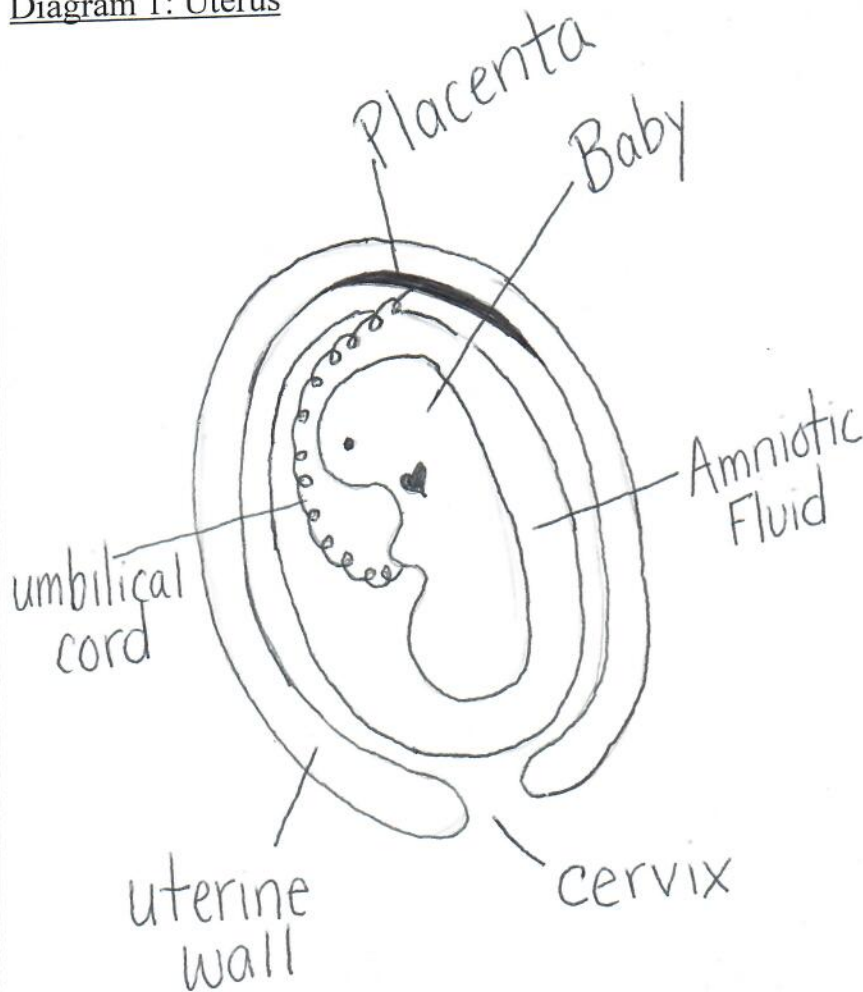


Created For Communion: Human Relationality From Biological and Theological Perspectives

Part 1- Human Relationality in Biology

Diagram 1: Uterus



Terms:

Uterus-

Aka womb, muscular wall, houses the baby

Amniotic fluid-

Sac of fluid in which the baby floats

Umbilical cord-

Connects baby and placenta

Placenta-

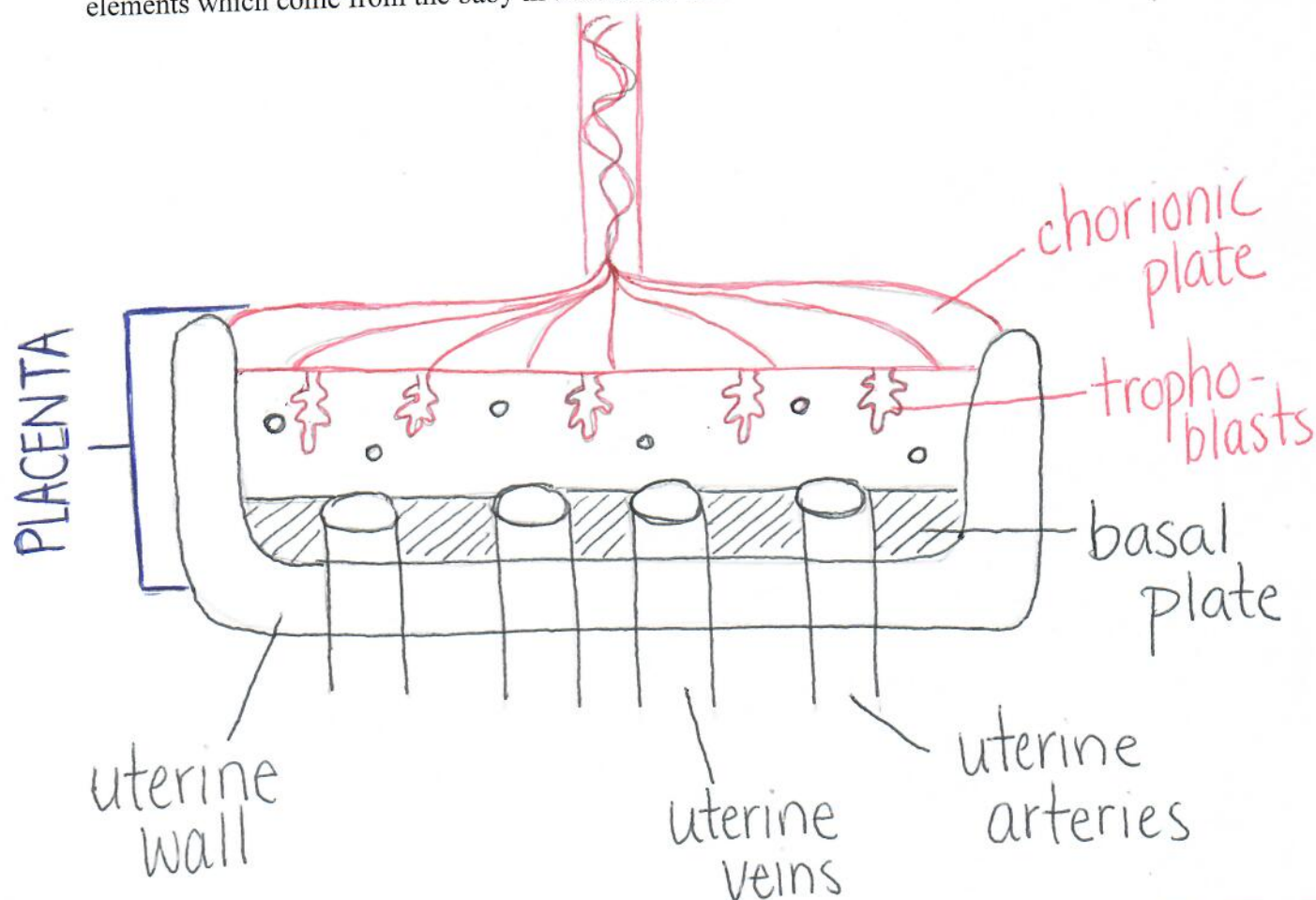
Fetomaternal organ (made by mother AND baby), only organ in the body that's made by 2 people, only purposely transient organ

Role of Placenta:

- Gives oxygen to baby, removes baby's carbon dioxide
- Provides baby with nutrients from mom
- Placenta must be healthy for both baby and mom to be healthy

Diagram 2: Cross-Section of the Placenta

Draw and label the elements of the placenta which come from the mother in one color and the elements which come from the baby in a different color.



Microchimerism

- Definition- presence of a small population of genetically distinct, separately derived cells within an individual
- During pregnancy cells from baby enter mom's circulation through placenta
- Cells migrate throughout mom and integrate into and act in mom's tissue- called fetomaternal microchimerism
- Examples:
 - Baby's cells enter sight of c-section and help the mom's scars heal
 - Baby's cells enter the mom's breast tissue... scientists hypothesize that the cells protect mom from breast cancer
- Suspect that movement of cells is bi-directional- cells from the mom also enter the baby, possible that cells from an older sibling can enter mom and then those same cells from older sibling enter younger sibling when mom is pregnant years later

Reflection Questions

Look over the information we covered in class today. What are your initial responses to it? Did anything surprise, amaze, intrigue, or confuse you?

Student answers will vary.

How do the placenta and fetomaternal microchimerisms challenge the idea that each of us is autonomous from the other people in our lives on a biological level? Do you think this should impact the way we view our relationships with others?

Possible answers can include the following ideas:

- The placenta is made through the co-operation of both the baby and the mother and is essential to the overall health of both the baby and the mother. Thus, the mother's and the baby's health depends on their ability to work together to create a healthy placenta.
- Fetomaternal microchimeric cells show that many people have cells from other human beings in their bodies that are actively working to promote their own health. In order to be most fully ourselves, we depend on others. It is impossible to escape our connectedness or relationality to others since it descends to the cellular level.
- Understanding that we are connected to others on the cellular level could cause us grow in appreciation and concern for others. We rely on each other at all different levels and thus have a responsibility to care for each other.

Part II- Human Relationality in Theology

Directions: In your small group, read Genesis 2:4-3:24 and answer the following questions in complete and thoughtful sentences.

1. How does God create humans in Genesis 2?

God creates the man by forming him from the dust of the ground and then breathing the breath of life into him. God creates the woman from one of the man's ribs.

2. What adjectives or phrases would you use to describe God's actions in Genesis 2? Explain your answer.

Guide the students to recognize the thoughtfulness and care that God demonstrates as He creates. God's creation is beautiful and a gift.

3. Describe the relationship between God and the humans in Genesis 2. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Guide the students to recognize the loving concern that God shows humans. God creates the man, then provides for all of his needs. God is not creating the man for selfish purposes. He creates humanity so that they can enter into relationship with him. As humans, we're created for relationship with God.

4. Describe the relationship between the man and the woman in Genesis 2. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

The man and woman are partners. There is equality between them. The man demonstrates love and admiration for the woman. God says, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). As humans, we're created for relationship with each other.

5. How does the relationship between God and the humans change once the humans disobey God in Genesis 3? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

The man is afraid when he hears God walking in the garden. There's a lack of trust in God's goodness. The man seems to blame God when he says, "The woman whom *you* gave to be with me, she gave the fruit of the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:12). While God continues to demonstrate concern for humans by promising to send a descendent of the woman who will crush the serpent (Protoevangelium- Genesis 3:15) and providing the garments for the man and woman, He also strictly punishes them. Sin has destroyed the peaceful harmony that originally existed between God and humanity.

6. How does the relationship between the humans change once the humans disobey God in Genesis 3? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

They become aware of their nakedness and seek to cover themselves. They no longer feel completely free in each other's company. The man blames the woman (Genesis 3:12). God's punishment indicates that the man will rule over the woman (Genesis 3:16). The original equality and partnership that existed between the man and the woman is damaged.

Can add that Genesis 4-11 clearly demonstrate how sin destroys relationships.

Concluding Notes

- Humans are relational beings
 - created for relationship with God and each other
 - need each other
- Most fully ourselves when we mirror the Trinity and live in relationships of love (can connect to the idea of being made in the image of God and God is a communion of persons)
- Sin destroys relationship- causes us to turn in on ourselves
- Christian morality
 - NOT an arbitrary list of things the Church says you can/can't do
 - Seeks to guide us so that we can live in proper relationship with God and each other
- Commandments 1-3- Protect relationship with God
- Commandments 4-10- Protect relationship with other humans
- To conclude, emphasize how all the Church's moral teachings aim to protect/nourish our relationships with God and others. By doing so, we fulfill our relational nature and become more fully ourselves.