

ABSTRACT  
TOWARDS RELATIONSHIP: A TRINITARIAN MODEL  
IN DEFENSE OF HUMAN EMBRYO ADOPTION

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In the 1987 document, *Donum vitae*, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) addressed bioethical questions on new reproductive technologies, including fate of “spare” embryos from *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) cycles. The CDF concluded that these embryos were subject to an “absurd fate” with “no licit means” of resolution. In a follow-up document in 2008, *Dignitas personae*, the CDF addressed the question of “spare” embryos again, with the possibility of “prenatal adoption”, whereby genetically unrelated parents adopt embryos to gestate, birth, and raise them as their own. While deemed praiseworthy, the CDF determined that embryo adoption suffers from problems relating to the rights and goods of marriage. This juxtaposition, of right to life versus rights of spouses, set the stage for the present debate on embryo adoption. No solution has been reached with these opposing sets of rights.

This project charts a new course in discussing embryo adoption. Rather than relying on the rights-based arguments that have dominated Catholic debates, this work recenters the argument on theological anthropology, thereby introducing a relationship-based argument in favor of embryo adoption. This work takes as its central argument that because human persons are made in the image and likeness of a triune God—a God who *is* relationship—we are called to imitate this relational God in our relationships, including embryos. This relational model considers love as the missing component in the debates on embryo adoption.

The trinitarian argument proposed in this work is based on the theology of Bernard Lonergan, as furthered by Robert M. Doran. The work concludes that trinitarian love, as expressed in graced human love, is the necessary addition to the debate on embryo adoption. The four-point hypothesis of the Trinity is the foundational trinitarian theology. Touching on a theological theory of history, a study of theological anthropology, and a theology of grace, this trinitarian theology provides a framework for healing in history. This healing includes addressing all situations of injustice, including “spare” embryos. This work therefore applies Lonergan’s theology, furthering Lonergan studies, but also moves the conversation forward on embryo adoption.