

The Eye of the Storm

On August 29, 2005, as Hurricane Katrina approached the Gulf Coast of the United States, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) captured the ferocity of the storm's progress in a series of memorable color satellite pictures. The threatening hurricane appears as a dense swirling mass with a small eye at its center, the swirl thinning out into a curling tail. Think perhaps of a fat tadpole or a pronounced paisley.

Others saw a different design. On August 30, a group called Columbia Christians for Life (CCL) sent out a press release to its members containing the NOAA picture of Katrina bearing down on the coast. The accompanying text stated that the picture "looks like a 6-week unborn human child as it comes ashore the Gulf Coast. . . . The image of the hurricane above with its eye already ashore at 12:32 PM Monday, August 29 looks like a fetus (unborn human baby) facing to the left (west) in the womb, in the early weeks of gestation (approx. 6 weeks). Even the orange color of the image is reminiscent of a commonly used pro-life picture of early prenatal development. . . . This hurricane looks like an unborn human child."¹ According to the CCL this was no coincidence: there was a direct relation between the storm's prenatal manifestation and the destruction wrought upon New Orleans. As the email explained, "Louisiana has 10 child-murder-by-abortion centers—FIVE are in New Orleans." It concluded with an imperative: "God's message: REPENT AMERICA!"²

In some respects, the image of a vengeful, God-sent fetus taking aim at sinful New Orleans is a familiar story. For most of human history, disasters of all sorts—pestilence, dam bursts, AIDS—have been interpreted as divine retribution for one or another human failing.³ Such calamities are often accompanied