



THEOLOGIES OF THE BODY (POLITIC)

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Development & methods

NAVEL DISCOVERIES

My research focuses on the pregnant body.

My enduring interest: political theology, with special attention to social sin & systemic injustice.

A holy interruption: the birth of my son.

Addressing a need in feminist literature: pregnancy.

There are good reasons for this gap:

- a need to decouple ideals about motherhood and womanhood.
- worries about the dangers of essentialism.
- desires to avoid divisive debates about abortion.

But the need remains. We must center maternal bodies ...

- as a matter of *justice*: providing for the needs of pregnant persons.
- as a matter of *prudence*: we will learn more about who we are and what we owe.

Fortunately, there are increasing developments in this direction.

- Memoirs (“mom lit”).
- *Human Dependency & Christian Ethics; The Obligated Self; Motherhood: A Confession.*
- JRE issue on motherhood (49.2, 2021).
- Motherhood workshop (and future unit) at AAR; motherhood panel at APSA.

Current project

MATRICES: PREGNANCY, PIETY, AND THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF HUMAN AGENCY

The project begins by portraying what it is like to be pregnant.

Then, I present five lessons that pregnancy can teach us. Pregnancy helps us understand:

1. the diachronicity of human life and our need for social norms.
2. our sociality, and its attendant features—language and other-regard—and our need for families.
3. the political obligation that follows from our interdependence, and the limits of that obligation.
 - a. We need a politics that appreciates *both* our need for each other *and* the dignity of persons.
 - b. Examples: enslavement, eugenics, COVID vaccines, pregnancy.
 - c. Paul’s vision integrates the best of Rawlsian liberal theory and neo-republican theory.
4. our need for gender, if gender names the social meaning of sex, per MacKinnon & Haslanger.
 - a. The division of reproductive burdens across the sexes is unequal and non-redistributable.
 - b. It is not just *pregnancy* that presents burdens, but *uterus-having* does, too. (*Contra* Haslanger.)
 - c. A tongue-in-cheek proposal: “*hysterics*.”
5. the piety, or “appreciation for the sources of our being,” that we owe to our forebears.
 - a. Integrating Aquinas on piety with 20th century pragmatists: Santayana, Dewey, and Stout.
 - b. Piety must be *critical*: those communities that malform us deserve dishonor, not honor.

Future research

BODIES POLITIC

Political theology project: *Theological Republicanism*.

American critics of domination—the subjection of a person to the arbitrary will of another—supported their critique with theological reasoning.

- Black abolitionists: David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany
- First wave feminists: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott

For them, domination is tantamount to usurping a role that is reserved for God alone.

Not only about gender but focuses on the early women’s movement and uses feminist methods.

Later: gender, language, and embodiment—engaging with Augustinian notions of original sin.

Future teaching

NURTURING ETHICISTS

Pedagogy:

- Holism & mutual understanding
- Mixed media assignments, development of writing
- Interdisciplinarity and connection to other developing interests
- Training students to think *and* exercise the skills that empower them to be citizens and leaders

Graduate level and upper-level undergraduate seminars:

- Topics in gender & sexuality: the maternal body; womanist ethics; theologies of gender
- Social sin and systemic injustice; reparative ethics; Christianity and capitalism

Introductory courses: Faith, Reason and Culture; Introduction to Christian Ethics