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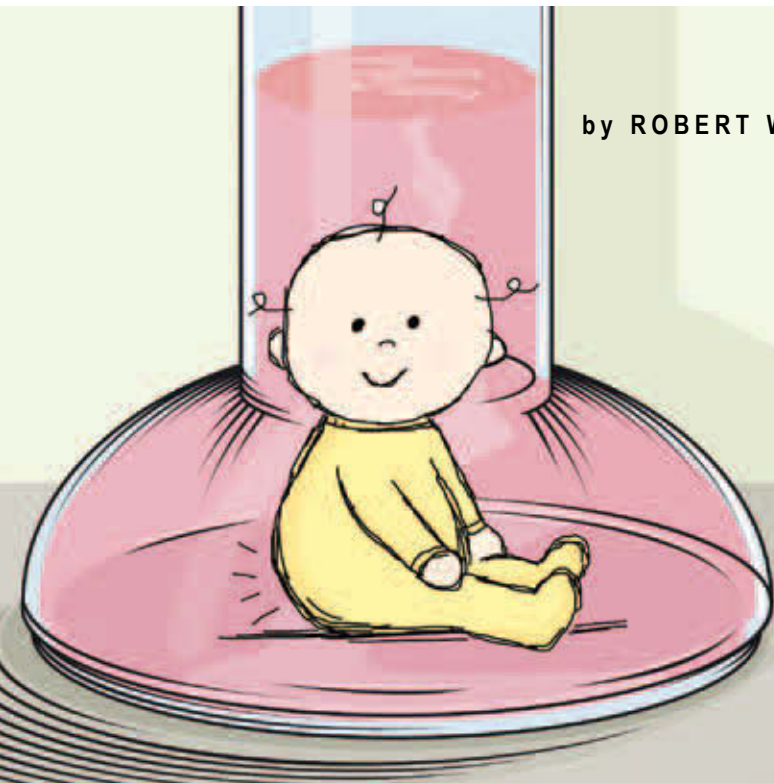
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SHAPED BY GOD

by ROBERT W. WEISE



Are embryos in petri dishes really human?

We are made and shaped by God physically. We are human beings from the union of maternal and paternal genetic material delivered by the ovum (egg) and sperm to form the one-cell embryonic human being called a zygote. In addition, we are made and shaped by God to live the life of Christ in this world as Christians by water, His Word and faith through Holy Baptism. To be a fully human being, a new creation in Christ is to be righteous in His sight, and so we are both a created creature and a newly created child, made and shaped by God through His Word.

We see this outlined in the explanation of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses." Dr. Martin Luther even writes on the creation of mankind:

But He Himself shapes him [Adam] according to His image as if he were God's partner and one who would enjoy God's rest. So Adam is a dead and inactive clod before he is formed by the Lord. God takes that clod and forms from it a most beautiful creature, which has a share in immortality . . . and, as Moses states later, makes the woman out of the rib of the man. Such was the origin of man.

But what about today? The burgeoning science of assisted reproductive technology, including more than 28 reproductive ways to make a baby (this excludes God's Word in Genesis "to be fruitful and multiply"), the freezing and thawing of human embryos, as well as embryonic stem cell research, continues to trivialize the tiniest and weakest amongst us: the embryonic human being. But what should we as Christians consider when we discuss the relationship of parenting to assisted reproductive technology, especially as it results in the freezing and thawing of embryonic human beings and their ultimate death?

God's Word affirms that the child in the womb is a human being, a person in continuous development (Ex. 21:22; Job 31:15; Is. 44:2; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 51:5). God knows the child in the womb as a human being. This becomes more profound and compelling within the context of the incarnation of God who became like one of us from His incarnate conception and birth (Luke 1:31; the Nicene Creed).

From conception through birth and beyond, parents are to raise



As baptized Christians, we are neighbor to the weakest amongst us—the embryonic human being who is shaped by God physically and declared righteous in His sight at his or her Baptism.

their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord (Eph. 6:1–3; Deut. 6:1–10). Parenting begins when they learn that the mother is bearing a human person created by God. After the child is born or adopted, the parents will bring this child to the waters of Holy Baptism. This baptized child of God is a new creature in Christ with the sure and certain hope of living eternally in the new creation.

But when a husband and wife or a female parent goes through in vitro fertilization (IVF) or Direct Egg Sperm Injection (DESI) into an ovum (egg), the resulting embryonic human being is graded as to its viability for

implantation. If the human embryo is not viable to the naked eye, the embryo will be destroyed. If the embryo is viable, he/she will be implanted, with the extra or spare fertilized embryos (4–7 day old) frozen at -321°F in liquid nitrogen. Right now, there are more than 500,000 unwanted, homeless embryonic human beings remaining in liquid nitrogen. These may be thawed and used for embryonic stem cell research, resulting in their destruction.

You cannot parent a frozen embryonic human being. When frozen embryonic human beings are thawed, 7 percent to 57 percent will die. Again, this is not caring for the least of the tiniest human beings amongst us who are God's creatures with a body and soul. Human beings, regardless of their stage of development or age, should not be frozen, but we should instead "defend them," according to the Eighth Commandment. They should be either returned to the mother's womb, given up for adoption (www.nightlight.org/snowflake-embryo-adoption) or remain frozen. To remove the liquid nitrogen bath of the frozen embryos may be compared to human embryonic euthanasia.

Parents who enter the world of assisted reproductive technology that results in adult humans determining which embryonic human being lives and which dies, and which will be implanted and which will be frozen, need to pray and reflect on their parental responsibility to raise their child in the instruction and discipline of the Lord Jesus Christ. Parents are called by their God-given vocation to nurture their children from conception onward. The gift of human creation by the Creator God-Man, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, compels Christians to care for these little ones at all times. As baptized Christians, we are neighbor to the weakest amongst us—the embryonic human being who is shaped by God physically and declared righteous in His sight at his or her Baptism. ☼