

## The Fingerprint of God


With everything God touches He leaves something of His glory behind.

I recognize faces easily, although names are sometimes slow to come to mind. Just ask my children. Each is a unique person, and though I recognize them, I still occasionally mix up their names. What I never forget is that they are separate and distinct persons from me. Each is genetically complete, clearly human, and very much alive, both physically and spiritually. Some have suggested that personhood also depends on the presence of brain function, age from conception, or even location (inside or outside the womb). The definition of who is, and who is not, a person is literally a life and death distinction for unborn children. Since January of 1973, some 33 years ago now, millions of children have failed to meet the legal definition of personhood and have lost their lives from a horrible “choice” made by, of all people, their own mothers.

The biological facts are well known. The human egg and sperm reproductive cells are both alive, but each is an incomplete cell because each contains half the normal amount of genetic material as a regular body cell. It is only when the sperm cell penetrates the outer defensive layer of the egg and the two cells fuse during fertilization that a genetically unique, diploid, human cell is formed. At that moment, a human genetic profile or fingerprint is established which is different from either parent and which never changes no matter how many trillion cells develop from this first cell. Fertilization, or conception, is the first moment a new, genetically unique human life can be recognized.

Even more amazing is the evidence, developed in

the past four decades, that the mother’s immune system recognizes the growing embryo as a “foreign” object which should be rejected—just as a heart or skin transplant from another person would be rejected unless anti-rejection drugs were taken. But the growing baby, despite being recognized through its histocompatibility proteins as foreign, is not attacked as if it were just some tissue graft. Scientists call this situation an “immunological paradox” because mothers develop potentially lethal antibody and cell-mediated immune responses against the growing child but the response does not damage the infant.<sup>1</sup> Instead, during pregnancy, a temporary state of immunological “tolerance” or protection develops which lasts until delivery of the child. The body recognizes the developing child as if it were an invading bacterial infection or an organ graft, but instead of removing this threat, the body protects this new life.

It has been said that life began just once and since then is just passed on. The biological facts are clear that, for the individual, this point of “passing” is the moment of conception. Conception creates a new life, a new person. It is equally clear that God has finely and elegantly designed the mother’s immune system to recognize, but also protect, the growing new life within her until birth. This is not an immunological paradox. It is the fingerprint of God. —MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D. 

1 A.L. Mellor and D.H. Munn. Immunology at the maternal-fetal interface: Lessons for T cell tolerance and suppression. *Annual Review of Immunology* 2000; 18:367-391.

