

The False, the Evil, and the Ugly: A Critique of Margaret Kamitsuka's Defense of Abortion

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ABSTRACT: This paper summarizes the central arguments of Margaret Kamitsuka's recent book *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic*. It then provides a critical response to the book from a pro-life point of view. It argues that Kamitsuka's interpretation of history in relation to abortion is false, misleading, and incomplete. Her philosophical arguments in defense of the killing of the inhabitant of the womb are gravely faulty because they rely on *othering*, which is a phenomenon that is well-understood and critiqued in other areas of human life but one that goes unrecognized by pro-choice advocates when they themselves are guilty of it. The evil in the pro-choice position lies principally in its indefensible violence, which in turn produces a cultural atmosphere characterized by rancor, spiritual ugliness, and emotional pain.

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THERE IS A TRADITIONAL RULE of debate that holds that debaters should be able to summarize their opponent's arguments in a way that the opponent would recognize them as accurate. In that spirit, I will make my best attempt at recapitulating Margaret Kamitsuka's *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic*.¹ Kamitsuka is a Professor of Religion Emerita at Oberlin College; her two previous books are *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference* (Oxford, 2007), and an edited collection of essays, *The Embrace of Eros: Bodies, Desires, and Sexuality in Christianity* (Fortress, 2010).

Kamitsuka's book on abortion has two main parts, the first being a critique of pro-life authors' interpretations of history, their use of the Bible, their reference to Christ's incarnation, and their philosophical arguments regarding fetal personhood. The second part contains her constructive proposals for the pro-choice position regarding maternal authority, gestational hospitality (including reference to the Parable of the Good Samaritan), and a concluding chapter on "Motherhood Choices, Abortion Death, and the Womb of God." As we can see already, Kamitsuka is not of the opinion that religious or theological arguments must be excluded from the abortion debate in favor of exclusively "secular" arguments. She seeks to counter both pro-life arguments that are theological and those that are secular, treating both types of arguments seriously.

Regarding history, her main target is John Noonan's well-known essay "An Almost Absolute Value in History," which has been very

¹ Margaret Kamitsuka, *Abortion and the Christian Tradition: A Pro-Choice Theological Ethic* (Westminster MD: John Knox, 2019). While I hope that Kamitsuka would affirm my summary as accurate, she could respond that it leaves out too much of her detail; however, if I spent fifteen pages summarizing her book, my own argument could not even get started.

influential in pro-life historiography.² Noonan and other pro-life scholars have asserted that the central Christian viewpoint, from the early church period up through the twentieth century, was profoundly and consistently anti-abortion, with no openness to what we know today as the pro-choice position. Kamitsuka says that the mistake made in pro-life writings on history is to assume that statements against abortion were motivated by concern about the immorality of killing the inhabitant of the womb, when they actually were motivated by sexism and a desire to control the sexuality of women. Kamitsuka here draws on Beverly Wildung Harrison's *Our Right to Choose* and other related feminist writings to argue that the Christian tradition's opposition to abortion arose from its assumption that a wife was under the authority of her husband, that her primary role was to be a mother to many children, and that the pursuit of sexual pleasure as an end in itself was a result of humanity's fall into sin.³

Kamitsuka proposes a "counternarrative" that employs four arguments. First, she claims that the Apostle Paul would likely have known about and agreed with the Hellenistic Greek notion that there is a distinction between a formed and an unformed fetus and that the death of the latter was not viewed with great concern because it was not seen as a bearer of the image of God. Second, she argues that the penitential manuals that developed in the Middle Ages assigned a lesser penance for aborting an "unformed" fetus than a "formed" one, and that they treated differently the cases of a poor woman and a woman who was trying to hide the evidence of her fornication or adultery. Third, she observes that there was a turn in the later Middle Ages away from the penitential manuals and their more lenient and flexible approach to the problem of abortion, in favor of an

² John T. Noonan, Jr., "An Almost Absolute Value in History" in *The Morality of Abortion: Legal and Historical Perspectives*, ed. John T. Noonan, Jr. (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970).

³ Kamitsuka, pp. 21–23.

increasingly defined criminalization of abortion in canon law. From that point forward, both contraception and abortion were treated as cases of legal homicide; this arose from the assertion of centralized authority in Rome and from the “sex-negativity” of the decretalists.⁴ Fourth, she cites evidence from the early Church to show that the medical science of that day understood that childbirth could sometimes lead to the death of mother and that death could be avoided through a physician dismembering the child to save the life of the woman. She notes that even the moral rigorist Tertullian agreed with this.⁵

In the next chapter Kamitsuka turns to the Bible. She argues that drawing on the “image of God” language of Genesis 1:26–27 does not do the theological work that pro-life advocates think it does. She claims that it is an unsupported leap of logic to connect the image of God concept with all fetuses and says that in the New Testament becoming Christian involves being re-formed after the image of Christ in discipleship. In her analysis, that has nothing to do with an ontological claim about fetuses.⁶ She considers the few biblical texts that refer to a prophet being called by God from the womb (such as Is. 49:1 and Jer. 1:5) to be “literary type scenes,” not generalizable comments on the moral status of all gestating human beings. The following chapter (on “Fetal Personhood and Christ’s Incarnation”) continues the conversation with an emphasis not on proof texts but on theological interpretations. Kamitsuka considers attempts to ground the pro-life position on the doctrine of the Incarnation and finds all of them unconvincing. She rejects the notion that Christ’s divine and human personhood was present immediately at the Annunciation to Mary and argues instead that “Jesus’ human nature was divinized continually, incrementally, and progressively, as the Logos assumed each new emergent event of Jesus’ human existence—from conception, to

⁴ Kamitsuka, p. 33.

⁵ Kamitsuka, p. 46.

⁶ Kamitsuka, p. 59.

blastocyst, to birth, and then throughout his life..., culminating in his death and resurrection.”⁷

Kamitsuka next considers pro-life philosophical arguments. She takes note of two types, the “substantialist” approach that focuses on DNA as a basis for making ontological statements about the moral status of the inhabitant of the womb and the “probabilist” approach that argues that “an embryo should be accorded the full rights and dignity that any human person has, based on the probability that the embryo already is an ensouled human person.”⁸ She finds both of these approaches faulty in that they present an “abstract” assertion of the immediate and full personhood as following from fertilization, without taking into account the personhood and life circumstances of the woman who is pregnant. This leads, she claims, to a position that could possibly establish the “plausibility of some fetal rights” but without justifying “suppressing the mother’s reproductive rights.”⁹ She argues that both approaches “relegate women to a passive role of fetal incubator.”¹⁰

This first part of the book seeks to respond to pro-life literature and to explain why she finds it unpersuasive. In the second part she develops her own constructive argument. If I may be allowed to insert a critical comment here, it strikes me that aside from the flaws that one might find in her responses to what she has read, there are two major omissions from her account thus far. The first is that she uses rights language, as in her reference to “the mother’s reproductive rights,” but nowhere in the entire book does she explain what rights are as a general concept, where they come from, and why it is that various thinkers in the modern world use rights language to argue for positions that are exactly opposite to one another, while still other authors argue

⁷ Kamitsuka, p. 91.

⁸ Kamitsuka, p. 109.

⁹ Kamitsuka, p. 98.

¹⁰ Kamitsuka, p. 107.

that rights language ought to be abandoned entirely. The problematic nature of rights language does not seem to be on her radar screen. The second issue is that she seems to not have grasped clearly that the core of the pro-life worldview is an anti-violence moral stance. Abortion is a form of intentional killing. In the wake of the vast and varied forms of killing that human beings have engaged in over the past several centuries, a stance that seeks to defend yet another form of lethal action would seem to bear the burden of proof in this grand contest of worldviews. Her claim that the burden of proof lies more on the pro-life side is, to use one of her favorite words, *unconvincing*.

Kamitsuka's fifth chapter ("Maternal Authority and Fetal Value") summarizes two pro-choice positions, before expressing her preference for a third. The first position sees the woman as a victim and the fetus (or the "pregnancy") as an adversarial agent that is attacking her. The second position relies on the notion that some women may feel psychologically unprepared to be mothers. This "pre-mothering identity" frees her from the obligation of bringing the fetus to birth.¹¹ The third way of thinking, favored and developed by Kamitsuka, accepts that pregnancy does give a woman a mothering identity, but denies that this means there is an obligation to give birth. She argues that if "pregnancy termination is not seen as itself a mothering decision, then women who have abortions forever carry the stigma of being women who selfishly or callously rejected motherhood responsibilities" and that this leads to "state-imposed forced gestation."¹² She says that the fetus is not without value and does have an emerging status of personhood, but this does not override the woman's "maternal authority" to decide whether or not it lives.

In the next chapter ("Gestational Hospitality and the Parable of the Good Samaritan") Kamitsuka disagrees with the pro-life view that

¹¹ Kamitsuka, p. 121.

¹² Kamitsuka, p. 122.

this parable establishes a virtuous obligation for all pregnant women to give birth. She argues that a woman can legitimately “refuse her fetus the hospitality of her womb” and that this “is not an abdication of Samaritanism but an instantiation of the best principles of neighbor love.”¹³ She considers the use of the parable in the pro-life arguments of Stanley Hauerwas, Frederick Bauerschmidt, and Richard Hays and finds all of them unpersuasive. Her constructive response draws on the care ethics of Nel Noddings, the supererogatory view of gestation presented by Patricia Jung, perspectives drawn from Jewish ethics, and arguments by feminist authors who reject a pro-life interpretation of Emmanuel Levinas, which would see the “face of the other” in every fetus. Here, and throughout the book, she describes the position of pro-life advocates as “abstract” and “dangerously idealistic.” She thinks that “their appeals to Jesus’ parable fall flat because the Samaritan’s generosity is not even closely analogous to the demands and life-changing realities women face with pregnancy, birthing a baby, and the lifetime of mothering demands that follow.”¹⁴

In the seventh and final chapter Kamitsuka seeks to develop a constructive account of the acceptability of legalized abortion that is distinctively theological and Christian. The chapter argues that there are circumstances in which a decision to abort is not sinful, “and, beyond that, [she] offers reasons for seeing the difficult choice of abortion as encompassed by God’s compassion.”¹⁵ She discusses Mary and Eve, arguing that Mary’s acceptance of her pregnancy should not be used as a model that produces an obligation. Rather, “Mary had the promise of miraculous succor to see her through her unintended pregnancy; yet women today face their unintended and unwanted pregnancies mostly on their own. If Mary was allowed to choose

¹³ Kamitsuka, p. 155.

¹⁴ Kamitsuka, p. 189.

¹⁵ Kamitsuka, p. 193.

motherhood, how much more so should ordinary women.”¹⁶ Kamitsuka draws on various feminist authors who seek to deconstruct and reshape the traditional and simplistic binary that sees Eve as a representative of sin who listened to the Serpent, and Mary as the virginal mother of Jesus Christ who listened to the Angel. She develops her constructive vision by disagreeing with those pro-choice advocates who sometimes refer to abortion as “always a tragedy.” She feels this casts the shadow of sin over abortion, and she seeks to dispel that shadow by “seeing abortion as a woman’s morally serious maternal decision that there be no child born to whom she would have further mothering obligations.”¹⁷ Kamitsuka argues that abortion should not be seen as a sin because the personhood of the fetus is ambiguous, not clear; further, most women who decide to abort do so with a sense of anguish that recognizes some value to fetal life. She also rejects the idea that abortion should be seen as a sin against God, by saying: “There is no objective way to know if, or the extent to which, a particular act of abortion death has damaged a woman’s relationship with God,” because that is a matter of “individual conscience.”¹⁸

Kamitsuka speaks of the emotionally painful experiences of miscarriage and stillbirth. She portrays God as comforting and cradling the woman in such a situation. I cannot imagine anyone disagreeing with that idea. Pro-life advocates, however, will fail to follow her logic when she describes abortion in similar terms. She presents “a mothering God who turns her face not away but toward [a woman who has chosen to abort] and feels compassion for the death that the woman brings into her own womb.”¹⁹ She speaks about the crucifixion of Christ, suggesting that just as God abandoned Christ on the cross and

¹⁶ Kamitsuka, p. 195.

¹⁷ Kamitsuka, p. 210.

¹⁸ Kamitsuka, p. 212.

¹⁹ Kamitsuka, pp. 220-21.

gave him over to death, before taking him back up again into the life of the Trinity in the resurrection, so also could a woman choosing abortion think of her baby being given over to death, while also being lifted up into the life of the Trinity. She says that she is not making the claim that abortion is analogous to crucifixion or that the woman has divine power; rather, the “woman who aborts does so precisely because she is *not* a god. In her finitude, she makes the best decision she can.... The crucified God understands and has compassion on the pain of the woman who aborts.”²⁰ She concludes that “the incarnation vouchsafes that God has given these women the Spirit, who calls them not to cower in shame and self-recrimination but to go forward and grow in wisdom.”²¹

This ends my summary of the central ideas in the book. Where shall I begin in my critique? I will use the true, the good, and the beautiful as my structuring themes. What are the main elements of falsity at work in Kamitsuka’s work?

The first point to note is her Orwellian use of language, which is a widely noted feature of pro-choice rhetoric. To refer to killing one’s child in the womb as a “mothering” decision is, as Orwell put it, like saying that when an army wipes out a rural village, it is the “pacification of the countryside.”²² To use the phrase “maternal authority” in the way she does insinuates (rather than clearly stating) that the inhabitant of the womb is a piece of property that is owned by the pregnant woman. She has the power of life and death over that property. This is never clearly and candidly stated because, if it were, the comparison with slavery would be unavoidable. Many pro-life feminists have made this point; she does not respond to them.

²⁰ Kamistuka, p. 222.

²¹ Kamistuka, p. 223.

²² George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language,” https://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit. Accessed 3.7.22.

Regarding history, Kamitsuka seems to view it as a repository of facts and opinions that can be treated as one might turn to an encyclopedia for bits of information. The idea that there is meaningful change and development in history that we need to reflect on carefully is outside her field of vision. Consider, for example, David Bentley Hart's eloquent description, in *Atheist Delusions*, of how the expansion of Christianity within the Roman world brought with it a very subtle and profound change in moral sensibilities. The rejection of abortion and infanticide was a moral insight that grew out of the Judeo-Christian expansion of the boundaries of the moral community. Christianity has at its core an engine of change that has given, over many centuries, a "face" before the law to those who were previously faceless.²³ Consider also that Kamitsuka only refers to Thomas Aquinas with regard to his views on the ensoulment of fetuses. In my view, the immense importance of Aquinas lies in his moral psychology and moral theology, with its rich account of the virtues and vices of the human soul. It is this aspect of Thomas that is of most importance for the abortion debate, but, once again, it lies entirely outside of Kamitsuka's field of vision.

This could have been rectified if she had read *The Sources of Christian Ethics* by Servais Pinckaers. This author is also sensitive to Christianity's moral yeast slowly but surely influencing Western culture over many centuries. Pinckaers argues that it was the misunderstanding and then outright rejection of Aquinas's understanding of virtue and happiness that paved the way for the ascendance of nominalism in modern history. One of the key features of nominalism is that it grounds moral thinking in an opposition between obligation and freedom. This is clearly the situation in Kamitsuka's worldview, in that she continually attacks "obligation" as

²³ David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2009).

her rhetorical devil term and contrasts it with individualistic “freedom of conscience,” which is her god term. That this is a false understanding of freedom is made clear in Pinckaers’s work, which contrasts “freedom for excellence” with “freedom of indifference.”²⁴ But such notions are not on her radar screen.

Kamitsuka also has no place in her thought for the important phenomenon of conversion in the abortion debate. The names Bernard Nathanson, Norma McCorvey, and Abby Johnson do not appear in her index. They are the tip of the iceberg in terms of individuals who were allied with the pro-choice position but who came to see the falsity of that position and became fervent defenders of life. She gives this phenomenon the silent treatment. She has to, for the pro-choice worldview is actually at its core a reversion to the Roman worldview and a rejection of that expansion of moral sensibilities that Christianity brought into the world. The pro-life position calls people to be converted away from the particular form of violence that is abortion and to allow themselves to be drawn forward to a pathway of greater moral maturity that supports a culture of life.

I need to emphasize at this point that there are places in the pro-choice literature where there is an admission that abortion is form of violence. Dr. Lisa Harris, for example, who performs abortions, said this: “In general feminism is a peaceful movement. It does not condone violent problem-solving, and opposes war and capital punishment. But abortion is a version of violence. What do we do with that contradiction? How do we incorporate it into what we are as a movement, in particular a feminist movement?”²⁵ This is a rhetorical question for which Dr. Harris has no answer. Dr. Kamitsuka answers it

²⁴ Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Noble (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), ch. 14–15.

²⁵ Lisa Harris, “Second Trimester Abortion Provision: Breaking the Silence and Changing the Discourse,” *Reproductive Health Matters* 16 (2008): p. 77.

by saying that abortion will be incorporated into the feminist movement by claiming that God approves of it. The conversion of the Apostle Paul involved his awareness that he was complicit in unjust violence. The pro-choice way of thinking leads those who subscribe to it to continually tell themselves that what they are doing is right in their own eyes; it is a pathway of self-righteousness and a refusal to repent of participation in violence.

Another aspect of the falsity of Kamitsuka's message is that she describes the pro-life way of thinking as "abstract" when that is actually a more fitting description of her own position. Throughout the book, her description of the woman making a decision to have an abortion is the abstract, hyper-individualistic solitary self that is at the core of modern political liberalism's worldview. She does not take into consideration the husband or sexual partner of the woman, nor does she speak about her other family members, friends, and employers. This social context that is missing in her narrative can have both a positive and a negative influence on the pregnant woman's situation. On the positive side, there may be, and certainly ought to be, significant others in her life who will support her if her life circumstances are difficult. The church as a community ought to be there for her. This is the gist of Stanley Hauerwas's argument, which she dismisses because her worldview lacks a substantive ecclesiology, even though she claims that she is making a Christian theological argument for Christian women. The negative aspect of a woman's social embeddedness is seen when those close to her put pressure on her to have an abortion. She refers to Frederica Mathewes-Greens's book *Real Choices*, which contains many first-person accounts by women who were pressured into having abortions. But Kamitsuka ignores this aspect of the situation, always depicting the pregnant woman as a contextless, solitary individual making a decision as if she were alone on an uninhabited island.

I turn now from those aspects of Kamitsuka's argument that can be placed under the heading of falsity to those aspects that can be described as abortion's complicity in evil. I have already gestured in this direction with the idea that abortion is a form of violence, but I need to expand on that thought. As I said earlier, Kamitsuka ignores Aquinas's moral theology. The same can be said of the core of Aquinas's anthropology, which is in tune with the whole tradition of Christian thought from the New Testament up to the present. Consider this quotation from the *Summa theologiae*: "Augustine says: *There are four things to be loved; one which is above us, namely, God, another, which is ourselves, a third which is nigh to us, namely, our neighbor, and a fourth which is beneath us, namely, our own body.*"²⁶ Augustine and Aquinas draw on the great commandment: "You shall love God, and your neighbor as yourself." Many thinkers in the modern world have drawn on this tradition by speaking of the three main dimensions of reality as it is inhabited by human beings: the vertical axis (God and nature), the horizontal plane (society), and individual selfhood.

It would take me too far afield to even begin to list and provide quotations from a representative sampling of the dozens of authors who have expounded on this core anthropological concept, that the complexity of human experience can be illuminated through this type of dimensional anthropology. I will limit myself just to one quotation from one prominent expositor of this idea, Eric Voegelin, who said that "God and man, world and society form a primordial community of being. The community with its quaternarian structure is, and is not, a datum of human experience. It is a datum of experience insofar as it is known to man by virtue of his participation in the mystery of its being. It is not a datum of experience insofar as it is not given in the manner of an object of the external world but is knowable only from the

²⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2-II, 25.12. See Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, i. 23

perspective of participation in it.”²⁷ Those are the first sentences of his magnum opus, *Order and History*; the secondary literature on Voegelin makes it very clear that his worldview is based on this dimensional anthropology and that his critique of the deformations of political life always points to the refusal of human beings to inhabit these dimensions in a balanced, rich, and complex way, in response to the divine pull toward greater maturity and integration.

The word “othering” is trendy in academic circles, though it has not yet entered common speech in society in general. “Othering” is an updated version of words such as “prejudice” and “discrimination.” Many scholars in liberal academia, for example, have written about othering as the core dynamic at work in racism, slavery, and lynching, in colonialism, in xenophobia of all types, in the patriarchal oppression of women, and so forth. To “other” another class or group of people is to interpret them in such a way as to place them on a lower plane of reality where they are demeaned and dehumanized so that their mistreatment is rationalized. Othering is a more sophisticated concept than prejudice, for example, because its articulation includes the idea that human beings are forming their own identity and self-understanding by saying what they are *not*. I am an Aryan, *not* a Jew; or, I am a Hutu, *not* a Tutsi; or, I am a champion of the proletariat, *not* a bourgeois oppressor. We lift ourselves up by pushing others down.

Slavery was based on vertical axis othering; it assumed that whites are higher up on the Great Chain of Being than blacks, who are merely agricultural animals, chattel property. There are many different forms of horizontal plane othering in which one ethnic group or nation exalts itself over another in preparation for doing violence. The former Yugoslavia provides abundant and horrifying examples of this. In the wake of World War II, Western culture has undergone a major pivot in

²⁷ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*. Vol. 1, *Israel and Revelation*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), p. 1

the direction of atomistic individualism. The dimension of individual selfhood is now the key vector of experience that is played as a trump card in the phrase “individual autonomy.” The vertical axis is a relic of the ancient past, and the horizontal plane of society is now a threat that must be fended off so that the individual may make completely free and unfettered choices in shaping his or her life.

The blind spot in the pro-choice worldview is that it is unable to see that violence is a shape-shifting phenomenon within the various dimensions. Vertical othering and horizontal othering are easy to see and critique, but what the pro-choice position cannot see, without being undone, is that it is engaged in temporal othering within the dimension of selfhood. We exist as selves in time; it logically follows that if we are going to form our identities as rational agents and autonomous individuals, then we must do so by saying what we are *not*; we are *not* embryos and fetuses; we, in contrast, are *persons*. Our personhood consists in our rationality, and we use our rationality to justify the killing of those human beings who we define as *nonpersons* because they have not yet been born.

Human beings over the past several centuries have been cycling through the dimensions as vectors for justifying violence; we moved from the vertical to the horizontal, and then to the individual. But what we are refusing, at the core of our being, is the possibility of living in a balanced way within all of the dimensions and developing a moral and political philosophy that rejects *all* forms of othering. Put differently, when human beings are evading a holistic dimensional anthropology, then they will create social imaginaries that take different forms but that have as their commonality a fundamental assumption that reality is at root conflict, strife, violence. We will, in other words, engage in some form of human sacrifice that we justify in our own minds. If we were to be truly converted to the true, the good, and the beautiful, we would see that reality at the deepest level is the gracious creation of a loving God, and that we are in tune with that reality when we live lives of love, peace, nonviolence, and hope.

To live in that way is to live a beautiful life. The pro-choice position produces death, rancor, pain, and discord. It is a poison that has infected the law, medicine, culture, the media, relationships between men and women, and scholarship in academia. It turns the noble ideals of the Declaration of Independence upside down by asserting that the individualistic pursuit of happiness requires a redefinition of liberty as license; while the right to life is demoted to the lowest level, and it becomes a “socially constructed” right that may or may not be granted to the weak and vulnerable by those who have power over their lives, rather than being recognized as a *natural* right. The pro-choice position claims to represent progress in history, but it is actually a regress by being yet another way in which human beings justify their lethal actions in their own eyes. That is, in reality, the core of the fascist way of thinking.

If this seems to be a slander against the pro-choice position from the outside, we should hear how an insider, Marjorie Reiley Maguire, expresses the core of the pro-choice worldview: “...even if the fetus is a person and thus does have a moral right to bodily integrity, the fetus is beyond the protection of the law. The fetus can be compared to a citizen of a totalitarian state whose freedom is taken away by the government... A woman’s body is like the borders of a foreign country.”²⁸ Underneath the surface level of Kamitsuka’s text, there is a deep agreement with this candidly expressed idea. The inhabitant of the womb is a piece of property, under the “authority” of the woman, and her “authority” grants her the power to end the life of that piece of biological property. What Kamitsuka adds to the usual pro-choice arguments is a thin theological veneer that calls to mind that section of Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* entitled “Religion is Unbelief,” and also the reflections of Dietrich Bonhoeffer on “cheap grace.” Cheap

²⁸ Marjorie Reiley Maguire, “Symbiosis, Biology, and Personalization,” in Edd Doerr and James W. Prescott, eds., *Abortion Rights and Fetal “Personhood,”* (Long Beach: Centerline, 1989), p. 12–13.

grace is that which we human beings bestow on ourselves by creating a God in our own image. Human beings who are not living in the Center, holding the dimensions of reality together in a balanced harmony, are alienated from God, and they will inevitably create idols out of their own imaginations.