

God and the Adoption of Sperm and Ova

Christians are wise to “gauge the thickness and strength of the moral ice” beneath reproductive technologies like artificial insemination from the husband, and donor *in vitro* fertilization.

by David Larson

CINDY AND JIM WAGNER LOVE EACH OTHER PROFOUNDLY. They are in their middle twenties. Professionals with advanced degrees in their specialties, both are attractive, energetic, and cheerfully resourceful. They are convinced and convincing Christians who are among the most active and respected members of their congregation. And they are both overflowing with happiness, because today, for the very first time, they both felt their baby move within Linda’s womb.¹

Linda is Cindy’s sister. She is happily married to Bob Hamilton. Linda and Bob, who are also leaders in the congregation and community, already have two children. They desire no more youngsters even though Linda feels exhilarated during pregnancy.

Although they very much wanted to be parents, Cindy and Jim had come to fear that they would never have children. Cindy knew for some time that she had been born without

a uterus, even though in other ways she was quite normal.² She and Jim learned after they were married that his sperm count was dangerously low, though perhaps not so low as to guarantee his sterility. The combination of these factors, plus the difficulties they experienced in finding a child to adopt, sometimes led them to despair of ever having a “real family,” as they often put it.

Not long ago a number of normal and healthy ova were removed from Cindy’s intact ovaries. These were fertilized in a clinical laboratory with sperm from Cindy’s husband that had been combined with sperm from an anonymous donor. The doctors placed three of the resulting pre-embryos within Linda’s womb. One of these successfully implanted and now appears to be on its way to a normal delivery. The pre-embryos that were not used at that time were frozen. If all continues to go well, several years from now three of the frozen pre-embryos will be thawed and implanted into Linda in hope that Cindy and her husband can have another child. Eventually, Cindy and her husband will donate any frozen

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pre-embryos they do not use to other infertile couples.

At least three primary reactions to cases like this can be distinguished on Christian grounds. One stance rejects all medical attempts to assist human procreation in these ways. A second position endorses those techniques that utilize the physical resources of husbands and wives but rejects the contributions of all donors and surrogates. The third option contends that it is a worthy thing for Christian individuals and institutions to assist human procreation even if such assistance utilizes the contributions of donors or surrogates or both. These three primary alternatives can be divided and combined in a variety of ways.

Which of these reactions is the most persuasive?

Before attempting to answer this question, we would do well to review the primary affirmations of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures about human sexuality, in hope of placing our ethical inquiry into an appropriate theological context. It would also be helpful to explore more fully the ethical relationships between the unitive and procreative purposes of human sexual congress as these are now being discussed by thoughtful Christians. We will then be able to assess in a more respon-

sible way the morality of what can be done in cases like that of the Wagners and Hamiltons.

This discussion focuses primarily upon the morality of assisting human procreation and only secondarily upon ethical issues in doing so. There are many ethical issues in carrying out reproductive techniques, including confidentiality, due process, allocating scarce medical resources, truth-telling, medical experimentation, marketing, advertising, and similar matters about which we should also be sensitive. But such issues need not be explored unless it is first established that assisting human procreation in these ways is a morally commendable activity. This presentation concentrates upon the prior and more fundamental question—the ethics of human procreation.

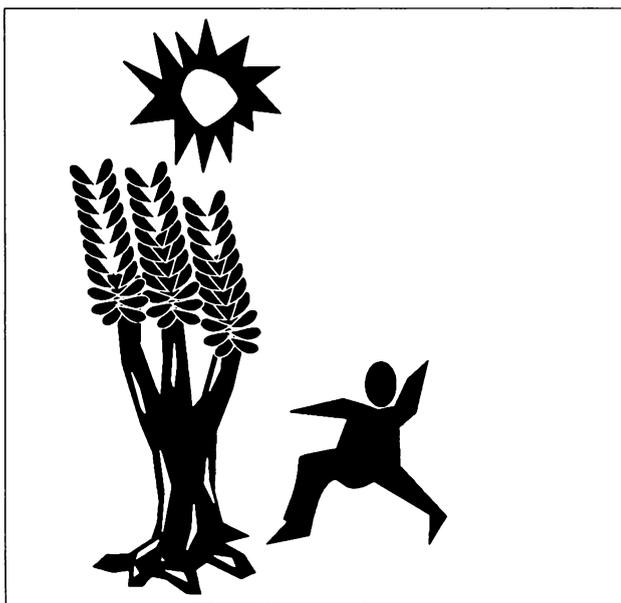
Theology and Human Sexuality

What the Bible says about sexuality can be distinguished from that of other sacred texts by at least six broad affirmations. Taken together, these six affirmations compose a foundation for a Christian understanding of human sexuality that can inform our convictions about assisting human procreation.

The material universe in general and the human body in particular are made by God and therefore of positive reality and value.

From a Christian point of view, there is no reason to deprecate the material world or the human body as illusory or evil. Rather, the Christian is to rejoice in his or her physical embodiment, and in the material world in which he or she lives, as these are precious gifts from a loving Creator who desires nothing but what is good for all creatures.

This aspect of the biblical doctrine of creation, when properly understood and applied, spares the religions of the Hebrew heritage—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—from the negative consequences of the various forms of dualism and monism, the latter of which is



sometimes known as pantheism. Dualism contends that every particular thing is an instance of the convergence of two ultimate and irreconcilable principles, one spiritual and the other physical. In the long run, dualism not only distinguishes between the spiritual and the physical but also separates them and deprecates the physical. This is one source of human discontent with the physical body. As such, dualism is like a spring that continually issues the contaminated waters of excessive asceticism.

Monism, or pantheism, is hardly less kind to particular things. It holds that only the universe as a whole (the Absolute) is ultimately actual. Individuals throughout the universe, including particular human beings, are somewhat deficient in actuality because they are fragments of the Absolute that alone is ultimately real. This too can be a spring of excessive asceticism, sexual and otherwise.

The religions of the Hebrew heritage know the value of asceticism when it is understood as self-control and sacrifice for the sake of others. But these religions, when they are true to themselves, are uncomfortable with asceticism when it is prompted by a melancholy view of the material world and of the physical body, whether dualistic or monistic. The more extreme the asceticism, the more uncomfortable the Abrahamic religions become.

The differentiation between man and woman is created by God and therefore a positive feature of human life.

Unlike many in ancient and modern times

who believe that gender differentiation is an unfortunate happenstance, or perhaps even a divine curse, the religions of the Hebrew heritage view it happily, though with an eye and ear to the pain that men and women often experience in each other's presence.

It is hard to imagine a contrast greater than that between the Genesis account of gender differentiation and the words of Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*. In one of its expressions, the biblical story connects the differentiation of humankind into male and female with the idea of humanity existing in the image of God, as though to emphasize that we live in a

communiverse rather than in a *universe*. In its other expression, the Genesis account portrays the emergence of gender differentiation as the fashioning of woman from the rib of man, as though to underline the essential identity and equality of man and woman as well as their differentiation.

Both of these biblical accounts are a conceptual chasm away from the view of the *Symposium* that the differentiation of humankind into man and woman occurred as a divine punishment for human arrogance. Far from deprecating it, or being ashamed of it, or longing for some more androgynous alternative, the Genesis account looks upon the similarities and differences between men and women with joy and satisfaction, except, as is so often the case, when these become occasions for injustice.

The Creator's first hope is that men and women will relate to each other as equals.

This means that men and women are equal

Monogamy is a sexual analog of monotheism because they both understand that one can be ultimately loyal to only one other person. . . . It is no more possible to be ultimately loyal to more than one lover than it is to be ultimately devoted to more than one nation or cause.

in Creation, equal in sin, and equal in redemption. It also means that men and women are equal in value and significance. During long stretches of Christian history this view of things was lost sight of, as evidenced by Tertullian's rebuke to the Christian women of his day:

The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives on in our times and so it is necessary that the guilt should live on also. You are the one who opened the door to the Devil, you are the one who first plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree, you are the first who deserted the divine law; you are the one who persuaded him whom the Devil was not strong enough to attack. All too easily you destroyed the image of God, man.³

It is difficult to see how Tertullian could find biblical support for his idea that sin did not merely deface but also destroyed the image of God in humanity. And it is difficult to understand how Tertullian could fail to notice the Bible's claim that the image of God in humankind is closely connected to the creation of humanity as male and female. But in that time and place, his views were typical.

Today, very few Christians, if any, would find interpretations like Tertullian's persuasive. Important disputes remain among Christians as to what practical arrangements the equality of men and women should take. But even those who reserve some roles for men

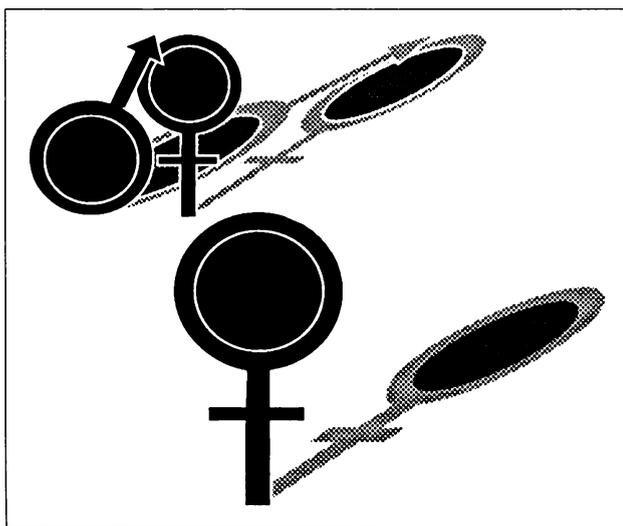
and others for women almost always insist that these differences in function do not constitute differences in value. Those who now oppose the ordination of qualified women to the Christian ministry, for instance, usually do so with an insistence that, contrary to the views of Tertullian and others like him throughout the centuries, women are equal in worth to men even though their roles should be different.

For those, like myself, who long for the day when qualified persons will be ordained to the Christian ministry in all denominations without regard to differences in gender, the realization that since the time of Tertullian we have made some moral progress is small consolation—though it is better than nothing. And it is frank acknowledgement that it is no longer credible to state or imply that men and women are less than equal in value to each other.

A permanent and exclusive commitment of love between one man and one woman for the whole of their lives is the optimal form of marriage.

The Bible is well aware of the practice of polygamy. It also knows the ways in which marriages are often destroyed by death, desertion, and divorce. The Scriptures do reach out in supportive ways to those whose lives have been filled with pain by such heartaches. But the Scriptures reach out to people in their marital disappointments and sorrows in ways that do not compromise or contaminate the ideal of permanent and exclusive commitment. They portray this ideal, this loyal love between one man and one woman who are ultimately faithful to each other, and only to each other, throughout all the trials and tribulations of their lives, as a reminder of God's steadfast love. And it portrays God's steadfast love as the goal and norm of marital commitment.

Monogamy is a sexual analog of monotheism because they both understand that one can be ultimately loyal to only one other person. Ultimateness implies and entails singularity. This is as true of sexual relationships as it is



elsewhere. It is no more possible to be ultimately loyal to more than one lover than it is to be ultimately devoted to more than one nation or ultimately committed to more than one cause. Sooner or later, every lover says to his or her beloved what Yahweh said to the people of Israel: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Those who do not pay sufficient attention to this logical and psychological truth often discover that their various relationships are marred by jealousies and conflicts as to who is most important.

Within the context of the permanent and exclusive commitment of love we call marriage, the pleasures of coitus are right and good.

The Bible is as explicit as any document can be that Christian husbands and wives are to be sexually faithful and sexually available to each other. Each side of this moral agreement is as important as the other. From a biblical point of view, it is morally wrong for a Christian to betray his or her spouse sexually. According to the Scriptures, one can cheat one's spouse by being sexually intimate with another, and one can cheat one's spouse by refusing to be sexually intimate with him or her. The fact that many conventional Christians view the first form of betrayal more harshly than they do the second has more to do with cultural assumptions than with the witness of Scripture.

This positive affirmation of sexual pleasure within what we call marriage is at odds with the single most influential book other than the Bible ever published in the entire history of Christian sexual thought: *The Good of Marriage* by Augustine of Hippo. Augustine taught

that marriage is good but only secondarily, temporarily, and instrumentally so. Every Christian's first moral hope should be that of lifelong celibacy, he contended. Those who find celibacy too challenging do well to marry, but should live as soon as possible as though they are brothers and sisters, he wrote. It is permissible for Christian husbands and wives to experience coitus, Augustine taught millions of Christians throughout the centuries, if and only if each sexual union intends conception. When Christian husbands and wives are sexually intimate with each other when they

do not desire offspring, he believed they commit a sin, albeit a venial sin:

In marriage, intercourse for the purpose of generation has no fault attached to it, but for the purpose of satisfying concupiscence, provided with a spouse, because of the marriage fidelity, it is a venial sin; adultery or fornication, however, is a mortal sin.

And so, continence from all intercourse is certainly better than marital intercourse which takes place for the sake of begetting children.⁴

It is easy to smile at Augustine's utterances until one recalls that over the centuries millions of lives have been frustrated and harassed by genuine but difficult attempts to practice what he preached. These disappointments were unnecessary because they were prompted by interpretations of human sexual life that are neither scriptural nor scientific.

Nowhere does the Bible state or imply that it is sinful for husbands and wives to enjoy each other sexually when procreation is not intended. Nowhere does it suggest that coitus within marriage is acceptable only when conception is intended. These negative attitudes

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have been bequeathed by Augustine and others, and not by the Bible, to unsuspecting and unfortunate Christians right down to the present time, with negative results for many.

Children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are precious treasures.

Men and women are portrayed by the Bible as most unfortunate if they are sterile or barren. On the other hand, to have many descendants, to have offspring more numerous than the stars in the sky or the sands of the sea, is considered a great blessing. The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are pro-natal.

Some may dismiss the Bible's delight in offspring as the assumption of tribal groups whose very existence was constantly threatened by low birth rates and high death rates. Although these factors cannot be denied, they hardly constitute the entire picture. The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures presume that it is a good thing to be a father or a mother, a grandfather or a grandmother. It is almost as if they suggest that in the process of being a parent and grandparent one can learn something about the steadfast love of God and can experience the joys and the sorrows that come only from investing one's self in some appropriate way in the next generation.

The Bible is not sentimental about children. It does not portray youthful humans as unending and undiluted sources of pleasure. The Scriptures are sturdy and sober in their depictions of the enormous grief and sorrow children often cause, sometimes without realizing or caring how much pain they prompt. Hardly a family portrayed in the Bible is unscarred by strife, contention, rivalry, and even warfare. Eve's delight and disappointment in Cain, a man who is a symbol of all who murder their own siblings, is a metaphor of the joys and sorrows of parenthood. But despite its clear-eyed view of human children as they actually are, the Bible rarely doubts that it is a good thing to be a parent, that it is a very good thing to have children and grandchildren and many great-grandchildren.

Of all the affirmations of the Hebrew and

Christian Scriptures about human sexuality we have surveyed, the Bible's affirmation of procreation may be the most difficult to accept today. For perfectly legitimate reasons, people must now limit the size of their families, not merely for their own sakes but also for the sake of the survival of life on planet Earth. This is an ethical and ecological necessity as well as a financially prudent course of action.

Ethics and the Unitive and Procreative Purposes

So far we have seen that the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures exhibit positive views of: (1) the human body, (2) sexual differentiation, (3) equality among men and women, (4) permanent and exclusive commitment between spouses, (5) sexual pleasure within marriage, and (6) human offspring. It is now appropriate to inquire more directly into the proper relationships between the fifth and sixth of these biblical affirmations.

We will now explore the ethical relationships between the so-called "unitive" and "procreative" purposes of human sexual union. Alternative interpretations of these relationships are directly related to differing views among Christians about the ethics of assisting human procreation. Other factors also contribute to these disagreements, but the importance of this consideration cannot be overemphasized.

One way to clarify what we mean when we speak of the "unitive" and "procreative" purposes of sexual intimacy is to recall the summary of the proper ends of sexual intercourse provided by Jeremy Taylor, an Anglican clergyman of 17th-century England. Speaking of Christian husbands and wives, Taylor wrote that:

In their permissions and licence, they must be sure to observe the order of nature, and the ends of God. He is an ill husband that uses his wife as a man treats a harlot, having no other end but

pleasure. Concerning which our best rule is, that although in this, as in eating and drinking, there is an appetite to be satisfied which cannot be done without pleasing that desire; yet since that desire and satisfaction was intended by nature for other ends, they should never be separate from those ends, with a desire *to have children, or to avoid fornication, or to lighten and ease the cares and sadnesses of household affairs, or to endear each other*: but never with a purpose, either in act or desire, to separate the sensuality from these ends which hallow it.⁵

When Jeremy Taylor speaks of the ends “which hallow” human sexual union for Christians, he expands and enlarges the earlier view of Augustine and others that the threefold goodness of marriage entails: (1) offspring, (2) fidelity, and (3) sacramental grace. Today we might say that when Taylor speaks of “a desire to have children,” he refers to the procreative purpose of sexual union. When he writes of a desire “to lighten and ease the cares and sadnesses of household affairs, or to endear each other,” Taylor depicts what we now mean by the unitive purpose of the conjugal act.

Even though for many centuries this was not the case, today there is widespread agreement among Christians that within marriage the procreative and unitive purposes of human sexual union are both morally commendable. Disagreement persists, however, about the proper relationships between these purposes, and these differences have important practical consequences. At least three alternatives can be identified.

The unitive purpose may not be separated intentionally from the procreative purpose and the procreative purpose may not be separated intentionally from the unitive purpose.

According to this view, the two purposes are always to be connected and equally valuable. They are always to reinforce and invigorate each other. It would not be right to deprecate one purpose in favor of the other. Neither would it be right to affirm the two purposes as though they are equally valuable but also separate matters. The two must al-

ways be held together in thought and in action. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that this position tends to think of a single twofold purpose for human sexual union instead of two distinct purposes.

If this is so, virtually all forms of artificial contraception and sterilization are morally wrong because, among other things, they intentionally separate the procreative purpose from the unitive purpose. Likewise, if this view is correct, virtually all forms of artificial insemination and *in vitro* fertilization are morally wrong because they intentionally separate the unitive purpose from the procreative purpose. And this is so even if the sperm and the ova are derived exclusively from the husband and the wife, even if the procedure is limited to married couples and uses or makes use of no donors or surrogates.

This approach is similar to the position that the official leadership of the Roman Catholic Church circulated in March of 1987 in a document entitled “Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation.” This statement condemns artificial insemination in many cases when limited to spouses and in all cases when utilizing donors. It also condemns *in vitro* fertilization in all cases, whether limited to spouses or



using donors. It finds that such medical interventions separate the unitive and procreative functions of human sexuality in ways that are morally unacceptable for Christians:

The church's teaching on marriage and human procreation affirms the "inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman." This principle, which is based upon the nature of marriage and the intimate connection of the goods of marriage, has well-known consequences on the level of responsible fatherhood and motherhood.⁶

Some of these "well-known consequences" include the condemnation of all forms of artificial contraception and sterilization, as well as all forms of artificial insemination by the husband (except for those that are not masturbational and those that assist the conjugal act instead of replacing it), all forms of *in vitro* fertilization, and all forms of surrogate gestation.

I find it difficult to imagine a more negative and less convincing analysis of the morality of assisting human procreation. But if this approach is rejected, it should be rejected for primary and not secondary reasons. I believe the primary reason for not accepting this interpretation should be that one finds the reciprocal and symmetrical connection it posits between the unitive and the procreative purposes of human sexual union untenable for scriptural, logical, scientific, and experiential reasons.

Experientially, the claim strikes many Catholics and non-Catholics as counter-intuitive. It strikes me that way too. Scientifically, one wonders what empirical evidence has been presented, and what empirical evidence could possibly be presented, that would demand so tight a linkage between the unitive and procreative purposes. If anything, the empirical evidence might suggest that among humans the two purposes are physiologically and psychologically separate to a significant degree, as implied, for instance, by the extent to which, among human females, sexual responsiveness is not wholly determined by the estrus cycle.

When persons consider the logic of the argument under consideration, they cannot help but notice that it functions with a very narrow understanding of the unitive purpose. Surely the conjugal act itself is not the only sexual way a husband and wife can "lighten and ease the cares and sadnesses of household affairs, or to en-

dear each other," as Jeremy Taylor put it. Many couples might even find that they do "endear each other" during the process of conceiving a child through the assistance of a fertility clinic and that these interactions are for them more bonding, more unifying, than were the experiences of their honeymoon or most recent vacation. And finally, but most importantly, where is the biblical evidence, direct or indirect, that suggests that in every instance the unitive and procreative purposes must always be inseparable? The evidence from the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures has not yet been presented in a convincing manner, and I doubt that it can be done.

I find it more helpful to think of accepting the contributions of donors or surrogates as "adoption" than as "adultery." . . . In the Bible, the theme of "adoption" is far more positive than is that of "adultery."

This alternative does have at least one merit that is often overlooked, however. Its insistence on reciprocal and symmetrical relationships between the unitive and procreative purposes does imply that it would be wrong from a Christian moral point of view for a husband to cause his wife to conceive by raping her or by compelling her to participate against her will in an artificial insemination or *in vitro* fertilization project, with or without donors and surrogates. Such coercion would certainly separate the unitive from the procreative functions, and would be morally wrong. Although it is frequently forgotten, this insight ought to be included in any Christian stance toward assisted procreation.

The unitive purpose may be separated from the procreative purpose and the procreative purpose may be separated from the unitive purpose.

This position recognizes the dual purposes of human sexual union as clearly and as happily as does the first option. But it sees them as two related but distinct functions and not a single twofold function. It posits a radical disjunction between sexuality as “making love” and as “making babies” and treats them differently even though it values both. When the purpose is to “make love,” that should be done with energy and enthusiasm with full advantage of all contraceptive measures. When the purpose is to “make babies,” that should be done as earnestly and skillfully as possible, taking full advantage of every technological possibility.

To be certain that one was conceived in love, in this view of things, is not so much the ability to trace one’s origins back to moments of passionate parental ecstasy as it is to be able to know that one was planned, desired, and maybe even designed, to the extent this is possible. Because the unitive purpose may be separated from the procreative purpose, all forms of artificial insemination and *in vitro* fertilization, including those that accept the contributions of donors and surrogates, can be

morally commendable. Because the procreative purpose may be separated from the unitive purpose, there is no ethical objection to the various forms of artificial contraception and sterilization, providing they are safe and effective.

Joseph Fletcher, one of the fathers of modern biomedical ethics, is among those who morally approve the separation of the unitive and the procreative purposes of human sexual intimacy.

Love as an interpersonal sentiment is of course wider and deeper than sexual intercourse, just as “sexuality” is. But in the restricted sense of intercourse, “love making” like other human acts, is not inherently either right or wrong. Our moral judgments on sex acts are determined by many extrinsic and contextual variables—such factors as the intentions and attitudes of the parties, their marital status or lack of it, their health, their age and competence, and so on.

If we keep two crucial realities in mind—the separation biologically of love making from baby making, and the critical need socially to arrest or even reverse population growth—we will see that our moral scheme must have a place for sex freedom and variety. Love making has a two-dimensional nature, “procreation and recreation.” On its procreative side, sex should be well controlled, a discipline of careful calculation, whether it is carried out naturally or artificially. On its recreative side, spontaneity and personal feeling should reign.⁷

The strengths and weaknesses of this approach are almost the mirror image of those of the first alternative. It is difficult to imagine a more severe separation between the two purposes. It is also hard to exaggerate the differences between the ways the first and second alternatives view the nature of moral obligation, Christian or otherwise. The first alternative is so “objective” and the second so “subjective” that one can only hope there is another alternative between the two. In addition, the two views vary considerably in their understanding of love. The first alternative emphasizes love as structure and stability. The second

stresses love as immediacy and spontaneity.

This second alternative can rightly be viewed as a moral revolt against the first one. Like many revolutionary movements, it has its legitimate grievances. But it also exhibits some excesses. One of these is that in failing to retain the conviction that procreative acts should be unitive, a door is left open, if ever so slightly, for coerced sexual intimacies on the one hand and for cold, forbidding, or even harsh technological interventions on the other. There must be a better approach.

The unitive purpose may not be separated from the procreative purpose but the procreative purpose may be separated from the unitive purpose.

This point of view agrees with the first alternative that every act should be unitive. It condemns conception through any form of sexual coercion, whether by rape or by forced participation in the activities of a fertility clinic. But this alternative proceeds with an understanding of the unitive purpose that can be at least a bit wider than the one that functions in the first option. According to this somewhat more comprehensive reading of the unitive

function, it is not necessarily and automatically wrong for a husband by masturbating to acquire semen to be artificially inseminated into his wife. In addition, in some cases this more encompassing understanding of the unitive function is able to endorse the techniques of artificial insemination, and perhaps even those of *in vitro* fertilization, providing that in neither case a donor or surrogate is used. But perhaps the most dra-



matic difference between the first alternative and this one is that, even though this one does hold that every conjugal act must be unitive, it does not contend that every conjugal act must be procreative; i.e., it does not hold that both parties must be open to the possibility of conception and that neither may take artificial steps to prevent it.

More than two decades ago, Paul Ramsey of Princeton University published an ethical evaluation of assisted human procreation that was similar to this third alternative. Ramsey did everything he could to show that each conjugal act must be unitive but that not every conjugal act must be directly and immediately procreative. This position made him critical of the use of donors. It is a safe guess that if he were alive today he would oppose the use of surrogates as well. But Ramsey did not condemn every instance of artificial contraception and sterilization:

In relation to genetic proposals, the most important element of Christian morality—and the most important ingredient that the Christian acknowledges to be deserving of respect in the nature of man—which needs to be brought into view is the teaching concerning the union between the two goods of human sexuality.

An act of sexual intercourse is at the same time an act of love and a procreative act.

To put radically asunder what God joined together in parenthood when He made love procreative, to procreate from beyond the sphere of love (AID [Artificial Insemination by Donor], for example, or making human life in a test-tube), or to posit acts of sexual love beyond the sphere of responsible procreation (by definition, marriage), means a refusal of the image of God's creation in our own.⁸

Because it is less wooden and more subtle and nuanced than the first and second alternatives, and because it seems to resonate with “common sense,” both in its acceptance of contraception and sterilization and in its rejection of the contributions of donors and surrogates, this third approach is far more attractive

than the first and second ones.

Nevertheless, we must still ask if its rejection of the gifts of donors and surrogates is necessary as a matter of Christian ethical principle. There is no doubt that the inclusions of these other participants introduces a host of psychological, legal, and medical challenges. But that is not the primary question at hand. The question before us, as I understand it, is: Would it be morally commendable for Christian individuals and institutions to make use of donors and surrogates in fertility clinics if and only if the various practical challenges can be successfully met?

From a Christian point of view, is there in every case an unconditional, absolute, universal, categorical, eternal, and irreducibly moral objection to the contributions of all donors and all surrogates no matter what the circumstances?

I believe the answer to this question should be "no." And I believe that on reflection, irrespective of their initial reactions, most Christians would agree that such an absolute and universal prohibition would be too sweeping.

Such sweeping claims are vulnerable to refutation by the successful presentation of merely one convincing counter-example. I believe the case of the Wagners and Hamiltons is enough to demonstrate that accepting the contributions of donors and surrogates is not always morally wrong from a Christian point of view. But even if I am incorrect about this, I suspect that someday someone will be able to present a case in which Christians would rightly approve the participation of donors or surrogates or both. If only one such case can be anticipated, a total and uncompromising condemnation of all such protocols should not be adopted at this time.

Two of the most important ethical reasons for contending that in every instance it is categorically immoral to accept the contributions of donors and surrogates are (1) that such protocols always alienate the unitive purpose of sexuality from its procreative purpose, and

(2) that they always come too close to adultery. If these charges were always telling, I would agree that Christian individuals and institutions should always reject the contributions of donors and surrogates. But because I don't find these criticisms valid in every case, I prefer a more cautious conclusion.

My discomfort with the criticism that accepting the contributions of donors and surrogates always alienates the unitive from the procreative is that this criticism often proceeds with an understanding of the unitive purpose that is still too narrow even though it is wider than many. Paul Ramsey and people of his persuasion easily convince me that Christians should not "make babies" unless they "make love." But I am not convinced that the conjugal act is the only way to "make love." It is very easy for me to imagine that a youngster who knew that he or she began life in a fertility clinic could be truly thankful for having been conceived in love, in an extraordinary love, a great, passionate, and noble love, a love that secures and sustains for the whole of life.

But what about the issue of adultery? Do Christians violate the seventh commandment, and similar reminders of the permanence and exclusiveness of marriage, by accepting the contributions of donors and surrogates? This can and perhaps does happen. But it does not necessarily happen in every case.

Adultery has at least two essential features. On the one hand, adultery is a form of intimacy that is physical, but usually not merely physical. On the other hand, it is a form of disloyalty, profound disloyalty. In order to qualify as adultery, an



act or relationship must be both intimate and disloyal. As our various words demonstrate, one or the other is not enough. An act that is intimate but not disloyal is not adultery but fornication. An act that is disloyal but not intimate is not adultery but treachery. Intimacy plus disloyalty (plus perhaps some other factors) equals adultery. Anything less than this or anything other than this is not adultery.

It is certainly possible, perhaps even probable, that there have been cases of adultery among those who have been involved in programs that assist human procreation. But it must also be possible to participate as a patient in the activities of a fertility clinic without being intimate, even though one is physically exposed. If this is not the case, no man or woman could ever have a thorough physical examination from any doctor, male or female, without committing adultery. And it must also be possible to participate in the activities of a fertility clinic without being disloyal to one's spouse, otherwise fertility clinics would not be frequented by couples who are working with each other, as well as with the specialists at the clinic, to become parents. In those instances where participation in the activities of a fertility clinic do not entail both intimacy and disloyalty, I believe we would do well not to insinuate that people are coming too close to committing adultery.

I find it more helpful to think of accepting the contributions of donors or surrogates as "adoption" than as "adultery." Both notions are powerful themes in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. In the Bible, both point to intimate and important relationships among humans. And in these Scriptures, both highlight life and death alternatives in the relationships between humans and God. But in the Bible, the theme of "adoption" is far more positive than is that of "adultery"; the first is a symbol of salvation while the second is a symbol of damnation. Why should Christians, in every case, apply the more negative symbol to gamete donation or surrogate gestation?

Virtually all would agree that it is morally

permissible to adopt a human child. Many would approve of the adoption of a human fetus. Some would endorse the adoption of a human embryo. A few would agree that it is ethically acceptable to adopt a human pre-embryo. And a very few would approve of the adoption of a human gamete in at least some circumstances, whether sperm or ovum. Is there any reason why Christians should not be able to affirm each of these forms of adoption as appropriate ways to resolve at least some crises? I doubt that such a reason can be found.

Now that we have reviewed aspects of the recent discussion among thoughtful Christians about the relationships between the unitive and the procreative purposes of human sexual intimacy, we can come to some conclusions about the following theological interpretations and their ethical implications:

1. The view that the unitive purpose may never be separated from the procreative purpose and the procreative purpose may never be separated from the unitive purpose is inadequate. It claims too much and condemns too much.

2. The view that the unitive purpose may be separated from the procreative purpose and the procreative purpose may be separated from the unitive purpose is also inadequate. It claims too little and condemns too little.

3. The view that the unitive purpose may not be separated from the procreative purpose but that the procreative purpose may be separated from the unitive purpose is the most promising of the three alternatives. However, this alternative will be more persuasive and effective than it sometimes is if it utilizes a more comprehensive understanding of the unitive function and a more precise understanding of adultery as intimacy plus disloyalty.

These conclusions may be clarified if we utilize a simple diagram that exhibits the various ways the ethical relationships between the unitive and procreative purposes of human

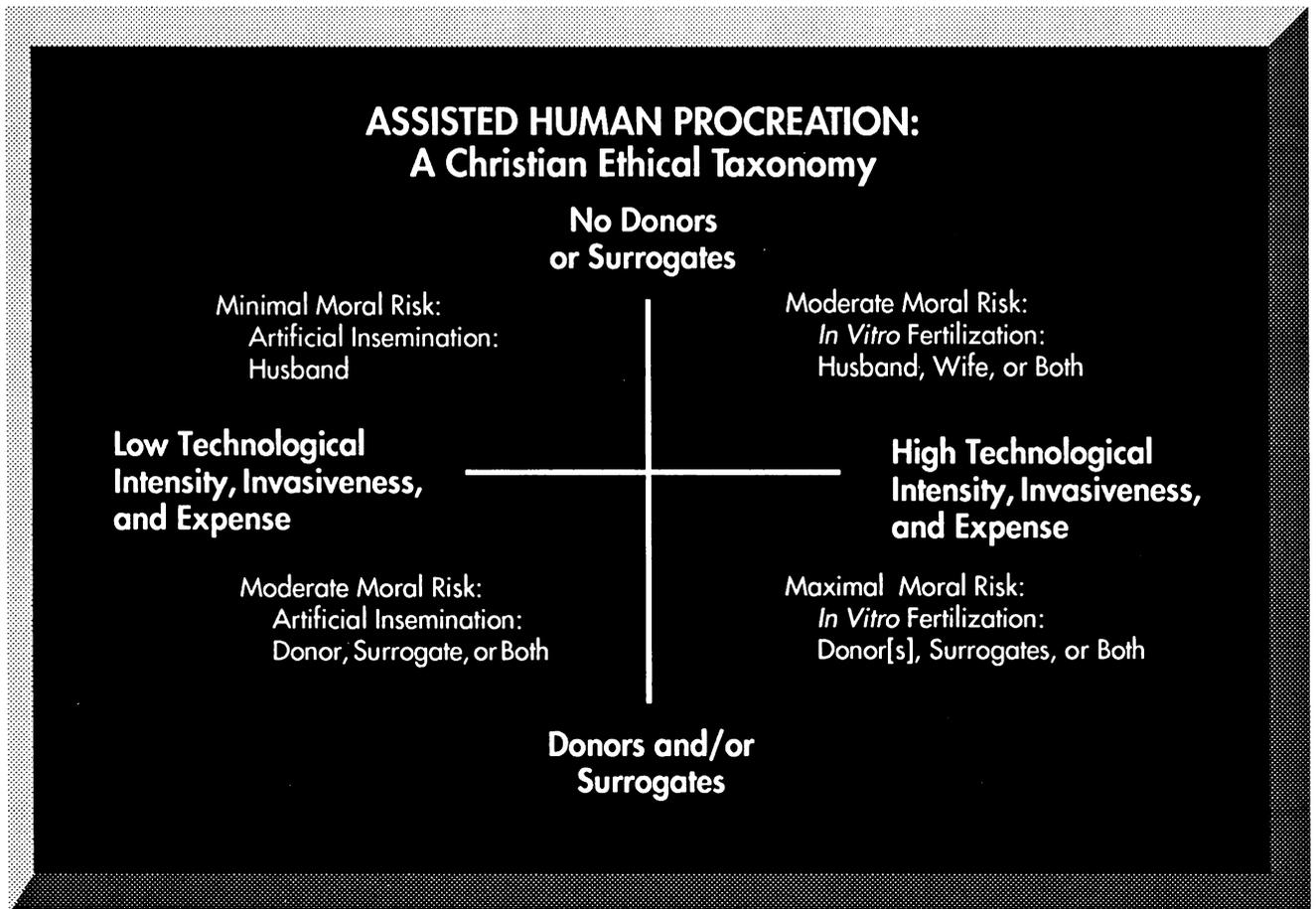
sexual union are understood.⁹ The conclusions we have reached suggest that the first alternative (unitive but not procreative) and the second alternative (both unitive and procreative) are both morally acceptable purposes of human sexual union from a Christian point of view, as are the various medical technologies that enable them. The third alternative (procreative but not unitive) is not acceptable from a Christian point of view. However, a wider understanding of the unitive function than is customary is ethically appropriate. This wider understanding would approve of technological interventions that thoughtful Christians have sometimes criticized.

If these conclusions are valid, and I believe they are, Christian individuals and institutions do that which is morally right and good when they participate responsibly in attempts to assist human procreation through a variety of

means, including artificial insemination and *in vitro* fertilization, and with a variety of personnel, including donors and surrogates. It must be emphasized, however, that responsible participation in such medical protocols requires a keen awareness of the varying moral risks presented by the differing medical possibilities. In each case, individuals and institutions that employ these measures should keep these moral risks clearly in view.

One way to exhibit these differing moral risks is to compare the alternatives according to their use or nonuse of donors and surrogates and according to the degree of their technological intensity, invasiveness, and expense, as is shown in the diagram below.

As this scheme suggests, the more technologically intense, invasive, and expensive a method of assisting human procreation is, the more ethically doubtful it is for Christians.



Likewise, the more such a method makes use of donors and surrogates, the more questionable it is from a Christian moral point of view. The least objection should be raised against artificial insemination protocols that utilize the husband's sperm. More ethical hesitancy should be experienced by the use of *in vitro* fertilization protocols that rely exclusively upon gametes provided by husbands and wives because of their greater technological involvement. For a different reason—the involvement of anonymous “third parties” in the process—artificial insemination by donor should be greeted with moderate moral hesitancy by Christians. The strongest reservations should be expressed toward *in vitro* fertilization projects that involve the use of donated sperm or ovum or both, or the use of surrogates for gestation.

To use an analogy, all of these procedures rest on moral ice that differs in thickness and strength. From a Christian point of view, the moral ice is thickest and strongest beneath artificial insemination by husband. It is thinnest and weakest beneath *in vitro* fertilization that accepts the contributions of donors or surrogates or both. It is moderately thick and strong, though not always morally safe, beneath *in vitro* fertilization protocols that use neither donors nor surrogates and beneath artificial insemination protocols that use donors or surrogates or both.

Christian individuals and institutions are morally free to utilize all of these alternatives; however, they are morally wise if in each instance they gauge the thickness and strength of the moral ice beneath a procedure before utilizing it. They are also ethically prudent if they post warning signs where the moral ice is thin and weak, and if they prepare themselves with rescue devices for those who venture too far and fall through the ice into the cold and dark waters of moral disappointment.

In each alternative, every measure should be undertaken to ensure that the contributions of donors and surrogates are gifts, and not sales

of products or services. For this reason, I believe donors and surrogates should be compensated for their actual expenses and nothing more. This will make it more likely that the donations of donors and surrogates will be genuine gifts to infertile couples who need their help. By minimizing or even destroying any financial motive for being a donor or surrogate, the fertility center will fail to appeal to many whose participation would not be consistent with Christian beliefs and values.

Wagners and Hamiltons

All Christians should be able to rejoice with Cindy and Jim Wagner that, thanks to the fertility clinic and to Linda and Bob Hamilton, they will soon have a child to share with their congregation and community. There may be some who glance upon them with the eyes of moral suspicion. But such gestures are unnecessary and inappropriate. Of all people, Christian individuals and institutions should be among those who are able and willing to develop new ways to solve old problems. As they do so they can be sure that the One who works for good in all things is striving to spark their imaginations, refine their understandings, improve their skills, and strengthen their courage.

Some may wonder if the Wagners should spend so much money to become parents. But they can afford it and could spend their money on much worse things. Others may wonder if Cindy and Linda will still be friends after the baby is delivered. But they've been through so much together already that it is doubtful they will become estranged. In any case, we would do well to lessen the likelihood of such problems by supporting them as much as possible instead of criticizing them. Others may wonder if it is appropriate to try so hard to bring another child into the world in view of the population explosion. But only those who have voluntarily chosen not to have children for this reason are morally qualified to ex-

press an opinion on this matter. Still others may suspect that the clinic will discard viable pre-embryos that Cindy and Jim do not need. But they have already contracted with the fertility clinic to donate these to other infertile couples.

Some may wonder if the Wagners and Hamiltons considered the prenatal influence Linda and Bob might have on Cindy and Jim's baby. They did. That's why the two couples spend so much time together these days. All four adults want the baby to be as familiar as possible with Cindy and Jim, and with their way of life, when the delivery occurs. Fortunately, the Wagners and the Hamiltons have very similar beliefs and values.

Others may be curious as to what will happen if divorce or death separates Cindy and Jim before Linda delivers their baby, something no one expects. What then? I don't know. But

Cindy and Jim know. And Linda and Bob know. And their doctors at the fertility clinic know because written advance directives are on file at the medical office that cover these contingencies. The clinic requires this of all the couples it serves.

Not long from now we will dedicate the new babies of our congregation to each other and to the one before whom we are all children. It will be a very special worship service. Linda and Bob Hamilton will be there. Cindy and Jim Wagner will be there. Their friends and relatives will be there. The doctors and nurses from the fertility clinic and from the hospital will be there. And yes, of course, Baby Wagner will be there, too!

I plan to be there. I hope you do, too. It would be too bad to miss a chance to express our gratitude to the Giver of all good gifts!

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Earlier versions of this paper were presented to the Randall Visitors Center Sabbath school class in Loma Linda, California, on April 13, 1991, and to a meeting of the Committee on the Christian View of Human Life of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at Pine Springs Ranch in Mountain Center, California, April 15, 1991. I am thankful to both groups for their spirited but friendly criticism. I am also thankful to Gayle Foster of Loma Linda University's faculty of religion for her cheerful and professional assistance.

2. I am grateful to Doctor Elmar Sakala, a perinatologist at the Loma Linda University School of Medicine, for informing me about Mullerian Aplasia which, according to Mary Louise Baker, ed., *Birth Defects Encyclopedia* (Dover, Mass: Center for Birth Defects Information, 1990), p. 1171 is "congenital absence of the uterus in a 46 xx individual with normal ovarian development and normal female external genitalia."

3. Tertullian, "The Apparel of Women" in R. J. Deferrari, ed., *The Fathers of the Church: A New*

Translation (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959) Vol. 40, p. 118.

4. Augustine, "The Good of Marriage" in R. J. Deferrari, ed., *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1955), Vol. 27, p. 17.

5. Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 44, 45. Emphasis supplied.

6. Thomas A. Shannon and Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Religion and Artificial Reproduction* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), p. 161.

7. Joseph Fletcher, *The Ethics of Genetic Control: Ending Reproductive Roulette* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1988), p. 175.

8. Ramsey, *Fabricated Man: The Ethics of Genetic Control* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 32, 39.

9. I am grateful to Professor Sydney Allen of San Bernardino Valley College for suggesting the use of such a diagram.