

What are Religious Ethical Concerns on Invitro Fertilization?

Miryam DeRosso

Nyack College

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The evolution of modern science has given society a chance to battle situations that are challenged by health, war, or the consequences of everyday choices. Soldiers who have come home with impaled limbs can benefit from electronic prosthetics that give the person a chance to walk or use their arms and hands again. Individuals who have negative health prognostics have a choice to fight the report with newfound medicines, and if it needed, there is intravenous medical equipment that we can use. Many individuals, regardless of personal religious beliefs, view these various interventions offered by modern science as morally right. However, ethically good ethics are ambiguous when the use of Artificial Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) arises, such as Invitro Fertilization (IVF). IVF is controversial and is not accepted by various religious sectors, believing that science is playing the role of God or is acting against the natural order. Therefore, different religious families facing fertility issues battle against the stigma that infertility brings or of the use in considering ARTs. Also, battle against beliefs that imply seeking interventions for the aid of infertility is erroneous and is an act of faithlessness. The view is that children that are a product of ARTs are not part of God's divine plan. These families live a life dictated by these beliefs which place their desires of parenthood under the rug, battle faith, or try to quench their hopes for a family. If these families are asked if they ever taken a Tylenol, seen a medical doctor for antibiotics, had any surgeries, or used other forms of therapeutic interventions designed by science, most would say yes. Therefore, how is preserving life any different when using ARTs than any other medical technological interventions that force religious sectors to deny these types of assistance for infertility. God gives us tools to fulfill His purpose, and we can see this example in the story of Noah, where Noah uses tools to carry on God's plan in building the ark. Noah used his resources to build the ark to fulfill his purpose.

Similarly, the Lord gave humanity a command in the book of Genesis that is to be fruitful and multiply, which can be carried out by the help or tool of ARTs. One thing to keep in mind is that even if in-vitro fertilization is a need for an infertile couple, it does not signify successful results. A family will still require faith as they are undergoing therapeutic intervention for reproduction. For example, in Australia (Loy, 1984), the rate of infertility in couples is 15%, and women undergoing treatment are facing an arduous process. Loy's (1984) work reports how women undergoing fertility treatment through IVF are required to provide urine and blood samples daily during the morning, or afternoon times, or sometimes twice a day. When their ovum is ready for retrieval, then they will have to be admitted and placed under anesthetic while the eggs are retrieved. Once implanted, some women can abort within four weeks; if the couple gets past the six-week window, the prognosis is good. These reports demonstrate the emotional and psychological factors a couple has to endure, and without faith or perseverance, these processes can be detrimental to one's overall mental well-being.

Objections: Usurping the place of God

In vitro Fertilization possesses a controversial method among religious sectors, Roman Catholics (Jones, 2014) state that in selecting the best embryo is assuming the place of God by choosing which embryo lives or dies. A fetus in the moment of conception is a viable person (Clowes, 1995, as cited in Jones, 2014), and in choosing is eliminating the less favorable embryo rights and sentencing them to death. Further, embryos that are frozen allegedly are exposed to harm and deprived of parent-child attachment and gestation (Congregation for doctrine of the faith, 1987, as cited in Jones, 2014). Religion challenges IVF because it views it as a manipulative technique that eliminates the natural order in conceiving between a man and a

woman. It is an interruption to God's design for conception where sexual intercourse is required (Grudem, 2019).

Moreover, Anderson and Walker (2019) conclude that in resorting to IVF treatment versus a more natural therapeutic intervention may not bring a positive testimonial to the Kingdom of God. Besides societal objections on IVF, Klitzman (2018) expresses that religious oppositions are not only a moral issue that a couple endures themselves. Disagreements are assertive and bestowed from those who the couple is close too, such as religious family members, friends, or co-workers. A woman reported that her boss asked her if she did not think she was tampering with the will of God, this woman's answer was no and proceeded to say that if God did not want her to have children, He would have made her sterile and would have been born without ovaries (Klitzman, 2018). Another woman vocalizes on how she has been told by people that if God wanted her to get pregnant, it would happen and when it happens, it will happen on its own without the use of ARTs (Klitzman, 2018).

Furthermore, due to ill information and lack of research on medical topics, religious oppositions can motivate a couple to forgo any treatment or medical advice. An example of this is noted in the practice of physicians to advise the expecting Jewish parents to be to take the Ashkenazi panel test that tracks any genetic mutations that mainly emerges in the biology of Ashkenazi Jews. Some orthodox patients call their Rabbi asking for consent in proceeding with the panel, and sadly, their Rabbi's say no (Klitzman 2018).

Other Responses to Religious Oppositions

Roman Catholics, in attempts to be up-to-date with contemporary views Jones (2014) cited Shannon and Walter (2003) that in "light of contemporary scientific concepts" (p. 151), an embryo is considered a person within two to three weeks into gestation. It is when an embryo

should retain some form of human rights and protection versus the first moment of conception. It allows embryos for disposal without religious concerns.

Through the lens of Protestants such as Donald Mackay (1977), as cited in Jones (2014) is a neuroscientist and Christian thinker who had a different theological view and did not see IVF as a method to play God instead used a biblical approach to support humanity's responsibility in procreating. Mackay believed that we could come one with God and use the gift of biomedical advances in a wisely and responsible way to procreate. God does not dispute these technical advances in the bible; God's disapproval arises when technological achievements are for self-glory or pride. Furthermore, IVF reverences life, unlike mothers who have an abortion, in-vitro fertilization is a choice by families who desire whole heartily in having children. These embryos will be taken care of by professional technicians and doctors who will protect the rights of the embryos and women (Cook, 1988).

Future Research

Overall, inside the scope of religion IVF is still an on-going controversial concern, ethically religious advocates views IVF as a negative resource that can give power to scientist to identify embryos and grant life. Such resources provoke fear that it will be misuse and abuse. However, concerns such as the future vitality of the frozen embryos, to protect the rights of the embryos, the family grants permission to freeze their embryos and signs a consent form. That informs of the future of the embryos when the death of a parent or a divorce occurs.

Moreover, at the start of good intentions for the development of ARTs, further progress was sought out for more complicated cases such as women unable to produce ovum and will need a donor. At this point, the only genetic heritage that is transmitted is of the husbands and not of the mother. It will be the ancestral heritage of the donor's mother that is transferred to this

child, further, with the limited research on the future outcomes of test-tube children produced by ovum donors. I would be curious to understand if there are any emotional or psychological challenges that these families undergo. Would parents, later on, feel emotionally troubled on their decision on attaining a donor ovum and if it affects a child's identity development. In this instance, whether a couple belongs to a religious sector that is for or against the use of ARTs, it is an impediment that families learn when to inform their children that they are products of ARTs. Education is required for appropriate language when passing forward this type of information to their children. Words are powerful and require responsible awareness.

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