

## Letters to the Editor

Dr. Douglas Heimbürger writes in response to the article in this issue by Dr. Douglas Duffee:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to "The Necessity for a Revelational Approach to Ethics. I appreciate the author's interacting with my previous writing, and applaud his desire to clarify further the approach that Christians should take to ethical dilemmas. The model I presented for ethical decision-making was developed from John Frame's ideas, published later in his *Medical Ethics: Principles, Persons and problems* (Presbyterian & Reformed, 1988). I think most of what the current paper's author proffers as a disagreement with Frame's model and my application of it to treatment decisions at the end of life may not be the difference it appears to be. Much of what the author described as being the role of the Holy Spirit through prayer is implied what I, and I think Frame had in mind in the existential "angle on ethical issues. The existential concerns in ethical dilemmas are focused on the person, and imply freedom, which may be seen as granted by the agency of the Holy Spirit. To this extent the author may differ only semantically. A Christian ethic that does not incorporate these elements is not thoroughly Christian, and misunderstands the role of the Holy Spirit in applying propositional revelation to our hearts.

However, we may disagree more substantively on the nature of the revelation the Holy Spirit provides us. If by saying "revelational sources are understood as personal and propositional, the author intends to imply that the Holy Spirit gives personal norms that stand alongside the propositional norms God has given to all persons, with similar authority, I disagree. The Holy Spirit reveals the character of our hearts, and gives us guidance. In doing so, He never guides contrary to His own written Word, for to do so would be to contradict His character. The Holy Spirit provides freedom, indeed, but always does so within the form circumscribed by propositional revelation.

Finally, perhaps the author also misunderstands that I

(and Frame) was not suggesting that we can borrow from three of the world's philosophical systems (the normative, situational, and existential) in order to create a workable integrated ethical framework. Rather, the point is that the Word of God has sufficiently provided what the natural man, in devising these three ethical systems, is yearning for but unable to supply. To say so is to offer an apologetic for a thoroughly biblical ethic, and not syncretistically to merge worldly philosophy with Christian principles.

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To the Editor:

"The Case for Routine Neonatal Circumcision" [JBEM, Winter, 1992, James Fletcher, M.D.] provided welcome encouragement for a decision made with much hesitation some 13 years ago. In that case, the obstetrician who delivered our son at home also returned eight days later to perform the circumcision. Apparently, this biblical practice is also well grounded medically, for I have heard that the blood clotting factors are optimum at that time.

Dr. Fletcher would like to add something about the medical benefits of the "eighth day" circumcision; perhaps this practice might reduce even further the incidence of unhappy sequelae.

John K. Kippley

[Mr. Kippley is one of the Directors of the Couple to Couple League of Cincinnati, Ohio.]