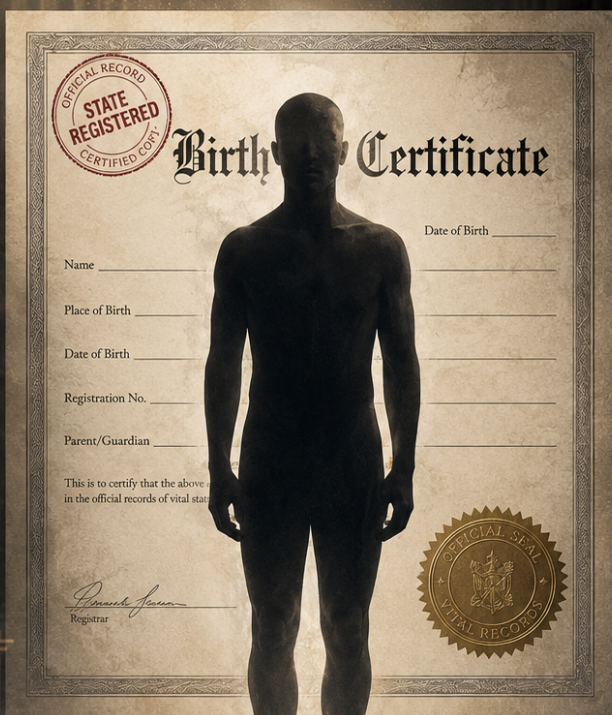




INVOLUNTARY STATE PERSONHOOD

Birth Registration, Legal Identity, and
the Christian Conscience Before the State

CHRISTIAN MAN DANIEL

ADVANCE PREVIEW



INVOLUNTARY STATE PERSONHOOD



Birth Registration, Legal Identity, and
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BY CHRISTIAN MAN DANIEL

A selected excerpt from the forthcoming ebook

A Note to the Reader



This advance preview is offered as an early look at **our forthcoming ebook, Involuntary State Personhood: Birth Registration, Legal Identity, and the Christian Conscience Before the State.**

The selected excerpt, **“The Performance You Were Given,”** introduces one of the book’s central questions: what is actually being asked when a man is required to state a registered name, present identification, sign a form, or answer through a state-created legal identity?

These actions are usually treated as ordinary administration. This book asks the reader to look more carefully, to distinguish the living creation of God from the legal role prepared by the state, and to consider what repeated identity performance may require of the mouth, the hands, and the conscience.

The complete ebook develops this inquiry through history, law, Scripture, consent, religious accommodation, and the practical path of peaceable separation with clean hands.

We hope this preview encourages you to examine the question beneath the name.

By Christian man Daniel

EXCERPT



The Performance You Were Given

*Every morning you put on a face.
It is not the one you were born with.*



Selected from Chapter 1 of
Involuntary State Personhood

The Performance You Were Given

Every morning you put on a face. It is not the one you were born with.

Samuel Johnson, in his 1755 *Dictionary*, gives the first sense of **person** with a plainness almost too simple to notice: “*An individual human being.*” A man. A woman. A child in arms. There is comfort in that first sense because it seems to name what is nearest and most real.

But Johnson does not stop there. Further down, under the same word, another sense appears: “*In law, an individual or corporate body regarded as having rights and duties.*” The shock is that the word widens. The shock is that it divides. Under one roof there now dwell two disparate things. First, the living man. Second, the legal entity who is accounted, managed, summoned, charged, represented, recorded. The same word is made to carry two burdens.



This is the beginning of confusion, and confusion is often maintained not by lies shouted in the square but by words left slightly doubled. One has a mother. The other has a file.

The modern world has trained you to slide across that split without feeling it. You hear the word **person** and imagine that all meanings are close enough, that law is simply describing the man or the Living Soul standing there. Yet Johnson's two senses do not merely sit beside one another like cousins at table. They pull in different directions. “An

individual human being” speaks of life (despite the objectionable use of the word *human* by Johnson here). “In law, an individual or corporate body regarded as having rights and duties” speaks of status, office, capacity, and burden. One is being. The other is what the law regards. One is what God made. The other is what a system names, frames, and uses.

That difference matters because the whole structure of compelled identity performance depends upon keeping it dim. If the distinction were spoken aloud each morning, many of the day’s routines would appear in a new light. You would see that much of what passes for ordinary civic life is not simply life among neighbors, but daily joinder to a Legal Person, a *Persona*, which was prepared for you before you could speak, before you could object, before you could even know that any question had been asked in your name.

The argument of this chapter is therefore not strange. A **person** has never meant only one thing. Law itself has long relied on that fact. The wonder is that you were never plainly told how much of your life would be built around serving that split.

Your Morning Begins Before You Think

You wake and reach for the same things you reached for yesterday. The room is cool. Water runs. Light comes through a slit in the curtain. Coffee or tea, soap or steam, cloth against skin, keys in hand. None of this feels political. None of this feels theological. It feels like a life.

Then the small liturgy of papers begins.

You sign for a parcel. You fill out a form at the clinic. You show an ID card at the desk. You confirm your date of birth. You answer when your name is called from the waiting room. You type the same string of letters into a portal. You repeat an address. You check a box beneath words written by someone else. You swear that the information is true and correct to the best of your knowledge. You make your mark, and the day moves on.

Because these acts are common, they are treated as nothing. Yet common things are often the deepest rehearsals. The hand learns before the tongue does. Your signature comes faster than your thought because it has been trained as obedience can be trained: by repetition, by reward,

by friction against anyone who hesitates. The card in your wallet is not merely a convenience. It is a portable costume token. The form does not merely gather facts. It invites joinder. The name printed there, often styled in full and fixed form, stands ready like a part already cast.

You are told that this is simply administration. The state must know who is who. The bank must know who is who. The employer must know who is who. At every turn the same answer is demanded: identify yourself.

But notice the wording. Not, *“Tell me who you are before God.”* Not, *“Speak as the Living Soul that your mother bore.”* Not, *“Show the face by which your friends know you.”* The demand is narrower and harder. Identify yourself within the prescribed legal grammar. Fit yourself to the record. Answer to the legal construction. Bring forth the proper signs. **Make the paper live by sounding through it. Perform the link between flesh and file.**

That is why a man can feel tired in ways that sleep does not cure. The burden is not labor alone. It is acting. The tone you use at the counter is not the tone you use at the supper table. The words you choose in a government office are chosen not for truth alone, but for safety, legibility, and acceptable manner. You are not merely present. You are careful, and careful repeated long enough becomes costume.

What The Stage Reveals

Erving Goffman gave the modern world a useful description of social life when he wrote of it as performance. He observed that people do not appear to one another as bare interiors. They present themselves within scenes. There is a front stage where the part is maintained, and a back stage where the strain may be set down. There is a setting, a place arranged to support the act. There is appearance, by which the performer signals what sort of occasion this is. There is manner, by which he signals how he expects to be received. There is discipline, by which the whole impression is kept from breaking.

This is not yet a doctrine of truth. It is a description of what anyone with eyes can see. Living beings move through settings and take up manners suited to them. Goffman names the furniture of the scene.

Once you see it, the courtroom becomes impossible to misread.

A courtroom is front stage in one of its purest forms. The setting is arranged with almost liturgical care: raised bench, bar, seal, flags, rails, marked seats, prescribed entrances, files stacked in place, deputies stationed as visible boundaries. Appearance is not incidental there. Robes, badges, uniforms, suits, folders, docket numbers, standing when told, sitting when told, speaking only when called. Manner matters just as much. Calm, deferential, precise, brief. A shrug is read. A tone is read. The body itself becomes evidence of attitude.

And because the setting is so strong, it teaches the participant what sort of being is expected to appear there. Not a whole man with a life too rich for paper. Not a Living Soul whose worth precedes the room. The scene calls forth the Legal Person. It is built to receive the Persona, to sort it, test it, admonish it, license it, punish it, discharge it, or bind it over for later return. Even mercy in such a place is often administered as a function of the part.

Goffman also helps explain why resistance is so difficult. A performance holds by cooperation. The audience, the other players, the attendants, and the setting all sustain the same definition of the situation. To disrupt the performance is to offend not only a rule but an entire shared arrangement. This is why Identity Performance can feel natural even when it is forced. Repetition makes the borrowed role seem like skin, and the stage educates the nerves before the mind has time to object.

None of this proves that the Legal Person is rightful. It only shows how a system makes its role seem inevitable. The value of Goffman's analogy here is not that he gives us a solution, but that he gives us a lantern. He shows the boards beneath the carpet. He helps you see that much of public order depends upon managed impression, sustained setting, and trained manner. Once seen, the thing loses some of its spell.

The Repeated Act

Judith Butler, setting aside the later quarrels that gathered around her name, revealed one important point with unusual force: **identity in public life is often a repeated social act rather than a secret essence one displays once, a doing done again and again until it acquires the look of nature.** That insight is useful here so long as it is kept in its rightful place. The Christian account does not say that the Man is produced by performance. The Man precedes the performance because God made man in His image and gave him being before any social script was laid upon him. But Butler helps expose the legal “I” for what it is: not a living origin, but a maintained repetition. The Legal Person persists because it is cited, answered, signed, displayed, and reenacted. Stop admiring the mask as a self, and its dependence on repetition becomes plain.

If the matter ended with sociology, it would still be worth noticing. But the wound goes deeper than public manners because it touches the order of creation. Genesis does not begin with the state and ask how a file may be animated. It begins with God and declares, *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”* Then comes dominion, fruitfulness, blessing, life bestowed before bureaucracy, before registry, before seal and signature. The order is not trivial. Image first. Office under God second. Record nowhere near the cradle.

A man, then, is not first a claimant in an earthly ledger. He is not first a unit of administration. He is not first an applicant for permission to exist among institutions. He is creature before he is categorized. Living Soul before he is Legal Person. The blessing of Genesis rests upon the one made by God, not upon the paper estate fashioned by civil process. The law may notice him; it does not make him. The registry may assign a handle; it does not breathe life into his nostrils.

This is why Paul’s warning about letter and spirit cuts so sharply into the subject. *“The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”* The apostle is not praising disorder. He is showing the difference between outward administration and living power. A written system, however impressive, cannot create what only God creates. It can classify, accuse, bind, and memorialize. It can command forms, extract declarations, and reward compliant appearances. But it cannot generate the Living Soul whose

life is from God. When a society mistakes the letter for the life, it begins to serve its records as though they were the source of being.

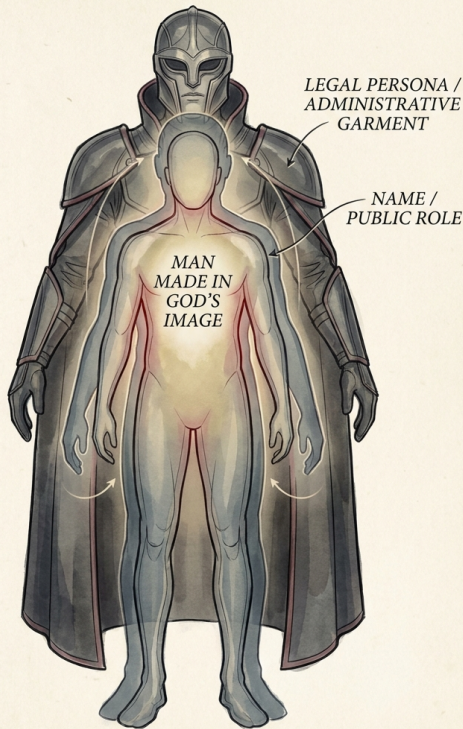
Paul presses further in Colossians: *“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”*

The movement here is not toward better costume work. It is toward truth in the inward parts, and toward renewal after the Creator's image. Put off. Put on. Garment language is used, yes, but not to make peace with the world of masks. Rather, the apostle exposes the old false clothing as something not owed perpetual loyalty.

Read that sequence together and a pattern appears. **Genesis names the original dignity of Man under God. Second Corinthians warns that dead letter is no source of life. Colossians commands the putting off of the old false garment and the putting on of the new man renewed after the Creator's image.** The theological line is not subtle: the image of God is native; the dead letter is derivative; the false old clothing can be put away. The state would have you believe that the legal garment is so bound to you that to question it is to question yourself. Scripture says otherwise. There is an old thing to be put off precisely because it is not identical with the life God gave.

“The image of God is native; the dead letter is derivative; the false old clothing can be put away.”

GARMENT / MASK / MAN



"The garment may be used; it must not be mistaken for the man."

This is where many readers feel a pang of fear. If the Legal Person is not the man, must the man become nobody? No. The opposite is true. The man may cease treating a shadow as his substance. He may learn the difference between using a worldly instrument under protest and believing that the instrument is his source or his name before heaven. The spiritual danger lies in habituation: day after day the Persona can become more legible to institutions than the man feels before God.

And here a seed may be planted without yet revealing the whole field. Revelation speaks of a system in which no man may buy or sell save he that bears a mark, a name, a number. The full burden of that text lies ahead in later chapters, and it ought not to be handled lightly. But even

now one word may be set on the table: **charagma**. An impressed mark. A stamp of authority. A sign fitted for commerce and recognition. Only a fool would rush too quickly from text to mechanism. Yet only a sleeper would fail to notice that **the world has grown very fond of marks by which men are permitted to move, trade, and be acknowledged.**

The issue, then, is not whether order exists. The issue is what kind of order claims your mouth and hands. The scriptural witness does not teach that man creates himself by performance. It teaches that God creates man, and that false garments, dead letters, and lying identities must not be mistaken for life. That is why the question of compelled identity performance is more than administrative. It is devotional.

What you repeatedly answer to will shape what you think you are.

Releasing This Week



Involuntary State Personhood will be released **this week**.

A full digital edition of the ebook will be made available
exclusively on Patreon.

If this preview resonates with you, visit Patreon to follow
the release and be among the first to access the complete
work.

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Thank you for reading this advance preview.