



# **A Defense of Dignity: Creating Life, Destroying Life, and Protecting the Rights of Conscience (ND Studies in Medical Ethics)**

*Christopher Kaczor*

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Questions about the dignity of the human person give rise to many of the most central and hotly disputed topics in bioethics. In *A Defense of Dignity: Creating Life, Destroying Life, and Protecting the Rights of Conscience*, Christopher Kaczor investigates whether each human being has intrinsic dignity and whether the very concept of "dignity" has a useful place in contemporary ethical debates. Kaczor explores a broad range of issues addressed in contemporary bioethics, including whether there is a duty of "procreative beneficence," the ethics of ectopic pregnancy, and the possibility of "rescuing" human embryos with human wombs or artificial wombs. *A Defense of Dignity* also treats issues relevant to the end of life, including physician-assisted suicide, provision of food and water to patients in a persistent vegetative state, and how to proceed with organ donation following death. Finally, what are the duties and prerogatives of health care professionals who refuse in conscience to take part in activities that they regard as degrading to human dignity? Should they be forced to do what they consider to be violations of the patient's well being, or does patient autonomy always trump the conscience of a health care professional?

Grounded in the Catholic intellectual and moral tradition, *A Defense of Dignity* argues that all human beings from the beginning to the end of their lives should be treated with respect and considers how this belief should be applied in controversial cases.

"*A Defense of Dignity* provides a skillful, informed, and clear philosophical analysis, from a natural law perspective, of a range of controversial, and sometimes complex, bioethical questions concerning the beginning and end of life. Few authors approach bioethics from a natural law perspective, and few do it as well as Christopher Kaczor. The book should be of interest not only to natural law philosophers and their students, but also to anyone interested in bioethics." —**John Keown, Georgetown University**

"Moral questions at the beginning and ending of life and controversies over liberty of conscience are among the most vexing and important issues of our day. Christopher Kaczor brings his characteristic moral seriousness and philosophical good sense to his treatment of these issues, all of which implicate the key concept of human dignity. This eminently readable collection will provide an invaluable resource for educators and students alike." —**Christopher Tollefsen, University of South Carolina**

"Indispensable. Kaczor untangles the various meanings of human dignity to undertake a reexamination of the most serious and difficult issues in medical ethics. The book combines clarity with philosophical precision, faithfulness to Catholic teaching with a thorough engagement with critics." —**J. Budziszewski, University of Texas at Austin**

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