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In vitro fertilization (IVF) has become the most common assisted reproductive technique in the United States, accounting for 48,000 births in one recent year alone. This has also given birth to a silent generation of over 500,000 human embryos, waiting in cryopreservation for their chance at birth (Grabill, 2006). For the Christian who believes that conception marks the beginning of human life, the fact of half a million frozen persons creates an ethical challenge of enormous proportion. Besides the obvious solution of not contributing to the problem (by freezing or discarding one's own embryos), embryo adoption is often presented as the only life-affirming option left available (Sullivan, 2007). This paper will defend an additional approach that seems absent from the Church's pro-life strategy.

The believer pledges his commitment to a certain problem-solving approach: "Be imitators of God, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love" (Ephesians 5:1-2, NIV). A large part of Christ's ministry was extending compassion to individual problems of suffering. Alternatively, Christ reserved the harshest rebuke for those indifferent to the human needs around them (McKenzie, 2003). A significant realization is that compassion cannot be defined without the component of suffering, without being in pain or distress (Compassion, 2007). Adoption is perhaps the fullest expression of compassion. As such, it is an appropriate way to affirm the personhood of frozen embryos. However, the fullest embodiment of Christ's ministry would be to adopt those who suffer. Unlike children, embryos do not suffer because they cannot experience the felt needs of a physical body.

Throughout the Bible, God demonstrates His special care of the fatherless (Exodus 22:22, Deuteronomy 26:12-13, Psalm 68:6). Orphan care is the pure and faultless religion of our Heavenly Father (James 1.27). Adopting a child imitates the compassion of Christ toward individual suffering and obeys the biblical mandate regarding the fatherless. Another reason to favor child adoption over embryo adoption clarifies an important distinction. The choice between a child and a pre-born child is not a matter of personhood, but of priority. We are faced with a lamentable situation in which the ideal valuing of a person may be forfeited either way. Choosing embryo adoption first ignores an additional Christian imperative: compassion for suffering. The eyes of ontologically-based ethics see only persons, not the physical development of persons from embryo to child to

adult (Sullivan, 2003). This is the very heart of a principlist stance against the utilitarian position of unwanted or surplus human beings.

Is this seen in our response to frozen embryos? Just as abortion is universally more repugnant when sentience is reached, so should we be more naturally in tune with the needs of embodied orphaned children. This type of triage becomes necessary when resources are regrettably exhausted before every need can be satisfied. The embryo and the child are comparable in this manner by the very equality of their personhood. It is no less tragic to neglect an embryo than it is to neglect a child – but the child is the more imminent tragedy.

Another consideration favoring child adoption is the questionable ethical basis that many attach to embryo adoption. It is ironic that Christians reject IVF for themselves on moral grounds, but will nevertheless attempt the same result with someone else's embryos, created by the same process. A 16.6% success rate of frozen embryo transfer equals fatal harm to 83.4% of embryos supposedly saved by adoption (Grabill, 2006). Natural Law raises questions regarding the "technological separation of sexual union from procreation," and the involvement of other parties in a couple's pregnancy (Sutton, 1998). For the all these reasons, the Roman Catholic Church will not endorse embryo adoption, but advises individuals to act with sober judgment according to their own conscience (Neuhaus, 2007).

Jesus distinguished his authentic disciples by the compassion they showed to individuals with everyday needs (Matthew 25). A child is clearly an interactive member of any community and, therefore, his neglect is a more glaring omission of Scriptural mandates (James 1.27, 2.8; Romans 13.8-10, Matthew 22.39-40, Galatians 5.14).An infertile couple can choose to place the needs of a lonely child above their own God-given desire to feel complete through pregnancy. Satisfying this need by adopting an embryo may not necessarily be a morally culpable act. However, moral wrong certainly attaches to cases where self-serving motives, such as personal autonomy or social acceptance, overpower purer motives of conscience such as sacrifice (Caplan, 1986).

Adopting a child addresses the issue of embryo storage by illustrating the crucial continuum of inherent personhood. In the pro-life effort to prove the vital truth that an embryo is a child, we often overlook the obvious fact that a child began as an embryo. In other words, if child adoption became more common, it is

logical to assume that creation of embryos by reproductive technology would decrease. If we were eager to adopt children, we would do much to silence the opposition because everyone is pro-life in the pro-child movement. Even popular news media have recognized the potential impact of America's evangelicals rising to the challenge of orphan care (Associated Press, 2007).

Christ-like communities who stand ready to love and adopt needy children illustrate in living color the gospel of our adoption into the family of God. Based on currently available statistics, one child adopted by every *infertile* couple who claims a Judeo-Christian faith would leave no American child without a home. Moreover, there would actually be a waiting list of adoptive parents for every foster child with future adoption potential (ARDA, 2004; DAI, 2002; U.S. Census, 2007)!

Will the testimony of the Church be as phenomenal if every embryo is adopted, but hundreds of thousands of American children remain orphaned? These results speak for themselves. Both embryo adoption and child adoption supply traction for an ontological response to this nation's large store of frozen embryonic life.

Eppinette has done well to emphasize that "bioethical situations are opportunities for creative love." Christians should be known for their compassionate acts, and not for a generic argument carelessly dispensed for each and every circumstance. We may pose the wrong question when we ask: "Is this morally acceptable?" or even, "Is this morally heroic?" Wisdom asks: "Is this the highest moral good?" Embryo adoption and pro-life legislation are both good and necessary. However, there are compelling reasons to champion child adoption, together with the demonstration of Christ's compassion, as the primary pro-life strategy for frozen human embryos. The best way, the most holistic way, to be pro-life is to be pro-child.

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