

SURROGACY AND THE CHURCH: A RELIGIO-ETHICAL APPRAISE

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Abstract

This paper looks at surrogacy using the religio-ethical model, and provides a Christian theological analysis of the topic with special emphasis on the Anglican tradition. It is therefore the desire of this research to assess surrogacy inasmuch as it is supported by biblical teachings, ethical reasoning, and the church teachings, and in the process examines the issues of the marriage, family and human dignity. The current study uses qualitative research to conduct a review of the theological literature, official Church documents, and current ethical literature to give a detailed evaluation of surrogacy. It derives from the general life of the Anglican Church which has always striven to achieve a middle road; a middle road that is neither too doctrinally rigorous, nor overly sensitively pastoral. It is agreed that surrogacy legitimizes multiple parenthood, injustices towards economically vulnerable women and the sale of human entity. However, most objections regard commercial surrogacy while few Anglican views can approve altruistic surrogacies in cases meeting the principles of compassion, justice, and holding the reverence to human dignity. It is for this reason that the study suggests that the Church should encourage legislation that offers protection to surrogate mothers and the children that are born and come under the care of the intended parent/s; the Church should encourage the adoption of children as a rightful and truly responsible system. Moreover, as society continues to grapple with the moral effects of technological progress and as new types of surrogacy arrangements emerge as possible, more and still more theological reflection and ecumenical conversation are required. This paper seeks to advocate for a vindication of surrogacy that is inclusive of sympathy, but not of complacency, for the Church to balance the scriptural agenda with social justice and welfare of the people of God.

Keywords: surrogacy, Christian moral theory, Anglican ethos, the sanctity of life, human dignity, practical support, theological reflection, assisted reproductive technologies (ART).

Introduction

Surrogacy can be defined as a business arrangement in which a woman for a fee agrees to get pregnant for another person or couple. It has been fostered by rising social and legal acceptance of the practice most especially where couples and individuals are facing infertility, intended to parent a child of the same sex, and with enhanced technologies in

ART (Harrison, 2022). However, surrogacy is still not allowed, or at least it is not popular, particularly in religious communities. Being members of a Christian society, they receive the ideas regarding surrogacy as a sin that violates the scriptural and doctrinal values concerning the creation, marriage, and family. The current paper aims at discussing surrogacy using the lens of Christian theology and assessing its conformity with the standards of the Christian Church.

Biblical Perspectives on Procreation and Family

From a biblical standpoint, procreation is a divine mandate, as outlined in Genesis 1:28, saying “be fruitful and multiply”. According to this perspective, childbirth is regarded not as a biological function, but as God’s cooperation with a woman (John Paul II, 1981). Traditional Christian interpretations emphasize that children are to be born within the marital covenant, which reflects God's design for human relationships (Genesis 2:24). This framework inarguably gets clouded by surrogacy since it brings in third parties into the process of procreation. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 expresses the holiness of the body because it is said that it is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Some people’s critics have claimed that surrogacy puts a price on the child and the surrogate’s body thus deeming this sanctity violated. Hence, from the theological point of view, surrogacy violates life as the divine gift granted to people under certain ethical and moral conditions.

Ethical Concerns Surrounding Surrogacy

On the matter of surrogacy there are numerous ethical dilemmas. One of the key tenants of Christian ethics is the inherent value of every person and this; the above process may well erode. Surrogacy is referred to as “womb renting” because it is a business, and there are issues of exploitation for example, economically vulnerable women who engage in surrogacy because they have to (Purdy, 2021). This raises important questions of justice, autonomy as well as questions to do with the ethics of the surrogacy contract. The last important issue is connected to the fragmentation of motherhood. In surrogacy, biological mother, a woman who carries the baby, and a mother who will raise the child may be different people, thus raising questions about the child’s identity and proper mother figure (Kaczor, 2020). Theologically, this dysfunctionality is widely regarded as an opposite to the integrated and connatural concept of parenthood based on Scripture.

The Catholic Church's Position

The Catholic Church as we know condemns surrogacy in very strong terms. The Church perceives surrogacy as the violation of the dignity of the marriage and the act of procreation and considers it a prerogative of the marriage union (Catechism of the

Catholic Church, 1997, para 2376). The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1987) in *Donum Vitae* says that surrogacy is exercising the God like sovereignty over the process of creation of life, and treats the child as an object of contract. This position has been based on natural law ethical system that recognizes the unity of the unitive and procreative values of marriage.

The Anglican Perspective on Surrogacy

The Anglican tradition usually tries to investigate and mediate between theological realities on the one hand, and the lives of people and the challenges of modern moral issues on the other. Regarding surrogacy Anglican opinions differ significantly as it is in the case with almost any other topic concerning the Anglican Communion. Where some Anglicans have suspicions of or outright opposition to surrogacy on grounds of theology and ethics, others take a more empathetic and contextual view of the positive possibilities of surrogacy within a framework of Christian justice, care, and love.

Theological Principles Guiding the Anglican Response

1. Sanctities of Life and God's Gift of Creation

The Anglican tradition emphasizes the sanctity of life as a gift from God, reflecting the Creator's image (Genesis 1:27). This principle forms the basis for most of the ethical arguments surrounding ART especially surrogacy. From this point of view, human beings are created at conception, and the process of reproduction is seen as the act of creation between God and people. On the positive side, surrogacy could be viewed as a way of assisting barren couples satisfy their desire to start a family but problems emerge when the practice seems to commercialize life or divorce conception from its socially prescribed place within marriage.

2. Marriage, Parenthood, and Family Purity

In Anglican teaching the sacrament of marriage is a covenant that is to be expressed in the act of procreation (Book of Common Prayer, 1662). When surrogacy involves third party contributors, either genetic or gestational, ethical issues arise as to the sanctity of marriage and the roles of biology, gestation and social parenthood. It also revealed that Anglicans still uphold the regular and traditional nuclear family. Such separations are generally approached with some degree of skepticism within structures owing to the risk of disintegration of the family nucleus. But more liberal Anglican voices could understand the modern challenges of family and pay attention to the needs of the child and the environment in which he or she grows up.³ Human Dignity and the Risk of

Exploitation caution, citing the potential for fragmentation of the familial unit. However, more progressive Anglican voices may recognize the complexities of modern family dynamics and focus on the wellbeing of the child and the relational context in which they are raised.

3. *Human Dignity and the Risk of Exploitation*

The Anglicans have in the past especially within the context of the social order been proponents of human dignity. This tradition of commercialization of surrogacy has important ethical considerations; more so where poor women are used as vessels in surrogacy contracts, especially in the developing world (Church of England, 2011). The Church of England's respondents believe that surrogacy should be addressed in strict compliance with the rights and freedoms of the surrogate which must not be violated, and the key point is that it is prohibited to get profit out of it through coercion.⁴ The Principle of Pastoral Sensitivity's with caution, citing the potential for fragmentation of the familial unit. However, more progressive Anglican voices may recognize the complexities of modern family dynamics and focus on the wellbeing of the child and the relational context in which they are raised.

4. *Human Dignity and the Risk of Exploitation*

Anglicans have historically been strong advocates for human dignity, particularly in contexts involving vulnerable populations. The commercialization of surrogacy raises significant ethical concerns within this tradition, especially in cases where economically disadvantaged women are exploited in surrogacy arrangements, particularly in developing countries (Church of England, 2011). Many Anglicans argue that surrogacy should be carefully regulated to ensure that the dignity and autonomy of the surrogate mother are respected, and that no coercion or exploitation occurs.

5. *The Principle of Pastoral Sensitivity*

Ethical concerns of Anglican Church more and more tend to focus on the pastoral care and compassion to the suffering individuals and families. Childlessness remains one of the most intimate and painful experiences of many couples; and seeing surrogacy from the perspective of the Anglican tradition, one can pinpoint the need to accompany those who are suffering. A pastoral approach does not equal endorsing all types of surrogacies but respecting people and their decision-making process and helping them with prayer, counsel, and discernment and protecting the sacredness of human life.

Official Anglican Statements and Commentary

While the Anglican Communion does not have a single, unified position on surrogacy, insights can be drawn from broader Anglican perspectives on assisted reproductive technologies:

1. Lambeth Conference Resolutions

The Lambeth Conference, an assembly of bishops from around the Anglican Communion that takes place every ten years, has dealt with reproductive technologies obliquely through resolutions on marriage, family and the sanctity of life. While the conference does not directly address surrogacy there is sufficient material to consider surrogacy through the lens of the conference's focus on the sanctity of marriage and the need to safeguard the vulnerable.

2. Church of England Reports

The church of England has issued reports that tackle issues to do with ethics in surrogacy and assisted reproduction. For example, *Some Issues in Human Fertilization and Embryology* report (Church of England, 2011) recognizes the possibility of the positive outcome of surrogacy for childless couples, but at the same time considers the dangers of commercialization and use of women's bodies. This report stresses the need to guarantee the dignity of all those who engage in surrogacy and those who will be affected by it – the surrogate mother and the child.

3. Regional Anglican Responses

It means that the reaction to surrogacy can also differ depending on the region and culture within the Anglican Communion. For instance, churches in the developed economies where there are better chances of the surrogate practice being given a legal touch are more likely to allow it under ethical standards. Anglican churches of the Global South may be likely to take the more stringent stance because of the issues of exploitation and commercialization of life.

Ethical Challenges in the Anglican Context

1. Fragmentation of Parenthood

Like other Christians, several Anglicans worry about the breakdown of motherhood in surrogacy cases. These distinctions give rise to relational and ethical questions, which serve as the focus of this text. The theology of Anglicans, who maintain the principle of the oneness of related individuals in marriage and family, may regard such a split as undesirable, of course, there are two different types of surrogacies, that is the commercial type of surrogacy and the altruistic type of surrogacy.

2. Commercial vs. Altruistic Surrogacy

Most of the Anglicans differentiate between the compensated surrogacy, which involves payment of cash and the unpaid surrogacy that is done out of compassion and with a view to assisting others. It can be suggested that commercial surrogacy is going to be criticized for the reasons of the probable exploitation of women, whereas altruistic surrogacy will be considered to be much less ethical, given that it will occur with respect for the medical surrogate's decision and her voluntary consent.

3. The Welfare of the Child

Surrogacy is one of the most debated issues among Anglicans where huge emphasis is placed on the moral duty to protect the interests of children born through arrangements. This encompasses guaranteeing that the child receives a permanent and affectionate family and that they accept their identity and the source of the child. As with many contentious issues related to surrogacy, questions about biological parentage access respond to Anglican emphases on relational integrity and human dignity.

Anglican Pastoral and Ethical Recommendations

1. Facilitating Reflective Ethical Judging

In surrogacy the Anglican Church supports prayerful reflection and ethical decision making. Therefore, to the extent that couples cannot bear children, they should be encouraged to adopt – as this is a Christian thing to do because it means caring for those who cannot fend for themselves.

2. Civil Society for Justice and Regulation

Anglicans have support regulation of surrogacy but they consider it regrettable at the same time they argue that it should be made legal but under regulation. This includes campaigning for equal pay for surrogate mothers, and women who act as such for other individuals or couples and at the same time protecting the children's rights of the surrogate mothers.

3. Pastoral Care for the Sick: An Outline

Understanding the great spiritual turmoil that people going for surrogacies go through, Anglican clergy and pastoral caregivers are encouraged to embrace the people without necessarily endorsing the vice. This entails meeting places for constructive communication, theological thinking, and faithful counseling.

Anglican approach to surrogacy is typical for the tradition that attempts to maintain the respect to doctrinal teachings and the care for people on the same level. In general, there is no agreed Anglican position on surrogacy but the Anglican tradition is replete with

sound ethical principles that include the respect for life, family and the Surrogate. Ahead of it, the Anglican Church must stay committed to reflecting on the ethical and theological implications of surrogacy and providing the faithful teaching that takes into account both the Bible and the life experience of today.

Protestant Perspectives

The aspects of surrogacy among Protestant denominations are much more varied because Protestantism as a whole has quite a diverse theology. Some denominations have similar views to the Roman Catholic Church and stress the importance of holiness of natural marriage and child bearing while others argue that surrogacy is useful when it comes to easing suffering of people. For example, while some evangelical groups may view surrogacy as an act of kindness for childless couples and agree to its practice as long as it is based on justice, honesty and human respect for the surrogate mother and child (Meilaender, 2013).

A Balanced Ethical Appraisal

Ethically and religiously, surrogacy is problematic yet, it also holds a potential for the Church. Of course, it raises very high ethical questions and challenges on one side, especially when implemented as an exploitation of the helpless and devaluation of the value of human life. On the other hand, it creates a chance for Christians to think more deeply about how the emergent technologies should be approached with love. The difference is to be found in the ability to identify intervention that respects the individual person and God's word at the same time.

As applied theological ethicists, it is recommended that surrogacy-related patients and clients should receive love, understanding, and direction rather than condemnation. For instance, infertile couples need social support in dealing with moral and spiritual issues (Volf, 2015). The Church is to remain a voice of both verbal and written prophetic rebuke and encouragement, to provide an ethical vision for reproduction that is both scriptural and practical.

Future Directions for the Church and Surrogacy

With surrogacy becoming more and more accepted in the modern world, the Church feels the necessity of developing its theological reflection of the moral and social aspects of reproductive technologies. There are several issues which need further research to remain both biblical and gospel-oriented as well as pastorally relevant.

1. Creating a Complete Framework of Pastoral Care

The Church must provide clear and sensitive pastoral policies on moral and spiritual issues that families and individuals who involve themselves in surrogacy. This encompasses supplying clergy and pastoral counselor with theological materials and or/ Counseling tools to offer support. Equal importance should be laid on recognition of the dignity of all the involved parties such as children and surrogates.

2. Lobbying and advocacy groups call for ethical legislation.

It is equally important for churches to work hard in ensuring that good laws are passed in favor of surrogates, the commissioning parents and the children. For instance, the law should provide for protection of economically vulnerable female individuals, particularly in transnational surrogacy, while at the same time grants children rights to information about their parentage. Advocacy is an effective tool to promote reform and change in a society enabling justice and compassion because of its role in the area of reproductive ethics.

3. Participation in the Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue

Surrogacy is a well-claimed procedure internationally, and its ethical and cultural differences have different impacts. The several moral issues surrounding surrogacy can be resolved through ecumenical and interfaith dialogues that the Christian churches need to foster now. The strategy of cooperation can promote the common vision of the sanctity of life and the permissiveness of reproductive procedures without violating multicultural and theosophical pluralism.

4. Fostering Other Forms in Family Formation

Of course, surrogacy is one way of dealing with infertility, whereas the Church has always endorsed adoption as the morally right course of action. Increased focus on adoption as the way to create a family could help couples struggling with infertility to get theologically and ethically sensible solution. Furthermore, churches could provide funding to ministries as regards adoptive families and combat controversies connected with adoption in some cultures.

5. Theological Analysis of Technology in Somatic Procreation

The recent developments in artificial reproduction technologies demand continued theological analysis of relations between these breakthroughs and the intended divine plan for human beings. The Church may have to answer questions like whether it is moral to use a technology such as artificial intelligence in the selection of embryo, whether genetic manipulation is allowable, and whether reproductive services are a form of business. Such reflections will help Christians to have a resourceful biblical understanding to deal with the moral dilemmas of the contemporary reproductive practices.

The Call to Compassionate Witness

Finally, the Church is given a task of being a compassionate witness to the gospel in response to issues of surrogacy. This means repudiating practices that devalue human personhood or distort the biblical vision of family and at the same time loving and accepting our brothers and sisters who face infertility and other reproductive issues. Jesus' ministry exemplifies the importance of upholding truth with love, offering hope to the marginalized, and affirming the value of every human being as a child of God (John 1:14; Matthew 25:40). In this way the Church can offer the counter-cultural vision of redemption of the body that is a vision of human fulfillment that affirms God's purposes for human life, marriage and sexuality while at the same time being appropriately conversant with the postmodern context.

Final Thoughts

It will also be seen that ethical issues arising from surrogacy for most of the clients are not a mere exercise of philosophical standards of right and wrong or theological doctrines but real-life issues of moral dilemmas that any vulnerable circumstantial beings have to solve. Therefore, it becomes the Church's responsibility and task to provide direction that is gospel-based, and relevant to today's ethical norms. By keeping on reflecting, lobbying and caring pastorally, the Church can play an important role in promoting a culture that does not disregard human life and is not cheapening human reproduction.

In conclusion one can note that surrogacy is one of the actual and burning, which requires a thorough and thoroughpins analysis of the Church. On the one hand, the Church must remain loyal to its doctrine; on the other hand, it has to offer understanding and compassion in response to situations that make people think about surrogacy. By dealing with this problem with faith, ethical, and pastoral care considerations in mind, the Church is able to add a helpful and supportive voice to the on-going discussion of the moral issues of surrogacy.

Conclusion

Surrogacy is still a highly debated issue in Christian ethics which leads to crucial questions about what it means to be creating a life, what constitutes family, and what duty do parents have? The Church's teachings also help give a good foundation from which to argue against the practice while remaining sensitive to the individuals who turn to surrogacy due to despair or for the pursuit of hope. The Church will have to grow with reproductive technology but it has to do this cautiously, upholding the doctrine, but it must do this while being sympathetic to human dignity in all its forms.

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