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Approaching 'personhood' in the New Testament, with special reference to Ephesians

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1. Preliminary General Issues

There is some truth in a colleague's earlier lament: if we are not sure what we are really trying to talk *about*, when we speak of 'personhood', it is not easy to see how we can examine it from a New Testament perspective. For New Testament scholars there could thus be some excuse to shrug our shoulders and walk away from the problem, not least because the troublesome words *persona* and *prosōpon* (in the sense 'person') do not appear in our Scriptures, nor in their contemporary literature. In our literature 'face' (*prosōpon*) is occasionally used as *synechdoche* for 'individual human',[1] but it would make no sense to inquire of Paul or his contemporaries whether human beings (*anthrōpoi*) were *prosōpa*. The category 'personhood' simply was not available. Accordingly, we must demur from the suggestion, sometimes mooted, that the Fathers first knew themselves as 'persons' and subsequently projected that knowledge onto the Trinity. The Fathers, like the New Testament writers, may have had a robust theological *anthropology*, but, as far as I am aware, the terms *persona* and *prosōpon* simply were not part of it. Rather it was the creative application of those terms (in the sense mask/face – and approaching our sense 'persona') to the inter-trinitarian relations, which opened the way to a new ontology of personhood. This was only rather later applied to *human* persons, and even then only received its focus on the subject-centred *interiority* of the 'person' in post-Cartesian developments.

The absence of the terminology obviously does not itself quite let New Testament scholars off the hook. It seems legitimate, for example, to ask the question what the New Testament teaches about 'trinity', even though the word itself is not to be found in these writings. We may do this because we can define a *concept* of

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1 In the NT, *prosōpon* ('face') appears to be used as synechdoche for 'individual' or 'person' only at 2 Cor. 1.11 (cf. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd revised ed., Fredrick William Danker [London: University of Chicago, 2000], 888; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, based on Semantic Domains* [New York: UBS, 1988], 105], But such usage is evidently irrelevant to discussions of the essence of 'being' (human, angelic or divine).

'trinity' – e.g. as blandly as that 'the God of Israel coexists distinctly as Father, Son and Spirit, yet related in such a way that they are one God, not three gods'. Such a definition obviously owes something to Patristic developments, but the question of what the New Testament teaches about 'trinity' it is not thereby rendered anachronistic or illegitimate. The 'concept' is a package of meanings concerning each of which we may pose questions which would at least be intelligible to some if not all of the New Testament writers.

The trouble with discussing 'person' and 'personhood' is slightly different, however. It begins with the problem of agreeing which of several contemporary *concepts* of 'person' we wish to address. The different disciplines (theology, anthropology, sociobiology, law, education, psychology, medicine, etc.) jostle for their priorities, and even within the theological disciplines there is evident diversity.

To side-step *some* of these difficulties, we may usefully invoke the distinction made in linguistics between 'stereotype' and 'extension'.[2] The stereotype of the concept 'cup' is a list of the traits possessed by the concept of a 'typical' cup, and which differentiates it from the related concepts 'mug', 'bowl', 'vase', etc. Stereotypically a 'cup' is a 'vessel to drink from' (contrast 'vase'), 'with handle' (unlike 'bowl' or 'vase'), 'placed on saucer' (unlike 'mug', 'bowl', or 'vase'), 'with ratio of height to top diameter approximately 1:2 or less (contrast 'mug', which may reverse the ratio). The 'extension' of the class of 'cups', however, is the totality of vessels in the world that could be classified, linguistically, as 'cup', and this will include many cups that do not have handles, do or do not have accompanying saucers, and may or may not look exactly similar in shape and size to what I at first may have taken to be some kind of vase. My opinion on the last distinction might only be resolved when my hostess picks the object up and pours tea into it for me.[3] It is relatively easy, then, to define the linguistic *stereoptype* of a 'cup', even if deciding the extension is quite another matter.

It is similar, I suggest, with the lexemes 'person' and 'personhood'. Our problems are not so much with the stereotype of 'person' as with the possible extension of the class. The *stereotypical* traits of '(human) person' would probably include the following (the list makes no attempt to be exhaustive, and some traits obviously overlap):

(a) natural living being of the genetical species *homo sapiens*;

(b) sentient being, also capable of rational thought and analysis (that seems to be contained in the adjective *sapiens*);

(c) characterised by the use of a complex language system;[4]

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2 See P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1989), 146-80; J. Hurford and B. Heasley, *Semantics: A Coursebook* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983), chs. 8-9.

3 Even then, of course, when I exclaim, 'Silly me! I was actually, for a moment, wondering whether that was not a vase!', she may well respond, 'Well... Yes it is, really. I'm dreadfully sorry, but all the cups are in the dishwasher'.

4 Complex, that is, relative to alleged animal 'languages'.

(d) aware of the 'self' as a distinct and unified narratival 'I';[5]

(e) aware of 'others' as similarly 'personal' beings, not merely 'objects';

(f) self-communicative being of a fundamentally socially/culturally related order;

(g) possessing apparently advanced degree of autonomy in decision making;

(h capable of responsible/moral agency and deliberate actions such as could intentionally change, significantly, their 'environment';[6]

(i) capable of creative, artistic and literary expression.

But as we have said concerning cups, by no means all members of the 'extension' will necessarily exhibit even *most* of the stereotypical criteria. Our *problem* often comes in deciding how many traits must be present (and in what degree) before the object in question in included in the club. And that will obviously be somewhat subjective. So let us note some pertinent observations:

1. Striking out the specific mention of 'genetic species' in (a), most would be perfectly happy to recognise gods, angels, hobbits and orcs, as 'persons' (real or imaginary) – and many would probably view criterion (a) as differentiating us fundamentally from AI devices (which are 2nd-order creations).[7]

2. Many of our theoretical problems with 'personhood' relate to what seem to us to be the relative or complete absence of traits (b)-(i) in various stages of the embryo/foetus and in the variety of 'diminishments'[8] or pathologies we are subject to through genetic and psychological disorders, disease, accident and age.

3. How we relate stereotype to extension in such cases is often decided by prior and more local questions. For example, medical practitioners may partially divide between doctors and nurses, on whether to keep a PVS patient alive; the one group often saying destruction of the cerebral cortex is the end of personhood, the other often feeling that until the body dies, it remains a 'personal being', with intrinsic dignity, that needs looking after in the form of feeding and all other basic nursing. And in relation to the beginnings of human life there are similar disputed questions, on which not only medical practitioners, but also lawyers, philosophers and theologians will have their different agendas.

4. The above point clearly relates to extreme cases for consideration for inclusion within the 'extension' of personhood. There are many more intermediate cases – where it is rather the 'degree' of presence of criteria (b)-(i) that is primarily in question. The ambiguity here made it possible for otherwise

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5   Few species appear to share the trait of 'self-awareness', and possibly none could codify it as an 'I'.

6   It would be possible to include under this head the sub-trait 'sophisticated tool maker and or machine user'.

7   The Judeo-Christian God would clearly be included on all other counts but perhaps additionally excluding the trait 'natural' living being, if that suggests any element of belonging to the *created* order.

8   Cf. J. Hapgood, *Being a Person* (London:Hodder, 1998), ch. 11, for this term.

reputable doctors within the Nazi state to brand the mentally handicapped as *Untermenschen* and agree (even promote) their extermination.

But one point remains clear. If we compare ourselves with other animals, adult humans show 'personhood' in a degree incomparibly greater than other creatures. Even the strict minority of very 'personhood-challenged' autistics, solipsists, mentally handicapped or psychologically disordered humans show relatively strong traits of distinctive 'personhood'. We may recognise that our closest family pets, dolphins, apes, and perhaps even AI devices, also show *some* traits of the stereotypical 'personhood' defined above. But at the same time it is clear to present common sense that such wonderful specimens do not, and could not, count as stereotypical 'persons'.

5. We need to remember that in the broad 'linguistic' community 'person' and 'personhood' are what we call 'fuzzy lexemes'. There is no Platonic form of 'person/personhood' out there waiting to be examined and then precisely defined. For many, it may not make much more sense to ask what minimal criteria define 'personhood' than to ask what number/proportion of hairs I must have lost to be labelled 'bald'. It is really a matter of degree and of the perspective from which the question is asked. There is thus no *linguistic* anomaly in such sentences as 'Barry is so impersonal!', 'Rome utterly depersonalised slaves', 'A human foetus is not a person', 'A baby is not yet a person', even if there may be philosophical and/or theological objections to the last two claims.

In opting to privilege 'stereotypical' meaning over the more puzzling questions of 'extension', I am not seeking to skew debates on the theological anthropology of the beginning and ending of life.[9] The purpose is rather to engage with the core understanding of 'personhood', and how the gospel addresses it, rather than to approach the question through the admittedly illuminating and vitally important questions of ontogeny and diminishment (some of we shall briefly refer to in the final section of this essay). Ephesians does not address 'personhood' at these margins, but largely more *stereotypical* persons.

2. Preliminary biblically/theologically-orientated issues

1. At the outset we must determine *objectives* and *method*. What are we trying to do, and how are we attempting to *get there?* In the post-modern world, concepts of 'person' and 'personhood' are in danger of being shot to pieces in interdisciplinary crossfire. Indeed, as Vanhoozer has suggestively put it, the village madmen have already declared 'Man is dead!' as vigorously as Nietzsche's earlier counterpart had proclaimed 'God is dead!'.[10]

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9 On which see, e.g., M. Banner, 'Christian Anthropology at the Beginning and End of Life', *SJT* 51 (1998), 22-60.

10 Kevin Vanhoozer, 'Human Being, Individual and Social', in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 158–88, 162 and 167-75. In context, Vanhoozer's point is about the alleged death of the Enlightenment's objective 'Man'.

The task 'in the world', I suggest, is to show (more-or-less as Mark Twain was to put it) that reports of the person's death are 'greatly exaggerated'. That will require creative, and interdisciplinary skills, such as Vanhoozer, McFadyen, Gunton, Ford, and others, have pointed to. And it will need to address the difficult issues of beginning and ending of personal life. The task 'towards the Church' is perhaps more specific: to provide a biblically grounded and theologically critical account of human personhood that informs, encourages and directs authentic and vibrant Christian discipleship.

In *methodological* terms, a truly *Christian* account must inevitably give primary, but not exclusive, focus to the question of how the life, death, and glorification of Jesus informs our view of personhood, divine and human. That is not to leave behind what Christians refer to as the Old Testament, because the Hebrew Scriptures provide the background to, and stage on, which Jesus Christ makes his dramatic and conclusive entry. He comes as the fulfilment of Scripture.

2. As has been said, New Testament scholars approaching the question of 'personhood', in their primary texts, inevitably recognise that the agenda is being set largely from *outwith* their discipline (whereas a question about the nature of 'man' created in God's image would naturally be regarded as more intrinsic to it). The concept of 'person' – in terms of essence and relationship – was first raised in the fourth- and fifth-century debates on trinity. But it has received new life in contemporary theology as a device through which to construe an anthropology of 'humankind in God's image'. Emphasis has fallen especially on the relationally orientated trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian Fathers, and this has led to the development of a corresponding Christian anthropology which sees interpersonal relationship as the very *essence* – the *sine qua non* – of authentic personhood.[11] The point being made is that the one God only becomes three *persona* ('Father', 'Son', and 'Spirit') as each relates, in intimate communion, with the other. Or, more precisely, as McFadyen puts it:

> Father, for instance, denotes both a specific individual and the form of relation existing between Him and the other Persons... The Father, Son and Spirit are neither simply modes of relations nor absolutely discreet and independent individuals, but Persons in relation and Persons only through

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11 See especially J.D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: DLT: 1985); The Report *of the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today*, The Forgotten Trinity (London: BCC: 1989); Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990); Colin E. Gunton, 'Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology: Towards a Renewal of the Doctrine of *Imago Dei*', in *Persons, Divine and Human*, eds. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 47-61 (and cf. the other essays in this volume); M. Volf, *After our Likeness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); and, most recently, S. Bachmann, 'Enigma Variations: The *Imago Dei* as the basis for Personhood' (unpublished PhD dissertation, LBC/Brunel University, 2001), and S.J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (London: WJK, 2002). The last came to my attention too late to be used extensively in this essay.

relation. [Divine] Persons exist only as they exist for others, not merely as they exist in and for themselves.[12]

For beings created in such an image, 'personhood' involves an essentially rela-tion-orientated 'I', without, however quite suggesting (contrary to some claims) that personhood is neither more nor less than the relationships themselves.[13]

In a theological world conscious of the deep wounds inflicted by individual-ism, from Descartes onwards, all this appears to offer not merely healing balm, but radical reconstructive surgery. But it has also raised sharp questions. Does such an account presuppose that *human* individuals only become persons (or 'achieve personhood' – and are those different questions?) as they relate to each other? Or are they already persons by virtue of having the *capacity* to relate (and do embryos, foetuses and babies *have* such a 'capacity', or is it merely *poten-tial*)? And do those who suffer various forms of diminishment thereby become 'sub-persons' in the degree to which we lose (or fail to develop) the capacity to relate?[14] These are questions to which we will need to return in part 5, but it should be clear that for McFadyen most of the antitheses are false ones. From the sentient foetal stage onwards, I both *am* a person, and I am becoming one.

One question that has regularly been raised with respect to this whole ap-proach is whether it does not fatally attempt to explain the relatively 'known' topic – human personhood – in terms of the mysterious, and *unknown*, nature of the pre-temporal inter-trinitarian relationships. But this objection appears to rest on two false assumptions. First, it should be apparent that post-moderns are actually quite *unsure* what *human* personhood means. Second, the construal of ontological trinitarian 'personhood' was not a step into the abyss of mystery and speculation. It was a projection onto eternity of the *economic* trinity, as revealed in both testaments, but supremely in the incarnation, life, death, and glorifica-tion of Jesus Christ. So, in *theological* terms, the attempt is to clarify the 'un-known' (what human 'personhood' is really all about) in terms of a 'known' (the personhood of Jesus Christ).

3. Biblical scholars are also largely aware, however, that their discipline has in part *contributed* to the 'problem' of what it means to be a person, by its own analysis of biblical anthropology. Until the twentieth century, a dominant Chris-tian understanding of 'man' (in the inclusive sense) was various baptised ver-sions of the (neo-)Platonic dualistic account of human 'being', which empha-sised the rational/moral 'soul' as animating the 'essence' of what we might now

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12 *Personhood*, 27. This is not quite the same as the over-simplified version of McFadyen supplied by Harriet A. Harris, 'Should we Say That Personhood is Relational?', *SJT* 51 (1998), 214–34 (224-25).

13 See McFadyen's (minimal) glossary definition of 'person' in part V below (and *Personhood*, 317).

14 These concerns are voiced most sharply by Harris, 'Personhood', 214-34; but at points I think she fails adequately to represent the views of her primary opponent (McFadyen).

call the 'person'. Such a 'soul' – whether regarded as being given at fertilization, 'quickening' or parturition – seemed to guarantee 'personhood' at least from birth. It even seemed to ensure the person's eternal survival *beyond* death of the body (whether the soul came finally to reside in heaven or in hell). Biblical scholarship has exposed such a view as a misunderstanding of the hebraic world-view and narrative, which sees the essence of 'man' as a somatic part of creation and society; a vivified *body*, not a ghost in a machine.[15] On such a view, the *nephesh/ psychē* breathed into Adam by God is not the 'substance/essential nature' of his personhood, but merely 'breath of life', 'vitality', such as is given to *all* animal life too (cf. Gen. 1:30; 2:7; 7:15).

Intertestamental Jewish literature and the New Testament admittedly does, however, contribute a certain degree of fuzziness to this picture, in so far as it raises the possibility of some sentient 'intermediate state' beyond death and before 'resurrection'. We shall need to discuss the import of that later.

3. Preliminary New Testament issues

In view of what we have said above, the task before New Testament scholars attempting to address the question of the nature of 'personhood' essentially boils down to this. Given the rough-and-ready stereotype of 'person', outlined in Part 1, what *main* adjustments, additions, and refocussing, need to be made to that stereotype in the light of the New Testament witness?

There are three cardinal guiding considerations, in answering that question:

1. The New Testament writers take up once again, and reaffirm, the otherwise rare biblical language of humanity being 'in God's image'. To say as much is at once to reaffirm the paradigmatic significance of Genesis 1:26-27, with its presentation of humankind as created in the 'image' and 'likeness' of God.[16] Within

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15 The contrast between hellenistic and Judeo-Christian understandings of 'man' in relation to creation and future hope was perhaps most sharply drawn by G.E. Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968). Whether in making the contrast scholars have not tended to overdraw it, and whether the Christian tradition has been as dualistic as is often supposed, are open questions. See Peter Hicks, 'One or two? A historical survey of an aspect of personhood', *EQ* 77 (2005), 35-45.

16 I can only confess to puzzlement at Brueggemann's apparent attempt (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 451-52) to set this aside on the grounds that the description of humans in terms of the 'image of God' is all but confined to these chapters in the OT (cf. Gen. 9:6). By contrast, the whole of the OT could be said to assume that authentic humanity exists in some 'likeness' of God, and the call of Numbers 19:2 ('You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy') sums up the challenge to conform to God's own standards of justice, covenant love and mercy.

Genesis (and the language is not found outside Gen. 1-9 in the OT), it is precisely man's bearing of God's 'image' that distinguishes men and women – even 'fallen' humankind – from all other animal life (so Gen 9:6).[17]

The New Testament witnesses to the same belief. Appealing quite clearly to the creation narrative of Genesis 1:26-27, Paul asserts that men (any males, and not just believers) are 'the image and glory/reflection of God' (1 Cor. 11:7). And if the co-text (for polemical contextual purposes) describes women rather as the 'glory/reflection of *man*', this is not to be taken as a denial of *women's* sharing in God's image.[18] Similarly James can warn believers of the tongue's dangerously divided role, in that we may use it either to bless the Lord, or, equally, to curse people 'made in the likeness (*homoiōma*) of God' (Jas. 3:9). It may be assumed that James does not envisage that such curses are directed at other believers, certainly not exclusively so. So, for James, as for Paul, all humans deserve some special respect because they partake in God's 'image/likeness'.

While the witness of both testaments is that human 'being' thus has some kind of special place above the rest of creation, it remains less than clear in what respect that consists. 'Personhood' may be the answer, but that is not exactly specified.

2. Much more significantly, the New Testament in various ways proclaims Jesus as *the* (eschatological) Adam (esp. in Romans 5 and 1 Cor. 15, but also in many other places),[19] and as the 'image of God' (most explicitly in 2 Cor. 4:4 and Col. 1:15; but cf. also Phil. 2:6 and Heb. 1:3).[20] The affirmation of Jesus as 'the im-

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17 This verse has rightly been recognised as the answer to those who question whether the OT admits that humanity still retains God's image *after* the fall. But the relatively neglected Gen. 5:3 should also be taken into consideration, for it clearly implies that the 'image/likeness of God' is transferred from Adam to his firstborn son, Seth, and so to the remainder of his progeny.

   Some deny that angels are 'persons' in the 'image' of God, but I would question this. Within an OT context of reading, the plural 'Let us make man in our image' would most probably be construed as spoken by God addressing the heavenly council. Two other points may, however, be even more significant. First, within intertestamental Judaism the greater angels are regularly described in terms which would otherwise find their way into descriptions of theophanies. Metatron, seen by Elisha ben Abuyah as seated near God, can even disastrously be confused with God (3 Enoch 16). So, clearly, the 'likeness' between some angels and God was regarded as strong. More important, second, from Genesis right through to the intertestamental apocalypses and pseudepigrapha, God is often portrayed as an angelomorphic being: the great Angel/Angel of the Lord (cf. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A study of Israel's second God* (London: SPCK, 1992); Crispin H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1997), chap. 1).

18 See A.C.Thiselton's theologically nuanced discussion in his *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 833-37.

19 For a review of the topic and its related literature in Paul's letters, see L. J. Kreitzer, 'Adam and Christ' in *DPL*, 9-15.

20 For a brief review and adequate bibliography see D. J. A. Clines, 'Image of God' in Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 426-428.

age of God' is hardly incidental. Indeed it might be considered a central concept to much of the incarnational Christology of the New Testament.[21] But if it is the person of Jesus, as it is expressed in the total Christ-event,[22] that expresses God's image (not merely some quality, such as authority-in-creation, or whatever), then the character of his personhood becomes theologically vital and definitive. After all, *what of greater weight and significance could possibly be said of the human 'person' made 'in God's image' than that God the Son fully became such a 'person' without compromising his unique divine identity, but instead, precisely by incarnation (John 1.14), fully revealed it (John 1:18; cf. 1:1-4; Gal. 4:4-6; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20, etc)?*

While that might appear a statement of the obvious, objections have been offered. Principally it may be objected that a personhood 'in the image of God' that arises from a fusion of the Logos with 'human being' can only provide a very puzzling 'likeness' to ours. This essay cannot address such an issue, but the New Testament and the creeds adamantly assert that Jesus was made like us in every way, except without sin. Apollinarianism of any kind (the teaching that Jesus had a body like ours, but one animated and dominated by the divine Logos, rather than by a human mind/spirit/soul) needs firmly to be resisted. Orthodox Spirit-christologies may provide the necessary answer. They explain Jesus' capacity to 'be' the Logos to us in terms of the Spirit's continuous role as the 'Go-Between' God, the personal uniting bond of love, bringing the personal presence of the Father *to* Jesus, and *through* him, from conception to glorification.[23]

3. The last point is given particular significance by the thrust of those New Testament passages which assert, in one way or another, that believers are (re-) created in the 'image' of *Christ*.

(a) This transformation has a past, and decisive component, in so far as that in conversion-initiation (according to Col. 3:10), believers are said to have put off (like soiled clothes) the 'old man', that is the *Adamic* mode of humanity (*ho palaios anthrōpos*), and to have put on 'the new (man)', by which is meant the

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21 This is a central argument of Philip E. Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1989).

22 I.e. from incarnation to exaltation.

23 Spirit Christologies have regularly been suspected of reducing Jesus to a special case of the 'man of the Spirit' (as, most notably, in G. W. H. Lampe's unitarian theology, *God As Spirit: The Bampton Lectures* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977). But no less conservative a figure than John Owen vigorously supported Jesus' humanity and divinity in such terms (see, e.g., A. Spence, 'Christ's Humanity and Ours: John Owen' in Schwöbel and Gunton, Persons, 74-97). For more recent supporters see Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: OUP, 1994); Graham W. P. McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit: The Doctrine of the Incarnation According to Edward Irving* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996); idem, 'Strange News from Another Star: An Anthropological Insight from Edward Irving' in *Persons, Divine and Human*, eds. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 98–119; W. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM, 1984); G. F. Hawthorne, *The Presence and the Power* (Waco: Word, 1991).

personhood of Christ (cf. Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27).

(b) There is also a present, and *continuous* dimension of this transformation, in so far as that the same passage refers to the new man as one which is 'being (constantly) renewed after the image of its creator' (Col. 3:10). Together with 2 Cor. 3:18, this marks a strongly *personal/relational* understanding of being-in-God's-image. As the latter verse asserts, it is precisely as (= in so far as?) we behold/grasp the glory of the *Lord* (enabled so to do by the Spirit) that we are ourselves increasingly transformed into Christ's image.

(c) The transformation nevertheless awaits a definitive future point, when, through resurrection we become 'conformed to the image of his [God's] Son, so that he might be the firstborn within a great family' (Rom. 8:29). Then 'just as we have borne the image of the man of dust [= Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man [= the resurrected Last Adam, Jesus]' (1 Cor. 15:49). Similarly, we might compare Colossians 3:1-4; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2, etc.

In all this it is clear that Jesus is presented as the *paradigm* of human personhood, that is of man in the image of God. The Christ-event clearly also dramatically addresses the *worth* of human personhood. That the pre-existent Son becomes incarnate as a paradigm of man in the image of God is one thing; that he submits to the ignominious death of the cross in order to reconcile humankind to God provides the most solid possible foundation for belief in the sanctity of human life, and of the significance of human personhood before God.

We may now proceed to ask in what respects the Jesus story informs our understanding of personhood: how does it engage the 'stereotype' of personhood arrived at in Part 1? While in one sense it confirms what we listed as stereotypical traits, in another sense it re-shapes the whole picture. Here we offer three brief observations.

1. The Christ-event establishes the importance of 'bodily' existence for authentic human personhood. The Logos *became* flesh (Jn. 1:14). Human personhood can perhaps survive death in some kind of disembodied 'intermediate' state – as Jesus' own reassuring words to the crucified criminal beside him may imply: 'Today you will be with me in Paradise', Luke 23:43.[24] But it is Jesus' bodily resurrection on the third day, not any such shadowy 'interim existence', that becomes the focus of the kerygma. For Paul too, any such 'intermediate' state, without the natural clothing of a body, is mere 'nakedness' (2 Cor. 5:3-4). His real hope is that the Parousia might arrive *before* death, with its consequent disembodiment, and that his mortal body might thus be 'overclothed' and swallowed up by the resurrection body (2 Cor. 5:4; 1 Cor. 15:51-54). Christian hope is not for death's release of the soul into 'heaven'; but rather, as Paul puts it, we await a Saviour *from* heaven, 'who will transform our lowly body into the likeness of his great and glorious body' (Phil. 3:21) – i.e. bodily resurrection in a new creation

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24 Paul too appears to hold such a view; esp. at Phil. 1:19-23 and 2 Cor. 5:1-9; on which see L. Kreitzer, 'Intermediate State' in *DPL* 438-41, and the literature indicated there.

under new heavens.[25]

2. Most importantly, the Jesus story points to the radical *theocentricity* of authentic personhood. This love for, worship of, and obedient service to, the Father is not an incidental 'choice' that the Son 'happens' to make, in the same way that Herod may have had a predilection for fast chariots and great building projects. It is fundamentally constitutive of his personal being *as* Son that he lives in, for, and from the Father. The mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, in love, is, of course, a key emphasis in John's Gospel. And it lies behind the various forms of the statement that the Son is 'one' with the Father (so, esp., 10:30; 17:11, 21-22; but cf. 5:19-20; 8:28; 14:8-11; such statements provide the basis for the later doctrine of *perichoresis*). To *be* the *Son* was to live in such intimate union with the Father as to fully reveal him (John 1:18).

But for John, this is not merely a matter of Jesus having some distinctive sonship. What is true of the Son, is what is expected of all sons. It is (unsurprisingly, in the light of Gen. 1-2) the vocation of all human beings as persons in God's image. To live otherwise is to live in darkness, death, alienation, and all manner of other 'false' modes of personhood – departures from the kind of personhood intended by God in the creation of man in his image, and departures from the kind of personhood supremely revealed in the Son. Accordingly, John calls people to new 'birth from God' (3:3-5) as 'sons/children' (1:12; 1 John 3:1, etc.). It is a call to experience the same 'fellowship' with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3), and a similar self-revealing 'indwelling' of the Father and the Son in the disciple (John 14:20-24), that Jesus had experienced with the Father (cf. 1 John 2:6-11, 15; 4:16). This was to know 'life' itself (John 17:3).

3. The Jesus story clearly also brings powerful and searching light on the 'socially related' nature of authentic personhood. In his message, this is given radical 'heterocentric' focus. To live out personhood in the image of the trinitarian God – especially as revealed at Golgotha – is to live in sacrificial self-giving of love, first to the community of brothers and sisters, then to wider circle of humanity beyond. Disciples are called to live out, and so reveal, the same harmonious 'unity' of love amongst themselves as they find (a) in the mutual love of the Father and the Son (John 17:11, 21-22) and (b) in Jesus' love for them (John 13:35; 15:12, 17). Those who live in such 'fellowship', thereby show they are 'born of God, and know God (1 Jn. 4:7-12); by contrast, a person who does *not* live in such love of neighbour thereby demonstrates he or she does *not* know God (1 John 3-4).[26] But we can explore these themes more fully in Ephesians, to which we now turn.

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25 It is probable that for Paul most (if not all) forms of personal being (including angels, etc.) have *some* kind of 'body' (1 Cor. 15:35-41), at least in the sense of form and boundaries. And such certainly appears to be the case of the angelomorphic beings in the OT apocrypha and pseudepigrapha.

26 See Max Turner, 'The Churches of the Johannine Letters as Communities of "Trinitarian" *Koinōnia*', in *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler, JPTS* vol. 24, ed. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 53–61.

4. 'Personhood' in Ephesians

Initial issues

The Christian reader approaches the question of 'personhood' in Ephesians with due recognition that the letter is a relatively late Pauline writing (whether by the apostle himself or by a disciple on his behalf), and that it finds its context within the more general proclamation and theology of the apostolic church, for whom what we call the Old Testament was already Scripture, and for whom Christ was the fulfilment of Scripture and the fullest expression of God's Word to human-kind.

The letter is written self-consciously as a 'companion letter' to Colossians, and must be read in special conjunction with it. This is made clear not only by the close relations of language and themes between the two (with Ephesians sharing about nearly 1/3 of the wording of Colossians), but especially by the closing passage of each (Col. 4:7-8//Eph. 6:21-22) which essentially reads: 'Now that you may also know how I am and what I am doing, Tychichus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts'.[27] If Colossians is the more specific letter, written to head off potential false-teaching in that city, Ephesians presents a more general and largely epideictic account of related themes for a wider audience.

Orientation towards 'personhood' issues in Ephesians

Coming as readers to Ephesians, we must recognise how deeply Western Mod-erns and post-Moderns are being asked to venture into a strange country, almost another world. Descartes, Enlightenment 'man', the Romanticists, Kant, Freud, Jung, and developments since, have placed the major emphasis of personhood

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27 Here the wording is that of Eph., but that of Col. is virtually the same. The similarity between Eph. and Col. throughout the letters has usually been taken as a sign of the literary dependence of Eph. on Col. (and of the pseudepigraphical character of Eph). But this has now been seriously challenged by E. Best, who argues that careful attention to the differences in parallel passages indicates neither that Eph. used Col., nor that Col. used Eph. ('Who Used Whom? The Relationship of Ephesians and Colossians', *NTS* 43 (1997), 72-96). Best concludes that neither letter was written by Paul, but two disciples of Paul (who happened to have conferred about how they might end such a letter), wrote independently. This cannot be the easiest explanation of the almost exact parallel between Col. 4:7-8 and Eph. 6:21-22! Pauline authorship of Colossians (jointly written with Timothy) is still the most probably account of that letter (so James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996)). In that case, Eph. was probably written (in whole or in part [see J. Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Continuum, 2001]) at the same time, possibly as the letter to Laodicea (and Hierapolis?) mentioned in Col. 4:16, though perhaps not intended purely for the Lycus valley towns, but also for the main centre on the way, Ephesus. If the letter is post-Pauline, then 6:21-22 is evidence that the writer deliberately intended it to be *read* as a companion letter to Colossians.

on the *inner* self, the subjective and all-too-readily individualistic pole of experience, the world-interpreting (including 'self-interpreting') 'I'. The first century Graeco-Roman world, like so much of the modern Eastern and Southern worlds, was fundamentally different. Their concept of the 'person' (as with the Fathers!) is fundamentally much more dyadic, that is, essentially relational and group-orientated.[28] The 'person' marks him- or herself by (a) what place she has in her wider society (e.g., her lineage); (b) with which society she is identified (e.g. her *ethnos*, her city, etc.); (c) his or her upbringing, education and training (under which teachers, involving what skills, and understanding, etc.); and (d) his or her accomplishments, in terms of public deeds, and visible 'persona'. Within such a cultural setting, introspective and psychologising accounts of the 'self' may be expected to be found little more frequently than the proverbial mare's nest. Frank Sinatra's beautiful celebration of individualism, in his famous song 'I did it my way!', would never have got anywhere near the Roman or Athenian top ten, far less into the Jerusalem charts.

Ephesians does not address the question of the nature of 'personhood' any more directly than other New Testament or contemporary writing. But, like other New Testament writings, only to a much fuller extent, it does contrast two different ways of *being* 'man' – one regarded as 'false', the other 'true' – and in so doing it elucidates what it means to be a person in the likeness of God.

The pivotal passages, in this respect, are probably Ephesians 4:20-24 and 4:31-5:2. The former (with Col. 3:9-10) expresses the need to put off the old (Adamic) humanity, and put on the new form of personhood, created in the likeness of God, and of which the paradigm is Christ. The latter passage exhorts readers to be 'imitators of God' by exercising Christ's total and self-giving love.

Though the specific language of renewal in God's image (*eikōn*), present in Colossians 3:10, is absent from the Ephesians parallel, it is clear that vv. 23-24 essentially restate the ideas which Colossians compresses into the clause 'being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator'. The segment 'renewed in knowledge' (an allusion to the Adamic fateful quest for knowledge)[29] is replaced by 'renewed in the s/Spirit of your minds'[30] (compare Rom. 12:2), while 'after the image of its creator' has become '[new person] created according to God' – a closely allied concept, but one informed by Eph. 2:10 and 2:15. The further idea that believers are called to 'imitate God', as beloved 'children', by exhibiting God's forgiving love (4:32) and living in *Christ*-like love (5:2), clearly belong to the same

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28 See especially, B. J. Malina and J. H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville: WJK, 1996).

29 See Dunn, 221-22.

30 See Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 710-12, arguing against the majority that the anthropological interpretation of 'spirit' here is unparalleled and makes little sense. Fee would like to think the phrase is shorthand for 'be renewed in your minds by the Spirit', but recognising the problems moves to a more cautious position expressed as follows: 'this is yet another instance where we should recognize the human spirit as the first referent, but be prepared also to recognize the Holy Spirit as hovering nearby, since in Paul's own theology, such renewal is indeed the work of the Spirit' (712)

general concept of renewal of personhood in God's (Christocentric) image.

Here clearly we are on the familiar Pauline ground of the great Adam/Christ contrast and its related themes, even though there are subtle new nuances.[31] But to draw out the significance of the contrast in Ephesians 4/5, we need first to contextualise it within the broader setting of Ephesians. In an earlier writing on Ephesians, I briefly summarised that co-textual setting as follows:

> [T]he letter known as 'Ephesians' elucidates perhaps more comprehen-
> sively than any other New Testament writing what we might call the new
> 'meaning' which the Christian message offers to humanity. The majority of
> the letter is dominated by an extensive (and sharply antithetical) contrast
> between the 'then' of the readers' pre-Christian existence and the 'now' of
> their new life in Christ (cf. esp. 2.1-10; 11-22; 4.17-24; 4.25-5.2; 5.3-14, 15-
> 18).[32] Of especial interest is the way the writer expresses this principally in
> a duality between erstwhile *alienation* and present participation in cosmic
> *reconciliation* or *re-unification* in Christ. This latter theological emphasis
> has important implications not merely for a Christian view of the church,
> but also for a fundamental understanding of the nature of human person-
> hood in redemption.[33]

What we need now is to explore more fully the writer's understanding of the symbolic universe relating to the old and new 'man'.

The symbolic universe of personhood in Ephesians

We may spell out the symbolic universe of 'personhood' in Ephesians by asking three questions, (1) What was our experience of personhood (i.e. before Christ?) (2) What is it now? (3) What shall it be? To each of which we will devote one of the following sections.

(1) What was our experience of personhood? – the past of alienation

On this, Paul's answer differs slightly, depending on whether he is talking about the past of his mainly Gentile readers (concerning which he is unremittingly bleak (see 2:12, but especially 4:17-19),[34] or whether he is speaking of Jews. The

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31 Compared with Rom. 13:12 and Gal. 3:27, there is a slight shift from the more direct talk of 'putting on Christ' in Rom./Gal. to the slightly more oblique formulations in Col. 3 and Eph. 4, which concern rather a 'putting on of a new nature/humanity,' *like* Christ's. But the difference is minor (as Col. 3:1-4 shows), as it is precisely by union with Christ, and by deepening indwelling Christ (cf. Eph. 3:17-19) enabled by the Spirit, that the life of the new personhood is fulfilled.

32 The best overall treatment of this contrast in early Christianity is that by P. Tachau, *"Einst" und "Jetzt" im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972), esp. 134-43. But for an English summary and criticism of his handling of Ephesians see e.g. A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Waco: Word, 1990), 86-88; 125-26.

33 Max Turner, 'Mission and Meaning in Terms of "Unity" in Ephesians', in (eds. Antony Billington, Tony Lane, and Max Turner), *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 138-66, here 338-39.

34 Ernest Best, *Essays on Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), ch. 8.

latter he regards as having been at least 'near' God (in terms of the language of Isa. 57:19, which he uses in 2:13 and 17), while he identifies Isaiah's 'those afar off' with Gentiles). But in the context of other statements, this distinction appears to amount a mild differentiation between different shades of dark grey. According to 2:3 'we all' (Jew and Gentile) lived under the evil powers (cf. 2:1-2), in sin, and under judgment, 'like the rest of mankind'; we were *all* children of wrath (2:3), and 'dead' in our trespasses (2:1, 5).

The over-arching concept that especially sums up the character of the believers' old personhood is 'multiple alienation'. This is most markedly so with respect to the Gentiles, who are portrayed within a single verse as separated from Christ, alienated from Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God (2:12; cf. 2:15). And when the writer offers a thumbnail sketch of the 'Gentile life' which believers should now avoid (4:17-19), it is again in terms of 'alienation from the life of God', even indeed of stubborn resistance to him ('hardness of heart' 4:18), and so of 'ignorance' and 'futility of mind', but also of *socially* alienating sin (callousness, greed, licentiousness, (sexual) 'uncleanness', etc., and compare the vice-list in 5:3-5). Of course the account is one-sided (precisely of those aspects of Gentile life to be *avoided*); there were plenty of Gentiles with noble, socially cohesive, ethics.[35] But Paul still regards the life of the new humanity as one of one of great contrast with unbelieving Gentile life, for reasons that we shall see.

More nuanced in his portrayal of Judaism as those 'near God', enjoying covenants of promise and hope (2:12); but 'the near' too need to hear the message of 'peace' (2:17), and they too still need to be reconciled to God (2:16). Their alienation from God may not have been so deep, and so distancing, but it was real nonetheless – at least it was perceived to be so retrospectively by those who embraced the message of peace, and entered into the renewal of personhood offered in Christ.

(2) What is our experience of personhood now? – renewal in God's Image

The heart of the matter is perhaps best indicated in the programmatic climax of the opening eulogy of Ephesians. In 1:9-10 we are told that God's ultimate plan for the end of the ages is to 'sum up *all* things in Christ', and what this appear to *mean* is that God's intended end-game is the whole alienation-ridden cosmos back be brought back into full and harmonious unity with himself in and under

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35 See esp. Best, *Essays*, 142-46, and Peter William Gosnell, 'Behaving as a Convert: Moral Teaching in Ephesians Against Its Traditional and Social Backgrounds', (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Sheffield 1992). Gosnell argues that the *Christian* ethics of Ephesians does not differ materially from that of, e.g., Plato's, *Laws*; Aristotle's, *Nicomachean Ethics*, and various parts of the discourses of Dio Chrysostom and Epictetus. The point is partly taken, but see below.

Christ.[36] Moreover, 1:9c asserts that this grand plan has been decisively *launched* in Jesus (the *proetheto* of v. 9 should be translated 'set forth', as RSV, NRS; not merely as 'purposed', as in NIV). The eulogy of 1:3-14 thus celebrates the same grand cosmic reconciliation announced by the partly parallel 'hymn' in Colossians 1:15-20 (esp. vv. 19-20).

But this 'simple' assertion explodes in the total co-text of the epistles into a galaxy of related ideas all bearing on personhood. For convenience, we may 'organise' them into the vertical (God-related) and the horizontal (societally-related) dimensions of personhood in God's image – though it will soon enough emerge that such a distinction is not merely artificial, but in danger of missing the point.

(A) Renewal of the vertical dimension of personhood in God's image

Paul envisages such a profound change in the relation of human persons *to God*, that it justifies the sharp antithesis between old humankind/new humankind we have already noted in Colossians 3:9-10 and Ephesians 4:20-24, 28-30; 5:1-2. We may briefly note some of the major ways in which this is elaborated before the reader's eyes, almost as a triumphal parade:

(i) Already in the eulogy (1:3-14) she is told that believers are united with the risen Lord, and that by virtue of that unity in the heavenly places *they already begin to share* in the eschatological blessings, including full redemption (1:7), sonship (1:5), rich knowledge of God's wonderful mystery (his intent to reconcile all), final vindication/glorification 1:11-12),[37]. In their reception of the seal of God, the Holy Spirit, they have received the first instalment of, and guarantee of, the riches of their heavenly inheritance (1:13-14; cf. 1:18). Correspondingly, in 1:19-23, the church his Christ's body, and the locus he especially 'fills' with his presence.[38]

(ii) In 2.1-10, the contrast between old and new existence is that between past living 'death' in sin, manipulated by the powers, and present spiritual co-resurrection union with the exalted Lord. This state of being 'saved' – for the verb here refers specifically to the co-resurrectional unity with Christ, and represents '*inaugurated*', not fully realised eschatology[39] – is, for Paul a full expression of the magnitude of the power of God already at work in believers (1:19).[40] And what it

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36 On the background and sense of 1:9-10, and the relevant literature, see Turner, 'Unity', 139-43. Best (140-41) doubts whether *anakephalaiō* (lit. 'to sum up') really means 'to reconcile'. As to lexical sense, he is of course right. But the kind of 'summing up' of 'all things' in Christ which the author has in mind appears (in the light of the rest of Ephesians, and of the parallel in Col. 1:18-20) to be precisely their reconciliation into unity both through his death and *under* his exalted lordship (1:20-23, etc).

37 That appears to be the point of v. 12 (cf. Col. 1:22), which should probably be translated: 'in order that we, who have first [i.e. now] hoped in Christ, may *then* [i.e. at the final tribunal] be to the praise of his glory'. See Turner, 'Ephesians', 1126.

38 On Paul's prevalent 'Christ-mysticism' see, e.g., Dunn, *Paul*, 390-412.

39 See Turner, 'Ephesians' 1229-30, against Lindemann, Lincoln, et al.

40 In this respects 2:1-6 belongs *with* 1:19-23 as a further expression of the power of God at work. The kai at the beginning of 2:1 is genuinely continuative (with Schnackenburg), and the chapter division is unfortunate.

amounts to is nothing less than (new) *creation* (2:10) of the person, with consequent vocation to accomplish *work* for God.

(iii) The reader of 2:11-13, may at first expect the passage will go on to expound how Gentile believers have now been 'brought near' to God and share in the blessings of messianic Judaism. But 2:14 onwards gives this a dramatic twist. In Christ, believing Jews and Gentiles are united together as one body, so that he might 'create in himself one new man in place of the two' (note the Adamic allusions here). This tertium quid (no longer Jew or Gentile) is reconciled to God, and through Christ has access to the Father through the gift of Spirit (2:18). Indeed, according to 2:19-21, believers have become citizens of the eschatological temple city (19), or, following the switch of imagery in 2:20-21, they have become living building stones of the eschatological temple itself, the very dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

(iv) Two further related images deserve pride of place. In 4:7-16, and in 5:22-33, Paul takes up the earlier imagery of believers as together the 'body of Christ', while referring to Christ himself as 'head' (cf. 1:23). Such a relationship would certainly be suggestive of the unity of Christ and the church, but it may miss the point. In 1:23, Christ is not simply 'head' of the body, but given to the church as 'head (= 'lord') of all things (= the cosmos)'. According to this picture, the church is a full body in itself, not merely a headless torso. The same appears to be the point in 4.15-16, where the picture is not of the church as a torso growing into its head (a rather bizarre thought), but the church as a child growing up to become a man with the full stature/maturity of Christ (4.13), in the meantime always growing towards her 'head' (= lord), 'from *whom*' (not 'from *which*') the whole body grows as it builds itself in uniting love.

In Ephesians 5:22-33, in the middle of paraenesis on marriage, Paul clarifies further. Building from Genesis 2:24, Paul portrays the husband and wife becoming one 'body' (instead of 'one flesh') by their union in love, and so the husband should love the wife, recognising her as his own body. If the husband is referred to as the 'head' of the wife, that does not mean he is to think of their union as the coming together of Mr Head and Miss Torso – rather, as husband he may assume he will be 'head' (=master/lord) of the ensuing household, but he comes as a whole male body to unite 'as one body', with a woman who already has her own anatomical head. And it is this kind of relationship, Paul clearly thinks, that exists between Christ and the church, his bride (5:23-24; 25-27; 30-32). Christ does not come as disembodied 'head' to unite with, and make one body, with an otherwise headless trunk. He comes as the complete and lordly husband to unite with a complete and pure bride in a fullness of self-giving love that makes them 'one body'.

The last may be a good point at which to draw together the strands of renewal of personhood in the vertical dimension of being in the image of God. *For all the above are different ways of exploring/explaining the 'new man' in terms of a profound, thoroughly relational, intimately loving, and transforming presence of God in Christ through the Spirit.* In Ephesians that is perhaps best focused in Paul's prayer in 3.15-19, a prayer that the Spirit strengthen the inner man,

that Christ might dwell there and suffuse the heart with love, and that being so strengthened one might be enabled to grasp the enormity of the love of Christ, and thereby to be filled with all the fullness of God. This is full authentic person-hood as the believers first learned it in Christ (4:20), and it turns 'humankind' in the image of God into 'worshipping man' (cf. 5:15-20), 'praying man' (so most of Eph. 1-3, but also e.g. 6:18-19, 23-24), and 'serving/vocational man' (3:1, 7-13, and most of chs 4-6).

(B) Renewal of the horizontal dimension of personhood in God's image

The launching of the plan to sum up all things in harmonious unity in Christ, also profoundly informs and changes the horizontal dimension of personhood (though the 'also' here would be thoroughly misconstrued if it were taken to mean that such changes are somehow independent of those mentioned above).

I have dealt with the *ecclesial* consequences of this in relative detail else-where,[41] so there is no need to cover the same ground. Nevertheless, we may offer the following observations:

(i) The church is constituted as a community of the reconciliation of all things in Christ, and as the bringing together of the two 'realms' – Jews and Gentiles, formerly in hostility – as one new body in Christ, one heavenly eschatological temple (so Eph. 1-2). She is the realm of (messianic) 'peace' that results when alienating enmity is torn down (2:14-18; cf. 4:3). Her very existence in history as one harmonious ecclesia of Jews and Gentiles, and with a new distinct identity (neither Jew nor Gentile, but one body in Christ) is God's witness to the heavenly powers of his manifold wisdom and eschatological intent (3:4-6; 8-11).

All this presupposes that the new man created in Christ is fundamentally re-structured away from a personhood of 'self'-centredness, 'closedness' and al-ienation, towards one of reconciliation, and a new 'openness' of self-giving love to the neighbour.

(ii) Precisely this is the assumption of the extensive treatment of ethical top-ics, in chs 4-6. This sets out from the urgent call to be 'eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit [=the unity he gives] in bond of peace' (4:3) to a definition of the church in terms of such foundational unity (4:4-6) and then describes the task of all ministry as to promote the harmonious growth of the body in unity towards the stature and maturity of its Lord (4:7-16). It is in that context, that Paul calls his readers to put off 'the old man' and to live instead the personhood they have learned through the Christ-event (4:20-24; 4:30-5:2): the forgiving, loving, self-giving, God-imitating, life of Christ. The ethical advice which follows exempli-fies this call, from the first specific exhortation to put away falsehood, and only speak the truth with one's neighbour, 'because *we are members one of another*' (4:25), through to the advice to husbands and wives to live out the loving unity of Christ and the Church. The topics between largely stress the kind of behaviour that will promote the vision of corporate unity and condemn those that would threaten it.

41 Turner, 'Unity', *passim.*

The focus of Ephesians implies that restored personhood is thus *essentially* ecclesially-orientated. Authentic personhood is woman-in-relation to neighbour.

Both 'dimensions' of the renewal of humankind in God's image addressed in the letter have implications which amount to the creation, in Christ, of a profoundly new kind of personhood-in-relations.

(3) What shall it be – the future of new personhood

It needs to be recognised that nearly everything that has been said in section 2, immediately above, represents a merely *inaugurated* eschatology. Paul does not expect the church to reach 'the [full] unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God', nor to attain 'full manhood...the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (4:13), this side of the Parousia. The 'day of redemption' still lies ahead (4:30); at present we have only the first instalment and guarantee of our inheritance (1:14). The present are evil days (5:16; 6:13), days of spiritual battle (6:10-20), and of choices to be made about which kind of personhood we live. The writer would readily point to the companion letter, for the point that at present our real life is still hidden with Christ in the heavenly places: and only 'When Christ who is our life appears', will we 'then ... also appear with him in glory' (Col. 3:3-4), or, as the eulogy puts it, 'to the [eschatological] praise of his great glory' (1:14, cf. 1:6, 12).

5. Conclusion and prospect

Under this head we can offer only brief remarks:

Personhood (in the light of Ephesians) as dynamic/relational, rather than merely static/positional

There is a case to be made that the necessary and sufficient criterion of the predicate 'person' is simply 'individual natural living being of the genetic species *homo sapiens*' – and that the term 'person' thus applies from the zygotal stage onwards. That case rests fundamentally on the argument that 21-year-old Duncan, standing before me – more accurately, towering over me – is (and always has been) genetically distinct from Lucy and myself (his biological parents). And, arguably, had the single-cell zygote, which was his beginnings, been initially grown to an embryo *in vitro*, and then implanted in some surrogate womb, but subsequently brought up in our nurture, it would still be essentially the same Duncan.[42] And, right from the word 'Go!', his 'person' could be defined in 'positional' terms in respect of the web of relationships he will grow into (family, society, nation, etc.).

I have no problem with this use of the word 'person', though it clearly has a quite different sense from the stereotypical one. (And that observation itself suggests that it is perhaps more than time that the main dictionaries recognised

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42 This is the argument of Oliver O'Donovan, *The Christian and the Unborn Child* (Bramcote: Grove Booklets on Ethics (1), 1975²).

the degree of polysemy which is actually involved in English usage of the word.) But while recognising such a usage of person^{zygotal}, its place in the collection of lexical units 'person' would be regarded by others as marginal, and as potentially misleading – precisely because it lacks virtually all other traits of person^{stereotypical}. So, many would prefer to speak of Duncan's zygote as an 'individuated case of human being', rather than calling it a 'person'.[43] Evidently we could (and perhaps should) distinguish other lexemes of the type 'person' according to their share of the traits of stereotypical personhood. The main dictionaries already tend to distinguish person^{legal} and person^{philosophical}. Other candidates are person^{foetal} (post 24 wk, pre-natal human being); person^{infant}, person$^{socio-linguistic}$, etc.

To posit these different lexemes is at once to suggest that a dynamic/relational view of personhood, such as that advanced by McFadyen, is more capable of dealing with the complexities involved. According to McFadyen's basic definition of (human) 'person', it is:

> 'an individual who is publicly identifiable as a distinct, continuous and integrated social location from [sic] whence communication may originate and to which it may be directed: who has the capacity for autonomous engagement in social communication, and who has a unique identity sedimented from previous interaction' (Personhood, 317).

The first part of the definition embraces the static/positional view, the second is more open to dynamic/relational understandings. The concepts of human 'being' in Ephesians clearly tilt towards the latter. The very fact that 'I' can be the subject of 'death to'/'putting off of' my former self, of co-resurrection as an entirely 'new' anthrōpos in Christ, of constant renewal towards the latter, and can anticipate substantial personal transformation at resurrection, raises important questions about the static/positional model. By contrast, a fundamentally dynamic/relational model, using the metaphor of 'sedimentation', more easily allows for the catastrophic/anastrophic changes Ephesians implies. The creation of the 'new man' at conversion-initiation could be accounted for as a decisive fault-line in the sedimentation process, and so could resurrection-transformation.

The theo- and christo-centricity of personhood in the New Testament

There can be little doubt that for Ephesians, as for other New Testament writings, a cardinal criterion of authentic personhood (person^{auth}) is theocentric relationship in the image of Christ. The writer was evidently not directly facing the question of the status and dignity of the 'person' outside such a relationship, but,

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43 And here a further complication arises: until the fourteen-day stage, it is unclear whether such a zygote will develop into one, two, or more embryos. So is the zygote 'Duncan' or is it 'Duncan + Alasdair + John'? Retrospectively, the answer is clear. But prospectively it is not, and it was on such grounds that the Warnock Report decided that human embryonic tissue was just that – not persons – until the fourteen-day point.

from what one can infer, his view on the subject appears relatively bleak. In so far as he uses Adamic language at all, we may suppose he would agree that all people are made 'in God's image', with a worth that sets them above other creatures. But in so far as he regards 'alienated' beings 'in the image of Adam' as a sort of personhood that must *die*, or be 'put off', he grants little ground to Romanticist views of personhood. Personhood 'in Adam' is at worst simply a specimen that one might expect to see preserved in formalin in so many jars in the heavenly counterpart to today's pathology laboratory. (I trust there will not be such a gruesome entity!) At best, it is a type of being that can respond to the gospel and enjoy recreation in God's authentic image (and that itself speaks volumes). But Ephesians does not further address the question, and there, in one sense, we probably have to leave the letter.

The implications of the Jesus-story for life (in the womb) before 'personhood', and for developing personhood within the womb

If we adopt as the 'normal' (linguistically 'unmarked') lexical sense of 'personhood' that it includes *relational* traits of an experiential and dynamic kind, then, evidently, the status of pre-natal, yet individuated human beings is in some doubt. Are they 'persons' or not? And what are the consequences of a decision on such a matter?

Most would rough-and-readily agree that by twenty-four weeks the foetus is sentient, and in some minimal senses relational (at least with respect to mother). Most would also agree that it *not* possible to speak of sentience and relationality *before* the fourteen day point at which the neural canal first begins to emerge as a grey streak in the embryo.[44] So a relationally-orientated view of 'personhood' could not easily be pitched before that point, and many would not wish to place it before 'quickening' (approx. twenty-four weeks).

It is clear from the New Testament witness of Luke that babes in the womb are regarded as some kind of 'persons'. In the (approx.) twenty-fifth week of John the Baptist's embryonic existence, he 'leapt' in Elizabeth's womb to greet the newly conceived Son of God, Jesus, in Mary's (Lk 1.26, 41). On other grounds, it might reasonably be argued that at *this* stage the Son of God was himself not yet a (human) 'person'. The embryo of Jesus may not yet have differentiated even to the state of having the clear beginnings of neural canal, and so would not have any sentient and relational capacity.

But it must *not* be assumed that the consequences of denying Jesus' human 'personhood', at this stage, are a denial of his individuated human being, or of the worth of that human being. The rest of the gospel can only mark a sharp apostrophe to such a suggestion: we cannot look at the zygote of Jesus without considering the teleology of Jesus. Nor can we forget that the son – even as a single cell of humanity – is beloved of the Father, through the Spirit

In the light of this, biblical Christians should inevitably take all zygotal and

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44 Hence The Warnock Report's 1984 decision that human embryonic tissue could be used for experimentation up to but not beyond the fourteenth day.

embryonic life seriously. Given that all zygotes are individuated human beings, with the potential for 'personal' and resurrectional 'life', we may need carefully to consider, for example, whether the coil and the morning-after pill are appropriate forms of avoiding child-birth. At the same time, we may need to recognise that no zygote has anything like the special place of the incarnate Son, protected by the overshadowing presence of the Spirit. Indeed, only 40% of zygotes implant in the womb in such a way as to survive, and many of those do not survive. Whether such 'failures' could be regarded as 'persons' is moot. That is evident in the fact that we do not tend to honour even quite late 'miscarriages' by formal burial, let alone baptism.

There is evidently a tension here which still needs to be thoughtfully and prayerfully addressed. But, for most of us, zygotes, while human 'beings' of some kind – and so in need of great respect –, are not yet regarded as 'persons'. For most, foetuses become 'persons' shortly before, at, or immediately after, birth. (In such a light one can perhaps understand the 1973 Federal rulings that actually forbade States to issue laws protecting the foetus before 'viability' (20 wks), and only permit, but do not require States to provide protection between viability and birth.[45])

The implications of the Jesus-story for understanding personhood in the diminishments and end of life

As Banner argues, the death of Jesus teaches us not to fear death, but under God's grace to face it with the sure hope of resurrection. That hope carries the implications that on the one hand we should not strive officiously to keep alive (by degrading overtreatment), while on the other hand nor should we hurriedly impose death, or actively supply it, merely to make the ending more comfortable and dignified (euthanasia).[46] Crucifixion was deliberately degrading, and was widely feared more for the shame than for the pain it inflicted (terrible though that was). If the Son of God suffered *that* death, he has in a sense drawn the sting

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45 See O'Donovan, *Child*, 8.

46 Our duty to ease pain, even where the means of doing such may *hasten* death, is respected by law. But deliberately to terminate a human life, with or without the consent of the patient, is to cross the Rubicon. In the case of Tony Bland, the young man whose condition was reduced to persistent vegetative state following the Hillsborough disaster, the Appeal Court permitted the hospital to withdraw respiratory support, nutrition and hyrdration, knowing that this would lead to TB's death. At that point it may have been more convenient for all had Tony's bodily life simply been finished off by, say, an intravenous injection of potassium chloride. But the law distinguishes sharply between 'omission' and 'acts'. The former may be lawful; the latter would amount to murder. That was precisely the problem for the Appeal Court in its consideration of the conjoined Siamese twins, known as Jodie and Mary. The situation was that without surgical separation, both would certainly die. But to act to save Jodie would inevitably kill Mary. Their Lordships ruled that the operation should go ahead, chiefly on the basis of the difficult legal question of 'necessity' (circumstances may necessitate that A kill B to save his own life): see *All England Law Reports*, 2000, 961-1070.

of all deaths. Christ's death and resurrection give us hope to face our own diminishments and death, and the courage to face the diminishments and/or death of those we love. Diminishment and death may humble us, and may humble those who love us, but Christ – the resurrected and glorified Christ – is the last word. Our personhood, however sorely wounded by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, will finally be transformed. It is fitting to end with John's words. 'Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we know is this: when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we will see him as he is.' (1 Jn 3.2).

Abstract

The article first examines general linguistic issues involved in speaking about personhood in the NT, and argues that it is not anachronistic to ask how the NT (or any other ancient document) relates to a modern linguistic stereotype of 'personhood. In a second part, the article examines further the objects and method of such an inquiry. In part 3, we examine the more general NT contribution, and its Christological focus of the issues. Part 4 provides a relatively detailed analysis of personhood (alienated and reconciled) in Ephesians: the single NT writing that provides richest analysis of our theme. Part 5 briefly considers some implications of the dynamic/relational model of personhood elicited there to more modern questions about personhood in relation to foetal life and in the diminishments of old age.