

The Terrible Infancy of Fetal Cell Transplantation Technology

"I have set her blood on top of a rock that it may not be covered." Ezekiel 24:8.

"The Church disowned, the tower overthrown the bells upturned, what have we to do but stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards in an age which advances progressively backwards." T.S. Eliot, "Chorus from "The Rock", 1934.

In the first half of 1987 a remarkable pair of short articles were published in two different national news magazines. The conjunction of these articles begs certain conclusions to be drawn and raises a whole host of speculative questions. It is the purpose of this article to raise as many of these questions as possible so as to be at least partially prepared for future developments.

From a Biblical point of view the titles or subtitles of these articles are ironic in the extreme. The first, from Time, January 12, 1987, bears the heading, "Help from the Unborn." The second comes from Newsweek April 20, 1987 and is entitled, "Selling a Pound of Flesh -- Patients Want to Share Biotech's Bounty". The former article deals with our developing ability to transfer "immunologically naive" fetal tissues into an older person's body for the purpose of alleviating certain deficiency diseases such as diabetes or Parkinsonism. "Fetal nerve cells," it states, "unlike adult cells, can regenerate and thus have the

potential to repair a damaged brain or spinal cord."

The latter article deals with the ground breaking medical/legal issue in which certain patients are claiming the rights to sell certain body parts which need to be removed anyway. This piece chronicles the story of one John Moore, a leukemia patient whose diseased marrow formed "high levels of GM-CSF, touted as a potential AIDS drug. Golde (Moore's physician) allegedly parlayed the spleen into lucrative deals with Genetics Institute, the company that helped him derive the drug from the spleen cells, and Swiss pharmaceutical giant Sandoz which put the drug into clinical trials." Moore sued Golde for a portion of the profits, according to the article. Thus far, Moore has lost his case, and Congress will be petitioned to extend their ban on organ sales to include such cases. However, in face of the relentless development of this technology, it appears inevitable that a market for many different types of tissue is going to open up rapidly one way or another, legally or illegally.

Before drawing conclusions from the foregoing articles, I would like to make a reference to a third article published in the April, 1987, issue of this Journal, that of Andrew White, M.D., "Abortion and the Ancient Practice of Child Sacrifice." Dr. White has skillfully and thoroughly

examined the parallels between the demands of idol worship in the cradle of civilization (which apparently exacted its tithe in the currency of human flesh rather than merely in the blood of rams or bulls) and the demands of contemporary secular society. The conclusion he draws is that our contemporary practices are really not all that much different from the worship of, say, Molech. Others¹ have pointed out the parallels between ancient false gods such as Baal and modern false deities such as nature, evolution, economics, or population control utopianism of the planned parenthood fundamentalists.

My conclusions about the potential impact of this type of technology are not modest: I believe that the face of medicine is about to be radically altered, and a whole new medical industry will arise -- one from which a Bible-believing Christian will be in principle excluded.

It must be clearly understood and underlined that spontaneous abortions are not considered desirable for transplantation, because it is assumed that many of these fetuses may bear genetic defects which might well wreak havoc with the recipient in unexpected ways. Precisely what is wanted is the normal, healthy preborn infant. A defective fetus remains as much unwanted as before. What is considered valuable then in these cases is exactly those products of conception that were extracted for reasons of convenience or comfort, psychological or socioeconomic. The child aborted for Tay Sachs will remain mere debris. To speak in the manner of Dr. White's article, such

"therapeutic" abortions are unacceptable, marred sacrifices, except in the sense that the mother and/or father hope to exchange it for a healthy one next time, just as was done in ancient Carthage.

If we look at the biblical record we must agree with Dr. White as far as he goes. That is, we admit along with T.S. Eliot that we have as a civilization regressed from a high point of relative Judeo-Christian consensus back to a certain level of pagan morality that vied with the worship of Jehovah in Biblical times. But in fact it could be easily argued that in our rush towards technological sophistication we have overshot even the most hardened pagans of ancient times, with hardly a blink from the never-sleeping eyes of the secular or religious media. I refer, of course to our newly-discovered Saturnine capacity not only to kill tiny infants but to devour them as well.

In view of Scripture, there are references to prophecies about the Hebrew nation, stating that at times it would sink so low and be so desperate with hunger that their adult members would cook and eat their own children. I would urge the reader at this point to review the Scripture references listed at the end of this article. Please note that such prophecies assume that the hearers would receive this news with profound dismay. The Bible never assumes that men would undergo temptation to consume their own children in times of plenty or prosperity. This is quite different from his warnings about worshipping false gods such as Molech. It is implied that there was genuine

temptation to give over oneself or one's family to such gods. Cannibalism of children was always seen as a genuine and very severe, almost an ultimate, punishment, not a seductive element in any sense of the word.

Many euphemisms will undoubtedly be developed for this fetal cell transplantation technology, but does it not merely amount to a rather sophisticated form of cannibalism? "We are confronted with a biological revolution which is going to be just as important as the nuclear revolution was for physics," declared Dr. Antonio Scommengna, chairman of the department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Michael Reese Hospital. '...We are on the threshold of changing ourselves.' For all the promise of regenerating life, some darkness may lie beyond that threshold. 'I realize this opens up a Pandoras Box,' said Scommengna, 'a can or worms, or whatever you want to call it, but I foresee growing fetuses someday for spare parts.' A tiny shadow of cannibalism passes over that thought; a hint that an aging society might one day breed its young to replace its own worn-out organs.²

History does not give abundant examples of groups of people quite this short-sighted. It would seem almost too obviously suicidal to dismember our young people in order to give our older people a few more years, especially in a country that is near zero population growth already.³ Yet this is exactly what may be happening. We are all familiar with cannibalistic cultures which advocated consumption of certain parts of an enemy's body in order

to gain certain abstract qualities, such as courage or intelligence. However, this practice was confined, so far as I know, to enemies and not to the most helpless members of one's own family.

We note with mirth the fantasies of Ponce de Leon, who searched the territory of Florida for the fabled Fountain of Youth. Future generations may look at our flamboyant forms of biotechnology with either amusement or horror. The promise of artificial regeneration is a recurring theme in history, but this appears to be a quantum leap beyond previous schemes. Rather ordinary weapons have been used against the new born up until this time. They are only slightly cleaner variations of the infamous coat hanger. But this new array of techniques may have an impact on the human race as powerful and as undesirable as that of nuclear arms. One neuro-surgeon from Miami stated, "This field isn't growing, it is exploding." A comparison to a detonation is apt.

What follows will be divided into two parts. If the reader will bear with me, allow me to first briefly speculate as to what may occur in terms of events and attitudes to come, confining my remarks to what can be defined in a secular way. Then, having seen the Old Testament statements about the nature and source of this ultimate form of child abuse, let us continue to examine Biblical sources, focusing this time on the New Testament in an attempt to determine the optimal Christian response.

The easiest prediction to make is that successful transplantation programs of this

new type will give the Pro-choice movement a whole new set of slogans, just as the old ones were beginning to lose their luster. IT may also add to its constituency. No longer will its chief supporters be merely young and/or opportunistic, but the aged may join in their cause so that they, too, may have a choice. If, in addition, fetal organs or cell transplantation takes 20 to 30 years to mature, it may capture the middle ground as well. Incentives in regard not only to personal health but wealth would be virtually irresistible to the unregenerate man. To the "man without the Bible" there would seem to be almost no flaws to the new pro-choice arrangements.

In terms of this technology, having sufficient impact to change the character of medicine, I can only note with sorrow that this process has been underway for many decades and certainly began in earnest when we welcomed our comrades, the abortionists, in 1973. Transplant technology will, of course, probably give rise to additional respectability, graced with a subspecialty society, board exams, and so forth. Beyond that, the effects will depend on: (1) The scope of the techniques -- how wide the application may be. (2) The popularity of abortion. (3) The quantity of certifiably healthy fetal tissue available at any given moment. (4) The degree of public acceptance, overt and covert. (5) The response of Congress, the Supreme Court, and other governing bodies.

For instance, let us suppose for a moment that applicability ascends rapidly; that abortion declines due to declining fertility,

fear of AIDS, etc.; and that Congress or the courts declare that a person's body is their own to sell, including all fetal tissues. In that scenario, the value of fetal parts might well exceed their weight in gold. And though it may stretch or imagination somewhat, it is not improbable that a form of "temple prostitution" will re-assert itself in the temples of Molech. That is, certifiably healthy males and females could consent to reproduction solely for profit (the temple of Mammon) perhaps with a form of nature worship or biotechnical Darwinism thrown in (the temple of Baal) so that the "ethical" dimension will not be ignored or the press be ever so slightly unfavorable. In such a case, ordinary medical practitioners will probably be reimbursed as they are today -- little for cognitive services, a great deal of complex procedures. Those who merely prescribe insulin will be left far behind economically speaking, in comparison with those who are offering naive beta cells from the fetal pancreas. The latter will be a part of a new health care team consisting of full or part-time prostitutes, transplant surgeons, abortionists, immunologists, and so on, not to mention the nurses, receptionists, administrators, and public relations experts who will function as well-paid and well-protected pimps in this application. The temptation to join in this lucrative process will be strong.

On the other hand, should there be wide applicability, tissue shortage, and a ban on marketing (as applies today to blood and other tissue transplants, all of which are voluntary and uncompensated by law) then the whole prostitution process may have to

go underground. In either case, if ethics continues to be advertised as purely a private matter, the medical profession need answer to no one. The term "ethical" then reverts to the status of language in general as revealed by Lewis Carroll's Humpty Dumpty, whose theory of linguistics is summarized by the statement, "A word means just what I choose it to mean..."

Let us suppose, however, that contraceptive technology stagnates, and there is a glut of available organs, or fetal cell lines are developed that can retain desirable qualities such as endocrinological potency or immunological insensitivity, for long periods of time in vitro. In this case, the prostitutional aspects will be negligible, but a well-established, highly respected abortion/transplantation industry will become part of our cultural and medical landscape. The same would be true if applicability turned out to be very narrow. Then, unless it fails altogether, it will still provide the Pro-choice movement with enticing rhetoric stating that society needs these fetal "donors" just as much as we need blood donors.

II

They have cast lots for my people, have given a boy as payment for a harlot and sold a girl for wine that they may drink. Joel 3:3.

What about "the man with the Bible"? Where does that leave him, as a citizen or as a practitioner of medicine? Here it is impossible to narrow the issue down to a certain number of factors and commence

to calculate. Too much speculation about Christians or about what God will or will not do might easily earn a false prophet's reward. The matter of personal calling complicates our vision, as does man's interpretation of God's Word. We find Christians of all persuasions, from strict Reconstructionist to Pietists. What then might I say in a short space that will be of assistance to the majority of readers, whom I will assume share my sense of being repulsed by this turn of the technological screw? Let me mention three points:

1. I believe there is ample Scriptural evidence that we should, before all else, approach this issue more as if we were a patient than as a physician. The Scriptures clearly indicate that destruction of children and the practice of cannibalism upon them were, like the diseases mentioned in some of these same passages, punishment visited upon the disobedient chosen people of God. We have been grafted into this group, if we profess Jesus as Lord. We are further told that if God did not spare the natural branches, then why should He be expected to spare the grafts? (Romans 11:21). "Do not be haughty, but fear." (Romans 11:20).

Let us know then with trepidation that the same motivations that taint to Pro-choice argument, ie., unbridled materialism, comfort, and personal well-being, also contaminate a vast portion of Christendom -- not just the radical health-and-wealth-are-yours ministries but also many of our mainline and evangelical organizations which put bodily and financial concerns

ahead of the Gospel in various subtle or not-so-subtle ways. Are contingency funds the fundamental wave of the church's future? If so, are we not responsible for our own impotence? Is God lacking in power, or is He simply wisely unwilling to lend it to such a carnally-minded people? And have these horrors come in to fill the gap where "Christian unbelievers" dare not tread? Has prosperity so intoxicated Western man, so insulated us from God, that we cannot recognize our own shortcomings and weep? Or, rather than repent, shall we imitate the various special interest pressure groups who curse one another continually and vie for material and moral advantage at every opportunity? The Epistle of James (1:19-20) says, instead, "...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

So let us not blame others for our lack of spiritual courage. If there is to be a healing in this area, it must come from God, with ourselves being humble instruments of peace, or more likely, as "worthless servants" badly in need of healing from our sins.

2. After repentance and receiving Christ's forgiveness, it is incumbent on every Christian to live his own life in imitation of what he has received. This is elementary but cannot be repeated too often, even after it begins to become a reality. The point here is the most of us would do well, if we would obey God's will, to start with our own family -- to be a witness to them in word and in deed, with everything being

seasoned with love. Michael J. Gorman in his book *Abortion in the Early Church*⁴ notes that when abortion was rampant in the late Roman Empire, and while early church fathers universally condemned abortion, it was not rare for "so-called Christians" (Origen's term) to obtain abortions. I suspect this tragedy has occurred in most of our churches, as I know it has in mine.

Bringing up our family in the admonition of the Lord is therefore overwhelmingly important. What is the importance of gaining the whole world (even reversal of Roe vs. Wade) if we lose our own soul or that of one intrusted to us? Whether the abortion thus obtained is legal or not will make little difference then.

The more obvious point, but one not usually mentioned, is to bring up our family, period. Those of us called to be parents must consent to reproduce and thereafter serve willingly. If we are faithful in this, and transmit loving Christian convictions to our offspring, then we may someday have a population truly reverent of life -- not only willing but able to defend the unborn in ways that we cannot as yet. While those who are Pro-choice fail to reproduce or reproduce scantily, we cannot forget our commission to be fruitful and multiply. Presumably, God didn't wish us simply to clutter the planet with our bodies but rather wishes to see a redeemed people on earth who will follow Him to the ends of it and beyond. OF such people there is no surplus, nor is a proliferation of them likely to occur soon.

And again, if we fail to transmit Godly ideals to our children, is that possibly God's fault? Our children can make the same free choices we made but God knows if we have prejudiced them with hypocrisy, unbelief, or shallow spirituality unworthy of emulation.

3. Again referring to Michael Gorman's book, it is evident that while the early Church was adamantly antiabortion on the grounds of the humanity of the fetus and the indivisibility of human life, it never pressed directly to change the laws. In spite of the greatest of political sins of omission, their influence bloodlessly brought to the Western world a high legal view of the fetus that lasted from Constantine until the late 20th century. This was quite an accomplishment for a group committed initially to absolute pacifism but which also had no vociferous lobbyists and which was nearly uniformly despised by all respectable classical opinion! Their example might just be worth of imitation, even the pacifistic proclivity. (I say this with great caution, since a liberal idol will prove to be worth just exactly as little as a conservative one.)

Yet the previous hegemony of the pro-life position cannot be explained as a successful mutation of human history, the result of a happy accident. Which brings me to a final and central point.

4. Charles Finney had this to say: "I am convinced that nothing in the whole Christian religion is so rarely attained as a praying heart. Let me say again, if you lose your spirit of prayer, you will do nothing,

or next to nothing, though you have the intellectual endowment of an angel."

Billy Graham, when asked how our nation might be awakened spiritually, said, "First there must be earnest prayer (II Chron. 7:14). There must be a deep-seated, heart-yearning for revival -- not just a mere muttering of words, pious platitudes, and religious mouthing, but earnest, fervent prayer (James 5:16). Let your soul be anguished; let the tears flow; let your heart be burdened for the lost (Ps. 126:6)."⁵

If your tears have been shed as infrequently as mine, little wonder it is that nothing changes for the better. Very little politicking and campaigning will be necessary once a process of widespread sincere prayer begins. And such praying should continue as our central activity regardless of the barbarity or gentility of our nation's laws. There is no salvation for organizations, laws, or statistical analyses. God will not be running for election. He is most interested in you and me and how we respond to His invitation to fellowship with Him. If we need wisdom, He will grant it, if we ask (James 1:5-9). But without it, only a wasted motion and even wasted tears will result. The Lord builds His house with the building blocks of praying individuals. Precisely correct and necessary actions flow only from this edifice.

IN SUMMARY

In the way of a brief summary:

1. Abortion technology has made it feasible for the developed nations to

proceed from mere child sacrifice to a type of cannibalism of infants.

2. Scripture mentions cannibalism of children, but only as an extreme form of punishment to a very wayward people.

3. We are that wayward people, that Laodicean church that runs neither hot nor cold enough, numbered by prosperity and the secular bias of modern Western culture.

4. The first duty of today's Christian is that of sincere repentance, followed by evidence of an active prayer life and a willingness to serve as procreator and Godly parent when so summoned by our Creator.

Reference

1. Schlossberg, Herbert, *Idols for Destruction*, Thomas Nelson, 1983, p. 141.

Butterfield, Herbert, *Christianity & History*, London: Collins, Fontana, 1957, p. 9.

2. McNulty, Timothy, "Fetal research poses medical, legal, ethical questions", *Chicago Tribune*, July 7, 1987, p.1.

3. Wattenberg, Bent. T., summary article of "The Birth Dearth", *U.S. News & World Report*, June 22, 1987, pp. 56-63.

4. Gorman, Michael, *Abortion and the Early Church*, Intervarsity Press, 1982.

5. *Decision*, Feb. 1987, pp. 2-3.

Scripture References (NIV)

1. Leviticus 26:27-29, "If in spite of this you do

not listen to Me but continue to be hostile toward Me, then in My anger I will be hostile toward you, and I Myself will punish you for your sins seven times over. You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of our daughters.

2. Deuteronomy 28:56-57 (curses of disobedience) "Because of the suffering that your enemy will inflict on you during the siege, you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the Lord your God has given you. "The most gentle and sensitive woman among you -- so sensitive and gentle that she would not venture to touch the ground with the sole of her foot--will begrudge the husband she loves her own son or daughter the afterbirth of her womb and the children she bears. For she intends to eat them secretly during the siege and in the distress that your enemy will inflict on you and your cities." (This Scripture further goes on to list the diseases that will "cling to you".)

3. II Kings 6:28 (concerning famine in besieged Samaria)"This woman said to me, 'Give up your son so we may eat him today, and tomorrow we will eat m son.'So we cooked my son and ate him the next day I said to her, 'Give up your son so we may eat him', but she had hidden him."

4. Jeremiah 19:9 : I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, and they will eat one another;s flesh during the stress of the siege imposed on them by the enemies who seek their lives."

5. Lamentations 2:20 "Look, oh Lord, and consider: Whom have you ever treated like this? Should women eat their offspring, the children they have cared for?"

6. Lamentations 4:3-4 "Even jackals offer their breast to nurse their young but my people have become heartless, like ostriches in the desert. Because of thirst the infant;s tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth; the children beg for bread, but no one gives it to them."

7. Lamentations 4:10 "With their own hands, compassionate women have cooked their own

children who became their food when my people were destroyed."

8. Ezekiel 5:10 "Therefore in your midst fathers will eat their children, and children will eat their fathers. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all of your survivors to the winds."