of Us?

An Exploration of Personhood



by James J. Rusthoven

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. (Psalm 139: 1-3)

The development of the human unborn has been the subject of curiosity and awe since the time of Hippocrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Despite over two millennia of reflection about how the unborn

Dr. James Rusthoven, MD, MHSC (bioethics), is Professor of Medical Oncology/Infectious Diseases at McMaster University, in Hamilton, Ontario.

should be looked upon by mature adult human beings, the status of ourselves during pre-birth development remains a divisive topic that gets to the core of who we are as distinct creatures in God's created order. My objective in this paper is to explore notions of respect and personhood as they have been applied to arguments for and against the ethical appropriateness of producing and using human embryos for research purposes. I also hope that my reflections will get the reader to *think* about *what to think about* when considering the ethical issues created by procreative technologies.

During my master's level studies in bioethics, I came to realize that secular bioethics was largely a *process-driven* discipline. Our main textbook forwarded a framework known by some as *principlism*, which embodies four concepts: autonomy, benevolence, non-maleficence, and justice.¹ The authors themselves, each favoring very different utilitarian and deontological ethical theories, proposed this framework on the sincere belief that bioethicists adhering to different ethical theories could use it as a commonly understood language with which to engage in eclectic bioethical discussions even if they professed to very divergent beliefs, values, and faiths. Their framework has become the backbone of the dominant paradigm for decision-making in biomedical ethics today.

During my studies I became frustrated, not so much with the language being promulgated as with the lack of a moral foundation upon which the meaning of the language could be based. While adamantly denying that this framework is a

theory (they prefer to describe their moral conceptualization as moral reflection and construction²), the authors of principlism lapse into *theory language* often enough to reveal the tension in addressing bioethical issues with a common language that has no common grounding. It is out of this experience that one can see the importance of exploring whether the Christian tradition, particularly the Reformed tradition with its distinct reliance on and interpretation of Scripture, could contribute to a richer understanding of contemporary bioethical issues for the edification of both the Christian community and its public witness.

In light of the widespread acceptance of *in vitro* fertilization and the resulting ethical quandary of what to do with its storehouse of left-over embryos, there continues to be a thriving debate over the moral appropriateness of thawing frozen human embryos or of creating new ones for the purpose of using and necessarily destroying them for scientific purposes. The overriding incentive for many

A major focus for many in this debate has been the moral status of these embryos, on which some feel the moral justification for creating and destroying them rests.

researchers working in this area is the laudable goal of finding novel treatments for afflictions such as heart disease, type I diabetes, and Parkinson's disease. A major focus for many in this debate has been the moral status of these embryos, on which some feel the moral justification for creating and destroying them rests.

Two prominent concepts in this debate are those of *respect of the embryo* and *whether embryos are persons*. Karen Lebacqz, a bioethicist ordained in the United Church of Christ, has been one of the strongest advocates for respecting the embryo.

"Respect", she writes, "is owed not simply to persons, but very precisely to those who are always in danger of being cast outside the system of protection that personhood brings. In such an understanding, an embryo need not *be* a person to be deserving of respect. Indeed, it may be precisely *because* it is *not* considered a person that its value needs more urgently to be upheld."³ Lebacqz's position comes out of a concept of personhood championed in the eighteenth century by Immanuel Kant. According to Kant's concept, a person has self-determination and the defining quality of rational will. However, since this and other human qualities are not inherently possessed by the embryo, Lebacqz tries to salvage some value toward the embryo by attributing to it what she terms "respect." She states that the blastocyst (the early stage of the embryo consisting of about 120 cells) should not be treated *cavalierly*; instead, she speaks of it positively as "an entity with incredible value; as something precious that cannot be replaced by any other blastocyst, whose existence is to be celebrated and whose loss is to be grieved." Yet, on the same page, she goes on to say that "such an entity can be used in research and can even be killed. To do so is not in itself disrespectful."⁴

Lebacqz justifies such a position by appealing to *prima facie* ethical duties, those duties which are considered normally required but which can be overridden in specific circumstances by other duties with the risk of leaving ethically difficult residual effects.⁵ Applied here, Lebacqz says that harm should be minimized if early embryos are to be used for research. While preserving the life of the embryo should take priority, this priority is only in a context where it is possible to get the data from dissected embryonic stem cells while still preserving the embryo. The implicit message seems clear: while preserving the embryo is desired over killing it, getting the data is the priority; and if the only way to do so is to kill the embryo, so be it. She says that respect for the embryo can be expressed in the *manner* of killing, in the *attitude* expressed in the act. Such respect is near the top of a hierarchy of respect, which includes lesser degrees of respect for animals and plants.

Christian ethicists Daniel Callahan and Gilbert Meilaender, from Roman Catholic and Lutheran

traditions, respectively, have countered that such talk is an empty exercise and that any value of the embryo has been stripped away in the absence of criteria for determining how to weigh the value of the embryo against the potential good of the research to which it is subjected.⁶ In her response, ethicist Françoise Baylis quipped, “For certainly something is very odd in claiming to cherish the human embryo because of what it is while at the same time planning for its destruction.”⁷

If the value of human embryos is thus based on an intuitive concept called respect, as described by Lebacqz, perhaps embryos *are* nothing more than clumps of cells, exploitable for the biological knowledge extracted as scientists see fit!

Before making such a judgment, however, we should now look at the other concept on this debate: *personhood*. Several contemporary theologians, most notably Oliver O’Donovan, have enriched our understanding of personhood as it arose from early Christian thought.⁸ During the fourth and fifth centuries, debate raged in earnest on how to best express the nature of Christ and his relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In this endeavor, our ancestors in the faith drew from both Latin and Greek but found both languages wanting in their efforts to express with scriptural faithfulness the divine-ness and human-ness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Latin-speaking church chose the word *persona* to capture the sense of Christ’s essence. In the ancient theatre, the *persona* was the character-mask. An actor played different characters, each represented by a different mask. Each character or *persona* became known through its history within the story.⁹ But a problem arose because the Latin word *persona* could not be easily translated conceptually into the language of the Eastern contingent of the still universal church. The closest Greek word for a mask or face, *prosopon*, was deemed too hollow in its meaning. Therefore, the Greek-speaking church came to use the richer term *hypostasis*, or substance, which connoted a substantive reality that *underlies* or *ties together* the variable qualities and characteristics that an individual may present. However, disagreement persisted despite efforts by leaders such as the Cappadocian fathers of the Greek church, who pleaded, “We shall in no way quarrel about the names, as long

as the words point to the same notion.”¹⁰ (Due in large part to similar efforts at linguistic rapprochement by Hilarius, bishop of Poitiers, and other Latin fathers, this problem did not formally split the Church, but confusion continued.) At the same time, others were suggesting the more qualitative notions of the Trinitarian personhood, such as *activity*. For example, Apollinaris, fourth-century bishop of Laodicea, suggested that Christ’s identity be seen as *self-conscious, action-directed mind*; that is, a human mind was replaced by a divine mind embodied in human flesh.¹¹ As we will see shortly, such ideas foreshadowed the modern tendency to consider personhood as demonstrated qualities, with major implications for contemporary decisions about the degree of human-ness to which unborn, developing human beings may be entitled. Even Augustine suggested that God’s unity be compared with a human person and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be compared with three aspects of personality, such as memory, understanding, and will.¹² Hendrikus Berkhof interprets Augustine as distinguishing three *relations* within God rather than substantial distinctions. Augustine also related the Trinity to love; that is, the Father as the lover, the Son as the object of love, and the Holy Spirit as the act of love.¹³

In 451, the Council of Chalcedon declared that the Trinity consisted of three persons. Within eighty years, Boethius (480 BC), dubbed by some as the last of the Roman philosophers and first of the scholastic theologians, wrote an essay in which he attempted to better define *nature* and *person*. While readily confessing that “the proper definition of Person is a matter of very great perplexity,”¹⁴ he borrowed Aristotelian ideas of substance and corporality in defining a person as the individual *substance* of a *rational* nature. In so doing, he acknowledged the connotation of *hypostasis* as indicating a higher value of *substance* than that of animals. Despite such attempts at clarification, the idea of person remained elusive for many. Anselm of Canterbury was so distraught in using “three persons” to connote “three substances” that he spoke of “three I do not know what” ; and no less than Thomas Aquinas felt that “person” meant “relation” albeit as “its own mode of being.”¹⁵ Furthermore, Jones and others have suggested that, had Aquinas un-

derstood the intrinsic power of embryonic development as we do today, he would have judged that human beings begin with the fusion of the sperm and the egg. Thomistic principles also adhered to Boethius's definition, such that human beings were considered persons in possessing a rational nature, even though the unborn may be unable to exercise that reason.¹⁶ Boethius's definition persisted, though its original meaning and Christological basis subsequently became eroded. By the eighteenth century, personhood had come to mean a particular *instance* of a rational nature, stripped of its substantive core. What was the secondary feature of Boethius's definition, rational nature, became the primary feature. Put another way, the dominant anthropology of Western culture had changed from valuing humans for *who they are* to valuing them for *what they can do*.

Unfortunately, Scripture does not directly, in so many Greek or Hebrew words, tell us *what* personhood is or *when* personhood is achieved in human development. As a result, many Christians have turned to embryological and medical science for clarity. Have these disciplines given us that clarity? We know now that the male and female contribution to the procreative process are cells, not fluids or spirits or some other previously conceived substances or forms, through which pagan and Christian alike once envisioned that which could not be seen. The union of those genetically different cells results in a third genetically distinct entity, which is not the sum of the parts but a unique biological being, alive and progressing in a developmental direction, programmed yet environmentally-influenced to become a new creature. With conception also begins a new *history*, a biological and historical *continuity*, which grows, leaving a trail of what it was and a prescription for what it can become.¹⁷

Some would say, however, that the embryo and the early fetus are simply *biological* beings, genetically human but without characteristics and qualities indicative of a functioning human being. In its attempt to judge the severity of penance for harm inflicted on the unborn, the medieval church appealed to Aristotelian distinctions, which differently valued so-called unformed and formed stages of development (Aquinas adopted Aristotle's claim

that complete formation of the organs occurs at 40 days from conception for males and 90 days for females. Ensoulment reputedly occurred at this time as well¹⁸). From these roots developed qualitative criteria for determining humanness and personhood. O'Donovan has referred to Kant's practical imperative as the prototype of the modern preference for qualitative conceptions.¹⁹ Picking up systematically where Boethius left off, Kant, whose insights have shaped so much of contemporary

Unfortunately, in efforts to counter the impersonalization of the Holy Spirit by modern liberal theology, evangelicals introduced the personality of the Holy Spirit with the modern connotations of an autonomy of personality, which further supported the position of those who saw human value in human qualities and function.

humanist ethics, argued that the value of humanity that is distinct and most prized above that of all other creatures and objects of the temporal order is the rational nature, *which must respect itself*. This respect can be in the form of self-respect or respect of other human beings. For Kant, it is the generic *rational nature* that is the object of esteem, the objective end of our moral law, *not the individual in which it appears*.

From this Kantian bend in the Western philosophical road also comes the concept of *personality*. Hendrikus Berkhof traces this from what he calls a cult of "the person" arising out of the mod-

ernism of the late nineteenth century. This condenses, he says, to personality as autonomous and self-conscious power with its own moral strength and respect for itself.²⁰ Unfortunately, in efforts to counter the impersonalization of the Holy Spirit by modern liberal theology, evangelicals introduced the personality of the Holy Spirit with the modern connotations of an autonomy of personality, which further supported the position of those who saw human value in human qualities and function.

Does such a concept of personhood as personality gain support from theologians in the Reformed tradition? Generally not, but then personhood is not addressed in systematic way. As mentioned earlier, Augustine was clearly unhappy with the term *persona* and felt that the term fit better in describing the triune God than did what he called the three *relations* within the Godhead. In fact, says Berkhof, in general the Reformers were not particularly interested in this terminological heritage of the church. Calvin's own stated preference of person as a *subsistence* in God's essence, *related* to the other persons but distinguished by an *incommunicable quality*, could hardly be claimed as a clarification of the matter.^{21,22} Kuyper saw the soul of each individual as a unique creative act of God. God creates the soul and the body in the embryo, and human personality develops in the person that is the union of body and soul. Beyond this, both Kuyper and later Herman Bavinck acknowledged the *mystery* of human individuality and of human personhood in light of an immediate relationship with God.²³

Gene Outka, in his comprehensive exploration of the meaning of *agape* love in the Christian life, sees a person as an object of concern, of reverence, with acknowledged value *as a person* and with whom personal involvement is desired. *Agape* is the attitude toward such a person, and such a concept of person is independent of particular qualities and behavior tendencies. We acknowledge value *in* a fellow human being; we do not, or should not, bestow value *on* a neighbor.²⁴

Gordon Spykman has written that Western dualistic anthropologies lead to insuperable dilemmas in addressing the issue of abortion. If one posits a separation of some sort between body and soul, says Spykman, then the problem arises:

During which trimester does the fetus become a person? He states that "For a biblical view of man, human life in the integrally coherent unity of its bodily-spiritual wholeness begins embryonically at conception....For a divinely bestowed sanctity is insinuated into the total fabric of human life from its sunset years all the way back to its inception."²⁵

In his study of humans as the image of God, Anthony Hoekema argues that humankind's unique value is tied to the post-Fall retention of the image of God. This view is supported by references such as Genesis 9:6, which describes the violence done to God's image if human blood is shed by another human.²⁶ This creationally endowed aspect of our creatureliness provides one of the strongest supports for inherent human value, which may be described as personhood.

Today, many Christians and non-Christians have chosen to adopt a concept of person whose meaning and essence is defined by attributes, without which a human may no longer be conceived of as a person. As Margaret Summerville recently suggested, we seem to have become human *doings* instead of human *beings*.²⁷ And, by this way of thinking, the attributes most valued and most often associated with personality and thus with person appear to emanate from brain tissue, from whence originates rationality and spiritual possibilities.²⁸ From this concept follow two perceptions that affect a prevalent attitude regarding human embryos: a conviction that human personality can be the object of experimental knowledge and that humanness can be typed accordingly into person, non-person, or pre-person. Seeing this conviction in the light of the liberal scientific value of getting control of ourselves, we conclude that our biological way of being goes from that which we live to that which we observe and, ultimately, to that which we conquer in an effort to achieve human *self-transcendence*.

What is meant by self-transcendence? While the transcendence of God, in the traditional Christian sense, alludes to God's providential mastery over all that is created, self-transcendence, in a temporally restricted sense, refers to the human subordination of material reality toward higher or spiritual ends. Using Calvin's metaphor, as applied to science through materialistic spectacles, human

beings subject material objects to experimental scrutiny for the exploitative purpose of asserting themselves transcendently over those objects through the knowledge obtained. In the absence of a relationship with God, however, the human spirit is elusive, trying to grow with knowledge to become the subject of the science itself, the spirit of the resultant knowledge. Paradoxically, however, in scientifically studying *ourselves* as objects, we cannot see ourselves as a whole. Consequently, the part of us that is spirit is withdrawn from such scientific study and becomes elusive. O'Donovan suggests that our fascination with the study of the brain is one attempt to tie down spirit to its presumed material substrate and that doing so allows us to assert our transcendence over it.²⁹

In applying this idea to embryo experimentation, the tension thus arises wherein the embryo is human like us yet is considered an appropriate

*... a Reformed
interpretation of the post-
Fall image of God supports
human personhood as an
inherent essence of who we
are, apart from the qualities
and gifts given to us by
God's gracious providence.*

object of experimentation because it seems to be devoid of the attributes that make up personality, which expresses the human spirit. The embryo becomes, in effect, undifferentiated humanity, from which spirit and personality have not yet arisen from the biological substrate. Human embryos then become experimental projects of self-mastery, for the purpose of exploration and exploitation, rather than objects of human love. The human embryo itself becomes ambiguous: it is ourselves yet not ourselves. These members of our own species become *negatively* special *because* they are *not*

meant to become objects of our love and compassion. Indeed, such language begins to have overtones of the *respect* of which Karen Lebacqz speaks, in the quest to impart value and meaning to embryos. That which we have made in the laboratory, rather than begotten, is now at our disposal rather than someone to be engaged in a nurturing and anticipatory fellowship. Is this the way we should be? Is self-transcendence by experimental knowledge the *telos*, the ultimate good for humankind?

At the level of embryology, there are, in my judgment, no developmental biological milestones that separate the person from the non-person. When I am confronted with the suggestion that implantation onto the wall of the uterus signals the first time an embryo becomes a person because it has its own blood supply distinct from that of its mother, I point out that human cancers also develop their own blood supply when they get to a certain stage. The same biological principle seems to hold for both. When the inner cells of a growing cell cluster can no longer survive simply by osmotic diffusion of nutrients from its surroundings, genes encoded to produce and secrete vascular growth factors are activated, and a nutritive vascular plumbing is generated. Does that biological necessity change the valuation of a human cancer? Indeed, is it transformed into a distinct person or a clone of the person for which it now competes for nutrients? I think not.

Similarly, at the psychological level, emotive stimuli have been forwarded as grounds for conferring personhood. In their book *How Now Shall We Live*, Chuck Colson and Nancy Pearcey relate the story of the abortionist Bernard Nathanson. As a technically skilled obstetrician in a thriving abortion clinic, Nathanson kept himself aloof from the human side of the plight of his unborn patients. With the advent of ultrasound, he now saw the features of the fetus in real time animation, and, as Colson and Pearcey put it, the medical facts now coalesced with the grainy image on the screen and crashed into Nathanson's consciousness.³⁰ A human being was in front of him and would soon be destroyed. It was an epiphanal moment for him. But images of flailing projections destined to become appendages are one thing. What about the embryo? It lacks such humanoid qualities. It is

a speck, like a poppy seed or, using a biblical image of the kingdom of God on earth, a growing mustard seed. If one saw it under a video microscope powerful enough to see cytoplasm moving or chromosomes parting to form two new pluripotent cells of the growing organism, would that conjure up images sufficient to “crash into one’s consciousness”? Is the value *in* the embryo, or is the value to be bestowed *on* the embryo?

Let’s sum up for a moment some major points. First, there seem to be no developmental stages that signify the appearance of increasing human value during pre-birth development. Second, the prevalent modern concept of personhood in our culture views human beings as persons by virtue of their qualities and capacities rather than through inherent worth. This concept excludes early developing human beings from consideration as persons, leaving them vulnerable to treatment deemed criminal against more mature human beings. Third, a Reformed interpretation of the post-Fall image of God supports human personhood as an inherent essence of who we are, apart from the qualities and gifts given to us by God’s gracious providence. But how is our personhood, so conceived, *fully* realized. If it is not realized through matured qualities and attributes, then through what, or *whom*? Recall that both Kuyper and Bavinck acknowledged the *mystery* of human individuality and of human personhood preserved in an immediate relation with God, a mystery which Berkouwer said no science or theology can unveil for us.³¹

Is it this mystery that we are trying to overcome in our pursuit of biological knowledge? Is mystery a confession of ignorance, a lack of control, the inability to capitalize on the greatest number of choices that full biological knowledge can offer? If one thinks about it, the *loss* of mystery predictably puts us into a tailspin of reductionism such that what we grab onto and think we understand as knowledge becomes more than it really is. It becomes the key to unlocking the mystery and comes to stand for all that is important to know about an object or organism. Not just biological mystery but then all mystery becomes lost, and with that loss, our *self-transcendence* fills the void.

Could God have created us so that mystery would be a normative part of our existence and of

our understanding of our relationship to Him? In Eden we disobeyed God in an effort to self-transcend, to know good from evil, to be like God. We paid for it then with our lives.³² Some today plead for *humility* to maintain a sense of mystery and of a budding relationship with even the youngest of the unborn. Bouma and his colleagues have adopted a covenantal view, through which they suggest attention should move away from whether unborn human beings image God toward whether those with responsibility to protect and nurture the vulnerable among us are doing so.³³ Gilbert Meilaender writes, “We need the virtue of humility before the mystery of human personhood and the succession of generations.”³⁴ He sees the unborn as “simply the weakest and most needy *members* of our community”(his emphasis).³⁵ He encourages an unconditional commitment to parenthood to the unseen unborn, wherein “The time of pregnancy will be better spent learning to love the child we have been given before we begin to evaluate and assess the child’s capacities.”³⁶ This disposition has been expressed recently in a poignant expression of wonder, anticipation, and ultimately grief, by William Nathan Sneller in the November 2006 edition of *The Banner*. He shares with us the loss of their one-month-old, unborn human being, whom he referred to as their child: “He was not our miscarriage; he was our child...[.]we quickly overlook those God knows *only* in the womb.”³⁷ Indeed, what about those who are conceived in a Petri dish and never see a womb?

I think that we need to retain the sense of awe, fear, humility, and contriteness that mystery inspires. Reformed ethicist Allen Verhey speaks of mystery in a creational sense and of God as the Ultimate Mystery:

We live in God’s world, and we encounter mystery. Mystery evokes among us sense of its presence and power. Mystery evokes a sense of dependence upon some dimly known but reliable order, a sense of gratitude for the givenness (the gifts) of life and health...and it evokes a keen sense of responsibility to the inscrutable Mystery [that is, God,] who sustains the order, gives the gifts, judges the flaw, and promises hope.³⁸

And regarding the consequences of losing this

sense of mystery he notes,

When, in teaching the young, we empty the world of wonder, when we eliminate mystery in our quest for mastery, then we distort their vision and their lives....Christians sometimes respond to the mystery by reducing God to a giant puzzle or by attempting to domesticate God, rendering the inscrutable not only scrutable but serviceable to their own projects, to their own individual or communal causes.³⁹

Finally, we hear Paul Ramsey, in his book *Fabricated Man*:

Men may be able to subdue the mystery of procreation, they may be able to subdue all the wonders of human sexual response, in their sciences. But they cannot subdue the mystery in the fact that eminently human communications of marital love are also the places where we engage as pro-creators, and establish the step into cov-

Could God have created us so that mystery would be a normative part of our existence and of our understanding of our relationship to Him?

enant parenthood. Men can only deny that there is any mystery to be honored here; they can only reduce the matter to an accident of biological nature that could as well not have been so, or could be changed to vegetative reproduction.⁴⁰

In its fullest, uncorrupted expression, personhood encompasses the covenantal relationship with God the Creator, a relationship badly distorted by sin yet renewed and sustained by grace.

We need to think humbly and think hard about what we are doing when we begin to *make* some-

thing that would otherwise be *begotten*. Do we *need* the embryo as the basis of cellular therapies for some diseases? Can we redirect our financial and human resources toward therapies that can be derived from other stem cells that are not genetically unique beings, do not come into being through conception, and are not meant by their very nature to be the objects of love as distinct creatures? Christian communities remain divided on this and other bioethical issues. They need to persevere, not capitulate, in their prayerful desire for insight, deliberation, and discernment; test the spirits faithfully; and distinguish that which is Holy and that which is not.

While Scripture may not speak directly and precisely to many of our current ethical concerns, it does teach us to be always in awe of our God who made us and knew us intimately as unborn. In Psalm 51 we read, "Surely, I was sinful from the time my mother conceived me." In Jeremiah 1:5, the word of the Lord calls out, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." And in his perplexed anguish, Job calls out, "Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knot me together with bones and sinews? You gave me life and showed me kindness...." But perhaps Psalm 139: 13-16, 23, 24, continued from the beginning of this paper, gives us the true spirit of the intimacy of our relationship to God at *all* times:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be...Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

Thus says the Lord.

Endnotes

1. Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2001).
2. *Ibid*, 407.
3. Karen Lebecqz, "On the elusive nature of respect," in: Suzanne Holland, Karen Lebecqz, and Laurie Zoloth, *The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), 152, 153.
4. *Ibid*, 159.
5. For more on moral residues and traces, see Beauchamp, *Principles*, 14, 15, 406; Robert Nozick, "Moral Complications and Moral Structures." *Natural Law Forum* 13 (1968): 1-50; and Thomas E. Hill, Jr., "Moral Dilemmas, Gaps, and Residues: A Kantian Perspective," in *Moral Dilemmas and Moral Theory*, ed H.E. Mason (New York: Oxford U Press, 1996).
6. Daniel Callahan, "The puzzle of profound respect," *Hastings Center Report* 25 (1995): 39-40.
7. Francoise Baylis, "Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research: Comments on the NBAC Report," in Suzanne Holland, Karen Lebecqz, and Laurie Zoloth, *The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), 54.
8. For further reading on the history of the concept of personhood in the early church and in Western culture, see Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 237 – 44. Also, his earlier work *Begotten or Made?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), particularly pages 49 – 66, as well as Boethius's tractate *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (London: William Heinemann and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918).
9. It seems somewhat ironic that the early church used words connoting pagan theatre characters to describe the Trinity while in his Stone lecture "Calvinism and Religion," Abraham Kuyper pointed out the low moral standard of theatrical groups, which was behind the traditional Calvinist offense to theatre-going. In addition to the appearance of women on the modern stage, who risked jeopardizing their name and irreproachable conduct, it was apparently perceived that a moral sacrifice was demanded of the actors whereby the constant and ever-changing presentation of the character of another person would hamper the maturation of the actor's own character. See further in Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism and Religion," in *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 74, 75.
10. See Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1964), 111, 112. According to Berkhof, in the Latin expression of *persona*, the Great Cappodocian fathers Basil of Caesarea, his brother Gregorius of Nyssa, and their friend Gregorius of Nazianzus heard overtones of the Sabellian heresy (the denial of the essentials distinctions in God) in the Latin formula. On the other hand, the Greek conception of three *hupostaseis* in one *ousia* was translated into Latin as *una essentia, tres substantiae*, which sounded to Latin theologians like the heresy of tritheism or three gods. Hilarius, bishop of Poitiers, apparently also helped to interpret the Cappadocian concept for his Latin colleagues.)
11. See O'Donovan, *Begotten*, 53.
12. Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 276.
13. Berkhof, *The Doctrine*, 113.
14. Boethius, *The Consolation*, 81, 83.
15. See Berkhof, *The Doctrine*, 113.
16. For a more complete discussion of Aquinas's beliefs regarding the embryo, see David Albert Jones, *The Soul of the Embryo* (London: Continuum, 2004), particularly pp. 172, 173, 220, 221. Also see S. Heaney, "Aquinas and the Presence of the Human Rational Soul in the Early Embryo," *The Thomist* 56 (1992): 1; M. Johnston, "Delayed Hominization: Reflections on Some Recent Catholic Claims for Delayed Nominization," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 743-63; and B. Ashley and A. Moraczewski, "Is the Biological Subject of Human Rights Present from conception?" in P. Cataldo and A. Moraczewski, *The Fetal Tissue Issue: Medical and Ethical Aspects* (Braintree, MA: Pope John Center, 1994).
17. Gilbert Meilaender sees the unborn as the weakest and least advantaged members of the human community, yet someone with a personal history who is a person throughout that history regardless of the degree of capacity. See Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).
18. For further discussion on Aquinas' views on formation and ensoulment and for a comparison of his views and those of Gregory of Nyssa of the Eastern Church on the embryo, see Jones, *The Soul*, 120 – 123.
19. O'Donovan, *Begotten*, 58.
20. Berkhof, *The Doctrine*, 114. See also O'Donovan, *Begotten*, 58, 59.
21. Berkhof, *The Doctrine*, 113.
22. John Calvin, *Institutes*, book I, XIII. 6, 128.
23. C. G. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 292.

24. Gene Outka, *Agape: An Ethical Analysis* (New Haven and London: Yale U Press, 1972), 161, 162.
25. Gordon Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 242, 243.
26. Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans and Carlisle, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1986), 18.
27. See Margaret Somerville, 2006 Massey Lectures, entitled "The Ethical Imagination: Journeys of the Human Spirit," 4th lecture.
28. O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?*, 60.
29. *Ibid*, 62.
30. Charles W. Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, Inc. 1999), 220.
31. Berkouwer, *Man*, 309.
32. Genesis 3: 5, 22.
33. Hessel Bouma III, Douglas Diekema, Edward Langerak, Theodore Rottman, Allen Verhey, *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 222.
34. Meilaender, *Bioethics*, 44.
35. *Ibid*, 6.
36. *Ibid*, 54.
37. William Nathan Sneller, "Losses of the Heart," *The Banner* 148 (Nov 2006): 8.
38. Allen Verhey, *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life* (Eerdmans, 2002), 497.
39. *Ibid*, 498.
40. Paul Ramsey, *Fabricated Man: The Ethics of Genetic Control* (New Haven, CT: Yale U Press, 1970), 88.

Bibliography

- Baylis, Françoise. "Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research: Comments on the NBAC Report." In Suzanne Holland, Karen Lebacqz, and Laurie Zoloth. *The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001.
- Beauchamp, Tom L., and James F. Childress. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2001.
- Berkhof, Hendrikus. *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1964.
- Berkouwer, C. G. *Man: The Image of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962.
- Boethius. 5th Tractate. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand. London: William Heinemann and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918.
- Bouma, III, Hessel, Douglas Diekema, Edward Langerak, Theodore Rottman, and Allen Verhey. *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Colson, Charles W. and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall We Live?* Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999.
- Hill, Jr., Thomas E. "Moral Dilemmas, Gaps, and Residues: A Kantian Perspective." In *Moral Dilemmas and Moral Theory*. Ed. H.E. Mason. New York: Oxford U Press, 1996.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God's Image*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans and Carlisle, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1986.
- Jones, David Albert. *The Soul of the Embryo*. London: Continuum, 2004.
- Kuyper, Abraham. "Calvinism and Religion." In *Lectures on Calvinism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968.
- Labecqz, Karen. "On the elusive nature of respect." In Suzanne Holland, Karen Lebacqz, and Laurie Zoloth. *The Human Embryonic Stem Cell Debate*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001.
- Meilaender, Gilbert. *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *Resurrection and Moral Order*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *Begotten or Made?* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
- Olson, Roger E. *The Story of Christian Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999.
- Outka, Gene. *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*. New Haven and London: Yale U Press, 1972.
- Ramsey, Paul. *Fabricated Man: The Ethics of Genetic Control*. New Haven, CT: Yale Press, 1970.
- Spykman, Gordon. *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Verhey, Allen. *Remembering Jesus: Christian Community, Scripture, and the Moral Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Waters, Brent and Ronald Cole-Turner. *God and the Embryo*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown U Press, 2003.