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A Publication of
**THEOLOGICAL
STUDENTS
FELLOWSHIP**

Chicago, The University of Basel, Lutheran School of Theology and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The FSM was thankful to receive the hearty endorsement of the American Society of Missiology, and for its founding friends, including: Charles Forman (Yale), Larry Nemer (Chicago), Joan Eagleston (Orbis Books), Joan Chatfield (The Institute of Religion and Social Change), Arthur Glasser (Fuller Theological Seminary), Gerald Anderson (Overseas Missions Study Center), James C. Wilson (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) and Samuel Moffett (Princeton Theological Seminary).

The FSM organized its leadership and appointed committees to write a constitution, and to form an advisory board for both the group and the journal—boards made up of current missiologists. The society also asked Richard Jones, Scott Sunquist and Ruy Costa to begin to plan next year's meeting to be held at Duesnesne University, June 18-19, 1987. Rumors have it that the meeting promises to be very exciting! Attendees at this year's meeting are already looking forward to the opportunity to meet new graduate students in this field and to discuss "hot" topics in current missiological studies. As usual the conference will include a presentation by at least one missiologist and a presentation of a paper by at least one budding scholar. Discussions will follow all presentations. The group will also hold a business meeting. Everyone is looking forward to interacting with members of the ASM.

Anyone Can Get Involved

Area membership coordinators—Ruy Costa, Garry Parker and Tom Russell—are looking for you.

Kathleen Dillman, the FSM Journal editor, is now receiving articles which reflect the cutting edge of your research and reflection. She also has space for book reviews. Dillman is now collecting materials for the January, 1988 issue.

Anyone can join the FSM by paying annual dues of \$10.00, which includes a subscription to the FSM Journal. Anyone who wishes to become a friend of the society can join the FSM for an annual contribution of \$10.00 or more. Secretary/Treasurer Scott Sunquist is receiving all inquiries, dues and gifts at the FSM address: The Fellowship of Students of Missiology, CN 821, Princeton, NJ 08542.

In summing up the importance of the founding of the FSM, organizers have commented:

"This fellowship offers rising missiologists an opportunity to interact with their peers and scholars in the field."

"It affords me a chance to publish!"

"I find it extremely significant that the FSM has a similar zeal, but a totally different frame of reference. Instead of Western missionaries going out to mission fields, the FSM forges a much-needed link between budding missiologists worldwide."

The Case of *Brave New People*: A Shadow and a Hope

by Stephen Charles Mott

Pulled off the market in the face of controversy by its original publisher, *Brave New People: Ethical Issues at the Commencement of Life*, by D. Gareth Jones was republished in a revised edition in 1985 by Eerdmans (224 pp., \$8.95 pb.). The book is significant both on its own merits and in terms of the issue of censorship that surrounds the circumstances of its publication.

Upon its publication by InterVarsity Press in 1984, adverse reviews were published, some of which the author and the publisher argued significantly misrepresented the book. One group in its newsletter urged its readers to write to the publisher stating that because of its position on the question of abortion, the book should not have been published. The publisher found that many who did register their objection had not read the book. At the annual convention of the Christian Booksellers' Association, InterVarsity Press was picketed; and a leader of another group circulated a letter threatening a boycott of bookstores carrying their books. The letter was never received by the publisher, nor did the writer ever personally contact the Press. Some of the literature critical of the book contained such language as "foully dishonest," "satanic," "garbage," "monstrous," "noxious," "unregenerate," and "reprobate." The book was represented as "blatantly pro-abortion" and "eugenics." Guilt by association arguments were used, including comparison of the author with Hitler. His evangelical standing was denied; he was even condemned to

hell (for example, when a critic mentioned "The heat that he will face approximately ten seconds after his death"). I would like to point out that many supporters of a strong position against abortion were embarrassed by much of these tactics; this behavior should not be used as an *ad hominem* argument against the pro life position. Leading evangelical scholars, such as Carl Henry, Kenneth Kantzer, and Arthur Holmes, defended the publication of the book. But for various reasons Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship decided administratively to withdraw the book from the market. The Press, however, wanted to stand behind the book; and many people in the organization were in support of its continued availability.

The question which remains is not to point a finger at this particular organization or publisher, but to indicate why the author should not have been left in such a vulnerable position. Perhaps the nature of the argument on bioethical issues may thus be advanced to a higher plane, and a genuine evangelical pluralism in the evangelical publishing enterprise may be encouraged. There are two books to review: the one which the author actually wrote; and, in terms of its context in the abortion debate, the one which he is believed to have written. First, we will present the argument of the book with minimal commentary, requesting the reader to consider if this indeed is a book which no evangelical press should publish.

Issues in Bioethics

Gareth Jones is an evangelical medical biologist at Otago University in New Zealand. *Brave New People* is not a book

Stephen Charles Mott is Professor of Christian Social Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

on abortion; the concern is broader. His purpose was to help Christians formulate principles adequate for responding to several issues posed by biomedical technology which relate to human life around the time of its inception. Before discussing the ethical concerns relating to specific issues, he provides a framework in terms of the doctrine of human nature and of general theological and ethical issues presented by technology, particularly medical technology.

Human nature has the tension, Jones argues, of being tinged with infinity in our ability to have thoughts about God and eternity while dwelling in all too fallible bodies. Biomedical technology has accentuated our urge to break "the tension by viewing ourselves either as impersonal biological machines or as personal ethereal spirits" (p. 3). What is required of us is to face the issues of bioethics squarely but to do so in light of our being creatures of God. The creation account of Genesis, including the concept of humanity in the image of God, shows the exalted distinction of God from humankind and consequently an utter dependence upon God which cannot be conditioned by technology. We are an integral part of the natural world, yet in God's image we are beings who have a moral responsibility for the world. Because of our fall, side by side with the benefits of technology are hazards which pervert the good. Our redemption in Christ makes fully human experience possible and provides motivations and aspirations to use technology for good. When technology rather than God is central, not only is essential relationship with God lost, but so also are the moral guidelines for ethical decision making. Technology then affirms only the immediate and physical. If we misuse our responsibility in the area of biomedical technology, the implications are immense. Not only does our natural environment suffer, but we do as well since what is being changed by this technology is not merely the environment but we ourselves.

A significant contribution of the book is that the author carefully evaluates the particular issues in terms of the principles established in this framework. Amniocentesis, the sampling of the amniotic fluid around the fetus, is the primary tool for prenatal diagnosis. The inexorable logic of a technological innovation is that it should be used simply because it exists and it can be used with relative ease. Jones cautions against the routine use of amniocentesis, however. Some specific goal should be in mind for it to be undertaken. There is some risk involved, and for most cases the only intervention possible is abortion. Its original medical purpose can be misused to circumvent having a child of the wrong sex. And even when there is valid concern for a specific condition of risk to the mother, is it ethically justifiable to use this diagnosis if there is not ethical acceptance of therapeutic abortion? Similarly, he rejects random use of genetic screening; it bestows upon the genetic scientist too much control over the lives of people. Such elitist control contradicts the responsibility and self-control which is a theological character of human nature.

Open spina bifida is a condition in which infants are born with a protruding spinal cord covered by a membrane. A high proportion die before two years. One criterion for performing operations to reduce disability in these infants excludes those likely to be paralyzed, incontinent, or mentally retarded. An opposing criterion is to operate on wounds reparable surgically on all such infants likely to live more than a few days on the grounds of not adding years to their lives but life to their years. Jones favors the latter philosophy on grounds of his theological view of the dignity of human beings, while seeing the former approach as having undue reliance on technical criteria which reduce moral value to conformity to biological norms. Similarly, he rejects experiments on embryos which have been

preserved for in vitro implantation (see below). Rejecting the utilitarian arguments of great potential human good from such research, Jones sees the experiments as denying respect for embryos' significance as potential human beings.

In vitro fertilization fertilizes a human egg outside of the body and reimplants it in a woman's uterus. Jones ethically evaluates this process in terms of his theological view of the normative character of the human family. Helping a married couple have a child of their bodies and as an outcome of their marriage strengthens natural biological roots within a family, serving an important therapeutic purpose since medicine deals with a whole human relationship beyond mere diseases. In vitro fertilization should not be used, however, when the more human form of a natural fertilization could be used, such as through restorative surgery, because that would give technology a place beyond its supplementary role. By this family criterion this process also should not be used when the egg, sperm, or uterus are not those of the married couple. Similarly, this theological view of the family governs Jones' position regarding forms of artificial insemination, where semen is directly introduced into the woman's uterus. When it involves the artificial introduction of the husband's semen into his wife's uterus, it is a commendable therapy in their longing for children; but when used in a separation by death or distance, its impersonal and artificial side may be highlighted too heavily. On the other hand, when the donor is a third party, the technological inroads separate too radically marriage and parenthood. Since an equality exists among human beings in the perspective of the radical distance of all humanity from God, the eugenic program of a bank of semen of Nobel Prize winners bears the further moral impediment of wrongly elevating creative scientists and their genes.

Cloning presents similar concerns. In this process, which has occurred with animals but not yet with human beings, the nucleus of a woman's egg would be replaced with the nucleus of the cell from another person, who would then be exactly reproduced when the cloned egg matures upon reintroduction into the woman's womb. Here a "No" must be said to that which is possible through technology. It may create ethical consequences beyond our present knowledge and society's ability to handle them, it violates human dignity in not seeing new life as important and free as so to develop in its own characteristics, and it exalts a human being rather than God as the model for human life.

Jones' View on Abortion

As Jones turns to abortion inasmuch as it relates to this ethical consideration of medical technology and therapy, he provides a fuller background because of the complex and controversial nature of the topic. Conception, which constitutes for many a clear and obvious beginning of both human life and personhood, is not the beginning of human life. It is the continuation of human life in general. Human life is present, potentially or actually, in all the stages from ovum and sperm to birth. Conception also is less distinct than often thought. For as long as two weeks after fertilization, the embryo, or zygote, is capable of splitting to form two individuals. During this time the cell divisions merely produce a cluster of equivalent cells; only after a few days do the cell divisions give rise to a distinction of the embryo proper from what will form the placenta. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists defines conception as the process of the implantation of the fertilized ovum in the wall of the uterus, completed at the end of two weeks. One of the leading ethicists in support of the very restrictive position on abortion, Paul Ramsey, holds that individual life begins in the blastocyst stage of 60-100

cells. Helmut Thielicke, who also defends the inviolability of fetal life, views possession of the circulatory system and brain as establishing the fetus as a human person. Of course there are other distinct stages in the development of human personality: the first signs of nervous system functioning at six weeks; more sophisticated nervous system development at twelve weeks; quickening around twenty weeks; and visibility around twenty weeks.

The Bible indicates that the fetus belongs within the human community and receives God's care, but it does not impart knowledge about the precise state of fetal life, including the significance of the unborn relative to that of adult human life. Jones (in a section not in the first edition) also notes Augustine's position that the soul did not come to the fetus until the moment of quickening, Gregory of Nyssa's distinction of the fully and potentially human, and the distinction of fetus animatus and fetus inanimatus in the Roman Catholic Church until the late nineteenth century. Jones, however, rejects the position that the moral status of the embryo changes at the point of implantation. Human material always deserves respect. Jones' position is always to regard the embryo or fetus as a potential person.

According to this *potentiality principle*, a potential person is an existing being which, while not yet a person, will become an actual person during the normal course of its development. A human fetus is such a potential person. This principle takes seriously the continuum of biological development, and refuses to draw an arbitrary line to denote the acquisition of personhood. At all stages of development the fetus is on its way to personhood and, if everything proceeds normally, it will one day attain full personhood in its own right. It is part of a continuing process, the end-result of which is the emergence of an individual human being characterized by full personhood.

Inherent in a potential person is high probability of future personhood. With this goes a claim to life and respect, a claim that in very general terms may be proportional to its stage of fetal development. The claim is always present but, just as the probability of an older fetus becoming an actual person is much greater than that of a very early embryo becoming a person, it becomes stronger with development until, at birth, the potential person is so similar to an actual person that the consequences of killing it are the same as killing a young person (p. 156f).

A corollary of the continuum-potentiality argument is that there is no developmental point at which a line can be drawn between expendable and non-expendable fetuses, that is between non-personal and personal fetuses. It may be preferable to carry out abortions earlier rather than later during gestation, but that is a biomedical and not an ethical decision. Under all normal circumstances, a fetus has a right to full personhood (p.163).

The moral character of human nature mandates accepting responsibility for the consequences of sexual intercourse freely undertaken. Abortion on the grounds of convenience is morally abhorrent. "Only the most extreme circumstances can provide ground for abortion, which should be undertaken only in response to otherwise unresolvable dilemmas" (p. 176f. [not in the first edition]). When the mother's physical health is in jeopardy, her actual humanity is of more value than that of the unborn's potential for it. Practically all ethicists agree to

abortion in this situation, "converting all absolute stances into relative ones" (p. 177). In the revised edition, Jones discusses abortion in the cases of rape and incest. In rape the rights of the actual person, the mother, again take precedence over the rights of the potential person. In the case of incest, he agrees with Norman Geisler that we should not allow evil to blossom under the name of a potential good.

Jones' interest in abortion concerns abortion for genetic reasons—when there is fetal abnormality. He allows abortion in the extreme situation of severe fatal deformity combined with a family situation in which a host of adverse social conditions may lead to an inability to cope. Moreover, in such a case there must be no alternatives such as institutionalization or adoption (which are sometimes prevented by feelings of guilt by the mother over relinquishing the child). The deformity must be extreme so that the fetus has no potential personal qualities. Down's Syndrome or pregnancies affected by German measles do not qualify, therefore. But relevant cases might be found with an anencephalic fetus (in which major brain centers are lacking), the rare Lesch-Nyham syndrome, or Tay-Sachs disease. The criterion is the normativeness of the family in that even in these extreme cases abortion is permissible only where the family cannot cope with the challenge.

On the other hand, when the decision to abort becomes merely one of the mother's decision, the integrity of the family and the reciprocity of its members is violated as well as the wholeness in her life. Decisions to abort because of defects of the fetus violate the dignity of humanity and reduce human worth to biological criteria of wholeness. Although responsibility entails making ethical decisions rather than merely allowing natural forces to have their way, malformed fetuses are not generally the result of human irresponsibility; and we should avoid the temptation of undue activism to eliminate or rectify fetal deformity. Here we are reminded of our less than godlike status.

Brave New People and the Abortion Debate

In placing the controversy over *Brave New People* in the context of the abortion debate, we are reminded of the intimate relationship of justice and truth. The critics of the book who tried to stifle its publication have a praiseworthy commitment to justice for human life as they understand it. But a commitment to justice must also be a commitment to truth and respect for the processes by which truth is disclosed. Ability to share ideas broadly through the printed page is an important process of truth. Pressure upon publishers who print viewpoints which differ from our own is not a respect for the process of truth.

Publishers need not print the works of all viewpoints; certain publishers represent certain communities, including faith communities. Evangelical publishers may legitimately seek to serve those authors who belong to the evangelical community. But Gareth Jones not only belongs to such a community, but his work manifests clear understanding and commitment to the doctrinal standards of the evangelical movement, including the forms of religious knowledge. His book is a careful application of the principles of evangelical doctrine to a sphere of human behavior for which he has understanding. The only significant objection to his book must be found in the consequences of his thought, not in its foundations, which are evangelical. His temperate response to his opponents is a further sign of genuine Christianity (I Jn. 3:10) not obvious in this context, I fear, in some of his opponents. The damage of voluntary groups stifling the expression of members of their community can have a negative impact on truth comparable to public censorship. A characteristic of the prophet is one

who criticizes the accepted positions of the majority or of powerful minorities in his or her community. Justice needs the voices of prophets, and we must be careful that we do not yield to the pressures of powerful groups to stifle them. The community then can judge for itself who are the true prophets.

The abortion controversy is strangely marked by volatile emotions. High ethical stakes are combined with the ambiguities which lie at the very foundation of all positions in defining the nature of unborn human life. Excess zeal for the truth of one's position and defensive hostility against opposing views may reflect, as H. Richard Niebuhr noted about the Fundamentalist movement, not an excess of faith but rather a deficiency of faith, even in proponents highly motivated by piety and justice. Consciousness of ambiguity at the foundations of one's argument can lead to efforts to prevent the ambiguity from rising to the surface. Obstructing the publication of contrary viewpoints is a form of prevention, as is pressure to make one's own position the official position of various institutions (Wheaton College is one of the evangelical organizations which recently have rejected such pressure). Vilification of opponents and misrepresentation of their position are other forms of preventing examination of the weaknesses of one's own position.

In the face of such threatening ambiguity one may seek a false security by magnifying the religious character of one's position. Then the adversaries oppose not only truth but God. All the zeal of religious defense then can be used in defense of the particular position. Thus Jones, despite all other evidence to the contrary, receives the accusation of not being an evangelical or a Christian; and he or his position is described with the terms of satanic and reprobate. Jones may appear particularly dangerous because he does not fit the stereotype of the human centered, individualistic opponent that the critics' teaching presents.

The lack of the discernment of genuine ambiguity also arises in a bipolar view of the world, in which as Jones notes, his "critics recognize only two positions on abortion: the absolute protection of all fetal life, and abortion on demand." If a position does not fit the former, it must fit the latter; and if the holder of the position does not admit this characteristic, he or she is being superficial, inconsistent, or devious (p. xiii).

Ambiguities on Both Sides

The process of truth, however, demands that all ambiguities be brought to the light and examined. And there are important ambiguities in the position represented by Jones' critics. The following items are not presented as arguments against the critics' position on human life and abortion, but as areas requiring serious public discussion:

1. Scripture does not deal with the topic of abortion. The effort to use Scripture to establish the beginning of human life at conception has important difficulties in light of valid hermeneutical principles regarding due attention to the nature, function, and purpose of the passages involved, whether the materials be poetic or historical. Furthermore, a different theme in Scripture associating human life and spirit with breath would seem to connect personhood with birth at the latest or at the earliest with the development of the respiratory capacity near the end of the second trimester; but this argument has similar hermeneutical problems. The one passage which deals with the unborn in a legal context, Exodus 21:22-25, has been exeged differently so as to give the fetus either equal or unequal protection. In fact there are cases of the same evangelical Old Testament scholar having published articles defending each interpretation. Unfortunately, the text is unclear as to whether a miscarriage or an induced premature birth is in-

involved and to whom the "permanent harm" applies. There thus is need for public discussion of what are the most basic assumptions from an evangelical point of view; and if the most basic assumptions need public probing, certainly then do the consequences drawn from them. The different arguments for the beginning of human personhood appear in reality to be natural law arguments; while this is valid, the holders should be aware of the more finite basis of their position. Some proponents of the critics' position in the light of this ambiguity have disparaged the importance of the question of when personhood begins. This position is weakened, however, if the strong deontological claim from personhood beginning at conception is replaced by an argument that no human intervention should take place because of a traditional fatalism about the mysteries of the reproduction process.

2. When those who hold the position that the fetus is a full human person from the time of conception justify abortion to save the life of the mother, they are, in terms of their position, defending the taking of an innocent life. This appears to violate a basic tenet of Christian social ethics, and it could open the door to further weighing of innocent human life against innocent human life.

3. An ethicist recently argued that there is no life after death on the grounds that science shows that consciousness is connected to brain waves. Is not the same biological reductionism present when it is argued that personhood (or soul) begins at conception because "science shows that human life begins at the moment of conception?"

4. The reluctance to deal with the difficult exceptional cases where the rights of the fetus conflict with the rights of the born is a further ambiguity. Often the statistical rareness of such cases is pointed out. The strong condemnation of Jones' case is thus hard to understand because the very limited exceptions that he allows also add minutely to the number of abortions.

5. There appears to be a lack of sophistication regarding social-psychological factors. For example, the argument for adoption as an alternative can be a rationalistic posture insensitive to the difficulty of giving up a child once bonding through birth has occurred. Similarly, there is insufficient understanding of the trauma of carrying the offspring resulting from rape or incest.

The critics' position on abortion might still be the best position even with these ambiguities. We are not making a critique of that position but rather making a critique of a critique. A view of the fallibility of human reason and the unique character of divine revelation demands greater humility with respect to our positions and continual self-criticism. Preventing the possibility of the expression of other viewpoints does not encourage such re-examination.

Jones' position also has significant ambiguities. Is it coherent to speak of different degrees of the actuality of personhood (with consequential different worth when confronted with the claims of the born) and still speak of that life being a person throughout the reproductive cycle? Can one be a person without the full status of personhood? If the basic claims of those in a family outweigh those of a fetus with which it cannot cope, why then does therapeutic abortion also depend upon the fetus being devoid of the potentiality of personhood? Jones speaks about the process of the actualization of personhood continuing into young adulthood. A possibility of undercutting the life claims of infants is thus created, although he himself does not use the conceptual framework in that way. Likewise, when human personhood is defined by empirical categories, there is a possibility created, although not supported by Jones, of persons with severe disabilities after birth

being denied the full protection as human beings. The significance of birth requires firmer attention than he provides, because of the absence of biblical or theological grounds for any doubt of the presence of full human status after birth. Thus there is an epistemological question that causes the issue of abortion to differ from such issues as the Jewish Holocaust, South Africa, or slavery in which there is no possible doubt if the nature of human life involved.

The Need for Open Discussion

The abortion question is full of assumptions and issues which need full discussion. Truth must be pursued because the stakes involve basic claims of life and community. If a position is true, open discussion and probing by those sensitive to Scripture, theology, and the realities of human life can only strengthen it.

Will the opposition to this book discourage others from speaking openly on these issues? It appears rather that a diversity of evangelical viewpoints is again appearing. Frank Anthony Spina, Old Testament professor at Seattle Pacific University, in this journal called for an advance from the options which have been dominating the abortion debate. A broad presentation of options is made available in a recent

book by Robert N. Wennberg, a philosopher at Westmont College: *Life in the Balance: Exploring the Abortion Controversy* (Eerdmans, 1985). Perhaps now reappearing, after a seeming silence in the debate following upon the Roe vs. Wade United States Supreme Court decision, is the diverse yet sound thinking on medical ethics supplied by evangelicals several years ago, such as in *Birth Control and the Christian*, edited by Walter O. Spitzer and Carlyle L. Saylor (1969), and the articles on medical ethics in the *Baker Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, edited by Carl Henry (1973).

Out of the shadow of the attempts to stifle this book comes the hope that many committed to God's truth and justice will delve into these concerns and have the courage to speak openly. The title "Brave New people" originally was a take-off on the "Brave New World" of biological and technological reductionism of Aldous Huxley's novel. It represented those who in the face of that challenge frankly pursue the bioethical questions from a biblically informed perspective. Whether or not one agrees with all of his position, appreciation should be offered to both Jones and Eerdmans for their contribution to the discussion of these issues. Our hope is that through further open and honest exchange, God might mold brave new people better prepared to deal with the emerging issues of bioethics.

Abortion: Four Reviews

Life in the Balance: Exploring the Abortion Controversy

by Robert N. Wennberg (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984, 192 pp., \$7.95). Reviewed by Richard H. Bube, Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Stanford University.

There are few books on the controversial ethical issues—especially a complex issue such as the abortion debate—that grip the reader's interest and call for continuous stimulating interaction as well as this book by Robert N. Wennberg, Professor of Philosophy at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California. Time and again the author cuts through the confusions of rhetoric, the misleading implications of naive thinking, and the temptation to present an emotional, ideological position, to provide the reader with a thought-provoking and well-balanced analysis of the various theories and ethical positions that have been proposed to deal with the abortion issue. By publishing this book together with the recent re-issuing of D. Gareth Jones' *Brave New People*, Eerdmans has made a major contribution to the abortion debate. Both books deserve serious reading and consideration by all Christians.

In three initial chapters Wennberg sets the stage for the discussion to follow, in order to achieve his purpose of providing a systematic moral evaluation of the abortion issue, combining the most effective contributions available from professional philosophy with a theological tradition that is orthodox and biblically based. Growing out of a course on "The Morality of Killing," given at Westmont College, the book argues that "biblical and theological considerations do not narrowly limit the position open to us," and seeks to formulate its arguments in a form useful not

only to evangelical Christians but also to the secular community.

He points out that considering the implications of an ethical theory is one of the first steps in evaluating it. In particular, if a person is morally compelled to reject the implications of a particular theory, then it is also necessary to reject the theory that leads to those implications. Similarly, if one is led to act in a certain way in response to authority, one must be sure that the action does not conflict with one's "persistent and deeply felt moral convictions." In all such considerations, however, the Christian community must consistently maintain that abortion is a moral issue, not simply a social or utilitarian issue.

Wennberg explores the principal factors that have contributed to making an abortion such a serious social problem today: (1) great improvements in safety with decrease in seriousness of the procedures, (2) a number of significant reasons for which women may be led to seek an abortion, and (3) the fact that abortion involves ending the life of what is at least a potential person. The author promptly avoids some of the confusing circumlocutions that confound discussions of abortion. He is clear from the start that the fetus at any stage is indeed alive, and is unquestionably a case of human life; certainly abortion terminates a human biological life.

In several places in the book the author emphasizes the difficulty of maintaining any essential difference between a fetus before birth and an infant after birth. Both are "subcortical" organisms, i.e., it is not until the tenth day after birth that the neocortex, that part of the brain responsible for the higher mental functions, shows signs of change. Thus the fetus and the infant have similar claims to life since both are subcortical creatures, but at the same time efforts to build a case on

fetal behavior like thumb-sucking, feeding response, etc. are not the final evidence often argued, since the same responses can be found in an anencephalic, which has no chance of developing into a person.

No discussion of abortion can be complete without an evaluation of such questions as, "Is the fetus a person?" and what is the role of the "soul" in these considerations? Although acknowledging that the answers to these questions may play a significant role in these considerations, the author also suggests that they may not play the ultimate role often ascribed to them, i.e., "the abortion issue would not be settled by a simple determination of whether the fetus is a person." One of the problems in using the concept of "person" revolves around whether one who has the potential for rationality is intended, or one who has the actuality of rationality.

To be sure, the biological basis for personal life is developing as the fetus grows, but personal life itself does not emerge in the womb at all, nor will it begin to emerge until some time after birth, when the socialization process begins. . . . If an acquired rational capacity is the mark of personhood, then infants are not persons. Thus whereas both fetuses and newborn infants possess *biological* human life, neither one yet possesses *personal* human life. (p. 35).

In the development that follows, Wennberg essentially equates the terms "human person" and the "image of God," and presents a useful analysis of what is meant by speaking of a fetus "having a soul" and concludes that one may well conclude that a soul is not some immaterial part of a human being, and that the contention that souls are intrin-

sically immortal is essentially non-Christian. This portion of his discussion, particularly in view of the "gradualist" position he later advocates, would be assisted if he did speak continually of souls as something persons "have," but rather of something that persons "are," systems properties of the whole human being. His conclusion is that "the question of whether fetuses have immortal souls is essentially irrelevant to the abortion debate."

The author then considers in detail the various theories that have been advanced to relate the "right to life" to some decisive moment such as conception, implantation, human appearance, viability, beginning of brain development, attainment of sentience, and birth. Such "decisive moment theories" are in contrast with "gradualist" theories, which claim that becoming a human person with a strong right to life is a gradual process extending over an appreciable period of time. In the course of this discussion, Wennberg deals forthrightly with such key biblical passages as Psalm 139:13-16 and Jeremiah 1:5, often supposed to provide key insights into the nature of the fetus and the permissibility of abortion, and concludes that "these verses, then, do not teach—either directly or by implication—that the zygote or fetus is a person, an individual fully in the image of God."

The author also deals effectively with the "fallacy of the continuum," the argument that since a newborn infant clearly has the right to life, and since there is no clearcut moment of conception, then it follows that "there is no difference between a newborn infant who has a right to life and a newly fertilized ovum." His treatment of each of the "decisive moments" is always to the point, clearly setting forth the positions on each side and driving to the heart of the matter.

Three chapters then examine the major principles that have been proposed to provide guidelines for abortion considerations: the actuality principle, the potentiality principle, and the species principle. The way in which he unravels the complexities of each of these principles, deftly showing their strengths and weaknesses, is nothing short of beautiful. As a reviewer I am tempted to describe many of the vital insights, but, alas, review space is short and I must leave this enjoyment to the reader. When all is said, the actuality principle (the right to life comes only when full personhood has been actualized) leads inevitably to the conclusion that infants do not have the right to life, a conclusion totally incompatible with the Judeo-Christian tradition. This consideration leads to the key conclusion:

Indeed, the only way to have a morally permissive position on abortion is to deny that infants have a right to life, for as soon as one holds that infanticide is intrinsically objectionable, abortion will inevitably be rendered problematic and morally risky (p. 91).

The potentiality principle affirms that "a right to life belongs not only to persons but to all who in the course of the normal un-

folding of their intrinsic potential will become persons." After carefully laying out a path between the various problems associated with this principle, Wennberg finally arrives at what he calls "the gradualist variant of the potentiality principle." It is also not free from all problems, but it moves in the direction that seems most consistent to the author.

It holds that the right to life gradually becomes stronger as the newly fertilized ovum develops into a newborn infant, that there is no decisive all-or-nothing moment, that just as there is a continuous and gradual line of physical development from conception to birth (and beyond) so there is a continuous and gradual development in the right of life. This means that as the pregnancy progresses the reasons required to justify an abortion have to become increasingly more substantial (pp. 112, 113).

Finally the author considers the species principle, which specifies the same strong right to life to all members of the human species. This he concludes, after his usual careful analysis, to be deficient since it gives full moral standing to those "with no potential whatsoever for personal existence."

Wennberg then examines the various considerations necessary for actually making a decision concerning abortion. These include the degree of the woman's responsibility for the pregnancy, the extent of the burden the woman will have to bear as a result of her pregnancy, and the degree of fetal development. He then explores the possible grounds usually advanced to argue for an abortion. Throughout he is careful to be clear as possible about what we mean by "the right to life" and on what this right depends.

He recognizes that moral decisions concerning abortion are not synonymous with legal decisions and provides a penetrating and helpful analysis of the difference between these two kinds of decisions. Certainly the political debate focuses on whether abortion should be legalized or criminalized. He explores a dimension of the problem not often discussed:

It would seem, then, that the advocate of restrictive abortion legislation not only has to show that the fetus has a right to life but also has to show that the right to life includes the right to use another's body for life-sustaining purposes against that person's will (p. 155).

This leads him to a careful analysis of Judith Jarvis Thomson's "Case of the Famous Violinist" and its relevance for abortion questions. One of his conclusions is that the illustration "serves to undercut an assumption that often leads to an uncompromising anti-abortion position—namely, the assumption that if fetuses have a person's right to life, then abortion is murder." From this approach the author argues strongly that we ought to

use moral persuasion to decrease the incidence of abortion, but not legal coercion.

Finally Wennberg provides a summary and some reflections on the various dimensions of the issue. He holds that conception marks "the beginning of moral standing, the beginning of a right to life, the beginning of a unique center of emerging value." This right to life increases in strength as the fetus grows and develops, following the gradualist thesis. Such a position does not demand moral neutrality with respect to abortion, but rather is fully consistent with a view that sees abortion as morally objectionable. He rejects the common argument that "abortion involves a conflict between the woman's right to bodily self-determination and the fetus's right to life," because the fetus's right to life does not entitle the continued use of another's body to sustain that life. While recognizing that the moral argument is often kept socially alive because of the debate on the legal argument, still Wennberg feels impelled to conclude that we must uphold both the morally objectionable nature of abortion and the right of the pregnant woman to make the abortion decision.

It is clear that a genuine concern for the issues involved in abortion leads one to recognize the intricate complexity of a justifiable and authentic evaluation of those issues. The author is well aware that he has provided no simple set of answers. But this is exactly the best thing he can possibly do: by cutting away the false arguments and the misleading caricatures, he opens the way for Christians dedicated to following Christ in faith to face the issue in their own lives, in the lives of others, and in the society in which we live.

This review was written originally for the Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation.

Rachel Weeping: The Case Against Abortion by James T. Burtchzell (Harper & Row, 1984, 381 pp., \$10.95). Reviewed by Christine D. Pohl, MATS student in Social Ethics, Gordon-Conwell Seminary.

In a collection of five essays, Burtchzell carefully analyzes the abortion controversy. He compares aspects of the abortion issue with the language, presuppositions and actions of the Nazi Holocaust and of the Dred Scott Decision on the status of American slaves. He further compares and connects abortion with infanticide. His title essay examines studies done by Linda Bird Francke and Katrina Maxtone-Graham on women and men who had direct experience with abortion. Burtchzell uses their recorded interviews to isolate certain recurring themes running through decisions to abort. He examines, challenges and occasionally demolishes the major pro-choice arguments.

The length and detail of this book by a Roman Catholic scholar at Notre Dame make it appropriate for well-educated lay persons or students. Burtchzell's skillful presentation is restrained yet profoundly moving. Although the basic comparisons of abortion to

the Holocaust, slavery and infanticide are familiar, the author moves beyond superficial observations to note very disturbing fundamental similarities. His conclusions from the study of the interviews are both perceptive and unsettling. Especially interesting are his comments on the use and misuse of language in the debate. His strong pro-life bias is evident throughout the book and occasionally results in repetition and overstatement of the position. However, any minor weaknesses are far outweighed by the exceptional quality of the writing and the insights Burtchaell brings to the issue.

Abortion and the Christian: What Every Believer Should Know

by John Jefferson Davis (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1984, 125 pp., \$4.95). Reviewed by Frank Anthony Spina, Professor of Old Testament, Seattle Pacific University.

John Jefferson Davis takes on the complex problem of abortion by calling attention to the current American *Zeitgeist* (we have evolved from traditionalism to permissiveness), rehearsing the ethical options available (Fletcher's situationalism, Geisler's hierarchicalism, Brown's absolutism), providing information about the medical realities (abortion is far more dangerous than commonly believed), working in biblical texts (personhood exists from conception, therefore abortion is unbiblical), advocating abortion only when the mother's life is threatened (which is rare), and calling for a constitutional amendment (the Human Life Amendment).

Doubtless many who read this book will want the author's arguments to succeed. But will thoughtful Christians be any less frustrated when, in any end, they are still faced with the simplistic and largely ideological options of "pro-choice" or "pro-life?"

It seems there would have been no problem had not America veered from "traditional" values and replaced them with "permissive" ones. But this is argument by "labeling;" nothing is right or wrong because it is traditional instead of permissive. Sexism, racism and materialism are traditional in our society! Davis allows that abortion is a complex moral issue with psychological, social, medical and political dimensions, but he hardly seems to take that seriously. What is complex about a point of view that abortion is wrong except when the mother's life is threatened? The psychological, social and political factors which make the abortion question an anguishing one are largely swept aside. Thus, were it not for the "personal goals and career plans" of women, abortion would not be so problematic. The "complexity" seems primarily to be a function of women balking at the agenda males have set for them.

Nor is it clear how a review of the medical dangers involving abortion is helpful. If David is correct about this, might not one conclude either that we need medical procedures or that abortion will be ethical when it becomes less dangerous?

In my opinion, Davis is weakest when appealing to the Bible. To be sure, he cannot be faulted for emphasizing the biblical concept of *imago dei* or the many texts which underscore the sanctity of life. Nor should one quarrel with his contention that life is life in the biblical tradition, whether pre- or post-natal. The problem is rather that he strains so much to make the biblical case that he loses credibility; in addition, he glosses over the complexity of the biblical witness.

Are we really to believe that the disciples dismissed the children huddling around Jesus because they did not regard them as persons "in the whole sense?" How much are we to make of poetic statements about pre-natal life in the Psalms, or of John the Baptist leaping for joy in the womb?

More importantly, does establishing that the Bible teaches the sanctity of life conclude the discussion? How are we to incorporate those texts in which life, even innocent life, is sacrificed to some larger purpose (e.g., Joshua)? Or, why is it presumably legitimate for Christians to derive a "just war" position from the Bible notwithstanding its pro-life slant (are there any just wars in which innocents, including children, are truly safe?), but for them to be limited to a single absolutist position on abortion? There are biblical statements which strongly suggest pacifism, yet that has always been a minority position with the Church, even among those who would be adamantly against abortion. Davis cites the biblical text, but does not *engage* it.

As a fairly predictable contribution to the so-called pro-life side, Davis does little to advance the abortion debate beyond the current options, which continue to be unsatisfactory to a great number of Christians. It will probably take a "paradigm shift" to move beyond this impasse, something which Davis does not provide.

Our Right to Choose: Toward a New Ethic of Abortion

by Beverly Wildung Harrison (Beacon Press, 1983, 334 pp., \$9.95). Reviewed by Esther Byle Bruland, Ph.D. student in Religion and Society, Drew University, co-author of *A Passion For Jesus, A Passion For Justice*.

Procreative choice for women is the centerpiece of this scholarly and impassioned work. Beverly Harrison sets forth perhaps the most rigorous ethical thinking to date to enter the abortion debate from the pro-choice perspective. In this recent work she both responds to pro-life claims and lays the foundation for what she calls a new ethic of abortion which has women's well-being as its main focus.

Harrison characterizes herself as a mixed theorist, combining utilitarian-consequentialist considerations with deontological concerns. Her major approach, however, is that of feminist liberation theology. Her work is self-consciously revisionistic, rejecting what she refers to as patriarchal, misogynistic approaches. Much of Scripture is thus set aside; rather, the ethical bases of Dr. Harrison's work

are derived from feminist-liberationist notions of justice, rights, and the good society.

This book is cast in terms of a power struggle—the struggle of women to control their procreative potential. History is viewed in terms of women being defined and confined by their reproductive capacities. In this scenario, women have suffered subservience not only to male-dominated social relations and structures, but also to their own fertility. Harrison cites historical evidence of abortion and infanticide as aspects of this struggle of women to cope with their fertility.

Harrison envisions a society characterized by procreative choice as one in which the resort to abortion is minimized. Safe and reliable contraceptives would be available to prevent unwanted pregnancy; women would take active responsibility for managing their fertility; and for those women choosing to bear children, there would be adequate economic and social supports, including daycare and fair pay.

This vision is one of the most salient aspects of the book, particularly for those who do not share Harrison's pro-choice perspective. She indicates a point of potential agreement between pro-choice and pro-life advocates concerning policies that would enhance the options open to women and so minimize the resort to abortion as a form of birth control.

Harrison, however, would retain elective abortion as an option. She insists that to deny access to legal abortions is to deny women their status as fully capable moral agents. She would shift the onus of restricting abortions from the state to pregnant women themselves. To do otherwise, according to Harrison, is to invade their bodily integrity (she apparently does not consider abortion to be such an invasion).

Toward the end of the book, Harrison turns to evaluate the morality of the act of abortion itself. She refutes the belief that human life begins at conception as a naturalistic fallacy, i.e., a transmutation of scientific findings into moral norms without ethical deliberation. She sees humanity as socially rather than biologically determined. Her question then becomes, at what point ought we to *impute* human life to the fetus? She concludes, rather arbitrarily, that while a fetus may be considered "a form of life" during early gestation, we should not consider it "a human life" until it reaches viability. In her ethic, abortions are a necessary form of birth control of last resort; early abortions are far preferable to late abortions, but the will of the pregnant woman should take precedence up until birth.

Indeed, "will" and "want" play an important role in Harrison's ethic. Control is pivotal. Her approach is so concrete and matter-of-fact that a sense of awe and welcome for the miracle of new life is absent. Rather, pregnancy is treated as a problem that can be solved.

Harrison's focus on will and control is inconsistent, however. While calling for the moral agency of women to be respected, she says little about their agency in regard to sex-

ual activity. She regards the Christian sexual ethic as patriarchal and misogynistic. In her view, abortion as an issue should not be tied to a sexual ethic. Procreative choice has to do with fertility, but not chastity.

Harrison makes an important contribution in envisioning a society characterized by procreative choice in which the anguish women often experience in connection with their fertility and the resort to elective abortion are minimized. Her concern for the well-being of women and her desire that every birth be welcome are genuine. Harrison rightly stresses the material, social, and emotional hardships incurred through unwanted pregnancies. She fails, however, to acknowledge the psychological, emotional, and spiritual damage suffered by women (and their mates) as a result of choosing abortion. Nor does she acknowledge the loss of choice experienced when women are pressured into having abortions. Her concern for women's well-being, though genuine, does not go far enough. It must extend to the welfare of the fetus and to the intangible aspects of women's lives.

BOOK REVIEWS

Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective 2 vols. by James M. Gustafson (University of Chicago Press, 1981, 1984, \$25.00 (vol. 2)). Reviewed by Donald G. Bloesch, Professor of Theology, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

In this work, James Gustafson, professor at the University of Chicago Divinity School and one of the most articulate and probing ethicists of our day, presents the case for a radically theocentric ethics. He readily acknowledges his indebtedness to H. Richard Niebuhr, his teacher at the Yale Divinity School, who tried to make a place in theology for God's majesty and power. He also shares Niebuhr's appreciation for Ernst Troeltsch, the theologian of historicism, who maintained that our religious beliefs and moral values are inextricably bound up in the web of history and culture. But while Niebuhr made a valiant effort to transcend relativism by a commitment to "the absolute faithfulness of God-in-Christ," (*Christ and Culture*, p. 239), it is an open question whether Gustafson can avert this peril.

Because he approaches ethics from a contextualist or historicist perspective, it follows that there are no absolute, timeless truths but only historically and culturally conditioned insights that need to be tested scientifically. Indeed, he claims that not only culture but also nature is a source of moral wisdom. This is why it is necessary to draw on both the natural and social sciences in any assessment of theological and ethical assertions.

The author's approach is theocentric because he holds that human values and goals must be subordinated to trust and wonder in the God whom he defines as "the ultimate ordering power in the universe." God does not exist for the sake of humanity, but humanity can serve this power who both bears down on us and sustains us.

At the same time, Gustafson is also admittedly naturalistic. He sees God not as a transcendent personal being who intervenes in nature and history but instead as an impersonal power (or powers) that works through the processes and patterns of nature and history. His court of appeal, moreover, is not divine revelation but human experience that is tested by the scientific method. The credibility of theological assertions rests on their consistency with the evidence about the universe provided by the natural and behavioral sciences. Revelation is simply the awakening of religious sensibility to the mystery and wonder of Nature; it definitely is not the communication of meaning by a living God who confronts people personally in a divine-human encounter.

Given this radical departure from biblical faith, it is not surprising to find Gustafson using "God" and "Nature" interchangeably, though he resists identifying the Orderer of nature with the works of nature. His position is remarkably akin to that of ancient Stoicism, which practically divinized Nature. It seems that Gustafson's God is the soul or spirit of the world rather than the Creator and Lord of the world. Like the Stoics, he calls for a courageous resignation to and cooperation with the powers that are at work in the cosmos. He speaks highly of natural piety, which is characterized by awe, reverence and gratitude for what is. The physical orderliness of Nature becomes the paradigm for the moral order of humanity.

In this scenario, biblical authority fades into significance. The Bible is a source of support for Gustafson only as a record of the religious experiences of a particular people in history. We can learn from this record how people in another day responded to the awesome powers that shape the cosmos, but we cannot be bound to their myths, which are the product of a particular historical matrix and are now shown to be outdated, though not irrelevant. Gustafson almost completely ignores the Old Testament, though he does appreciate Jesus as exemplifying "theocentric piety and fidelity." At the same time, he rejects the Jesus Christ of orthodoxy—the preexistent Son of God made flesh—as well as the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. He also denies any kind of life after death and is content to face the future with the courage to live and endure in a world of uncertainty.

The God that Gustafson upholds is inaccessiblely remote, and this has led some of his critics to accuse him of deism. Yet his God is not detached from the universe but is actively at work within it reshaping and remodeling it. All we can know about this God, however, are "signs" or "signals" of the divine ordering of nature. We cannot even be assured that this God is one whose essence is love, for Gustafson points to the destructive as well as the beneficent powers at work in nature.

The goal of ethical action seems to be the common good, but the precise content of this good is arrived at through a partnership of religious tradition with the natural and behavioral sciences. Even then, it is a good that

pertains only to our particular period in history, and it may well change when circumstances change.

What Gustafson has given us is a refurbished natural theology that makes a place for law, even for rules, but not for the gospel, which celebrates God's act of reconciliation and redemption in Jesus Christ. For Gustafson, the foundational criterion for ethical action is the Book of Nature as seen through the eyes of the empirical sciences.

The author identifies with the Reformed tradition because of its emphasis on the sovereignty and glory of God, but he admits that he is very selective in what he chooses from it. He appreciates Calvin's perception of the inseparability of Nature and God (though he misreads this), but he rejects Calvin's Christology and high view of biblical authority.

Karl Barth is seen more as a foil than as a positive support. In contradistinction to Barth, he tells us that his model is not "one of God personally relating to human beings as persons in the spheres of their moral activity" but rather "one of powers that are impersonally ordering the world of which human activity is a part."

Gustafson can be commended for perceiving the importance of the historical and cultural context in ethical action, but he has gone too far by losing sight of the transcendent ground for Christian moral decision. In his view, there is no sharp distinction between the natural and moral order. Revelation is reduced to insight into the divine ordering of human experience; piety is reinterpreted as awe and wonder before the mystery of Nature; theology is transmuted into an enterprise that ventures to say some things about God on the basis of an examination of our affective responses to the world; God is no longer transcendent Lord and Savior of the world but "the power and ordering of life in nature which sustains and limits human activity." At the price of being relevant to the world of science and philosophy, Gustafson depersonalizes the God of Scripture and ends with a philosophical construct that may well arouse the curiosity of the world but certainly not command its allegiance.

Unmasking the New Age by Douglas R. Groothuis (InterVarsity Press, 1986, 192pp., \$6.95). Reviewed by Ronald Enroth, Professor of Sociology, Westmont College.

The brochure describes a weekend workshop which will enable participants to deepen their capacity to serve others. The approach of the workshop emphasizes "a trust in intuitive or inner wisdom" and "a connectedness to universal life force or spirit." Another four-day seminar, "The Art of Empowerment," is billed as "a mode of facilitation/guiding/healing that is highly empowered, profoundly growthful, and full of joy."

Such invitations to experiences of human "transformation" are indicative of the proliferating influence of New Age thinking in contemporary society. On the surface these opportunities for human betterment seem in-