

International Adoption: A Window into the Radical Movement to Change the World

Julia Bottoms

A Senior Thesis

Submitted to Veritas Scholars Academy

Mr. Davis

April 9, 2019

“Not flesh of my flesh
 Nor bone of my bone
 Yet still miraculously my own.
 Never forget for a single minute,
 You didn’t grow under my heart
 But in it.”¹

Shrouded in beauty, yet filled with flaws, an event of joy sprouted from pain - an adoption. Contrary to popular belief, adoption is not a perfect story with butterflies and rainbows; as one commentator said, it is “rooted and founded in tragedy.”² Parents die, siblings starve, and social stigmas persist. For the majority of the time, birthparents do want to keep their children, yet tragedy, social unacceptance, and poverty strike, leaving them with no alternatives. Thus, other people have a unique opportunity to do the radical. However, in today’s schools teachers promote the survival of the fittest, emphasizing the need to take care of oneself. Adoption contradicts this entirely. Instead of allowing the weak and disabled to die, adoption takes those children a survivalist would call worthless and makes them belong. Adoption is more than giving a child a last name or standing out in a family photo. Adoption is taking the rejected, poor, and hurting and enfolding them in love. This opportunity is one unique to Christians as God has commanded the church to take care of the orphans and widows. Therefore, Christians

¹Friends in Adoption. “Adoption Poem by Fleur Conkling Heyliger.” <https://www.friendsinadoption.org/adoption-quotes-poems/adoption-poem-by-fleur-conkling-heylige>.

² Dawn Davenport, “The Child Catchers: Criticism of the Orphan Care Movement.” *Creating a Family*, podcast audio, March 7, 2013, <https://creatingafamily.org/adoptioncategory/child-catchers-criticism-orphan-care-movement/>.

should approach adoption, not as a way to be earn righteousness, but as an act of obedience. One of the first examples of this obedience was not carried out by a Christian, but by a pagan.

When most Christians consider the life of Moses, they remember the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, the Ten Commandments, or the Israelites' journey to the promised land. However, few meditate on the significance of Moses' incredible beginnings and the means God used to grow him. As the book of Exodus relates, Pharaoh decreed that all Hebrew male babies born were to be killed. In an act of courage and love, Moses' parents hid their son, eventually floating him down the Nile River in hopes of keeping him safe. Exodus continues to tell how Pharaoh's daughter found Moses, asked a Hebrew mother to care for him, and requested that he be returned to her when he was older. Exodus 2:10 concludes, "When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, 'Because,' Pharaoh's daughter said, 'I drew him out of the water'."³ Moses' rescue is more than a touching story; his life displays the power of adoption.

While this is not the method adoptive parents use today, regulated adoption only became a reality in 1851. Up until that point, adoptions were almost entirely private arrangements where white parents sought healthy white babies to blend in with their own families. Regrettably, parents were not obligated to tell their child of his origin. More concerning was that parents could use their adopted children for labor purposes without the fear of prosecution. However, when Massachusetts passed the 1851 Adoption of Children Act, it ensured the priority of the child's welfare over the parents' interests. This principle became the foundation for modern adoption.

³ Exodus 2:10 (English Standard Version).

Through subsequent years, adoption supporters formed organizations, and legislators passed bills to protect the adoptees. Up until the late 1900s, evangelical Christians were involved in the adoption process, mainly by founding organizations and orphanages. Still, adoption in evangelical Christian circles became a new focal point when a couple from Oregon adopted eight Korean War orphans in 1955. The couple, already with a large family, explained that they felt God calling them and knew that adopting the orphans would be doing God's work. This story inspired other Christians, leading to the church's widespread emphasis on orphan ministry.

Despite smiling faces and optimistic news stories, the contemporary process of adoption is teeming with controversy. Everyone in the adoption world agrees that children being considered for adoption need help, but experts and parents alike disagree on the best solution for those children. Supporters of the Pro Birth Family view believe that the best option in any circumstance is keeping the family together at all costs. Concerned United Birthparents argues that in order to know who they are, children must know their birthfamilies and origins. Similarly, Kathryn Joyce, a journalist specializing in the adoption controversies, describes the implications of neglecting the birthfamily, “Adoption is often described as a 'win-win' solution – for the child in need of a home and for adoptive parents longing for a son or a daughter to raise. However, in the fuller equation adoption is too often a zero-sum game, in which the happiness of one family comes at the expense of another...”⁴

Joyce does not disregard the plight of orphans, but chooses to emphasize the regret and guilt birthmothers experience for the rest of their lives. In her book, *The Child Catchers*, Joyce shares numerous stories of their devastation. In every interview, the birthmother regretted placing her child for

⁴ Kathryn Joyce, *The Child Catchers: Rescue, Trafficking, and the New Gospel of Adoption* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2013).

adoption. While she openly recognizes birthmothers' pain, psychology professor Rebecca J. Compton stresses the significance of a healthy environment in a child's development. In her book on the psychological benefits of adoption, she writes, "The stable, supportive environments of family homes have an enormous positive impact on development, allowing children who suffered adversity early in life the opportunity to dramatically make up lost ground physically, cognitively, and emotionally."⁵

The implication of a child in an institution is that their family environment was inadequate, dangerous, or nonexistent, so Compton argues that adoption is the best solution. Granted, both sides believe keeping families intact is ideal theoretically; yet, Pro International Adoption advocates believe togetherness can require too many risks, some of which could endanger the child.

Still, Pro Birth Family proponents highlight a different danger to which adopted children are exposed: loss of culture. Although the point about culture appears to be insignificant, Mateo Cruz explains how losing his Guatemalan heritage ruined his life. After being adopted as an infant, Cruz later suffered racism from his adoptive father, his classmates, and his community. Even as an adult, Cruz lacked the acceptance he desired from his own Latino community. Summarizing his experience, he relates, "There is a unique complexity for anyone living between identities, between different worlds. We are aliens: Our existence is both suspect and intimate. We know that nothing is black or white, good or evil. Each of our stories is different and folded in the complexity of love and hatred, fear and safety, newness and loss, and privilege and racism."⁶ Heartbroken over losing his culture and angry at his adoptive mother for causing it, Cruz abandoned his adoptive mother in hopeless pursuit of his cultural identity.

⁵ Rebecca J. Compton, *Adoption Beyond Borders* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁶ Mateo Cruz, "International Adoptions Result in Discrimination" In *International Adoptions*, edited by Margaret Haerens (Farmington Hills, Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2011) 111-17.

While Montgomery and Powell openly acknowledge the alienation most adoptees feel, they challenge the argument as a significant reason to oppose international adoption. Citing their own experience as adoptive parents, they expound that, “When children are adopted out of a country or out of an ethnic group, it's the adults who feel harmed, not the kids...it seems more a matter of national embarrassment.”⁷ Thus, despite observing the loss adoptees experience, they conclude that the overwhelming benefits of adoption surpass that loss.

Although most professionals and parents involved in the adoption debate are fully convinced institutions negatively affect children, Kathryn Whetten reports otherwise. Director of the Center for Health Policy at Duke University, Whetten was part of a team that performed an extensive study of institutions across the world and discovered that, contrary to popular belief, institutions do not necessarily harm the child. The team says that, “These findings contradict the hypothesis that group home placement universally adversely affects child wellbeing. Without substantial improvements in and support for family settings, the removal of institutions, broadly defined, would not significantly improve child wellbeing and could worsen outcomes of children who are moved from a setting where they are doing relatively well to a more deprived setting.”⁸ Essentially, institutions should be considered on a case by case basis, instead of making sweeping generalizations. She concludes, “We are seeing children thriving in institutions. Institutions are not so bad. Community life can be very hard.”⁹

⁷ Mark Montgomery and Irene Powell, *Saving International Adoption: An Argument from Economics and Personal Experience* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018).

⁸ Whetten, Kathryn, Jan Ostermann, Brian W. Pence, Rachel A. Whetten, Lynne C. Messer, Sumedha Ariely, Karen O'Donnell et al. “Three-Year Change in the Wellbeing of Orphaned and Separated Children in Institutional and Family-Based Care Settings in Five Low- and Middle-Income Countries.” PLoS ONE 9(8): e104872. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0104872>.

⁹ Denise Grady. “Study Suggests Orphanages Are Not So Bad.” Last modified December 17, 2009. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/18/health/research/18child.html>.

Regardless of this data, Karyn B. Purvis, director of the Institute of Childhood Development, insists, “An infant needs more than just food and water and a roof over his or her head to grow; he or she needs close physical human contact and social interactions to develop optimally...Deprivation and harm suffered early in life impact all the ways that a child develops – coordination, ability to learn, social skills, size, and even the neurochemical pathways in the brain.”¹⁰ Advocates for International Adoption like Purvis reject institutional care except in dire circumstances. The damage institutions quickly cause, she argues, is almost irreparable. Still, even with the plethora of negatives, Jedd Medefind, journalist for Christian Alliance for Orphans, makes a vital distinction in this debate, “In short, it appears clear that when it comes to care for children, at least as important as the *setting* of care is the *quality* of care.”¹¹ Through his analysis of Whetton's data, Medefind admitted the benefits children could potentially derive from their stay in an institution, but he said the quality should be the primary concern.

Although there is great concern about the quality of the orphanages, most professionals in the adoption world are more concerned about how the children initially come to the orphanages. E. J. Graff, senior researcher for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University, traced the lines of orphans in institutions back to the opportunity for profit, “Remove cash from the adoption chain, and, outside of China, the number of healthy babies needing Western homes all but disappears.”¹² Through his research, he found several cases where countries like Guatemala and

¹⁰Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2007).

¹¹ Christian Alliance for Orphans “New Duke Study on Well-Being of Orphans Shakes Conventional Wisdom...And Confirms It.” Jedd Medefind (Last modified August 28, 2014). <https://cafo.org/2014/08/28/new-duke-study-on-well-being-of-orphans-shakes-conventional-wisdomand-confirms-it/>.

¹² E. J. Graff, “International Adoptions Should Be Discouraged.” In *International Adoptions*, edited by Margaret Haerens, (Farmington Hills, Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2011) 33-47.

China would become “hot countries” for approximately a year. When countries notice an increase in Western interest in adoption, he explained, local orphanages ensure they have a steady supply of children to keep cash flowing. In fact, he asserts, “many international adoption agencies work not to find homes for needy children, but to find children for Western homes.”

Consequently, income is often a major factor in the parents' decision to place their child for adoption. While they recognize the power of money, the Pro International Adoption view believes the act of relinquishing a child comes down to the parents' decision. Montgomery and Powell said, “Parents abandon children in large numbers when it's the only legal way to make the adoption happen...Surely, empowering private arrangements would reduce that [abandoning children at orphanages]. It would make parents more likely to choose international adoption over abandoning their children to an institution, especially if compensation were allowed.”¹³ If parents truly want to abandon their child, they will, the authors argue. Instead of shutting down orphanages to prevent parents from unnecessarily abandoning their child, Pro International Adoption advocates believe enabling private adoptions where the financial compensation is limited would discourage parents from doing it for money.

Unfortunately, not only are parents able to become corrupted by money, but the orphanages are as well. To remedy this problem, proponents of Pro Birthfamilies say that more regulations would decrease the chance of an illegitimate adoption. Graff writes, “More effective regulations would strictly limit the amount of money that changes hands. Per-child fees could be outlawed. Payments could be capped to cover only legitimate costs...Improved regulations will protect not only the children being adopted, but also the consumers: hopeful parents.”¹¹ In other

¹³ Mark Montgomery and Irene Powell, *Saving International Adoption: An Argument from Economics and Personal Experience* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018).

words, since money enables adoption, money should be limited. Interestingly, Pro International Adoption supporters sharply disagree. With their knowledge of economics, Montgomery and Powell argue, “Because it is risky and expensive to operate outside the law, illegal vendors tend to be undercut by legitimate vendors of the same product in an open market.”¹² In the context of adoption, this means black market orphanages would suffer and become obsolete because it would be as easy for a parent to relinquish their child to a legal orphanage as an illegal one.

Christians Should Adopt

In light of the numerous debates, one may be surprised the adoption system is still functioning. This is largely because America’s DNA, the Declaration of Independence, established the mindset most Americans have towards helping the poor. The Founding Fathers wrote, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”¹⁴ When they wrote of “all men” possessing these rights, this included women, children, and, of course, people from other nations. This essential recognition reminds Americans that all people inherently possess these same rights and should be assisted in retaining them if necessary. Celebrating the rights of people globally has preserved adoption as an institution, but the roots supporting this acknowledgment have caused it to flourish. James 1:27 reminds Christians that, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”¹⁵ While it is debatable whether children have the human right to belong to a family, the

¹⁴ The Declaration of Independence

¹⁵ James 1:27 (English Standard Version).

responsibility to take care of orphans is unquestionable for all people, but particularly for Christians. Consequently, the adoption movement is a focal point of many Christian ministries; however, both believers and nonbelievers often become enamored with adoption, not as a way to help needy children, but as a way to have a child or because of peer pressure. The adoption world is brimming with hurting and needy children and teeming with corrupt institutional care directors motivated by greed. This movement is fraught with significant problems, yet Christians should transnationally adopt minors who are not in a permanent support system because adoption saves lives.

Definitions and Statistics

Arguably the most difficult aspect of the orphan crisis is interpreting and organizing the statistics researchers gather. Numbers in the millions are thrown at audiences in churches and concerts without the audience learning the interpretation of those numbers. In 2018, Christian Alliance for Orphans estimated that there are 140 million orphans globally.¹⁶ This includes both single orphans, who have lost one parent, and double orphans, who have lost both. It may come as a surprise, then, to note that the estimated number of double orphans is only 10% of that – 15.1 million. This 15.1 million does not include children on the streets or those in care facilities simply because that number, between two and eight million, is so difficult to estimate. More importantly, Christian Alliance for Orphans notes that the term ‘orphan,’ “includes more than just the boy or girl who has lost one or both parents. Rather, it describes the child who faces the

¹⁶ Christian Alliance for Orphans. “Statistics.” <https://cafo.org/ovc/statistics/>.

world without the provision, protection and nurture that parents uniquely provide.”¹⁷ Clearly, the exact number of orphans would be even more difficult to estimate than it already is. Not only do researchers have to account for a child with living or nonliving parents, but also whether those living parents are meeting the child’s minimal developmental needs. Sadly, numerous testimonies reveal intact families where the child is abandoned or maltreated. Christian Alliance for Orphans provides a three-step process in handling these situations. Step One: before dividing the family, seek to preserve it. Step Two: if preservation is unreasonable at the time and separation is necessary, strive to unite the family as soon as is safe. Finally, Step Three: the last resort is to place the children for adoption and expand healthy families through their addition.¹⁸ For the purpose of this paper, “adoption” will be advocated in the case of the first two steps either being impossible or having failed.

The Origins of Orphans

Unlike the classic stories from *Anne of Green Gables* and *Oliver Twist*, most children do not necessarily become orphans through the death of their parents. For some children, the journey to adoption is dark and filled with pain. Since the inception of the one-child birth policy in China, Americans have supposed that Chinese parents resolutely abandoned their daughters in hopes for a son to carry on the family name. This blanket assumption entirely neglects the accounts of other Chinese families who desire to keep their daughters, but are forced to relinquish them. In

¹⁷ Christian Alliance for Orphans. "Important New CAFO White Paper: On Understanding Orphan Statistics." Jedd Medefind (Last Modified July 9, 2012). <https://cafo.org/2012/07/09/important-new-cafo-white-paper-on-understanding-orphan-statistics/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

her study of the 1.5 child policy's effect on China, Kay Ann Johnson writes:

The counterhegemonic voices of both birth parents and adoptive parents, evident in the stories related here, complicate these simplistic, static notions of Chinese culture and society in an important way. Far from considering their girls to be 'maggots in the rice' or 'deeply unwanted, unvalued babies,' sonless parents who gave up second or third daughters under duress in order to try to have a son live with regret and shame [...] Some of the 'unwanted daughters' were even seized directly from their own birth parents who found themselves helpless in the face of local officials, who may have construed a hidden child as an 'illegal adoption.'¹⁹

In her book on China's children, Johnson shares anecdotes of families who tried to hide their additional children to avoid being taxed, but ultimately they were discovered and taken away. Sadly, circumstances are as difficult in South Korea with the prevalent social stigma. Combined with a taboo against unwed mothers and the avoidance of special needs children, South Korea is one of the leading exporters of adoptees. However, mothers in Seoul are still abandoning countless babies on streets, in bathrooms, and even in dumpsters. Pastor Lee Jong-rak, director of a children's home in Seoul, runs an unusual facility. Instead of experiencing the shame of filling out paperwork, mothers can come to Jong's "drop box" on the side of his house, open a window, and leave their baby in a warm cubby in his home. Because of Jong's proactivity in addressing this issue, he has been able to save more than 600 babies since

¹⁹Kay Ann Johnson. *China's Hidden Children: Abandonment, Adoption, and the Human Costs of the One-Child Policy* (Chicago: Chicago Pression, 2016).

beginning the dropbox in 2009.²⁰ As encouraging as this report is, countless other babies are abandoned worldwide. These children have been mentally, emotionally, and physically maltreated. They are helpless.

Modern Cruelty in Institutions

When infants come to orphanages, people outside the adoption world imagine the children encountering malicious orphanage directors and subsisting on a poor diet. On the contrary, the cruelty infants suffer in modern institutions is something every parent longs for at some point in their life: silence. Instead of walking into the typical nursery full of crying babies and scattered toys, prospective parents are shocked by the dead silence and bland nurseries. Every day, the staff changes, feeds, and returns the babies back to their crib with limited physical or verbal interactions. Ruth Hedden, an adoptee from China, reported her struggle with depth perception when she began walking. Although she was only fifteen months old when her parents adopted her, that period of time spent staring at the ceiling or sides of the crib hindered essential aspects of her development. Her deficiency in depth perception caused her to run into furniture, which sometimes caused her pain. While a typical toddler would have cried for her mom, Ruth never cried from pain or hunger until her adoptive parents taught her. This social and emotional disparity affected other areas, preventing her from speaking until she was 3.5 years old.²¹

The physical challenges Ruth faced may have been easily foreseen, but her difficulty with emotionally connecting to people was less expected. In their work on “the science of affectional

²⁰ Genevieve Plaster. “The Drop Box: Rescuing Hundreds of Babies in South Korea.” (Last Modified March 15, 2015). <https://lozierinstitute.org/the-drop-box-rescuing-hundreds-of-babies-in-south-korea/>.

²¹ Google chat interview with Ruth Hedden (October 24, 2018).

ties,” the authors of *Human Bonding* explore the vital process of bonding in an infant’s development. Not only does the presence of an attachment figure promote an infant’s exploration of his environment, which leads to walking, but also a high-quality attachment sets infants up to be “more open to the processing of a range of information, more socially competent, and more likely to have better relationships with family members and peers.” Because of this acquired confidence, infants who have been loved and nurtured have a greater chance to be successful in their relationships later in life than babies who were neglected at institutions. However, the impact of attachment continues. “According to attachment theory, a person’s sense of acceptability (and self-worth) is tied to the manner in which attachment figures have responded to his or her attachment-related needs, such that parents serving as suitable secure bases and safe havens will instill in their infant a growing sense that the infant is valuable and has inherent worth.”²² Neglecting to provide this attachment early on creates a snowball effect into adulthood. The Encyclopedia of Depression describes “avoidant attachment” and “disorganized attachment” where the caregiver refuses to address the child’s needs in the former case and maltreats them in the latter.²³ Regardless of how the orphanage caregiver neglects to create attachment, the child’s feeling of low self-esteem could easily lead him into depression and later, suicide.

Life Beyond the Orphanage: Its Proven Inadequacy

This should come as no surprise, considering that 10-15% of adolescents commit suicide within two years of leaving their orphanage according to a study of Ukrainian and Russian orphanages.

²² Matthew J. Dykas, and Jude Cassidy. “The First Bonding Experience: The Basics of Infant-Caregiver Attachment.” In *Human Bonding: The Science of Affectional Ties*, edited by Cindy Hazen and Mary I. Campa, 29. (New York City: Guilford Press, 2013).

²³ Linda Wasmer Andrews, *Encyclopedia of Depression* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010).

Entering institutional care as infants, they grow up without love and attention and enter into their teenage years ignorant of their inherent worth as a person. Because of their poverty and low self-esteem, up to 60% of the girls become prostitutes, and up to 70% of the boys resort to criminal behavior. Of all the teens leaving orphanages, only 27% find work within two years.²⁴ To summarize, “institutional care is structurally and psychologically at odds with what young children need and that we should work to develop alternatives for orphaned and abandoned children.”²⁵

Physical Health: Quality over Quantity

Certainly, institutional care may be unable to give children individual attention, but should it not at least provide for the child’s physical needs? Giving a child food and water could not be too difficult, could it? However, reality says otherwise. Just as there is a definite deficiency in emotional and psychological care, so also is there a deficiency in the physical health of these children. In their book dedicated to discussing the policies and effects of intercountry adoption, Karen Smith Rotabi and Judith L. Gibbons relate the delayed growth which institutionalized children experience, “For every ~3 months of institutionalization, children ‘lost’ ~1 month of height age.”²⁶ Initially, an uninformed audience would suspect the children are being underfed; yet, seldom is this the case. Another study conducted by the SPOON Foundation explained that

²⁴ Humanitarian and Social Researches Center, *Report on World’s Orphans* (Turkey: Humanitarian and Social Researches Center, 2014).

²⁵ Mary Dozier, Charles H. Zeanah, Allison R. Wallin, and Carole Shauffer. “Institutional Care for Young Children: Review of Literature and Policy Implications.” US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health (2012): 1-25. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-2409.2011.01033.x.

²⁶ Judith L. Gibbons and Karen Smith Rotabi. *Intercountry Adoption: Policies, Practices, and Outcomes*. (New York City: Ashgate Publishing, 2012).

73% of the children in Kazakhstani baby homes were “exhibiting one or more macronutrient or micronutrient deficiencies.”²⁷ Although a child might be consuming bowls full of carbohydrates through different grains, he still might have a significant calcium deficiency in his diet, likely leading to weaker bones, overstimulated muscles, and problems with blood clotting.²⁸

While a poor diet could be due to limited resources or low funding, one cause of feeble physical health is predictable and preventable. Interestingly, it stems from the discussion on attachment and depression. In an institution where adults have minimal interactions with children who are meant to have families, cases of depression are not just possible – they are inevitable. Depression is usually accompanied by some form of eating disorder, and in a facility where food is portioned, anorexia is very common. For children who are emotionally-starved, starving themselves physically might be the only way to gain the attention they crave.

On the other hand, some children would gladly forego their meal in order to avoid excessive attention-- abuse. As this section’s title communicates, the amount of food and attention does not matter as much as the quality. The vast majority of children and infants are neglected, but a number of institutionalized children actually suffer abuse. Stressing the prevalence of abuse, UNICEF summarized their research, “Violence in residential institutions is six times higher than violence in foster care... Children in group care are almost four times more likely to experience sexual abuse than children in family-based care.”²⁹ Considering a basic understanding of human psychology, this is logical. In foster care and family-based care, the

²⁷ SPOON Foundation. “2012 Progress Report.” (Accessed February 8, 2019). http://www.spoonfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SPOON_Foundation_2012_Progress_Report.pdf.

²⁸ Marilyn M. Shannon, and Rachael L. Yunis. *Exploring Creation with Advanced Biology: The Human Body*. (Anderson, IN: Apologia Educational Ministries, 2013).

²⁹ Khin Thiri Win. “Child Protection and Orphanages.” UNICEF. (Accessed February 2, 2019). https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/CP_and_Orphanages_-_English_.pdf.

child has a personal relationship with their guardian. Regardless of the quality of their relationship, an emotional connection of some kind exists, discouraging abuse. In institutions, little to no emotional or personal connection exists, which would allow the caretakers to abuse the children with nearly the same level of guilt they would feel about a stranger. Again, attachment is vital.

While researchers have conducted numerous studies, pinning down accurate global statistics is extremely difficult. This complication arises from the diversity in cultures, government regulations, and the institutions themselves. One study of 1,053 children from Cambodia, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, and Tanzania reported that “50.3% [...] of the children within institutional care experienced physical or sexual abuse.”³⁰ Even with the advancements of our modern technological age, archaic problems of physical and sexual abuse are still rampant globally.

Unfortunately, people frequently overlook the child’s psychological and emotional well-being when considering their best interest. In a world obsessed with the exterior, it would be natural to affirm the well-being of children in institutional care, simply because the facility is clean and the children are dressed, fed, and taught. However, institutions are not only insufficient, but also inherently harmful. Children are not machines. They are not dogs. They are not even adults. Children are people who are in the process of developing physically, mentally, and emotionally. Those areas of development cannot be compromised.

International Adoption

³⁰ Kathryn J. Roberts, and Natasha Gandhi. “Child violence experiences in institutionalised/orphanage care.” *Psychology, Health, and Medicine*, no. 22 (2017): 31-57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2016.1271951>.

Even so, a skeptic may argue, it seems there are other options, like child sponsorships and foster care, that would be easier for everyone and still help the orphan. While foster care would solve several immediate problems like safety and nutritional needs, foster care alone cannot give the child the long-term care he needs. One organization, Kidsave, allows older children and teens from international orphanages to be foster children in the United States for several weeks during the summer, but unless the family adopts the child, they have few long-term benefits. They experience a loving relationship with parent-figures and see their inherent worth as a person, so their return to an institution would potentially result in greater depression and more abuse if the caretakers are disappointed the child was not adopted. Through Kidsave, 80% of the children who participate in the program are adopted by their host families, leaving 20% without permanent homes.³¹ This method of foster care is valuable in the cases that lead to adoption, but fails to ensure long-term solutions for everyone.

Sponsorship appears to be another attractive option for needy children, allowing the orphan to receive financial help toward their nutrition, education, and safety. Sadly, most institutions are tainted by corruption, so the monthly funding may be in vain. Even in situations where the child is directly receiving support, the money does not guarantee the orphan will be protected and given attention.

Clearly, the best alternative is international adoption. International adoption is not the default option because foster care and sponsorships are flawed; in fact, adopting internationally has several drawbacks of its own. Despite the inevitable problems, both researchers and the majority of adoptees have agreed that adoption does provide the quickest recovery physically,

³¹ Kidsave. "Why Family Advocacy?" <https://www.kidsave.org/family-advocacy/>.

mentally, and emotionally with additional advantages for the adoptive family.

Inherent Value and Success

When God created Adam, He "formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."³² Although Christians have heard this verse numerous times, its necessity in the discussion of adoption cannot be overstated. A person's body is not a necessary evil or a corrupted cage for their soul; it is a fundamental part of who people are and how they relate to each other. While children in institutional care suffer physically, sometimes with life-long impairments, studies have shown the astounding recovery adoptees display upon becoming adopted.³³ Children whose heights, weights, and head circumferences were all below average quickly caught up to children their own age, usually within eight years of being adopted. In a new home with a loving family, fear and depression vanish, stimulating a healthy appetite.

Furthermore, other studies have shown the connection between bonding and growth. As children tend to lose weight from depression and neglect, so they also show a significant improvement in growth upon receiving positive attention. This growth feeds the appetite they have gained, providing their brain with more nutrients and enabling it to grow as well. A similar study from 2005 revealed that adoptees' IQs increased noticeably after being adopted and are virtually indistinguishable from their new peers. Their improved IQ also aids in developing their social skills, particularly if they are adopted at a young age.³⁴

³² *Genesis*. In *Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2007.

³³ Compton, Rebecca J. *Adoption Beyond Borders*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

³⁴ Jesús Palacios, Carmen Moreno, Maite Román. "Social competence in internationally adopted and institutionalized children." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 28 (2013): 357-365.
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3be3/1d0cd082d89bb8fe05505fec414bedf9fe5f.pdf>.

As to the concern of institutionalized children with low self-esteem, 88 studies showed that researchers found no difference between the self-esteem of 10,000 adoptees and 33,000 nonadoptees. Two professors of adoption studies explained, "Although many adopted children have experienced trauma and adversity before adoptive placement, protective factors within the adoptive family context may have served as moderators, buffering the ill effects of the risk factors and resulting in catch-up and resilience in the children."³⁵ For some adoptees, the term "resilience" is an understatement. Adoptee and former CEO of Apple Steve Jobs said, "Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma - which is living the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition."³⁶ Undoubtedly, Jobs had high self-esteem, partly because of his loving adoptive parents. Less commonly known, though, is that Jobs's success was largely due to his environment as a child. Raised by a father who loved to tinker and living in a neighborhood of technological amateurs, Jobs developed a passion for electronics, ultimately leading to his creation of the Macintosh. If Jobs's adoptive parents had not adopted him, the company Apple - and all its conveniences - would be nonexistent.

Adoption Benefits Families and Cultures

Although the paperwork, fees, and travel are inconvenient prior to the adoption, internationally

³⁵ Femmie Juffer, and Marinus H. van IJzendoorn. "Adoptees Do Not Lack Self-Esteem: A Meta-Analysis of Studies on Self Esteem of Transracial, International, and Domestic Adoptees." *Psychological Bulletin* 133, no. 6 (2007): 1067–1083. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.133.6.1067.

³⁶ "Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Address: 'Your Time Is Limited, So Don't Waste It Living Someone Else's Life'." *The Huffington Post*. October 5, 2011. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/05/steve-jobs-stanford-commencement-address_n_997301.html.

adopting a child ultimately benefits both the child and the parent. For couples struggling to have children, adoption may be their last resort. Still, even through the grief of being childless, couples can find incredible joy in adopting. If pregnancy and delivery carry complications intertwined with anticipation, adoption does as well. Indecisiveness from birthparents, corrupt orphanages, and difficult government requirements can make adopting internationally next to impossible. However, as complications increase, so does the excitement and thankfulness of the adoptive family when they do finally bring their child home. Dawn Davenport, adoptive mom and the Executive Director of Creating a Family summarized:

Adoption can make the everyday seem miraculous. The moment when this child that you met only a few months or even weeks before seeks you, and only you, out of the crowd with her eyes. The moment when you realize that your small developmentally delayed child is now a robust into-everything preschooler, and the quiet pride you feel knowing that but for you, these gains may not have happened. The contentment in knowing that you took a risk and it paid off. A feeling of satisfaction unique to adoptive parents when we look around our Thanksgiving table and realize that we are a family created by choice and love.³⁷

Creating a family through adoption is so radically different than through natural means because of how intentional it is. When an adoptive family brings a child home, it was only because they invested time, money, and energy. This investment reaches far beyond that child,

³⁷ Dawn Davenport “Adoption is Not the Same as Having a Child of Your Own.” *Creating a Family*, November 13, 2017, <https://creatingafamily.org/adoption-category/adoption-is-not-same-as-child-of-your-own/>.

however. Adoptive parents Mark Montgomery and Irene Powell expressed their interest in supporting their child's birth country upon adopting their child. They wrote, "In the years since GB joined our family we've given to African child-care institutions several multiples of the thousands we've spent on his adoption. It is difficult to imagine our having done that without first adopting GB. The little boy who wanted 'de beeg chicken' made it hard to ignore the plight of similar boys and girls left behind in Sierra Leone."³⁸ As this couple testifies, adoption rarely stops with the child, but grows to meet the needs of hundreds where their child was born. Moreover, this social benefit extends to America as well. One piece of advice common to guides on adoption concerns appreciating the child's culture and giving the child opportunities to celebrate and experience their culture. This informs the other members of the family and would likely prevent racism from developing in their home.

Unfortunately, even with these benefits and stories of success, the adoption system is still flawed. While many Americans have kind intentions to help suffering children, they often seek to adopt healthy infants who carry little to no emotional, psychological, or physical problems with them. Certainly, this places more children in homes, but they may not necessarily be the ones who need it most. In 2003, Western interest in adopting Guatemalan babies exploded, leading to widespread corruption in the adoption system. Not only were infants kidnapped from their families, but it also motivated some mothers to become pregnant to sell their newborns to an orphanage. An opportunity to help others had unknowingly fueled immense child trafficking, which ultimately lead to Guatemala's adoption system being shut down.

³⁸ Mark Montgomery, and Irene Powell. *Saving International Adoption: An Argument from Economics and Personal Experience*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018.

Rather than succumbing to pessimism about the future of adoption, however, Christians should emphasize special needs adoptions for children with mental or physical disabilities. These are the children who will not be trafficked because they are the unwanted ones. When a parent realizes their child is disabled, they make a concrete decision to keep them out of love or relinquish them from lack of resources. Even Americans would not compete for a chance to adopt a boy with down syndrome. In a world of productivity and work, it is difficult to fully appreciate what little severely disabled children can offer: for some, a bright smile. For the children whose parents did relinquish them, they have little to no hope outside an institution's walls. While a healthy child could turn to drastic measures like crime and prostitution, a disabled adolescent would not even have these means to sustain himself. Thus, it becomes paramount for Christians to seek out special needs children. Not only would this help children in great need, but it would also reduce child trafficking in that country.

Unfortunately, child trafficking is not limited to a child's country of origin. In the United States, dissatisfied adoptive parents have set up threads through media outlets to find a home for the child they adopted. The reasons range from abusive adoptive children to children who did not bond with the rest of the family. Through these threads, they connect with other families who are interested in adopting, but will not go through the adoption process. One article reported how an adoptee went missing after being dropped off at her new parents' trailer home. Her teachers had not received notice that she would be gone, and the adoptee had stopped calling her previous family daily. Although the couple had only taken her on a road trip to visit family, the police investigated the couple and discovered that the couple's children had been taken away due to their abuse. All of this could have been avoided if her adoptive family had undergone training to

prepare them for difficult children. Instead of creating more restrictions and fees for families to adopt, parents should consider their competence. Adoption should not be limited to the upper class, but parents do need to be well-informed to determine whether they can handle a special needs child.

In conclusion, while the adoption system has several problems, Christians should transnationally adopt minors who are in a temporary support system because adoption saves lives. The implications of even one adoption are staggering. Not only is the life of that child forever changed, but also the lives of every person remotely connected to him. As in the example of Steve Jobs, millions of people's lives have been changed because his adoptive parents chose him. For the children who never have a family, life is lived moment by moment without security, peace, or hope. The institutions that provided minimal attention, investment, and love will one day turn them out to face the world alone. However, for those adoptees, life is not dependent on resources - food, clothing, and shelter. For adopted children, adoption is the window out of the prison of fear and loneliness. On the other side of paperwork, expenses, and corrupt officials wait parents with open arms. Adoption saves lives.

Bibliography

Andrews, Linda Wasmer. *Encyclopedia of Depression*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010.

Batura, Paul J. *Chosen for Greatness: How Adoption Changes the World*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2016.

Christian Alliance for Orphans “New Duke Study on Well-Being of Orphans Shakes Conventional Wisdom...And Confirms It.” Jedd Medefind. Last modified August 28, 2014. <https://cafo.org/2014/08/28/new-duke-study-on-well-being-of-orphans-shakes-conventional-wisdomand-confirms-it/>.

Compton, Rebecca J. *Adoption Beyond Borders*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Concerned United Birthparents. “A Life-Long Relationship.” Accessed January 11, 2019. https://www.cubirthparents.org/a_lifelong_reality.php.

Cruz, Mateo. ”International Adoptions Result in Discrimination.” In *International Adoptions*, edited by Margaret Haerens, 111-17. Farmington Hills, Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2011.

Davenport, Dawn. “Adoption is Not the Same as Having a Child of Your Own.” *Creating a Family*, November 13, 2017, <https://creatingafamily.org/adoption-category/adoption-is-not-same-as-child-of-your-own/>.

Davenport, Dawn. "The Child Catchers: Criticism of the Orphan Care Movement." *Creating a Family*, podcast audio, March 7, 2013, https://creatingafamily.org/adoptioncategory/child_catchers-criticism-orphan-care-movement/.

Dozier, Mary, Charles H. Zeanah, Allison R. Wallin, and Carole Shauffer. "Institutional Care for Young Children: Review of Literature and Policy Implications." US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health (2012): 1-25. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-2409.2011.01033.x.

Dykas, Matthew J, and Jude Cassidy. "The First Bonding Experience: The Basics of Infant-Caregiver Attachment." In *Human Bonding: The Science of Affectional Ties*, edited by Cindy Hazen and Mary I. Campa, 29. New York City: Guilford Press, 2013.

Friends in Adoption. "Adoption Poem by Fleur Conkling Heyliger." <https://www.friendsinadoption.org/adoption-quotes-poems/adoption-poem-by-fleur-conkling-heylige>.

Genesis. In *Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2007.

Gibbons, Judith L., and Karen Smith Rotabi, editors. *Intercountry Adoption: Policies, Practices, and Outcomes*. New York City: Ashgate Publishing, 2012.

Graff, E. J. "International Adoptions Should Be Discouraged." In *International Adoptions*, edited by Margaret Haerens, 33-47. Farmington Hills, Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2011.

Humanitarian and Social Researches Center. *Report on World's Orphans*. Turkey: Humanitarian and Social Researches Center, 2014.

Johnson, Kay Ann. *China's Hidden Children: Abandonment, Adoption, and the Human Costs of the One-Child Policy*. Chicago: Chicago Pression, 2016.

Joyce, Kathryn. *The Child Catchers: Rescue, Trafficking, and the New Gospel of Adoption*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2013.

Juffer, Femmie, and Marinus H. van IJzendoorn. "Adoptees Do Not Lack Self-Esteem: A Meta-Analysis of Studies on Self Esteem of Transracial, International, and Domestic Adoptees." *Psychological Bulletin* 133, no. 6 (2007): 1067–1083.
doi:10.1037/0033-2909.133.6.1067.

Kidsave. "Why Family Advocacy?" <https://www.kidsave.org/family-advocacy/>.

Montgomery, Mark, and Irene Powell. *Saving International Adoption: An Argument from Economics and Personal Experience*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018.

Palacios, Jesús, Carmen Moreno, Maite Román. "Social competence in internationally adopted and institutionalized children." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 28 (2013): 357-365.
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3be3/1d0cd082d89bb8fe05505fec414bedf9fe5f.pdf>.

Plaster, Genevieve. "The Drop Box: Rescuing Hundreds of Babies in South Korea." Last Modified March 15, 2015.
<https://lozierinstitute.org/the-drop-box-rescuing-hundreds-of-babies-in-south-korea/>.

Purvis, Karyn B., David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine. *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2007.

- Roberts, Kathryn J., and Natasha Gandhi. "Child violence experiences in institutionalised/orphanage care." *Psychology, Health, and Medicine*, no. 22 (2017): 31-57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2016.1271951>.
- Shannon, Marilyn M., and Rachael L. Yunis. *Exploring Creation with Advanced Biology: The Human Body*. Anderson, IN: Apologia Educational Ministries, 2013.
- SPOON Foundation. "2012 Progress Report." Accessed February 8, 2019. http://www.spoonfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SPOON_Foundation_2012_Progress_Report.pdf.
- "Steve Jobs' 2005 Stanford Commencement Address: 'Your Time Is Limited, So Don't Waste It Living Someone Else's Life'." *The Huffington Post*. October 5, 2011. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/05/steve-jobs-stanford-commencement-address_n_997301.html.
- Whetten, Kathryn, Jan Ostermann, Brian W. Pence, Rachel A. Whetten, Lynne C. Messer, Sumedha Ariely, Karen O'Donnell et al. "Three-Year Change in the Wellbeing of Orphaned and Separated Children in Institutional and Family-Based Care Settings in Five Low- and Middle-Income Countries." *PLoS ONE* 9(8): e104872. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0104872>.
- Win, Khin Thiri. "Child Protection and Orphanages." UNICEF. Accessed February 2, 2019. https://www.unicef.org/myanmar/CP_and_Orphanages_-_English_.pdf.