***The Fertility & Gender:
Issues in Reproductive and Sexual Ethics***

edited by Helen Watt

Oxford: Anscombe Bioethics Centre, 2011. 220 pp.

St. Paul admonishes the Colossians (and us) “to stop lying to one another” (Col 3:9). Informing this Pauline admonition is the clear understanding that to lie, to misrepresent, or to distort is to subvert the two-pronged mission of Christ—to reveal the Truth who is God, so all rational creatures might live in Its Light.

A recent *New York Times* article—“One Sperm Donor, 150 Offspring” (September 5, 2011)—illustrates just how natural it is for humans to reject and, more, to want to publicly expose, lies. This piece chronicles the mounting outrage of a woman who eventually discovers that the same anonymous donor who fathered her son also spawned 149 additional offspring (with more on the way). Addressing the anonymity issue, the woman asks: “What is in the best interests of the child to be born?” and “Is it fair to bring a child into the world who will have no access to knowing about one half of their [sic] genetics, medical history, and ancestry?” Referencing the insoluble dilemma of her son’s 149 half-siblings, she pleads: “How do you make connections with so many siblings? What does family mean to these children?”

Clearly this woman, and the many she represents, have yet to confront the principal “lie” of so-called assisted reproductive technology (ART) (i.e., that human conception does not demand, define, and activate the act of sexual union between persons attempting to conceive), but they are on the right track. We can only hope that uncovering the falsehood of anonymous sperm

donors will lead them to uncover another, and another.

Enter *Fertility & Gender*. This volume of collected papers could be just the ticket to assist these women and other thoughtful persons in their search for a sound philosophical guide toward treatment options in reproductive medicine or sexual counseling that are honestly good for them, their children, their relationships, and society. Each essay meticulously demonstrates the truth that the Roman Catholic Church’s “small-c” catholic norms derived from the nature of the human person, the dignity of procreation, and the dignity of human life provide good solutions: for infertile couples seeking moral treatment for their infertility, for couples of normal fertility desirous of conforming their procreative plans to God’s plan for the use of sexuality within marriage, and for persons who, despite unease with their gender, seek chaste ways to pursue sexual fulfillment.

As a women’s health-care consultant, I am pleased to be able to recommend to my clients this single volume of papers that uses Christian anthropology with its personalist philosophy to alert them to the mammoth, depersonalizing, glacial mass beneath the anonymous-sperm-donor tip of the ART-iceberg. To my mind, the fact that the majority of this volume’s contributing authors—Mary Geach, Luke Gormally, Dermot Grenham, David Paton, Helen Watt—are Brits only increases the credibility of their respective analyses. Who better to understand the ferocity of this technolog-

The Linacre Quarterly 79(2) (May 2012): 245–246.

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0024-3639/2012/7902-0010 \$.30/page.

ical storm than someone who hails from the land of IVF's grandfathers, Drs. Robert Edwards and Patrick Steptoe? Who better to admonish against ART's falsehoods than folks who, though living in the dragon's belly and surrounded by IVF specialists hell-bent on exporting its latest techniques clothed in the dress of "medical progress," refuse to compromise the truth about human sexuality, procreation, and marriage?

It is a bit of a truism to say "no single volume attempting a Roman Catholic analysis of reproductive technology can say everything." But I believe this volume does suffer from one important omission. *Fertility & Gender* fails to provide readers with some very important information: there are

moral alternatives to IVF: the use of methods of natural family planning (NFP) to achieve pregnancy. These are available, clinically tested, and medically effective in both treating the roots of human infertility, and in helping the infertile couple achieve a pregnancy within their own acts of love. For example, the Creighton Model FertilityCare System and the infertility protocols of NaProTECHNOLOGY wed intelligent medicine to sound ethics.

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