

CHRIST'S DEPICTION OF HUMAN FRAGILITY IN BYZANTINE THEOLOGY OF HUMAN BEINGS

Donald Steven Keryapi, Chainar Elly Ria, Murniati Barus
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Paulus Medan, Indonesia
Email: stevendonal@sttpaulusmedan.ac.id, chainarely@gmail.com,
murniatibarus13@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to show the form of theology regarding human beings and how Christ takes on this human vulnerability, especially from the perspective of Byzantine theology. The methods used in this study are from the research literature. This is a kind of research model from a qualitative approach, and the research results are obtained from various literatures about the man of Christ from a Byzantine perspective. This study shows that man was originally the most glorious creature and was created in the image of God, Christ. Known in his two forms, Precariat and Precaritas, human vulnerability is the result of human sin. This state of human vulnerability was assumed by Christ through the Incarnation and the work of redemption that was accomplished so that man could reenter the communion of the Triune God through the theological process. Sacrament, especially the Eucharist or Holy Communion. The conclusion is that the frailty and instability of man's fragility is the result of sin He is one and accepted by Christ incarnate so that man may return to the communion of the Trinity God

KEYWORDS *man, Christ, Doing Theology, Byzantine*



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INTRODUCTION

One aspect of mankind, namely fragility, has been made evident by the Covid-19 epidemic, which started in March 2020 (at least in Indonesia). According to the book *Homo Deus*, humans who use artificial intelligence to govern the world are susceptible to this little, invisible virus. The remaining population had to endure the pandemic as millions of people perished in the past 15 months. The era in which humans live is previously unforeseeable (*terra incognita*), and when the Covid-19 epidemic is ended, it will undoubtedly spawn new routines or ways of life that are entirely distinct from pre-pandemic condition.

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The topic of vulnerability has long been a topic of discussion in the fields of health, psychology, and other fields, particularly those that are concerned with people and their existence in this world. However, fragile as a theological theme has only recently become a topic of conversation that has drawn the attention of theologians. This theme recurs during the pandemic to highlight the precarious existence of people. The discussion of vulnerability as a theological issue is particularly fascinating because it is an essential characteristic of people. Fragility itself can, of course, be employed as a theological term for the development of future anthropological-theological doctrines.

Marianne Moyaert, one of the theologians, explains this vulnerability as follows:

Vulnerability is usually connected to notions such as fragility and frailty. Something that is vulnerable is not strong or powerful but is weak and breakable. This notion recalls the always present possibility of harm, hurt, fracture, and pain and also evokes ideas such as loss, grief, distress, and even discomfort (Moyaert, 2012).

Human vulnerability can be seen in suffering, harm, grief, or stress. In humans, fragility appears to be an inherent quality. Although Moyaert himself does not associate the concept of vulnerability with sin, he maintains that it is the antithesis of goodness (not in the ethical category). Heike Springhart underlined that human frailty is a mirror of the frailty of creation, in opposition to Moyaert. He said that *Vulnerable human life is the expression of vulnerable creation. From the very beginning creation faces endangerment and risk; human life as created life has a tragic dimension.* (Springhart, 2017, p. 382) Additionally, Springhart bases his argument for fragility on the theological ideas of Luther, Moltmann, and Dorothy Soelle, who connect sinfulness with fragility. Springhart doesn't stop there; he continues by providing a theological argument on how fragile particular facets are. It reads:

vulnerability has a somatic, psychic, and social-systemic dimension. These three dimensions form the horizontal axis. The somatic, psychic, and social dimensions permeate and cause each other, but they can be differentiated as specific facets of vulnerability. On a second axis, there is the distinction between vulnerability that occurs from outside, and vulnerability that is carried out from inside. Vulnerability is seen in two respects, namely as the possibility of being hurt or harmed, and as awareness of this possibility. In addition, vulnerability means concrete experiences of injury and harm that have happened. So, vulnerability as a phenomenon grasps three aspects: the potentiality of being wounded, harmed, or injured; the awareness of this potentiality; and the experience of concrete injury, harm, and affectability. (Springhart, 2017)

Moving forward from Springhart's thesis, the author will use Byzantine theology, a kind of theological anthropology developed by the Church Fathers, to investigate the issue of fragility. The argument made in this essay is that since people were created in the image of God, they must learn to accept their inherent

fragility. The Byzantine school of thought, which is characteristic of the Eastern Church, will be used to examine the issue of this vulnerability. The theological design of Byzantine theology is particularly integrative and interdependent, which is one of the reasons the writer adheres to it. Byzantine theology connects people and their nature as an integral aspect of the design of the triune God's interpersonal love and the universe (cosmos).

This essay seeks to address at least two significant issues, namely how human frailty is viewed from the perspective of Byzantine theology and how human frailty is viewed as the image of God. This paper is at least distinctive since Byzantine theology and the topic of fragility are still rarely treated in Indonesian theological discourse. The researcher brought up this subject as an integral component of the discussion in *Byzantine Philosophy of the Person and its Theological Implications* by Jay Zozulak and Michal Valco. The researcher brought up this subject in relation to the debate over the existence of the human spirit, soul, and body. The human element is thought to be inextricably linked to fragility. According to Byzantine theology, this essay also aims to demonstrate fragility as a feature of human existence and as the image of God

RESEARCH METHOD

Non-experimental descriptive qualitative research will be used in this study together with a research literature strategy. The researcher will engage in a discussion between modern writings on the issue of fragility and texts with a theological anthropological theme set against a background of Byzantine thinking. These texts containing the aforementioned themes can be found in books or scholarly publications. This textual conversation demonstrates the significance of vulnerability in humans

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Man: Made in the Image of God

Non-Christian anthropology uses a variety of perspectives to understand humans and their existence. The first, idealistic anthropology, which contends that people are essentially spirits (ideas) and that their physical bodies are alien to their actual nature, is one of at least two primary sections that are in conflict with or contradict each other. (Hoekema, 2012, p. 3) The Alexandrian philosopher Philon claimed that Kosmos Noetos (KN) is a world of ideas that serves as a template for the creation of "Copies" (mimema), specifically Kosmos Aisthetos (KA). (Cahyadi, 2015, pp. 21–22) According to this perspective, physical existence is a duplicate of intellectual existence. True nature is not physical existence but rather the existence of ideas. In Plato's thought, which stresses the world of ideas and rejects the world of reality, there is at least some degree of dualism between ideas and matter. The material is suppressed and destroyed in this manner, the existence of the notion may become apparent.

The second is a materialistic anthropology, according to which people are made up of only material components and that their spiritual, emotional, and mental selves are merely by-products of their physical makeup. Karl Marx is one

of the proponents of this viewpoint.(Hoekema, 2012) According to Marx, a person can only fully realize reality if they have a self-awareness; hence, a person acts in their work in a way that allows them to see themselves (Suseno et al., 2021). It is clear that his work reflects human value and plays a role in the social hierarchy between classes. Sin and evil are caused by structures, hence changing the class structure is the best way to get rid of sin and evil.

The two excellent viewpoints presented above demonstrate how the fact that humans exist is always viewed as a one-sided sacrifice of both physical and material goods while simultaneously ignoring the fact that humans are God's creatures. Additionally, although in various ways and through various activities, such as hedonism, etc., the two aforementioned perspectives have infiltrated Christian teachings until this day.

God, who created humans, must always be tied to them in their essence and existence. The idea that God created man is one of the fundamental tenets of Christianity. According to this view, humans are fully dependent on God as their Creator and are unable to exist independently (Neh. 9:6; Acts 17:25-28). Man, on the other hand, is a person and not merely a product. Humans are independent, capable of making choices, and strive to achieve that. Humans can, in essence, be free and react to everything that comes from outside of them. Humans are paradoxically the fusion of these two disparate things, and if they were to be separated, humans would cease to exist.

The Bible contains references to the idea that humans are like pictures, particularly in Genesis 1:26-28. The scripture makes note of the fact that heavenly consultation precedes the creation of humans. According to our image and likeness" has several different meanings. What do the terms likeness and image mean? Additionally, the word "we" is used, which suggests that God is involved in some sort of discussion. Furthermore, the word "image and likeness" is a word in which there is no significant change across the Bible, especially the Old Testament. Since there is no "and" sentence in the Hebrew text, this is evident. In essence, these two words are interchangeable and have the same meaning. But there is a tiny distinction between the two words.

Tselem, the Hebrew word for image, comes from a root that also means "to cut" or "to engrave." (MacKellar, 2017) Demuth's Hebrew name translates as "to resemble." It is clear that the word tselem implies that God is described by man, yet the word demuth itself speaks of the likeness of man to God. Particularly in the passages to the Hebrews and Colossians, which connect the phrase "image of God" to Jesus Christ, the New Testament offers a deeply philosophical explanation of the nature of God himself. Man must look to Jesus Christ as the true image of God in order to understand what the nature of the image of God is. In Christ, man discovers the fullness of his humanity; in other words, man cannot become fully human apart from association with Christ.

B. The Church Fathers' Views on Man

The idea of man as first presented by the Church Fathers usually starts with the conviction that God created man as a dual-element being, consisting of flesh or matter and spirit. Because their bodies are made of other creations, material beings such as humans have a strong connection to other created worlds. The

same is true of the spirit being that enables humans to communicate with God, their creator.

This is evident from the church fathers' depictions, first, Irenaeus was a bishop. In his opinion, while God's image has persisted, man's similarity to God was lost during the fall when God formed him in His own image and likeness in the beginning. This lost Godlikeness is being restored in the believer through the process of redemption (Cairns, 1953). According to Irenaeus, "the nature of man as a rational and free existence, a nature that is not lost in the fall," was what the word "image of God" signified. Additionally, "the image of God" refers to Adam's cloak of purity; man's spirit is the bearer of God's image. Adam possessed this Spirit before he fell, and it was renewed during the atonement process (Hoekema, 2012). *Second*, Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil the Great had the same conception of man. These three theologians held that man was a special animal made up of two natures, visible and invisible, consisting of a physical body made of matter and an intellectual soul ingested through His breath. Even Basil emphasized that flesh comes from earth and soul comes from heaven. According to the Cappadocian Fathers, humans are made up of a body and a soul, the latter of which is a byproduct of God's own breath. As a result, the soul or intellect is where the likeness between God and man is found. It is referred to as *nous* in Greek. God is pictured in the mind's eye. Third, according to John Chrysostom, God separates man into two parts: the soul and the body. The body is made of flesh and is herded here and there without reasoning, judgment, or discretion. The soul is not governed by the body. The soul is what has wisdom and logic, and it is the soul that knows what is right and wrong. The soul is more intelligent and is able to recognize what is right and wrong, whereas the flesh is more illogical, loses its wisdom, and allows it move back and forth (Clark, 2015).

The imagery with God is viewed in several ways, according to Byzantine thought, which the eastern church eventually adopted. First, the imagery with God refers to the soul or spirit. Since God is an infinite and absolute spirit, He gives the soul or spirit, along with moral qualifications and gifts, in order to fit into his status as the image of God. Second, people possess understanding, cognition, and wisdom because they bear God's image, which enables them to discriminate between good and evil. Third, because humans are made in the image of God, they are endowed with the propensity to live a life of virtue, holiness; fifth, because man is made in the image of God, he must strive to achieve the virtue that is holiness; and sixth, because man is made in the image of God, he is responsible for preserving the holiness that is inherent in God.

The aforementioned justification leads one to the conclusion that the Byzantine view of humanity as God's creation comprises two significant parts, namely the body/material and the spirit/soul. In other words, humans are bodies that have spirits or spirits that have flesh because these two elements are inherent in people and cannot be separated from one another. Man is at the center of creation because he has both a physical body that is derived from another creation in material form and a spiritual spirit that is derived from God's breath, enabling him to communicate with God. The ability of humans to live in divine

virtue, holiness, and holiness is also affected by the fact that the image of God resides in the spirit or soul.

C. The Creation of Human Fragility

A significant category in modern theology that has only recently been employed as a perspective in theology, particularly in discussions concerning people, the church, and other topics, is that of fragility. Vulnerability is a characteristic of people as relational, corporeal, and social creatures, according to Judith Butler (Navarro, 2005). Joas Adiprasetya underlined that the discussion of vulnerability has, for far too long, been framed in terms of human sinfulness. If you adopt this viewpoint, theology fails to integrate fragility into a wider and more accurate framework of Christian anthropology. Although it is a major factor in the propagation of social and structural sin, fragility is not a result of sin (Adiprasetya, 2021). We first examine vulnerability in order to understand the connection between social and structural sin and personal fragility.

Fragile is derived from the word "fragile," which indicates it has been harmed, broken, ripped, or damaged. If it is used in reference to the body, it can also signify sickly and weak. While the word "fragility" itself denotes weakness. According to this concept, if humanity is involved, the human being's nature or status is vulnerable. In their taxonomy, Catriona Mackenzie et al. identify three different types of fragility: pathogenic fragility resulting from unfair settings, situational fragility resulting from the complexity of human life, and innate ontological fragility (Mackenzie et al., 2014). It is evident from Mackenzie's taxonomy that this susceptibility is fundamental to and interwoven with humankind. The question thus becomes, if fragility is not the product of sin, what is the ontology of human beings' innate fragility? Zizoulas, an Eastern theologian, provides a thoughtful response to this query by bringing the idea of incapacity closer to fragility. He uses the concept of human incapacity as a substitute for language when discussing pre- and post-Eden human nature.

Because people are made of material that may be harmed or destroyed and cannot last indefinitely, incapacity itself might be interpreted as a sign that people are weak or frail. The body or material that is connected to him is one of the components of the human being that is affected by this fragility. This explanation closely follows Butler's taxonomy, which includes precariat conditions—universal, all-encompassing conditions that affect all people in all spheres of life. Precariat also refers to politically charged situations that result in political misery (Neocleous, 2009).

Butler connects this vulnerability to relational and societal factors, as was previously stated. Relational and brittle bodies are connected for him. The body serves as a conduit for relationships and serves as both a physical barrier and a connection to other people. Therefore, it would seem that Butler's statement of fragility is intimately tied to interpersonal relationships, particularly those that are more political in character. This communal relationship is a component of humanity, which also contains the trait of social interaction or cohabitation. Humans are obviously unable to choose their living companions. It also has to do with the social system in which people live and establish themselves. If it is connected to the precarious situation that fragility is also connected to conditions

that are politically influenced, or systems that grip and finally give birth to poverty, this may be regarded as an act of injustice. Sin, which was first a presence that was not innate in humans, is the cause of the fact of injustice. The reality of sin is a condition brought on by the Fall that engulfs all of humanity. It is possible to pinpoint the exact location of sin in the human body when discussing humanity that has been engulfed by sin. The depravity of man, according to the Church Fathers—particularly Gregory Nyssa—is in the nous, or mind, which lies in the spirit, or spirit of man himself. Due to the fact that humans are complex beings, this sin also pollutes the human body, causing it to produce wicked deeds and cause people to lose sight of the virtues that God desires in people.

D. Review of Theology on Human Fragility

The church fathers agreed that a person is made up of two components, the body and the soul, which are inseparable as one cohesive whole. The soul itself is a spiritual being that is eternal, unlike the earthly body, which is a material being that can suffer harm or pass away. The corporeal entity, however, has enormous significance because the human body is the temple of the Divine Spirit because God Himself breathed into the body to make it such. However, God did not create people similarly to machines. In his existence as a being made in God's image, he grants man free will.

The church fathers constantly equated man and his human condition with Christ, who was described in the Bible as the ideal representation of God. The position of the image is seen in *οἱ λόγοι τῶν ὄντων* (*I logi ton onton*), or what is frequently referred to as the rational, noetic, principle of being, as an existence made in the likeness and image of God. Humans are therefore recognized as the sole creation with a mind that sets them apart from other creatures, and through reason, this is where the likeness to God is found.

The upshot of the divine assembly's desire for beings beyond the person of the triune God to experience the trinitarian love is man, as shown in the creation described in the scriptures. Man is the height of creation because he is the core of all creation and connects the universe to its creator through the power of love. Humans are given the responsibility to live in contact with God as the apex of creation, which is manifested in a spiritual and practical existence that are interwoven.

In accordance with his abilities as a being made in God's image, man was given a mission as an adornment of the cosmos. Humans may think and act through their thoughts, which is where the image is located in the mind. As a result, free will or free will is indissociably linked to the mind. He has the ability to choose between life and death thanks to his free will, and in God's first test, which involved a tree in the Garden of Eden, man's free choice to disobey led to his fall into sin.

Sin is a condition that does not exist by default in creation, including people. As a result of the devil's trickery, he entered the room of human disobedience. The sin that is a part of all creation causes death in creation as well as harm and ruin to other creatures. This is a tangible effect of sin, but what is much worse is that sin, which is ingrained in the very nature of people, is the

source of openly committed acts of sin, injustice, crime, and misery. The presence of sin in humans gives rise to deeds that spring from a tainted nous and to structural sins brought about by human deeds. People are inherently lovely and live in communion with God, but he disregards it and, as a result of that transgression, chooses to experience suffering and death. Man's disobedience resulted in anguish and death for his soul first, followed by death for his body.

The outcome of man's sin in the Garden of Eden when he choose to eat from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Cowley, 2014), death and illness are at the very least universal precariat circumstances. The human condition, which is affected politically by precarity or the fall, is weakened by this precariat human frailty. Other words used to describe the ontology and axiology of fragility include precariat and precaritas. As a result, precariat and precaritas are always linked to the condition of fallen humans in the teachings of the Eastern Church Fathers. According to Gregory Theologian, God created and positioned man on earth as another angel, as a second world, as the big thing in the small, as earth and heaven, as mortal and eternal, and as the great thing in the small. Gregory's assertion suggests that man is not an arbitrary creation that represents the pinnacle of creational perfection. Man's status as a creature made in the likeness of God demonstrates the majesty of God that is mirrored in him from the existence.

The grace to experience divine love in relationship with the Triune God is given to man because he was made in God's likeness. The Triune God's desire for communion or fellowship with these divine beings is expressed in the communion between people and the Triune God in their roles as representatives of creation. God permits himself to have a relationship with mankind out of grace or love, which is known as a fellowship. Unlike the theory advanced by Sturla J. Stalsett, according to which human existence, which was recreated in the spirit of Christ and created in the divine image and likeness, is the object of God's love and as a result, God himself is fragile in communion with his creation (Stlsett, 2015), the relationship in question is not a sign of fragility. As can be seen, Stalset contends that God embraces vulnerability in the connection with man because of that vulnerability. The Byzantine perspective, which claims that the connection formed by God is precisely an expression of *Phylo Anthropos* and not a symbol of vulnerability, is very different from this. Man was made to receive and take pleasure in divine love in that communion/communion because the Triune God has always desired a relationship with a being that is not himself. God's manifestation of divine love is what causes Christ, the Word of God, to take on flesh and take on the characteristics of a frail, fragile human being.

Christ, whose divine image is the Incarnation of the word in the matter or flesh, unites the universal existence of humanity in his flesh so that the effects of sin have been experienced in his physical body in order to give birth to the life that was desired at the beginning of creation, namely fellowship with the Triune God. The divine supper itself is Christ's ripped and torn body, by which the man who has been saved by Christ finds relationship with God. The ontological fragility of man brought about by sin has been restored in Christ, but the perishable material existence is kept. However, the ontological fragility of

man brought about by sin has been redeemed in Christ and joined in the offered body of Christ.

E. Christ Accepts Human Fragility

The remedy for humanity's weakness and frailty is the Word of God made flesh in Jesus Christ. Christ has acknowledged the frailty that sin has produced in man. In Christ, the real Image of God, man rediscovers his ontological essence as God's flawless creation. The process of salvation completed by Christ unites all of fallen humanity. The idea that the eternally existent spirit of God has assumed an existence that was not before present in him is known as the incarnation of the word in the flesh. One person, Jesus Christ, embodies both the initial existence as the everlasting word of God and the human existence. God's understanding of human frailty began with the creation of the Word of God, which incorporates both the physical and the divine. The requirements of the Law that carried the danger of curses and wrath were repealed when Jesus Christ became the price for the sins of mankind.

Christ reaches out to humanity through the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, also known as Holy Communion. The sacrament of Holy Communion is a sacrament above all sacraments. The sacrament provides a way for Christ and the people to physically and spiritually unite via the use of bread and wine, which stand in for the body and blood of Christ, respectively. Paul made a point of highlighting the fact that when a believer shares in the body and blood of Christ, he shares in his suffering and resurrection in his writings to the churches in Rome and Corinth. Humans receive, contain, and become a part of Christ's body and blood at communion. Holy Communion has spiritual advantages like as soul salvation, eternal health care, spiritual nourishment, and salvation assurance (Bandura, 2012). The Lord's Supper also brings people back together with Christ and His body.

The primary job of Theosis/Divinization, which refers to humans' effort to become like Christ by possessing divine energy, is assigned to those who are included in Christ's work of redemption as demonstrated via the sacraments. Putting away worldly lusts and practicing celestial virtues are two ways to achieve this. In order to restore humans to their original nature as beings made in God's image, i.e. Jesus Christ, Christ embraced the frailty of humanity rather than simply justifying the existence of humans in sin.

CONCLUSION

The process of recognizing humanity itself is a function of human existence as a creation made up of two components, namely a body and matter. People are fragile beings, at least in a precariat state, according to the theological idea of fragility. This is because humans are material beings made of limited, broken, and impermanent substances. The precariat did indeed exist before sin entered humankind. While the precarious state is the vulnerability of people who are positioned in connection to one another and in circumstances that are politically influenced by unjust laws and structures that lead to sin and injustice.

Church theorists, particularly the early church Fathers, have long viewed this human frailty as the foundation of Byzantine theology. However, the existence of

the human spirit/spirit was a good and undamaged existence before sin entered the human nous as a site of communication with God. The church fathers believed that the situation of incapacity resulted from the status of people as bodily creatures who are finite and not immortal. When the nous is harmed by sin, sin is born, and sin ultimately manifests as acts of injustice in regard to sama and its relationality because humans are inherently beings that cannot be divided into matter and soul entities. The fragility of the post-Eden man is what is referred to as the condition of precarity.

Through the Incarnation, God's Word has reached out to humanity. Christ's work of salvation is a component of the effort undertaken by people to return to the original ideals created by God in order to experience communion with the Trinity. As a result, the Sacrament serves as the mortal's eternal remedy, enabling him to regain communion with the Divine through the Theosis.

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