

A SCRIPTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION
THE LIVING SOUL IN THE WOMB.



*WHEN DOES A HUMAN BEING BECOME A LIVING SOUL,
AND*

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE UNBORN?



'Inquire for the Old Paths'. Jer. 6:16.



**BIBLE STUDENTS,
TRACTS.**

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A Scriptural and Theological Examination

The Living Soul in the Womb

When does a human being become a living soul, and what does Scripture say about the status of the unborn?

A Scriptural and Theological Examination

The question of when a human being becomes a living soul is not merely an abstract theological exercise. It bears directly on how we view the unborn, on the matter of abortion, and—most poignantly—on whether those who die in the womb before drawing their first independent breath may hope for a resurrection. This article examines the relevant Hebrew and Greek terminology, the key Scriptural passages, and the arguments for and against the view that a developing babe in the womb is a living soul in its own right.

SECTION I

What Is a Living Soul?

Before asking when a babe in the womb becomes a living soul, we must first establish what a living soul actually is. This is not a trivial matter, as considerable confusion surrounds the term—confusion that, unless resolved at the outset, will cause every subsequent argument to rest on an unstable foundation.

Scripture is clear. A living soul is not something a person has—it is something a person is. The relevant Hebrew compound is נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה (*nephesh chayyah*)—living soul, living being. It is used of animals and humans throughout Genesis (1:20, 1:24, 2:7, 9:10, 9:12). It denotes a whole, integrated, living creature—not a body containing a separate invisible entity called a soul. Significantly, the term is never applied to plant life (Genesis 1:11–12) or to simple organisms. Scripture itself restricts *nephesh chayyah* to creatures possessing integrated, organism-level sentient life—the animal and human creation—where responsiveness, awareness, and coordinated life-function are present. It is this category, and only this category, that is in view throughout the present discussion.

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.—Genesis 2:7

Note the grammar carefully: man became a living soul. He was not given a soul, nor did a soul enter into him. The union of body and the animating life-principle produced a living soul—the whole man himself. When that union exists, there is a living soul. When it is dissolved by death, the soul ceases. ‘The soul that sinneth, it shall die’ (Ezekiel 18:4). The soul is mortal. It is the whole person.

Pastor Russell addressed this with precision in *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*, Vol. V. He wrote that the Scriptures recognise man as composed of two elements, body and spirit, and that these two produce soul—sentient being, the man himself. He was emphatic that the body is not the soul, that the spirit of life is not the soul, but that when the two are united so that intelligence and thought result, that resultant condition is sentient being, or soul condition. He stated further that many people reverse the Scriptural formula by speaking of man as having a soul rather than being one—which he called a very different thought. His conclusion was direct:

Examining this question from the Bible standpoint we will find that man has a body and has a spirit, but is a soul. . . when a body has been organised and infused with the spirit or energy of life, so that intelligence and thought result, that resultant condition is sentient being, or soul condition.
—C.T. Russell, *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*, Vol. V; *Watch Tower*, R3063 (1902)

Russell also described in detail what happened when Adam received the breath of life—the lungs expanding, the blood being oxygenised, the heart propelling it through the body, the nerves awakening, and in an instant the brain activating thought, perception, and sensation. The conclusion he drew was that ‘that which was a lifeless human organism had become a man, a sentient being: the living soul condition mentioned in the text had been reached.’ The soul is not an added ingredient. It is the condition produced by the union of body and life-principle.

John Edgar, whose treatment of this subject in ‘Where are the Dead?’ (1908) is one of the most thorough within the Bible Student tradition, reached the same conclusion and defined the soul with equal precision. He wrote:

*The soul is not the body, nor is it the spirit of life, but it is the whole sentient being, the being which is endowed with sense perception. The dominant part of the soul is the will, the thinking part of a man. This is the ego, the real person, for in a sense the body is merely the instrument of the will. Yet there can be no will without a body.—John Edgar, cited from *Faith’s Foundations*, 2012 (*Where are the dead?*, 1908)*

Edgar further demonstrated from neuroscience that the mind is not independent of the organism. A man whose brain has been injured cannot recall the interval of unconsciousness—proof that the thinking, willing self is not separable from the physical organism. This is entirely consistent with the Scriptural picture: body and life-principle together produce the soul; neither element alone is the soul; and neither element alone constitutes the person.

Both Russell and Edgar were equally clear about what happens at death. The soul—the whole sentient being—ceases entirely. It does not migrate, does not become dormant, does not ascend to a storage location. Edgar stated it without qualification: ‘when the soul or being dies, it goes out of existence.’ Russell described death as ‘the cessation of being’ and *sheol* as a condition of absolute non-existence. The soul sleeps in the sense that it is entirely unconscious—more than unconscious, non-existent—until God reconstitutes it at resurrection by His own infinite power and memory.

Foundational Definition—Russell, Edgar, and Scripture Agreed: a living soul (*nephesh chayyah*) is an alive, embodied, sentient creature—the whole integrated being possessing organism-level life expressed through coordinated biological function. The term is applied in Scripture to animals and humans, never to plant life or simple organisms. It is not a separate entity residing within a body. The body alone is not the soul. The spirit or breath of life alone is not the soul. The soul is the condition produced by their union. The soul can, and does, die entirely. This is the consistent teaching of Scripture, of Russell, and of Edgar.

‘Man has a body and has a spirit, but is a soul.’

— C.T. Russell, *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES*, Vol. V, E322.

This article examines the Scriptural evidence without imposing later theological tradition. Where Pastor Russell’s writings are referenced, they are assessed critically and not treated as infallible. The standard applied throughout is: what do the Hebrew and Greek texts, read carefully and in context, actually say?

—A NOTE ON METHOD

SECTION II

The Creation of Adam—Descriptive, Not Prescriptive

The primary argument used to exclude the unborn from living soul status, by some, is drawn from Genesis 2:7. The reasoning proceeds as follows: Adam had no life until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; therefore, no human being is a living soul until it draws an independent breath with its own lungs. This argument, while superficially compelling, treats Adam’s unique creation as if it were the normal pattern for all human life, and therefore reaches a conclusion that does not follow.

Adam was formed directly from the dust of the ground. He was not produced by any biological process. He had no father, no mother, no placenta, no umbilical cord. The mechanism by which God gave life to Adam was unique, unrepeatable, and specific to that single creative act. It is entirely improper to take this singular event and erect it as a universal template for how all subsequent human beings must receive life.

On the question of what Adam’s condition was before he received the breath of life, Pastor Russell was unambiguous. In his article ‘What Is the Soul?’ he described the pre-animated Adam in these words:

It had eyes, but saw nothing; ears, but heard nothing; a mouth, but spoke nothing; a tongue, but no taste; nostrils, but no sense of smell; a heart, but it pulsed not; blood, but it was cold, lifeless; lungs, but they moved not. It was not a man, but a corpse, an inanimate body.—C.T. Russell, What Is the Soul?, (R1880); STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES, Vol. V, E339.

This is the picture of Adam before the breath of life—a corpse-like, inanimate form. It is worth noting that Frank Shallieu read the passage differently, arguing in his Genesis 2:7 commentary that Adam already possessed living cells, blood vessels, and biological activity before the breath of life, and was therefore biologically alive but not yet a soul. Charles Taze Russell’s description does not support this reading. There is a further problem with Shallieu’s living-cells claim that operates on its own biological terms: living cells require oxygenated blood to survive, and if no breath of life had yet been given there was no oxygen in the blood, making the claim that Adam’s cells were alive before the breath self-refuting even by the biological logic Shallieu invokes. But in any case, the disagreement between them on the biology of Adam’s pre-animation state is ultimately speculative territory, since Scripture does not describe it in biological terms, and the argument should not rest there.

What the passage does establish is definitional. Russell’s own understanding of a living soul—the condition produced when a body and the animating life-principle are united so that intelligence and

thought result—does not depend upon a distinct breath-event as a universal threshold for all human life. The account in Genesis 2:7 describes the unique creation of Adam; it does not prescribe the mechanism by which all subsequent human beings must become living souls. The soul is not inserted at birth. It is the condition that obtains when body and the animating life-principle are present together as an integrated whole.

This means that the question for the womb is not whether a particular breath-moment has occurred, but whether the body and life-principle are already united—whether integrated, organism-level life is already present. The developed babe in the womb has its own blood, its own heartbeat, its own developing brain, and its own coordinated life processes. By Russell’s definition of a living soul, the relevant question is whether such integrated life is present—not the particular mechanism by which oxygen is supplied.

There is a further problem with Shallieu’s position that strikes at its very foundation. In his Genesis 2:7 commentary, Shallieu argued that soul-status requires accumulated personality—a recording already underway on the cassette tape. His words were: ‘before the recording starts, the tape is live—it is sensitised—but it has no personality, or identity, until it is put into a machine, the electricity is turned on, and the recording begins. . . if an embryo in a womb is killed, it is not the killing of a personality.’ (Gen. 2:7, *Old Testament Studies*) But Adam had no accumulated personality whatsoever at the moment he became a living soul. He had never experienced anything. He had never thought a thought, spoken a word, made a moral choice, or formed a memory. By Shallieu’s own criterion, Adam at the moment of his creation was a completely blank tape. Yet Genesis 2:7 declares without qualification that he became a living soul. If a being with zero accumulated personality and zero prior experience can be a living soul—and the text of Genesis requires that he was—then accumulated personality cannot be a prerequisite for soul-status. The same is equally true of Eve, formed from Adam’s rib with no prior existence, no prior experiences, and no accumulated personality of any kind, yet immediately a living soul. Shallieu’s own primary witnesses—Adam and Eve—demolish his personality-prerequisite argument.

The creation account in Genesis 2 describes one way God gave life to one man on one occasion. It does not follow that every subsequent human must receive life by the identical mechanism, or that soul-status is necessarily contingent upon the particular act of air entering the lungs independently. To treat a descriptive passage as prescriptively universal is to press the text beyond what it was designed to bear.

SECTION III

The Creation of Eve—The Overlooked Precedent

This is perhaps the most decisive and consistently overlooked argument in this entire discussion. When God created Eve, there is no record whatsoever of God breathing the breath of life into her nostrils.

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.—Genesis 2:21–22

Eve was formed from living tissue taken from a living soul. The life was already present and active in the material from which she was made. God did not need to breathe into her nostrils because the life-principle was already inherent in the substance from which she was formed. She was, from the moment of her formation, a living soul—not because she drew an independent breath with her own lungs, but because life was already active within her from the outset.

This passage does two things simultaneously. Negatively, it demonstrates that the Genesis 2:7 mechanism is not presented as universal—it cannot be, since Eve, formed in the very same chapter, does not repeat it. Silence in Scripture is not equivalent to repetition of a prior process. To assume that Eve must have

received the breath of life by the same nostril-breath mechanism, simply because the text does not record a different mechanism, is to import a premise the text does not supply. Positively, the passage establishes a precedent for an alternative mechanism of life-transmission: life carried in living tissue from one being to another. This is not an argument from silence—it is an argument from the positive fact of Eve’s creation and soul-status. In the case of every subsequent human being, that same principle of transmitted life operates through the biological process of reproduction.

The Eve Principle: Eve’s creation does two things. It demonstrates that the Genesis 2:7 nostril-breath mechanism is not presented as universal—Eve, formed in the same chapter, does not repeat it. And it establishes a positive precedent for transmitted life as a sufficient basis for soul-status. Scripture does not present a single mechanism as the universal threshold. The reproductive process transmits life by the same principle that Eve’s formation illustrates.

Pastor Russell himself stated this principle of transmitted life explicitly. In his WATCH TOWER article (R5107) he wrote: ‘Adam transmitted a portion of that spirit of life to his children, in some of whom that portion of life continued for centuries. . . mankind have no right to that spirit of life; it is merely something transmitted to them by their parents.’ (See also E97.) The breath of life given uniquely to Adam at his creation was not re-given independently to each subsequent person. It was transmitted through the biological process of generation—from Adam through his posterity. This is the very mechanism the womb represents. The babe in the womb is receiving that transmitted life-principle through its parents.¹ On Russell’s own account, there is no Scriptural basis for requiring a separate, independently-taken breath before that transmitted life-principle constitutes genuine life.

Russell made a further observation in the WATCH TOWER of 1902 (R3067) that speaks directly to the moral weight of the unborn. Commenting on what he called the prenatal rights of the yet unborn generations, he wrote approvingly of those who recognised these rights—‘their right to be well born and bred, with as little of the taint of hereditary evil as the present generation can give.’ Russell here treats the rights of the unborn as a meaningful moral category. The unborn have rights—prenatal rights—which presupposes they are persons to whom rights can meaningfully apply. You cannot extend rights to a non-person, any more than you can impute sin to one.

It is significant that Frank Shallieu’s published commentary on Genesis 2:21–23—the passage describing Eve’s creation, found in his *Old Testament Studies*—is entirely silent on this question. He comments at considerable length on the surgical operation, the anaesthesia analogy, the question of whether Adam had a scar, and the spiritual type of Christ and His Church. He does not once address how Eve became a living soul, whether she received the breath of life, or what the mechanism of her soul-formation was. This is the most significant omission in Shallieu’s entire treatment of Genesis 2. His argument about the necessity of the first independent breath as the threshold of soul-status stands or falls on the Adam account alone—and Eve, created immediately afterwards from Adam’s own living substance and never said to have received a separate breath of life, is a direct and unanswered counter-example within the same chapter of the same book.

‘God did not breathe into Eve’s nostrils. Her life was transmitted through living tissue from Adam. Therefore the first independent breath cannot be the universal threshold for soul-status.’

— The Eve Principle—Section III

¹ ‘The Scriptures hold out the thought that all existence, living energy or being, comes from the father and not from the mother. The mother receives the sperm or seed of life [life-seed] from the father, furnishes it a cell-nucleus out of which a form or body is produced, and nourishes the germ of being until it is able to maintain an independent existence. . . .’—E99.

SECTION IV

Hebrew and Greek Terminology Relating to the Womb

Scripture employs a range of terms when speaking of the unborn, and the distinctions between them are theologically significant.

Nephel (נֶפֶל, H5309)—literally ‘something fallen’; an untimely birth, miscarriage, or abortion. Used in Job 3:16, Psalm 58:8 and Ecclesiastes 6:3. It denotes something that has not reached full development or viable existence—a loss of pregnancy at an early or undeveloped stage.

Olel / Olal (עוֹלֵל, H5768)—a child, infant, babe, suckling. Used in Job 3:16 in direct contrast to *nephel*. This term denotes a developed child, one who has reached a stage of recognisable, fully formed personhood.

Or as an hidden untimely birth [*nephel*] I had not been; as infants [*olel*] which never saw light.—Job 3:16

This verse is of cardinal importance. Job here distinguishes between two categories: an early, undeveloped miscarriage that has not reached recognisable human form, and a fully developed infant that dies before or at birth. Scripture’s own vocabulary encodes this distinction. A *nephel* is not an *olel*. An early miscarriage is not the same as a stillborn full-term infant, and the inspired writers recognised this.

Yeled (יָלֵד, H3206)—child, son, boy, offspring. This is the word used in Exodus 21:22 for what comes out of the woman when she is struck. It is a fully personal term, denoting a child—not foetal tissue, not a pre-personal organism.

Brephos (βρέφος)—the Greek term used in Luke 1:41 and 1:44 for John the Baptist in the womb at six months, and also in Luke 2:12 and 2:16 for the newborn Christ in the manger. The inspired writer uses the same word without distinction for the unborn and the newborn. No terminological barrier exists in the Greek between the child in the womb and the child in the cradle.

KEY HEBREW TERMS	
<i>Nephesh</i> נֶפֶשׁ	Soul, life, living being. The whole person. Used 753 times in the OT. The life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11).
<i>Nephel</i> נֶפֶל	Untimely birth, miscarriage, abortion. Something fallen before its time. Used in Job 3:16, Psalm 58:8, Ecclesiastes 6:3.
<i>Olel</i> עוֹלֵל	Child, infant, babe, suckling. A fully formed child. Contrasted with <i>nephel</i> in Job 3:16—a critical distinction.
<i>Yeled</i> יָלֵד	Child, son, offspring. Used in Exodus 21:22 for what comes out of the stricken woman—a fully personal term.
<i>Ruach</i> רוּחַ	Breath, wind, spirit. The animating life-force. Common to all living creatures (Eccl. 3:19).
<i>Neshamah</i> נְשָׁמָה	Breath of life. Used specifically in Genesis 2:7 for the breath God gave Adam. Given once—to Adam alone.

KEY GREEK TERMS	
<i>Psyche</i> ψυχή	Soul, life, being. The NT equivalent of <i>nephesh</i> . The soul ‘poured out unto death’ (Isa. 53:12 / LXX). Goes to hades at death.
<i>Brephos</i> βρέφος	Used for John in the womb (Luke 1:41, 44) and the newborn Christ (Luke 2:12, 16). No terminological distinction between unborn and newborn.
<i>Pneuma</i> πνεῦμα	Spirit, breath, wind. The Greek equivalent of <i>ruach</i> . The Septuagint ² renders <i>ruach</i> throughout Ezekiel 37 as <i>pneuma</i> —never <i>psyche</i> .

SECTION V

The Life of the Flesh Is in the Blood

This is one of the strongest Scriptural arguments for the presence of *nephesh*—life, soul—in the womb, and it has been consistently underemployed in discussions of this subject.

For the life [*nephesh*] of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.—Leviticus 17:11

For it is the life [*nephesh*] of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof.—Leviticus 17:14

The word rendered ‘life’ in both verses is *nephesh*—the same word rendered ‘soul’ throughout the Old Testament. The soul, the life, of the flesh is in the blood. This is not a technical biological statement but a theological identification: Scripture locates the life-principle of the flesh in the blood, using the same word it uses for the whole living person. The principle it establishes is that wherever the organism’s own circulatory life is active—wherever blood carrying the breath of life is flowing through the creature’s own system—*nephesh* is present. It is not a statement about lungs. It is a statement about the life-bearing blood of the living organism.

Pastor Russell’s account of how Adam became a living soul is directly relevant here. He described the moment the breath of life entered Adam: ‘the lungs expanded, the blood corpuscles were oxygenised and passed to the heart, which in turn propelled them to every part of the body, awakening all the prepared but hitherto dormant nerves to sensation and energy.’ In Russell’s own account, the oxygenation of the blood and its circulation through the body is precisely the mechanism by which life—soul—is expressed. The blood carrying oxygen is the medium of the life-principle. This is perfectly consistent with Leviticus 17: the *nephesh* of the flesh is in the blood.

From approximately three weeks after conception, an embryo has its own heartbeat. By the end of the first trimester³ it has its own distinct blood, circulating through its own cardiovascular system, pumped by its own heart, reaching its own developing brain. The oxygen carried in that blood—the *ruach* sustaining that *nephesh*—is supplied through the placenta, but the blood itself is the child’s own. The life-principle, the *nephesh*, is active in that blood.

This is not a minor point. Those who argue against soul-status in the womb typically acknowledge that the unborn child receives oxygen through the placenta, but contend that this does not constitute the

² ‘The Septuagint. . . sometimes referred to as the Greek Old Testament. . . and abbreviated as LXX, is the earliest extant Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible from the original Biblical Hebrew.’ — <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint>

³ First trimester (0–12 weeks); second trimester (13–26 weeks); third trimester (27 weeks to birth).

breath of life in the Scriptural sense because the child has not yet breathed with its own lungs. But Leviticus makes no such distinction. It does not say the *nephesh* is in the air breathed through the lungs. It says the *nephesh* is in the blood. If the blood is oxygenated and circulating—regardless of the source of that oxygen—then by the plain statement of Leviticus, *nephesh* is present. To argue otherwise is to add a qualification to Leviticus 17 that the text itself does not contain.

Russell himself noted that the same life-principle is common to all creatures: ‘the same lesson is taught in the account of the destruction wrought by the Deluge’—that all creatures with the breath of life in their nostrils perished. The *ruach*, the *nephesh*, the life in the blood, is not unique to post-birth humans. It is the universal principle of creaturely life. And the developing babe in the womb, with its own heart, its own blood, and its own developing brain, participates in that principle from a very early stage.

SECTION VI

Ecclesiastes 11:5—An Ancient Witness

One of the most striking witnesses to the presence of the life-principle within the womb comes not from the Hebrew text alone, but from the Aramaic Targum to Ecclesiastes—an ancient Jewish interpretive translation that reflects early understanding of the passage.

Just as you do not know how the breath of the spirit of life enters the body of an embryo which is lying in its pregnant mother’s womb, and as you do not know if it will be male or female until the time it is born, so you do not know the work of God who does everything in His wisdom.—Ecclesiastes 11:5, Aramaic Targum (Sefaria Community Translation)

The significance of this rendering cannot be overstated. The Targum explicitly identifies the subject of Ecclesiastes 11:5 as the breath of the spirit of life entering the body of an embryo in the womb. It does not treat this as hypothetical. It treats it as an established fact whose mechanism is unknown to man—not whose occurrence is in doubt. The breath of the spirit of life enters the embryo in the womb. The question is only how and when, not whether.

This ancient Jewish interpretive tradition therefore directly undermines the position that the breath of life is only present after birth. The womb is the place where the breath of the spirit of life enters the developing being—a mystery known to God, hidden from man, but real nonetheless. The Targum places this firmly within the womb, as part of God’s sovereign and inscrutable work in creation.

This also connects naturally to Psalm 139:13–16, where God is said to have covered David in his mother’s womb, to have seen his substance while yet unformed, and to have written all his members in His book while they were being fashioned. The womb is not a place of spiritual vacancy awaiting a trigger at birth. It is a place of active divine involvement in the formation of a living being.

The Targum Witness: The Aramaic Targum of Ecclesiastes 11:5 interprets the verse as referring to the breath of the spirit of life entering an embryo in the womb. This ancient Jewish tradition treats the presence of the life-principle in the womb as an established reality, not a post-birth event. The mystery is the mechanism, not the fact.

— THE ARAMAIC TARGUM (ECC. 11:5)



SECTION VII

Animated, Sentient Behaviour in the Womb

Scripture provides direct evidence of conscious, responsive, emotionally aware behaviour in the womb at an advanced stage of development, narrated matter-of-factly and without qualification.

And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. . . For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.—Luke 1:41, 44

John was six months gestation at this point (Luke 1:26, 36). Elisabeth does not say the babe moved or kicked, or that she felt a physiological reflex. She says the babe leaped for joy. The Greek word is *agalliasis*—exultation, extreme joy. This is attributed to John himself, in the womb, as a conscious and emotionally meaningful response to the presence of the mother of his Lord. Luke, himself a physician, uses the term *brephos* for John in the womb—the same word he will use for the newborn Christ in the manger. To Luke, the unborn John and the newborn Jesus are the same category of being.

The account further states that John would be ‘filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb’ (Luke 1:15). The Holy Spirit is not poured upon inanimate vessels or pre-personal biological processes. It is given to persons—to souls. The filling of John with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb is a direct Scriptural affirmation of his personhood, his soul-status, while yet unborn. Some have argued—including Frank Shallieu in his *New Testament Studies Commentary* on Luke 1:15—that the expression ‘from his mother’s womb’ means simply ‘from birth’ and not ‘in’ the womb. But both *Vincent’s Word Studies* and *John Gill’s Exposition* directly contradict this reading, with *Vincent* noting that the Greek *eti* means ‘while yet unborn’⁴ and *Gill* observing that John was set apart and ordained as a prophet before he came out of the womb—like Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5).

Pastor Russell himself, commenting on this passage in his *Watch Tower* (R1915), understood John’s filling with the holy spirit as rooted in prenatal influences. He wrote that the prenatal influences upon John the Baptist were such that ‘from his birth, his heart was inclined towards God and holiness.’ In a separate treatment (R2562) Russell stated that John ‘was well born, under holy influences, which tended to develop in him natural characteristics suitable to the mission he was intended of God to fulfil.’ Russell further noted that this applied equally to St. Paul, who was chosen from his mother’s womb (Galatians 1:15), and that in both cases the Lord’s providence had ‘guided and shaped their experiences without interfering with their wills, so as to make of them special instruments for the accomplishment of divine purposes.’ Russell’s own reading of these cases places significant divine activity—and significant character formation—in the womb, before birth. This is entirely consistent with the view that the womb is not a place of spiritual vacancy but of active divine engagement with a developing person.

The Jeremiah parallel is itself significant. God told Jeremiah: ‘Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations’. (Jeremiah 1:5.) God does not sanctify and ordain non-persons. He does not set apart biological processes for prophetic office. The language of knowing, sanctifying, and ordaining Jeremiah before birth

⁴ The Greek adverb *ἔτι* (*eti*) means ‘yet’ or ‘still’. In Luke 1:15 it combines with *ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ* (*ek koilias mētros autou*, ‘from his mother’s womb’) to form the phrase *ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ*, which *Vincent’s Word Studies* renders ‘while yet unborn’. *Lenski (The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel*, p. 47) notes that the *ἔτι ἐκ* construction is a Hebrew idiom meaning ‘before he leaves the womb’. The meaning ‘while yet unborn’ therefore belongs to the full *ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας* construction rather than to *ἔτι* in isolation—but *Vincent’s gloss* accurately captures the force of the combined phrase. This reading is confirmed by Luke 1:41 and 44, where John’s leaping for joy in the womb at the approach of Mary is the narrative fulfilment of the angel’s promise: the Spirit-filling was already active before birth. Multiple modern translations render the phrase accordingly: ‘while yet in his mother’s womb’ (NASB), ‘even before his birth’ (NLT), ‘while still in his mother’s womb’ (CSB), ‘right from his mother’s womb’ (NWT).

is the language of personal identity, personal relationship, and personal calling—applied without qualification to the unborn child.

And the children struggled together within her. . . And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels.—Genesis 25:22–23

God speaks of Jacob and Esau as two nations, two peoples—not two foetal masses, not two pre-personal biological processes. He addresses their identity, character, and future as though they are already distinct persons. Their struggling in the womb is treated as meaningful behaviour, carrying significance that Scripture does not feel any need to explain away. John Edgar’s observation is apt here: the soul is the whole sentient being, and sentience—responsiveness, awareness, directed behaviour—is precisely what we observe in these accounts of the unborn.

Isaiah 49:1 adds a further witness: ‘The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.’ God calls persons by name. He does not name biological processes. The one called from the womb, named from the bowels of the mother, is already a person in God’s reckoning—not a potential person awaiting activation at birth.

‘The mind of the mother, her thoughts, her moods, her sentiments, are all being impressed upon the embryo child during gestation.’

— C.T. Russell, STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES VOL. VI, F520

Russell also wrote in R4209–R4210 that divine wisdom supervised prenatal influences to impress character upon the babe in cases such as John the Baptist and St. Paul. By Russell’s own teaching, the recording has begun before birth—directly contradicting the blank tape claim.

—RUSSELL ON PRENATAL INFLUENCES

SECTION VIII

God’s Prior Knowledge—Identity Before Experience

Frank Shallieu’s tape analogy requires that a personality must have been recorded before soul-status can exist. But Scripture repeatedly presents God as knowing, naming, sanctifying, and responding to individuals as distinct persons before they have accumulated any experience at all—indeed, before they are even fully formed. These are not an isolated proof texts. There is a consistent pattern across multiple books of Scripture, and it constitutes one of the most powerful refutations of the personality-prerequisite argument.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.—Psalm 139:16

David declares that God saw his substance while it was yet unformed—and that all his members were written in God’s book while they were still being fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. The phrase ‘when as yet there was none of them’ is decisive. God’s personal knowledge of David as an individual preceded even the physical formation of his members. God’s record of the person is not a recording made on the cassette tape of human experience. It pre-exists that experience entirely. The identity that God knows is not constituted by accumulated personality—it is known to God before any personality has been formed.

This is not Shallieu’s tape recording. It is God’s own prior knowledge of a person, written in His book before that person’s body even exists in its finished form. Shallieu’s framework has no account of this. His analogy requires that the recording starts at birth and constitutes the identity. Psalm 139 states that God’s knowledge of the identity precedes the formation of the body itself.

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.—Jeremiah 1:5

God tells Jeremiah three things: He knew him before forming him in the belly; He sanctified him before he came forth from the womb; and He ordained him as a prophet before birth. Each of these is an act performed upon a person—not upon a biological process or a blank tape awaiting activation. Sanctification and ordination are not directed at pre-personal organisms. They presuppose a person who can be set apart and appointed. Shallieu’s argument that soul-status requires accumulated personality cannot account for God ordaining Jeremiah as a prophet in the womb before Jeremiah had accumulated any personality whatsoever—before he had spoken a word or made a single moral choice.

The parallel with John the Baptist is exact. Luke 1:15 states that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. The Holy Spirit is not poured upon pre-personal biological processes. Jehovah gives it to persons. Both Jeremiah and John are treated by God as persons—as souls—in the womb, before any accumulation of experiential personality.

The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.—Isaiah 49:1

God calls by name. He does not name biological processes or sensitised tapes awaiting recording. The naming of the servant from the womb presupposes that there is a nameable individual—a person, an identity—before birth. Names in Scripture are not given to non-persons.

For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.—Romans 9:11–13

This is perhaps the most powerful single passage in the entire debate. St. Paul’s argument depends upon the fact that God’s differentiated response to Jacob and Esau—love towards one, rejection of the other—was established before they were born and before either had done anything good or evil. St. Paul’s whole point is that God’s election is not based on works, precisely because the election was made before any works were possible. But this argument only works if Jacob and Esau were already real, distinct individuals to whom a differentiated divine response was meaningful. God does not love one biological process and reject another. He loves and responds to persons. Jacob and Esau are persons in the womb, before birth, before any action, before any accumulated personality—and St. Paul treats this as an established fact rather than a point requiring defence.

Shallieu’s personality-prerequisite argument is therefore not merely countered by these passages—it is rendered meaningless by them. God’s own prior knowledge, naming, sanctifying, ordaining, loving, and rejecting of individuals in the womb demonstrates that identity before God is not constituted by accumulated human experience. The person is known to God before the person knows themselves—and before, in Shallieu’s terms, the tape has begun to record.⁵

Russell himself applied this passage in precisely this way. In his *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES* (E383), commenting on God’s power to reproduce the entire race in resurrection, he cited Psalm 139:14–16 directly—noting that David’s words about God seeing his substance while yet unformed and writing all his members in His book might apply ‘either prophetically to the resurrection or reflectively to the first birth.’ Russell read Psalm 139 as applicable to both God’s creative knowledge of persons in formation and His reproductive power in resurrection—treating them as expressions of the same divine knowledge and power. This is fully consistent with the article’s argument: the God who knows individuals in the womb

⁵ The only ‘defence’ usually offered in rebuttal concerning these Scriptural accounts is that these are all ‘exceptions’ to the general rule.

before their members are fully fashioned is the same God who preserves their identity in His memory for resurrection. The womb and the tomb are both within His knowledge and His purpose.

God's Prior Knowledge—Summary: Psalm 139 places God's personal knowledge of the individual before physical formation. Jeremiah 1:5 places sanctification and ordination before birth. Isaiah 49:1 places naming from the womb. Romans 9:11–13 places God's differentiated moral response to Jacob and Esau before birth and before any action. All of these presuppose persons, not pre-personal organisms. None of them is consistent with the view that identity does not exist until a post-birth recording has begun.

SECTION IX

The Personality Prerequisite Refuted

Frank Shallieu's most consequential claim is that killing an embryo is not the killing of a personality, because the recording of identity has not yet begun. This claim has been repeated within certain Bible Student circles and has the potential to cause considerable pastoral harm—most acutely to those who have lost children in the womb. It deserves to be answered directly, thoroughly, and on multiple grounds simultaneously.

First: the blank-slate argument from Adam and Eve, and the distinction between personality as prerequisite and personality as development. As already established in Section II, Adam *had absolutely no accumulated personality* at the moment he became a living soul. No memories, no experiences, no moral choices, no formed character. His tape was, by Shallieu's own terms, completely blank. Eve likewise. If the absence of accumulated personality disqualifies a being from soul-status, then neither Adam nor Eve was a living soul at the moment of their creation—which contradicts the plain text of Genesis 2:7 and is a conclusion no serious student of Scripture would accept.

This exposes a fundamental equivocation in Shallieu's position. He treats personality as a prerequisite for soul-status—as though the recording must have begun before the soul can exist. But Scripture consistently treats personality as *something that develops within a living soul*, **not as something that creates it**. Infants have minimal personality yet are souls. The unconscious have no active personality yet are souls. Adam had none at all—yet was explicitly a soul. Personality *is the content of a soul's lived experience*, not the condition of its existence. Shallieu has confused the development of a soul's character with the origination of the soul itself. These are not the same thing, and conflating them undermines his entire framework.

Second: the prior-existence argument refuted—identity depends on God, not prior experience. In his *Old Testament Studies* commentary on Genesis 2:7, Shallieu himself raised 1 Kings 17:21–22 as a supporting argument, writing: “The Hebrew word *nephesh*, which is translated ‘soul’ here, is the same word that is used in 1 Kings 17:21,22, where the dead child was revived, and the account says that the soul came back into the child. . . one has to have a previous existence before he can become a dead soul. After being a dead soul, he can be revived.” Shallieu's argument was that the soul returned to the dead child because it had previously established an identity through lived experience as a breathing, independent soul—and therefore only those who have already lived as such can have a soul to return.

Russell addressed the proof text directly in his Q&A (R366), stating plainly:

The Hebrew word here translated soul is nephesh; it signifies being, or life, or existence. Now read it: ‘the child's life came into it again’; and all is clear. The word soul has been shrouded in mystery by theologians. . . there is no excuse for any one who has even a slight knowledge of the Hebrew. . . for making this mistake.—C.T. Russell, WATCH TOWER, R366 (Questions and Answers)

Russell is unambiguous. The *nephesh* of 1 Kings 17:22 simply means *life*—the child’s *life* came back. It does not mean an intelligent personality-entity with an established identity returning to a body. Furthermore, Russell stated explicitly in his R360 article on *anastasis* that the restorations performed by Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus are never called *anastasis*—resurrection—in Scripture. They are mere revivifications, temporary restorations of a spark of life, not resurrection precedents.

But there is a deeper problem with Shallieu’s prior-existence argument that the R366 response alone does not fully close. Frank Shallieu can concede the *nephesh* point and still maintain his position: that one must have previously existed as a breathing soul before one can be a dead soul eligible for restoration. He might say: ‘I do not claim the soul is a tangible entity—I simply claim that prior living existence as a breathing person is required before God can restore an identity.’

The decisive answer to this is not found in word studies but in the case of Adam himself—and it goes further than pointing out that Adam had no personality before first breath. The more fundamental point is this: Adam had no prior existence of any kind whatsoever before God created him. He did not exist in any form before that first moment of creation. God created Adam’s identity from nothing—from dust. There was no prior Adam, no prior experience, no prior soul-state from which God was restoring anything. God originated a complete identity where nothing existed before.

This establishes a principle that directly undermines Shallieu’s framework: identity does not depend on prior existence. It depends on God. God is the source and ground of personal identity—not the accumulation of prior experience, not a previous soul-state, not a breathing history. If God can originate a complete identity from dust with no prior existence whatsoever, then prior existence cannot be a prerequisite for identity. And if prior existence is not a prerequisite for identity, then the absence of prior independent breathing life in the womb does not exclude the developing babe from having an identity that God knows and may restore.

This is fully consistent with Russell and Edgar’s own framework. Both held that God preserves identity in His own memory—not in a surviving soul-entity, not in any prior state of the being itself—but in God’s own knowledge and power. If identity is preserved in God’s knowledge rather than in prior experience, then identity originates in God’s knowledge rather than in prior experience. The resurrection of Adam will not be a restoration of a prior soul-state. It will be the reconstitution of an identity that exists in God’s memory. The same principle applies to any identity God knows—including those He has known from before their physical formation was complete (Psalm 139:16).

Third: the Ezekiel 18:4 distinction between Adamic death and second death. Also in his Genesis 2:7 commentary, Shallieu argued that for a soul to die it must have had the breath of life and done something—writing: “in regard to the statement ‘the soul that sinneth, it shall die,’ a soul must have had the breath of life and done something in order to go into death (Ezek. 18:4).” This conflates two entirely distinct categories of death that Scripture consistently separates. Ezekiel 18:4 addresses personal, wilful, conscious sin and its consequence—what Scripture elsewhere calls the second death. But the death that reigns over the unborn is Adamic death—the inherited condemnation passed from Adam to all his posterity, requiring no personal act of sin whatever. St. Paul is explicit in Romans 5:14: death reigned even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression. Infants who die having done nothing are dying the Adamic death—and that death demonstrably reaches into the womb, as miscarriage, stillbirth, and foetal death all attest—as does the fact that babes are born with disabilities, disfigurements and other imperfections. The dying of a babe in the womb is not *second death*. It is *Adamic death*. And it can only be dying that death if it is already a being subject to it—which means it is already a soul in the relevant sense. The very fact of foetal death, on Russell’s own understanding of Adamic condemnation, presupposes the soul-status of the being that dies.

Russell himself drew this same Adamic death versus second death distinction using the phonograph⁶ analogy in the WATCH TOWER article R1263. He wrote that Adamic death is illustrated by the removal and preservation of the wax cylinder with a view to later reproduction—the dissolution stops the making and expressing of character, but through the ransom God has made provision for the preservation and resurrection of that character. The second death, by contrast, is one in which there is no preservation of character and no future reproduction—‘just as when the wax cylinders are done with, all the impressions are obliterated—as though they had not been.’ The unborn who die are dying Adamic death, not second death. On Russell’s own phonograph framework, this means their character is preserved in God’s memory for reproduction in resurrection—it is not obliterated as in second death. The phonograph analogy, correctly applied, supports rather than undermines resurrection hope for the stillborn.

Fourth: modern scientific evidence that the recording is already underway. The claim that no recording has begun before birth is not merely Scripturally unsupported—it is at odds with the substantial body of contemporary neuroscientific evidence, even if precise thresholds remain a matter of ongoing research. By approximately eighteen weeks, the developing babe shows measurable responses to sound, with evidence of preference for the mother’s voice. By twenty-five weeks, there is strong evidence of differential response to pleasant and unpleasant stimuli introduced into the amniotic fluid. By twenty-eight weeks, REM sleep patterns are present, which neuroscientists associate with memory consolidation and dreaming. By approximately thirty weeks, the foetal brain shows responses consistent with pain registration, though the precise nature and significance of these responses continues to be studied. Researchers have also documented individual differences in movement patterns and response styles between foetuses—early variation that distinguishes one developing person from another. Taken together, this evidence provides strong grounds for concluding that stimuli are being received, processed, and responded to in the womb—that impressions are being formed on the organism well before birth. By Shallieu’s own tape analogy, the recording is actively underway. The claim that no personality is being formed, and therefore no soul exists, is not supported by the evidence available to us today, even if that evidence was unavailable to earlier writers.

Fifth: Russell’s own teaching on prenatal influences directly contradicts the blank tape claim—and turns Shallieu’s own analogy against him. In STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES VOL. VI (F519–F523), Russell devoted extended discussion to prenatal influences on the developing child. He wrote explicitly that during gestation ‘the mind of the mother, her thoughts, her moods, her sentiments, are all being impressed upon the embryo child.’ If the mother’s mind is kept bright and cheerful, these will favourably influence the embryo. If she is harassed and troubled, ‘this distress will surely be impressed upon the embryo, giving a peevish or sad or ill-tempered disposition for life.’ Russell went further in his R4209/R4210 treatment of John the Baptist and St. Paul, writing that divine wisdom supervised prenatal influences which ‘impressed a certain amount of character upon the babe.’

The significance of this for Shallieu’s own analogy is decisive. Frank Shallieu himself stated in his Ecclesiastes 12:8 commentary precisely when, on his own framework, the recording begins:

When a baby comes out of the womb, it is like the tape in a recorder, a human body. The baby breathes—it gets oxygen—and inside is a film that is sensitive to both receiving and emitting light and sound.
—Frank Shallieu, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes 12:8*

According to Shallieu’s own account, the recording begins when the baby exits the womb and breathes. But Russell’s own VOL. VI teaching places character impressions in the womb, during gestation, before

⁶ ‘A phonograph, later called a gramophone, and since the 1940s a record player, or more recently a turntable, is a device for the mechanical and analogue reproduction of sound.’—<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonograph>

birth and before first breath. Shallieu’s framework and Russell’s framework cannot both be true. More critically, Shallieu’s own analogy, applied consistently and using Russell’s own authority on what is happening in the womb, refutes his own conclusion. If impressions are being received and recorded on the embryo—character and disposition being formed prenatally—then by Shallieu’s own criterion the recording has already begun before birth. His analogy, used faithfully, places soul-status in the womb rather than outside it. He cannot use the tape illustration to exclude the unborn and simultaneously accept Russell’s teaching that the tape is already receiving impressions before birth.

Sixth: the continuity argument—no ontological change, that is, no change in the nature of the person, occurs at first breath. Shallieu locates the origin of soul-status at the moment of first independent breath. But this boundary cannot survive scrutiny because no coherent ontological change occurs at that moment. The organism before first breath and the organism after first breath is the same continuous being. The same cells, the same brain, the same blood, the same developing identity. What changes at birth is environmental, not ontological: the source of oxygen shifts from placenta to lungs, the physical environment changes from womb to world. But the being itself is unaltered in its nature.

If Shallieu cannot identify a coherent ontological change that occurs at first breath—a change in the nature of the being rather than merely its environment—then the boundary he draws is arbitrary. He is not marking a real transition in what the being is, only a transition in where it is and how it breathes. An argument that soul-status depends on the source of one’s oxygen supply rather than on the nature of one’s being is not a Scriptural argument. It is an assertion without foundation. Scripture defines soul-status in terms of what a being is—an integrated, living, sentient creature—not in terms of the mechanism by which it currently receives oxygen.

The Personality Prerequisite—Six Refutations: The claim that the embryo has no soul-status fails on six independent grounds. First, personality is not what creates the soul but what develops within it—Adam, Eve, infants, and the unconscious all demonstrate soul-status without active personality expression. Second, the prior-existence argument is refuted by Adam himself: God created a complete identity from nothing, establishing that identity depends on God, not prior experience. Third, the death of the unborn is Adamic death, not second death—and Adamic death presupposes soul-status in the being that undergoes it. Fourth, modern neuroscience provides strong evidence that impressions are being formed in the womb from mid-gestation. Fifth, Russell’s own prenatal influences teaching demonstrates that the tape is already receiving impressions before birth—turning Shallieu’s own analogy against his conclusion. Sixth, no coherent ontological change occurs at first breath: the being before and after is the same continuous organism, and a boundary defined by oxygen source rather than by nature of being is arbitrary.

“The Hebrew word nephesh signifies being, or life, or existence. Read it: ‘the child’s life came into it again.’ The word soul has been shrouded in mystery by theologians.”

— C.T. Russell, WATCH TOWER, R366

Shallieu used 1 Kings 17:22 to argue that only those with prior lived experience have a soul to return. Russell’s own Q&A demolishes this: *nephesh* here simply means life, not a personality-entity. Russell also stated in R360 that this incident is never called *anastasis* in Scripture. It is a revivification, not a resurrection precedent.

—RUSSELL ON 1 KINGS 17:22

SECTION X

Ezekiel 37—A Misapplied Passage

The vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1–14) has been used in this debate to argue that biological life without independent breathing does not constitute soul-status. This application is mistaken on multiple grounds.

First, and most decisively, God himself interprets the vision within the text. Verse 11: ‘these bones are the whole house of Israel.’ This is not a passage about the formation of individual souls. It is an explicitly stated prophecy about the national restoration of Israel, using the imagery of resurrection as a metaphor for national revival after exile. The interpretive key is supplied by God himself, and it admits no ambiguity. Any secondary application to the question of individual soul formation operates against the explicit intention of the passage.

Second, the Hebrew vocabulary of Ezekiel 37 does not employ the standard soul-formation language of Genesis 2:7. In Genesis, the definitive phrase is *נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה*—*nephesh chayyah*, living soul. In Ezekiel 37, *nephesh* is absent. The dominant term throughout is *ruach*, used eight times as breath, wind, and spirit in varying senses. The Septuagint renders this consistently as *pneuma*, again without employing *psyche*—the Greek equivalent of *nephesh*—in the soul-formation sense. The vocabulary of Genesis 2:7 (*nephesh chayyah* / *psyche zosan*) is simply not present in Ezekiel 37.

Third, the vision depicts the restoration of those who were already dead souls—people who had lived, died, and whose national existence had collapsed. The direction of travel is restoration, not initiation. It is an entirely different question from the initiation of a new soul in the womb.

Conclusion on Ezekiel 37: Ezekiel 37 is a prophecy about Israel’s national restoration, interpreted explicitly by God himself as such. Its vocabulary does not replicate the soul-formation language of Genesis 2:7. It addresses dead souls being restored, not new souls being initiated. It should play no part in establishing the threshold at which a developing human being becomes a living soul.

God’s own interpretation is given in v. 11: ‘these bones are the whole house of Israel.’ The passage is about national restoration, not individual soul formation. *Nephesh* (soul) is notably absent; *ruach* (breath/spirit) dominates. The Septuagint uses *pneuma* throughout, never *psyche*.

—ON EZEKIEL 37

SECTION XI

Exodus 21—Life for Life

Exodus 21:22–25 is one of the most contested passages in biblical ethics, and it deserves to be handled with corresponding care. The goal here is not to press the passage beyond what it can bear, but to establish what it does and does not say—and in particular to show that it cannot sustain the claim that the unborn are not a life at any stage.

When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children [yeled] come out. . . if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. . . —Exodus 21:22–25

Two readings of this passage have been held by serious scholars across the centuries, and both deserve to be stated in their strongest form before either is assessed.

The miscarriage reading holds that verse 22 describes a premature delivery resulting in the death of the child, in which case a fine is imposed because no further harm to the mother follows. On this reading, the *lex talionis*—‘life for life, eye for eye’—applies only if the mother herself is subsequently injured or killed. The grounds for this reading are not negligible: the word rendered ‘come out’ can describe expulsion as well as premature birth; the passage does not explicitly state the child survives; and the Septuagint, the earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, introduces a distinction between a formed and an unformed child, with the financial penalty applying to the unformed and the life-for-life principle applying to the formed—suggesting that early translators understood the passage to address at least some cases of foetal death. This reading has a long and serious interpretive history and should not be dismissed.

The premature birth reading holds that verse 22 describes a child delivered alive but prematurely, with subsequent legal consequences depending on whether harm—to the child, the mother, or both—follows. On this reading, the *lex talionis* applies to whatever injury results, including the death of the child. Keil and Delitzsch concluded that the words are to be understood as relating to injury done to the woman and to the fruit of her womb, since the text speaks of both. Adam Clarke similarly understood the passage to extend legal protection to the child.⁷ The word used for what comes out—*yeled*—is the ordinary term for offspring and child, and is not a term of depersonalisation. Whatever the precise legal outcome, the language of the passage resists reduction of what comes from the woman to a category beneath personhood. This reading also has a long and serious interpretive history.

It is important to recognise what this interpretive dispute is and is not. It is a dispute about the precise legal mechanism of the passage—who the *lex talionis* applies to, and under what circumstances. It is not a dispute about whether the unborn are a life. Neither reading of the passage requires the conclusion that the unborn is not a life at any stage. Neither the miscarriage reading nor the premature birth reading states, or implies, that the unborn child at any stage is not a living being. The debate is not between life and non-life in Exodus 21, but between different degrees of recognised harm and corresponding legal response.

This framing is crucial, because the argument most commonly pressed against the article’s position—Frank Shallieu’s claim that ‘the foetus was not considered a life no matter how old it was’—is not a reading of the text. It is a conclusion imported into the text. The passage does not state this. It describes an outcome involving offspring (*yeled*) and assigns legal consequence based on harm. The text never introduces a category of non-life regardless of developmental stage. That conclusion is imposed upon the passage, not derived from it.

The most important argument available to the careful reader is not lexical but structural. The passage has three components: an event (premature birth caused by assault); a conditional (if no harm follows, a fine is paid); and an escalation (if harm follows, the *lex talionis* applies). The critical question the structure raises is: to whom can ‘harm’ apply?

The text does not explicitly restrict the harm to the mother. The structure leaves open—and the plain reading supports—that harm may apply to the woman, the child, or both. The entire *lex talionis* formula—life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot—is a graded framework for proportional justice based on injury to the affected party. It presupposes a subject who can be harmed in these ways. The presence of this graduated formula in connection with a passage about a pregnant woman and what comes from her womb is itself significant: the legal framework applied is the same one applied

⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, Vol. 2, pp. 134–135 (Eerdmans); Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*, note on Exodus 21:22. Both are freely available online at studylight.org.

to harm suffered by persons. This is entirely consistent with—and actively supports—the view that what comes from the woman is a being to whom harm can be done and for whom legal restitution is owed.

Rather than resisting the LXX distinction between formed and unformed, it is better understood as reinforcing the article's developmental framework. The LXX distinguishes developmental stages and assigns differing legal consequences, but does not explicitly introduce a category of non-life. Far from undermining the article's position, it reflects the same developmental awareness that runs throughout the Scriptural data—and actively supports the view that moral weight increases with developmental stage rather than arriving only at birth. This is precisely the distinction Scripture encodes in its own Hebrew vocabulary—*nephel* (an untimely, undeveloped loss) versus *olel* (a fully formed child). The LXX, read rightly, reinforces rather than undermines the developmental continuum.

Shallieu advances five arguments from or in connection with Exodus 21. Each can be answered cleanly.

The foetus-not-a-life claim. Shallieu states: 'The foetus was not considered a life no matter how old it was.' This is not found in the text. The passage uses *yeled*—the ordinary term for offspring and child—for what comes from the woman, and assigns legal consequence to harm suffered. It does not introduce, imply, or require a category of non-life. The conclusion is imported, not derived. Furthermore, the moral consequence of the claim deserves to be stated plainly: if the foetus is not a life at any stage, then deliberately ending foetal life at any stage cannot violate the sixth commandment. This implication follows necessarily from the position and should be addressed explicitly within that framework.

The Adam-to-womb argument. Shallieu writes: 'Just as Adam was perfectly formed before he became a living being, so a foetus with hair, a brain, etc., is not a living being until the breath of life enters.' This connection is revealing because it makes explicit how entirely his Exodus 21 position depends upon his Adam argument. But the Adam argument has already been answered at length in Sections II and IX of this article. If it fails there—and it fails on multiple grounds—then the Exodus 21 argument built upon it also fails. The two stand or fall together, and Shallieu has made this dependency explicit himself.

The teeth argument. Shallieu states: 'Proof that verses 23–25 do not apply to the foetus is that a foetus does not have teeth.' This misreads the structure of the *lex talionis*. The governing principle of verses 23–25 is life for life. The subsequent formula—eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot—is a graded legal statement of proportional injury, providing examples of corresponding restitution for corresponding harm. It is not a definitional checklist of the features a subject must possess in order to fall within the provision at all. The absence of teeth does not exclude a subject from the life-for-life provision any more than the absence of a hand excludes one from 'hand for hand.' The life-for-life principle requires a life, not a full set of teeth. And Scripture, through Leviticus 17, places *nephesh* in the blood. The child has blood from an early stage. The teeth argument is not a structural argument about the passage—it is a misapplication of a sub-provision to the governing principle.

The independence criterion. Shallieu states: 'The breath of life must be breathed independently of the mother for the foetus to become a viable living being.' This criterion does not appear in the passage. Exodus 21 operates on harm to a being already present—it says nothing about how that being receives oxygen. The independence criterion imports Genesis 2:7 into a legal text that does not reference it. Furthermore, if Scripture locates the life—the *nephesh*—of the flesh in the blood (Leviticus 17:11, 17:14), then the presence of a living circulatory system is the relevant Scriptural indicator of life, not the mode of breathing. Exodus 21 does not redefine this principle; it operates within it. The independence criterion is Shallieu's own unscriptural addition to a text that does not contain it.

The John 1:9 ransom argument. Shallieu writes: 'Jesus did not redeem foetuses. He is the light for every man who cometh [entereth] into the world (John 1:9); that is, every child born will have the opportunity for life.' This argument fails on three independent grounds. First, it contradicts Shallieu's own John 1:9

commentary, in which he reads the verse as prophetically universal in scope—including all who lived and died before Calvary and all who never heard the gospel—without restricting it to those born alive. Second, Russell's own R5573 article on John 1:9 explicitly names 'all infants who have died before reaching the age where they could know of God and His Truth in Christ' as within the scope of the true Light—listing them alongside the heathen and those of imbecile mind as within the comprehensive plan of salvation. Russell's own authority directly contradicts the use of John 1:9 to exclude the unborn from resurrection hope. Third, the phrase 'cometh into the world' is grammatically ambiguous: Barnes, Poole, and the patristic commentators Cyril and Augustine all recognise that it may describe Christ rather than every man—'the true Light who, coming into the world, enlightened every man'—in which case it says nothing about restricting the scope of redemption to those born alive.

Exodus 21 does not decisively settle the question of when soul-status begins. That is not what the passage was designed to address, and pressing it to settle that question—in either direction—is to ask more of it than it was intended to bear.

What the passage does establish is this: it does not support the claim that the unborn—at any stage—are not a life. Its language resists depersonalisation. Its structure applies the framework of proportional legal justice to harm arising from an act against a pregnant woman and what comes from her womb. Its legal logic is consistent with a view that recognises increasing moral weight with developmental stage. And its strongest use in this discussion is as a blocking argument rather than a proof text—one that disarms the extreme claim that the unborn are not a life no matter how old, without overclaiming in the other direction.

The phrase in the original is ambiguous. The word translated 'that cometh' may either refer to the 'light', or to the word 'man'; so that it may mean either "this 'true light that cometh' into the world enlightens all", or "it enlightens every 'man that cometh' into the world." Many critics, and, among the fathers, Cyril and Augustine, have preferred the former, and translated it, 'The true light was he who, coming into the world, enlightened every man.'

—BARNES ON JOHN 1:9

SECTION XII

The Moral Consequences of the Position Examined

A theological position is judged not only by the strength of its Scriptural arguments but by the coherence and acceptability of its logical consequences when applied consistently. The claim that the developing babe is not a living soul until it breathes independently of the mother produces a series of consequences that deserve to be stated plainly and examined honestly.

The partial birth consequence. The independence criterion states explicitly that the breath of life must be breathed independently of the mother for the foetus to become a viable living being. Applied consistently, this produces the following consequence. A child in the process of being born—its head fully emerged from the birth canal, eyes open, its body partially in the world—but still connected to the placenta and not yet having drawn an independent breath, is on this criterion not yet a living soul. It has not yet breathed independently. It is still receiving oxygen through the placenta. Deliberately ending its life at that moment would not, on this framework, constitute the taking of a living soul. It would *not* be murder. This is not a hypothetical. Partial-birth procedures exist and have been legally performed. On the independence criterion, the child partially born and still placenta-dependent is in precisely the same category as the child still entirely in the womb: not yet a living soul. The logic is inescapable. Those who hold this position are obliged either to accept this consequence or to supply a principled reason why

partial emergence from the birth canal changes the moral calculus in a way their framework can coherently explain. No such explanation has been offered.

The sixth commandment and the question of murder. Shallieu's Exodus 21 commentary states without qualification that the foetus was not considered a life no matter how old it was. This is a direct claim about the moral status of the unborn at every stage of development. If the foetus is not a life at any stage, then deliberately ending that foetal life cannot constitute murder—it cannot violate the sixth commandment, which prohibits the taking of life. On this framework, the deliberate abortion of a fully developed, fully formed child at nine months is not the taking of a living soul and therefore not murder in the Scriptural sense. Those who have raised this question and asked what crime, if not murder, such an act constitutes, have received no coherent answer from those who hold this position. The question deserves to be asked directly: if a fully formed, nine-month-old babe in the womb is not a living soul, and if killing it is not murder, then what is it? And what law, natural or Scriptural, is broken by doing so? The silence that greets this question is itself instructive.

The abortion survivor and the stillborn—a study in theological irony. The independence criterion does not merely produce abstract philosophical difficulties. It produces, in documented real-world cases, a moral and theological outcome of striking injustice. Consider two mothers. The first desperately wanted her child. Her fully-formed, nine-month son was strangled by the umbilical cord in the final days before birth—an accident of imperfection, the kind of tragedy that could not occur in a perfect world—and was delivered stillborn, having never drawn a single independent breath. The second mother sought to end her pregnancy. A late-term procedure was performed, but the child survived it, was delivered alive, drew breath—however briefly—and then died without medical intervention being offered.

On the independence criterion, these two outcomes produce the following theological result. The first child—wanted, loved, mourned, named, buried—is not a living soul and has *no resurrection hope*, because it *did not breathe independently*. The second child—unwanted, the subject of a procedure intended to end its life, left without aid—is a living soul and is entitled to a resurrection, because it *drew one independent breath before dying*. The doctrine, applied consistently, grants resurrection hope to the unwanted child left to die on a table, while denying it to the grieving mother's beloved son.

This is not a hypothetical constructed for rhetorical effect. Documented cases of children surviving late-term abortion procedures and dying without medical assistance have been recorded in multiple countries, all using the same international classification code—ICD-10 P96.4, 'Termination of pregnancy, affecting foetus and newborn'—giving the figures a common official methodological basis.

In Canada, Statistics Canada's CANSIM Table 102-0536 records 491 such cases between 2000 and 2009. A Statistics Canada statistician confirmed in writing that these figures are included in national cause-of-death statistics because 'when the aborted foetus is born alive and subsequently dies, each event must be registered.' In the United Kingdom, the Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH), in its government-commissioned *Perinatal Mortality* report (data year 2005, published 2007), recorded 66 infants who survived NHS termination attempts in England and Wales in a single year, breathing unaided; approximately half lived for over an hour, and one survived for ten hours. In Australia, Queensland Health's *Perinatal Annual Reports* (Table 10.13 of each annual report) and Victoria's equivalent *Mothers and Babies* reports together record 724 children left to die following live birth after termination in Queensland and Victoria alone between 2010 and 2020, an average of approximately 66 per year across the two states. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified 143 such cases from death certificate data between 2003 and 2014—a figure the CDC itself acknowledged may be an underestimate, given that reporting of abortion survivors is not uniformly mandated across states.

In at least some of these cases, the child drew independent breath. On the independence criterion, each such child crossed the threshold into living soul status—however briefly, however unwillingly on the part of those present.

The woman whose wanted child dies by cord strangulation one week before birth receives, on this doctrine, the verdict that her child never was a living soul and cannot be raised. The woman whose unwanted child survived a procedure and gasped once before dying unattended receives, on the same doctrine, a child with resurrection hope. Whatever one thinks of the doctrine's Scriptural basis, its moral output in this scenario deserves to be examined without flinching. A theological position that produces this outcome is not thereby proved wrong—but it is obliged to own the consequence, and to explain why the single independent breath is so theologically decisive that it can produce this precise asymmetry between two mothers, two losses, and two eternal outcomes.

The population problem argument answered. A further objection advanced against granting soul-status to the unborn is that if every conception produced a soul entitled to resurrection, the numbers would be incomprehensible. This argument fails on examination. God's capacity to reconstitute and resurrect is not constrained by human arithmetic. More importantly, the developmental continuum this article defends does not require that every fertilised cell is a fully constituted living soul. It requires that a fully formed child in the womb—the *olel* of Job 3:16—with its own heart, blood, and developing brain, is not a non-person on the sole grounds that it has not yet taken one independent breath. Early pregnancy loss is a distinct category—the *nephel*—and Scripture itself distinguishes it from the formed child. The population argument, even if it had force, applies to a position this article does not hold.

The spiritual analogy argument answered. A typological argument has also been advanced: that the foetus in the womb pictures the new creature in its gestation period, not yet born as a spirit being, and that this type justifies treating the foetal stage as pre-soul. Types and antitypes do not negate the literal reality that the type illustrates. The paschal lamb was a type of Christ but was nonetheless a real lamb. The fact that foetal development may picture spiritual development does not mean the physical foetus is not a real living being. The type and the literal reality can coexist. To deny the soul-status of the unborn on the grounds that they serve as a picture of something else is to allow the antitype to negate the literal thing it is typifying—a logical error that would have wide and unacceptable implications if applied consistently to other types.

Taken together, these consequences do not constitute independent proofs of the article's position. But they provide a further lens through which to assess the coherence of the opposing view. A position that cannot coherently distinguish between a partially born child and a fully born one, that cannot say why deliberately ending the life of a nine-month 'foetus' is murder while simultaneously insisting the 'foetus' is not a living soul, has not merely a Scriptural problem. It has a moral one.

This was not merely the moral instinct of one tradition or one generation. It was the consensus of the earliest post-apostolic Christian community, expressed in their foundational documents. The *Didache*—*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*—dated to approximately A. D. 85–110, is one of the earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament. Written in Koine Greek—the same language as the New Testament and the Septuagint—its moral instruction states without qualification: οὐ φονεύσεις τέκνον ἐν φθορᾷ οὐδὲ γεννηθὲν ἀποκτενεῖς—'thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill what is born' (*Didache* 2:2).

The Greek of this prohibition deserves closer examination. The word used for what is destroyed by abortion is τέκνον (*teknon*)—child—the same fully personal term used throughout the New Testament for children in the most intimate sense: 'my little children' in St. John's epistles, children of God, children of the family. It is emphatically not a biological or clinical term. Abortion and infanticide are placed in

immediate sequence, alongside murder, adultery, sorcery, and perjury, indicating that the *Didache* drew no distinction in moral status between the unborn child and the born one. The act of abortion is described as φθορά (*phthora*)—corruption, destruction, ruin—a word St. Paul himself uses in Romans 8:21 for the bondage of decay from which creation longs to be delivered. The *Didache* thus applies the vocabulary of personal identity (*teknon*) and the vocabulary of destruction (*phthora*) simultaneously to the unborn, confirming that the earliest Christians recognised the unborn as fully moral persons. This is precisely the terminological logic that runs through the Hebrew and Greek vocabulary examined in Section IV of this article—*yeled, olel, brephos*—and the *Didache*, drawing on the same Koine Greek and Septuagintal tradition as the New Testament, confirms that this vocabulary of personal recognition was consistently applied to the unborn by the earliest Christian community.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. A. D. 74–130) repeats this moral pairing: ‘Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born’ (*Epistle of Barnabas* 19). Both texts treat the unborn and the newborn as morally equivalent, showing that early Christian understanding drew no line of moral status between the child before and after birth.

Athenagoras of Athens, writing his *A Plea for the Christians* to the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus in A. D. 177, made the connection between abortion and murder explicit in an apologetic context. He argued that women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder and will have to give an account to God, and that it is inconsistent to regard the foetus in the womb as a κτίσμα (*ktisma*)—a created being under divine care,⁸ using the same root as the New Testament’s language for God’s creative acts—while permitting its destruction, or to expose a newborn, since those who expose them are also guilty of child-murder (*A Plea for the Christians*, ch. 35). To call the foetus a *ktisma* is to place it within the category of what God has made and cares for—which is precisely the category within which *nephesh chayyah*, living soul, operates throughout this article’s argument. Athenagoras was not writing for an internal church audience. He was presenting Christian moral reasoning publicly before the Roman Emperor as a self-evident principle distinguishing Christian from pagan ethics.

The *pharmakeia* connection reinforces this. Galatians 5:20 lists φαρμακεία (*pharmakeia*)—the use of potions and drugs—among the works of the flesh, rendered ‘witchcraft’ in the King James Version. Barnes notes that the word ‘means, properly, the preparing and giving of medicine’, and traces how it came to encompass poisoning and magical arts, ‘because in savage nations pharmacy or medicine consisted much in magical incantations’—the connection between drug use and the destruction of life being embedded in the term itself. Early Christian writers including Athenagoras and Clement of Alexandria explicitly understood drug-induced abortion to fall within this moral category, demonstrating that early Christians equated it with murder. The *Didache*’s 2:2 prohibition, written in the same Koine Greek and cultural world as Galatians, places the condemnation of drug-use immediately alongside abortion, reflecting a consistent early Christian understanding that the use of substances to destroy developing life was a moral violation of the same order as the other acts listed.

⁸ Κτίσμα (*ktisma*, Strong’s G2938) derives from the verb κτίζω (*ktizō*), which in Scripture is used exclusively of God’s deliberate creative acts—never of accidental or incidental processes. Vine’s Expository Dictionary defines *ktisma* as having ‘the concrete sense—the created thing, the creature, the product of the creative act.’ The word appears four times in the New Testament, each usage instructive. In 1 Timothy 4:4 Paul writes that ‘every *ktisma* of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving’—asserting that what God has created by deliberate act is good and entitled to be received, not destroyed. In James 1:18 it is used of believers as the product of God’s own will and creative purpose. In Revelation 5:13 every *ktisma* in heaven, earth, and sea gives glory to God and the Lamb. In Revelation 8:9 the death of *ktismata* is a matter of cosmic and moral consequence. When Athenagoras calls the foetus a *ktisma* he is not making a biological observation. He is making a theological claim using a word his readers would have recognised immediately from their own Scriptures: the foetus is what God made, by deliberate creative will, as part of His creation, entitled to the same care and protection that every other *ktisma* is entitled to. Its destruction is therefore not merely a biological event but a violation of God’s creative purpose and providential care. This connects directly to Psalm 139:16, where God’s eyes see the individual’s substance while yet unformed and all his members are written in God’s book—the same divine intentionality and care that Athenagoras identifies as the ground of the foetus’s protected status.

This historical witness aligns directly with the Scriptural and theological case developed throughout this article. The God who, in Russell's and Edgar's framework, preserves every identity in His own infinite memory for resurrection—who fills the unborn with His Spirit, who names and ordains before birth, who places *nephesh* in the blood of the developing child—is the same God whose earliest worshippers, within living memory of the apostles, recognised the destruction of that developing life as murder and named it without hesitation as a violation of the same moral law that forbids the killing of the born. The stillborn child rests in the same divine memory and the same divine care.

SECTION XIII

Psalm 51:5—Conceived in Sin

This verse has not received the attention it deserves in this discussion, yet it may be the most theologically decisive of all.

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Psalm 51:5

David here traces his sinful condition not to his birth, not to his first breath, but to his very conception and formation in the womb. He is not saying his mother sinned in conceiving him. He is saying that he, as a person, was already in solidarity with Adam's fallen condition from the moment of his conception—that his *identity* as a sinner began at the very beginning of his existence.

The theological significance of this cannot be overstated. Sin, in Scriptural understanding, is imputed to persons—to souls—and imputation always presupposes a subject to whom it is applied. Whether Adamic condemnation is viewed in federal terms—legal solidarity with Adam as the father and representative of the race—or in ontological terms, as an inherited corrupted nature from the start, it is never applied to a non-entity. One cannot impute sin, in any Scripturally coherent sense, to a biological process, to a mere collection of cells, or to a pre-personal organism. If David was already a sinner from conception, there must already have been a David from conception—a person, a soul, a subject of the imputation. The logical structure is tight, the Scriptural grounding is firm, and the theological reasoning holds regardless of whether a federal or ontological model of original sin is preferred.

This is directly consistent with what Pastor Russell taught concerning Adamic death and its transmission. He wrote in *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES VOL. V* that 'the spirit of life. . . we receive from our fathers, it being nourished and developed through our mothers.' (E301.) The life-principle—and with it, the impaired, death-sentenced condition of Adamic humanity—is transmitted at the point of conception, through the father's seed. This is precisely what St. Paul states in Romans 5:12: 'death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'—not all have sinned by conscious act, but all sinned in Adam, inheriting his condemned condition. If that condemnation attaches from conception, personhood attaches from conception. The two are inseparable.

Russell was equally clear that even those who had not committed personal acts of sin—infants, for instance—were nonetheless under the sentence of Adamic death. St. Paul himself makes this point explicit in Romans 5:13–14: though sin is not imputed where there is no law, death reigned nevertheless even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Russell, drawing on this passage in *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES VOL. V* (E308–E339), applied it directly to Adamic condemnation: the death-sentence is not moral but federal—it attaches to every descendant of Adam by virtue of descent alone, not by virtue of personal transgression. And if that condemnation attaches before birth, the person to whom it attaches exists before birth. Russell, in *WATCH TOWER* article R2047, stated this without qualification: 'all of Adam's posterity are born in sin and shapen in iniquity'—citing Psalm 51:5 and Romans 5:12—and observed that 'depravity or weakness of character are born in every child.' This

depravity is not acquired after birth. It is inherited from conception, as the Psalm itself states. Russell's own acknowledgement of this places the person—the soul upon whom Adamic condemnation rests—in existence from the beginning of the conceived life.

This also directly answers Shallieu's use of Ezekiel 18:4—'the soul that sinneth, it shall die'—to argue that a soul must have breathed independently and done something before it can be subject to death. Shallieu conflates two categories of death that Scripture consistently distinguishes. Ezekiel 18:4 addresses, ultimately, the second death—the consequence of personal, wilful, conscious sin. But the death that reigns over the unborn is not second death. It is Adamic death—the inherited condemnation that attaches at conception through descent from Adam, requiring no personal act whatever. The very occurrence of death in the womb—of miscarriage, stillbirth, and foetal loss—is itself evidence that Adamic death reaches the unborn. And Adamic death can only reach a being that is already subject to it. The being that dies in the womb is dying because it is in Adam—and to be in Adam, by Russell's own teaching, is to be a being upon whom the death-sentence rests. The unborn child's death in the womb is not evidence against its soul-status. It is, on the contrary, evidence for it.

SECTION XIV

The Redemption Argument Examined

The strongest argument against the resurrection of the stillborn, as articulated by Pastor Russell in 1916, runs as follows: whoever has not been born has not been redeemed; if not redeemed, not raised. This argument deserves serious engagement rather than dismissal, as it carries the weight of Pastor Russell's considerable authority.

However, it contains a fundamental structural problem: it is circular. The chain of reasoning depends entirely upon defining birth as the threshold of personhood and soul-status. But that is precisely the proposition in dispute. To use it as an unexamined premise is to assume the conclusion one is attempting to prove.

Furthermore, Adamic condemnation—and therefore the need for redemption—is inherited, not earned. St. Paul states in Romans 5:12 that death passed upon all men because all sinned in Adam. This solidarity with Adam's sin does not begin at birth. Psalm 51:5 places it at conception. If the unborn share in Adam's condemnation from conception—which the Scriptural evidence consistently suggests they do—then Christ's redemption, which covers all of Adam's posterity, logically extends to them as well.

Russell himself stated the scope of the ransom in terms that are difficult to restrict to the post-birth only. In a 1902 WATCH TOWER article (R3063: p. 252) he wrote that God has provided in the death of Christ a ransom for all—'all the souls of the human family—for Adam and Eve, and all the souls begotten, generated, by them.' The word used is *begotten—generated*—which in its most natural sense encompasses all who are brought into being through the generative process, not merely those who have completed the process by being born. If the ransom covers all souls begotten of Adam and Eve, and if Psalm 51:5 places the existence of such a soul at conception, then Russell's own statement of the ransom's scope does not self-evidently exclude the unborn.

The 1916 Q&A (Q596:3) response in which Russell excluded the stillborn from resurrection hope was a brief answer to a specific question, not a developed theological treatment. It stated as a premise what needed to be proved—that no child is a soul previous to birth—without engaging with the Leviticus blood-life principle, the *brephos* terminology of Luke 1, the sentient behaviour of John and of Jacob and Esau, or the Psalm 51:5 evidence. These are not minor details. They are precisely the Scriptural evidence that bears on the question, and Russell's brief 1916 answer did not engage with them.

Furthermore, Russell's own broader treatment of *anastasis* and resurrection scope in R360 and in STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES VOL. VI sits uncomfortably with his 1916 exclusion of the stillborn. In R360 Russell wrote that *anastasis* means rebuilding, restoration, setting up again—and that its scope covers all in Adam. In VOL. VI he used the analogy of a prison to describe the condition of the whole race under Adamic death. The order for release, he wrote, covers not only those shut in their cells—those in the tomb—but all who are in any sense behind the prison bars. Those still walking in the prison yard, not yet in their cells, are equally under the jailer's power and equally within the scope of the release order. Russell's own framework therefore does not self-evidently exclude the unborn—who are, if anything, among those most fully within the prison of Adamic death, having not yet even entered the prison yard of lived existence.

Russell also stated in R360 that the restorations performed by Elijah, Elisha, and Jesus—including the widow's son of 1 Kings 17—are never called *anastasis* in Scripture. They are mere revivifications—temporary sparks of life, not resurrection in the full Scriptural sense. This is directly relevant because it removes the 1 Kings 17 account from the list of resurrection precedents entirely, and with it the argument that only those who have lived as independent breathing souls can have a resurrection hope.

It must also be acknowledged that Russell made his 1916 statement at a time when scientific understanding of foetal development was rudimentary. The assumption that a foetus is essentially inert and non-sentient until birth was medically credible then in a way it emphatically is not today. This does not undermine Russell's authority on the nature of the soul—on which he was plainly correct and whose teaching this article endorses. But on the specific and narrow question of the stillborn child's resurrection hope, he may well have been mistaken, and Scripture furnishes sufficient reason to think so.

SECTION XV

The Resurrection of the Stillborn

The question of whether a stillborn child—particularly one fully formed and near term—is entitled to a resurrection touches the character of God as directly as it touches any point of doctrine.

Consider the case of a child nine months in the womb, fully formed, with a functioning brain and beating heart, responsive to sound and light, who is strangled accidentally by the umbilical cord and is born dead. Is this child, by some doctrinal technicality, consigned to eternal non-existence because it did not manage to draw one breath of air with its own lungs? Is the difference between resurrection hope and eternal oblivion the matter of a single gasp of air?

Such a conclusion is not required by Scripture. It is inferred from a particular reading of Genesis 2:7, pressed far beyond what that text was designed to support, without accounting for: the Eve precedent; the Leviticus blood-life principle; the Job 3:16 distinction between *nephel* and *olel*; the Exodus 21 *yeled*; the Psalm 51:5 placement of personal identity at conception; or the testimony of John leaping for joy at six months.

John Edgar made an observation in *Where are the Dead?* that is directly relevant here. Discussing the resurrection and the preservation of character, he noted: 'Little children who have died before they have had time to form character will have no bad habits to unlearn in the resurrection. This will be to some extent to their advantage.' Edgar here assumes, without argument, that little children who die are subjects of the resurrection—their lack of formed character being a feature of their resurrection experience, not a disqualification from it. He does not restrict this to children who died after birth. His language is simply 'little children who have died.' While this cannot be pressed as a definitive statement about the stillborn specifically, it is entirely consistent with a more inclusive view of resurrection scope than Russell's 1916 Q&A suggests.

Russell's own VOL. VI treatment of resurrection is also worth noting here. He wrote that the threads of existence are taken up just where they were dropped in death—that the awakening in resurrection will be as the termination of a sleep, with the individual finding themselves in practically the same condition in which they lay down, able to recall what preceded. For a stillborn child, those threads are brief. But Russell's framework places no minimum length on the threads before they are worth taking up. His prison yard analogy, as already noted, includes all who are under Adamic death's power—and the stillborn are most emphatically within that category. Nothing in Russell's broader framework self-evidently requires that the threads reach some minimum experiential length before they fall within the scope of God's restorative work.

Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.—Psalm 145:16

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.—1 John 4:8

The God of Scripture is not a God who condemns on technicalities. He is a God who searches the womb (Psalm 139:13–16), who knows his servants before their formation is complete (Jeremiah 1:5), who fills the unborn with his spirit (Luke 1:15), and who satisfies the desire of every living thing. Russell himself wrote movingly of God's character as the ultimate guarantor of resurrection hope: 'God is leaving each of us to the freedom of our will, while at the same time he is seeing to it that all things are working together for good to those who love him.' A God of such character, who has gone to such lengths to redeem the race, who has promised to wipe away every tear, is not constrained by a technicality of first breath to leave a strangled, fully-formed infant in eternal oblivion.

The hope of the mother who buries her stillborn child is not a sentimental indulgence to be corrected by doctrine. It is grounded in the character of God, in the cumulative weight of Scriptural testimony concerning the personhood and value of the unborn, and in the very scope of the ransom that Russell himself defined as covering all souls begotten of Adam.



SECTION XVI

The Phonograph Misread—Russell, Edgar, and Frank Shallieu

A significant doctrinal dispute has arisen within the Bible Student tradition concerning the nature of the soul and what happens to it at death. This dispute is directly relevant to the question of the unborn, because it concerns the very definition of a living soul and what God preserves across death and resurrection. It is necessary to trace the argument carefully, because a well-known teacher within this tradition advanced a position that, on examination, directly contradicts the writers from whom he claimed to derive it.

Pastor Russell used the analogy of a phonograph cylinder to illustrate the resurrection. The cylinder receives impressions during its use; when destroyed, those impressions are preserved—not as a surviving thing—but in God's memory, to be reproduced on a new cylinder in the resurrection. Russell was explicit about the limits of his illustration. He wrote that the character and identity are 'preserved by the Lord—



Scholars Discussing the Edison Phonograph

we know not how nor where.’ He made no claim that a tangible entity survives death. The illustration is about God’s power to reconstitute, not about a surviving immaterial substance.

It must be acknowledged that Russell’s Q817:2 phonograph illustration, read in isolation, could appear to support the idea of a surviving identity—a cylinder preserved while the machine is destroyed, then later placed in a new machine. But two qualifications prevent this reading. First, Russell himself immediately adds ‘we know not how nor where’—a deliberate agnosticism about mechanism that is incompatible with the claim that the soul is a specific stored entity returned to a specific location in heaven. Second, and decisively, Russell’s R5166 article provides the clearest statement of his actual position:

When man dies, his personality, which is the result of his hereditary and prenatal influences combined with his experiences, perishes; for it cannot exist without a body. As the Scriptures declare, ‘In that day his THOUGHTS perish.’—C.T. Russell, *Watch Tower*, R5166

Personality perishes at death because it cannot exist without a body. The WATCH TOWER article R1263, written by Mrs C.T. Russell and published in the WATCH TOWER, states this with equal precision: ‘though an individual may die, become extinct, pass out of actual existence, his character still exists in the memory, the mind of God.’ The word extinct is decisive. Russell’s framework explicitly contemplates complete extinction of actual existence while identity is preserved only in God’s memory. Nothing survives in any tangible form. God’s mind is described as ‘a great cabinet in which are preserved the exact record of the thoughts and sentiments or characters of all the world (as in the wax cylinders), and from which each character can at his will be reproduced.’ The preservation is in God’s mind, not in a stored soul-entity. God then ‘creates another body. . . and stamps it with all the lines of that character just as it exists in his memory.’ He creates and stamps—He does not retrieve and reinsert.

The same R1263 article addresses Christ’s own death in terms that directly refute Shallieu’s framework: ‘when he died and his identity was completely lost to himself for three days, it still existed in the memory of God.’ Christ’s identity was completely lost to himself. It did not survive in any dormant form accessible to Christ. It existed only in God’s memory. If Shallieu’s framework were correct—that the soul is a separate entity which becomes dormant at death and retains its identity intact—then Christ’s identity would not have been completely lost to himself. Russell explicitly says the opposite. Christ’s identity existed in God’s memory during the three days, was reproduced in a glorious divine body, and he recognised himself—not because a stored entity was reinserted, but because God stamped the new body with the same character that had existed in His memory.

The consistent reading of Russell across Q817:2, R5166, and R1263 is therefore unambiguous: God preserves identity in His own knowledge and power, reconstituting it at resurrection by creative act. The cylinder is an analogy for the character preserved in God’s mind, not for a surviving soul-entity stored in heaven. *We know not how nor where* is Russell deliberately declining to specify a mechanism—the very opposite of Shallieu’s confident claim that the soul ascends to God’s memory bank in heaven.

John Edgar, whose 1919 treatment of this subject is the most detailed within the tradition, developed the phonograph illustration extensively—and then stated its limits with perfect clarity. He wrote:

The soul is the whole sentient being. When the soul or being dies, it goes out of existence. God preserves the memory and character of the individual, not as an immaterial something, but merely as a remembrance. In the resurrection he will impart this memory and character to a new body, and thus the identity will be preserved.—John Edgar, *Faith’s Foundations*, 2012 (*The Preservation of Identity in the Resurrection*)

Edgar even anticipated the error that would later be made, warning that the difficulty of understanding resurrection without a surviving substance ‘is really the old difficulty which led to the conception of the natural immortality of the soul, and the theory of the disembodied spirits of the dead.’ He saw the danger

and named it. The soul goes out of existence. Nothing survives as an immaterial something. God reconstitutes from His own infinite memory.

Frank Shallieu took the phonograph analogy and crossed precisely the line that Russell and Edgar refused to cross. The foundational error appears already in his Genesis 1:25 commentary, where Shallieu wrote: ‘All living animals and creatures, including man, possess souls. . . . God has a memory bank, and the soul of man will have a resurrection. Each soul is a separate, distinct individual.’ The verb possess is significant. Russell stated that *man is a soul*. Shallieu states that *man possesses a soul*. These are not the same thought—Russell himself identified this as a *very different thought* and called it a *reversal of the Scriptural statement*. From this foundation of man possessing a separate soul-entity, Shallieu built an elaborate framework.

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:37–38, Shallieu taught that the soul is ‘a separate entity’—that it does not die but *becomes dormant*, that it *returns to God in heaven* where it is stored awaiting reinsertion into a new body. He stated explicitly: ‘The souls of all humans, consecrated or unconsecrated, go to God at death and are put into His ‘bank,’ to be determined later what body each will receive in the resurrection.’ In his commentary on Ecclesiastes 12:6–7, he described the silver cord as the soul itself, stating that ‘the spirit, the soul, goes up to the bank in heaven that stores in its memory all living beings, wherever they have been.’ He claimed that Pastor Russell ‘did not explain what the soul itself is’—a puzzling assertion given that Russell published a tract called *What Is the Soul?*, addressed the question at length in *STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES VOL. V*, and explicitly stated that **man is a soul**, not that he has one.

Shallieu was also aware that the tape analogy has limits. In his 1 Corinthians commentary he acknowledged: ‘Yes, but of course the tape is material, and the soul is spirit.’ Having acknowledged that the illustration is imperfect—the soul being spirit rather than material substance—he nonetheless continued to draw literal doctrinal conclusions from it: that the soul-spirit separates from the body at death, ascends to a storage location, and awaits reinsertion. Russell and Edgar refused to draw any literal conclusions from their phonograph analogy and explicitly said they did not know how or where God preserved identity. Shallieu drew extensive literal conclusions from his tape analogy while acknowledging it was imperfect. This is not a development of Russell’s illustration. **It is an abuse of it.**



A related internal inconsistency appears when Shallieu’s John 1:9 commentary is set alongside his Exodus 21 commentary. In his Exodus 21 notes Shallieu uses John 1:9—‘every man that cometh into the world’—to argue that Jesus did not redeem foetuses, restricting the ransom’s scope to those born alive. But in his own John 1:9 commentary he reads the verse as prophetically universal, explicitly including within its scope all who lived and died before Calvary and those who never heard the gospel. He does not restrict it to those born alive. And Russell’s own R5573 article on John 1:9 is explicit that the provision includes ‘all infants who have died before reaching the age where they could know of God and His Truth in Christ.’ Russell names them alongside the heathen and those of imbecile mind as within the comprehensive plan of salvation. If infants who died having never accumulated any personality or formed any character are within the scope of John 1:9 and therefore within the plan of salvation, Shallieu’s framework cannot coherently exclude the stillborn child from that same scope. He has not supplied a principled ontological distinction between an infant who dies one hour after birth and one who dies one hour before it—and his own John 1:9 commentary implies no such distinction exists. The contrast between the positions is absolute. Russell and Edgar: at death the soul goes out of existence entirely; personality perishes because it cannot exist without a body; God preserves identity in His own memory and reconstitutes it at resurrection—we know not how nor where. Frank Shallieu: man possesses a soul as a separate entity; the

soul does not die but becomes dormant; it ascends to God’s memory bank in heaven; it is put into storage and later reinserted into a new body. This is not a development of Russell’s teaching. **It is a reversal of it**—and it is precisely the kind of thinking about surviving immaterial substances that Edgar explicitly identified as the source of the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul.

Russell also addressed the Ecclesiastes 12:7 passage—‘the spirit shall return unto God who gave it’—directly. He stated that **this does not mean the spirit wings its flight back to God as a conscious entity**. The spirit of life, the power or privilege of living, reverts to its source as a forfeited right, not as a surviving intelligence. Nothing tangible travels to heaven. The soul goes into *sheol*—the condition of oblivion and non-existence. Christ’s soul went to *sheol* for parts of three days; Peter makes this explicit in Acts 2:27–31. David’s soul remains in *sheol* to this day. Neither ascended to heaven. The soul is not in transit between death and resurrection. It is non-existent, preserved only in God’s purpose and power.

The Critical Distinction Russell and Edgar: at death the soul goes out of existence entirely; God preserves identity in His own memory and reconstitutes it at resurrection. Frank Shallieu: a separate soul-entity survives death in a dormant state, ascends to heaven, and awaits reinsertion into a new body. These positions are mutually exclusive. The first is consistent with Scripture; the second, despite its new technological clothing, reinstates the ancient error of the surviving immaterial soul.

The relevance of this to the womb question is this: if the soul is the whole sentient being—not a separate stored entity—then the question of whether a babe in the womb is a living soul is a question about whether the whole integrated being is alive, sentient, and present. The evidence of Leviticus 17, Luke 1, Genesis 25, Psalm 51:5, and the Targum of Ecclesiastes 11:5 all point in the same direction. The developing babe, particularly once fully formed, meets the criteria of a living soul—not because some immaterial entity has been inserted into it at birth, but because the life-principle is already active within it, its own blood is already circulating, and Scripture itself attributes to it sentient, responsive, spiritually significant behaviour.

‘The soul or being dies, it goes out of existence. God preserves the memory. . . not as an immaterial something, but merely as a remembrance.’

— John Edgar, Faith’s Foundations (*The Preservation of Identity in the Resurrection*)

Russell and Edgar: the soul ceases entirely at death; God reconstitutes identity from His own memory. Frank Shallieu: the soul survives as a dormant separate entity stored in heaven awaiting reinsertion. These are irreconcilable positions. Shallieu’s framework reinstates the ancient error of the surviving immaterial soul that both Russell and Edgar explicitly rejected.

—RUSSELL AND EDGAR VS. SHALLIEU ON THE SOUL

‘The spirit shall return unto God who gave it’ does not mean a conscious entity ascends to heaven. Russell: the spirit of life—a power or privilege, not an intelligence—reverts to its source as a forfeited right. The soul of Christ was completely lost to himself for three days, existing only in God’s memory (R1263).

—ON ECCLESIASTES 12:7



SECTION XVII

Conclusion

The following propositions have been established from Scripture and from the evidence of both reason and neuroscience throughout this examination:

A living soul is an alive, embodied, sentient being—the whole creature, not a body containing a separate invisible entity. Man is a soul; he does not merely have one.

The creation of Adam is unique and unrepeatable. It is descriptive of one creative act, not prescriptive of the universal mechanism by which all subsequent souls must come into being. Adam himself was a living soul with zero accumulated personality, refuting the claim that personality is a prerequisite for soul-status.

Eve's creation demonstrates that the Genesis 2:7 mechanism is not presented as universal—she became a living soul without any recorded nostril-breath event. This provides both a counter-example to the first-breath threshold and a positive precedent for transmitted life as a sufficient basis for soul-status. Shallieu's Genesis 2:21–23 commentary does not engage with this counter-example.

The Aramaic Targum of Ecclesiastes 11:5 treats the breath of the spirit of life entering an embryo in the womb as an established fact, not a post-birth event.

The life of the flesh is in the blood. The developing babe has its own blood, its own heart, its own *nephesh*, active and present in the womb. That it receives oxygen through the placenta rather than its own lungs adds nothing to Leviticus 17 that the text itself requires.

Scripture itself distinguishes between an early undeveloped loss of pregnancy (*nephel*) and a fully formed infant (*olel*). They are not the same category.

Scripture records sentient, emotionally responsive, Spirit-filled behaviour in the womb at six months gestation, using the same Greek term (*brephos*) for the unborn as for the newborn.

God's prior knowledge of individuals in the womb—as demonstrated in Psalm 139, Jeremiah 1:5, Isaiah 49:1, and Romans 9:11–13—presupposes persons before birth and before any accumulated personality. God does not name, sanctify, ordain, love, or reject biological processes.

The personality prerequisite fails on six grounds: personality is not what creates the soul but what develops within it, demonstrated by Adam, Eve, infants, and the unconscious; the prior-existence argument is refuted by Adam himself, since God created a complete identity from nothing, establishing that identity depends on God's creative power rather than prior experience; the death of the unborn is Adamic death not second death, presupposing soul-status; modern neuroscience provides strong evidence that impressions are forming in the womb from mid-gestation; Russell's prenatal influences teaching demonstrates the recording has begun before birth, turning Shallieu's own analogy against his conclusion; and no coherent ontological change occurs at first breath, making the boundary arbitrary.

Identity originates in God's creative knowledge rather than in prior experience or prior breathing life. This is fully consistent with Russell and Edgar: God preserves identity in His own memory, not in any prior state of the being. If God can originate identity from nothing—as He did with Adam from dust—prior existence cannot be a prerequisite for identity. The unborn are not excluded from God's knowledge or care by the absence of prior independent breath.

The moral consequences of the opposing position deserve to be named. A child partially born, head emerged, still placenta-dependent, is on the independence-criterion not yet a living soul—and its deliberate killing is not murder. A fully formed nine-month foetus is not a life at any stage, on Shallieu's own words, and its abortion does not violate the sixth commandment. These consequences follow

necessarily from the position. Those who hold it are required either to accept them or to show, coherently, where within their framework the moral line is drawn. No such showing has been offered.

Russell himself recognised the prenatal rights of the yet unborn generations as a meaningful moral category (R3067)—presupposing that the unborn are persons of a kind to whom rights can meaningfully apply.

The earliest post-apostolic Christian community, writing in the same Koine Greek as the New Testament and the Septuagint, applied the vocabulary of personal identity—τέκνον (*teknon*, child)—to the unborn, described abortion as φθορά (*phthora*, destruction and corruption), and treated its deliberate commission as murder on the same moral footing as infanticide. The *Didache* (c. A. D. 85–110), the *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. A. D. 74–130), and Athenagoras of Athens (*A Plea for the Christians*, A. D. 177) are unanimous on this point, and their witness is irreconcilable with the position that the foetus is not a life no matter how old it was. Athenagoras further described the foetus as a κτίσμα (*ktisma*)—a created being and object of divine care—placing it within the same category of creaturely life within which *nephesh chayyah* operates throughout this article’s argument.

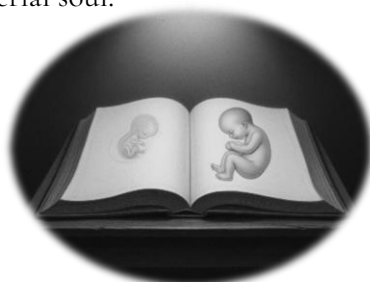
Psalm 51:5 places personal identity and Adamic condemnation at conception. Ezekiel 18:4 addresses second death from personal sin, not Adamic death—and the two must not be conflated.

The evidence points not to a single instantaneous threshold but to a developmental continuum within which the case for soul-status strengthens progressively with biological and neurological integration. Scripture itself reflects this in its own vocabulary—distinguishing *nephel* from *olel*, and presenting divine recognition of the individual as deepening with development. While the exact point of full soul-status is not explicitly defined, the weight of evidence makes restriction to the moment of first independent breath Scripturally unsustainable.

The redemption argument against the resurrection of the stillborn is circular, assuming birth as the threshold of personhood rather than establishing it. If inclusion in Adam determines inclusion in the scope of redemption, and if inclusion in Adam begins prior to birth—as Adamic condemnation reaching the unborn demonstrates—then exclusion from resurrection scope requires explicit Scriptural limitation, which is absent. Russell’s prison yard analogy and his R360 *anastasis* scope are difficult to reconcile with his 1916 exclusion of the stillborn.

Shallieu’s use of John 1:9 to restrict the ransom to those born alive contradicts his own John 1:9 commentary, contradicts Russell’s R5573 which explicitly includes infants who died before reaching the age of understanding within the scope of that verse, and rests on a grammatically ambiguous reading of the phrase ‘cometh into the world’ that patristic commentators including Cyril and Augustine read as describing Christ rather than every man.

Russell and Edgar both taught that the soul ceases entirely at death—that personality perishes because it cannot exist without a body (R5166)—and that God preserves identity as a remembrance in His own memory, reconstituting it at resurrection. We know not how nor where. Shallieu’s framework—that man possesses a soul as a separate entity, that it separates at death, ascends to God’s memory bank in heaven, and is later reinserted into a new body—directly contradicts both Russell and Edgar and reinstates the ancient error of the surviving immaterial soul.



Final Position: The Scriptural data does not support a single postnatal threshold for soul-status. Identity depends on God's creative knowledge, not on prior breathing existence—as Adam's creation from dust demonstrates. Scripture consistently presents life, identity, and divine recognition as present within the womb, in a manner that strengthens progressively with development. The Hebrew and Greek vocabulary distinguishes between developmental stages. God names, sanctifies, ordains, loves, and responds to individuals before birth and before any accumulated personality. The life-principle is active in the blood of the developing child from an early stage. Adamic condemnation, which requires a person to rest upon, attaches from conception. Personality is not what creates the soul but what develops within it. No coherent ontological change occurs at first breath—the being before and after is continuous. While the exact point of full soul-status is not explicitly defined, the cumulative weight of evidence makes restriction to the moment of first independent breath Scripturally unsustainable. Where Scripture does not explicitly exclude, and where the evidence consistently points towards inclusion, the burden of proof lies with those who would deny soul-status to the unborn—not with those who affirm it. The character of God, the scope of the ransom, and the testimony of Scripture together provide reasonable, well-grounded, and Scripturally defensible hope for the stillborn child.

Sources and References

All Hebrew and Greek terms cited with reference to Strong's Concordance. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted. Septuagint references are from the standard Rahlfs edition. References to Pastor Russell's writings are from: *Studies in the Scriptures* Vol. V (E301, E308–E339, E354–E362, E383) and Vol. VI (F519–F523, F694–F730); Watch Tower reprints R360, R366, R1263 (authored by Mrs C.T. Russell), R1880, R1915, R2047, R2562, R3063, R3067, R4174, R4209–R4210, R5107, R5166, R5573; Q&A responses Q596:3 (1916) and Q817:2; and the tract *What Is the Soul?* John Edgar's writings are cited from *Faith's Foundations* (2012 edition), *Where Are the Dead?* (1908), and *The Preservation of Identity in the Resurrection* (1919). Frank Shallieu's positions are cited from his *Old Testament Studies* (Genesis 1:25; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 2:21–23; Exodus 21:22–25), his *New Testament Studies* (Luke 1:15; John 1:9), and his published Commentaries on Ecclesiastes 12:6–7 and 1 Corinthians 15:37–38. The Keil and Delitzsch Old Testament Commentary is cited on Exodus 21. Adam Clarke's Commentary is cited on Job 3:16. Vincent's Word Studies and John Gill's Exposition are cited on Luke 1:15. Barnes' Notes on the Bible and Poole's Commentary are cited on John 1:9; Barnes' Notes is further cited on Galatians 5:20 (*pharmakeia*). Early Christian primary sources cited in Section XII: *The Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)* 2:2 (c. AD 85–110), Koine Greek original; J.B. Lightfoot translation, full text at earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-lightfoot.html; *Epistle of Barnabas* 19 (c. AD 74–130), full text at earlychristianwritings.com; Athenagoras of Athens, *A Plea for the Christians (Legatio pro Christianis)*, ch. 35 (AD 177), Ante-Nicene Fathers translation, full text at newadvent.org/fathers/0205.htm and ccel.org/ccel/athenagoras/plea_for_christians; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* 2.10.96 (on *pharmakeia* and abortion). The Aramaic Targum of Ecclesiastes 11:5 is from the Sefaria Community Translation (sefaria.org). Neuroscientific findings on foetal development are drawn from peer-reviewed literature on foetal sensory response, REM sleep patterns, and pain perception, from approximately 18–30 weeks gestation. Born-alive statistics cited in Section XII are drawn from: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 102-0536 (ICD-10 code P96.4), 2000–2009; Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health (CEMACH), *Perinatal Mortality* report, data year 2005, published 2007, England and Wales; Queensland Health, *Perinatal Annual Reports*, Table 10.13, and Victoria, *Mothers and Babies* reports, 2010–2020; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, mortality records ICD-10 code P96.4, United States, 2003–2014.

THE CANDLE ILLUSTRATION

The relation of body, spirit, and soul

The soul is the sentient being. Its existence depends on the union of body and spirit.

SOUL
The flame or light—sentient being, intelligence, personality.

SPIRIT (BREATH OF LIFE)
The oxygen in the air which unites with the body and produces the soul.

BODY
The candle itself—the physical organism.



IF THE BODY IS DESTROYED



Flame: Soul
Burning



Candle destroyed:
Flame ceases



No flame:
Soul ceases

If the body is destroyed (as by disease or accident), the soul—the sentient being—ceases.

IF THE SPIRIT IS WITHDRAWN



Flame: Soul
Burning



Supply of air
cut off



Flame goes out:
Soul ceases

If the supply of air (spirit of life) is cut off (by drowning, asphyxiation, etc.), the soul ceases, though the body may remain.

Death is the cessation of the soul, the sentient being, resulting from the separation of body and spirit.

The body returns to the dust; the spirit (breath of life) returns to God who gave it; and the soul ceases.

— Ecclesiastes 12:7

An illustration of the relationship between the human or animal body, spirit and soul:

‘An unlighted candle would correspond to an inanimate human body or corpse; the lighting of the candle would correspond to the spark of life originally imparted by the Creator; the flame or light corresponds to sentient being, or intelligence, or soul quality; the oxygenised atmosphere which unites with the carbon of the candle in supporting the flame corresponds to the *breath* of life or spirit of life which unites with the physical organism in producing soul or intelligent existence. If an accident should occur which would destroy the candle, the flame, of course, would cease; so if a human or animal body be destroyed, as by disease or accident, the *soul*, the *being*, intelligence, personality, *ceases*. Or if the supply of air were cut off from the candle flame, as by an extinguisher or snuffer, or by submerging the candle in water, the light would be extinguished even though the candle remained unimpaired. So the *soul*, life, existence, of man or animal would cease if the breath of life were cut off by drowning or asphyxiation, while the body might be comparatively sound.’—E342