

# Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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by Gary North

*Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break into pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it (Psalm 94:3-7).*

In the appropriate year of 1984 comes the equally appropriately titled book, *Brave New People*, written by a New Zealand professor of anatomy and medical ethicist, D. Gareth Jones, Ph.D. He claims he is a Christian. His book was published by Inter-Varsity Press, which also claims to be Christian. The book is a very clever defense of the ethical legitimacy of "therapeutic" abortion.

After spending six chapters discussing the admittedly difficult ethical issues relating to genetic manipulation, the author then introduces his chapter on the not at all confusing moral issue of abortion, the execution of the legally innocent. I call this the **"confuse, then corrupt" technique**. It has been used successfully for a century and a half by theologically liberal "higher critics" of the Bible. He warns us that "there are no slick answers" (p. 7), which is the typical approach of the morally confused (or morally perverse) but self-proclaimed "honest Christian" who is about to abandon the clear teachings of the Bible.

He wants Christian parents to make "a responsible decision" (p. 157). It is, of course, a "weighty" decision (*ibid.*) He wants us to place the fate of the unborn on a set of cosmic scales that God forbids us to use. Of course, "The issues are much more complex than is generally imagined" (p. 158). (Be prepared: when Ph.D.-holding Christian "ethicists" start warning you about "complex moral questions," you are about to be told you can safely violate the Bible's clear teachings.) He asks that all-too-familiar question: "When does the fetus become a person?" (p. 162). When you call an unborn infant a "fetus," you have already prejudiced the case. You have begun to answer the question. The answer, predictably, is that Christians just can't agree on this question, so let's use the alternatives to the Bible that "logic" provides.

### No Absolutes

He cites the Roman Catholic Church's absolute prohibition against abortion. "The major attraction of the Roman Catholic position for Christians is its high view of human life. It has the strengths of all absolute positions and it places the unborn directly in God's will. In practice, however, issues are not so simple, and while we may wish to believe that abortion is always morally wrong, dilemmas abound" (p. 167). In short, **moral decisions are sometimes costly, and certain "ethicists" recommend not paying the price.**

In a remarkable abandonment of both logic and morality, he then accuses the Roman Catholic position of irresponsibility. He summarizes the implications of the position: "A fetus, once conceived, has the right to develop; this is an expression of natural forces allotted to the mother by nature. Taken to its logical conclusion, this leaves no room for human responsibility. Instead, the erratic and impersonal forces of the natural environment are allowed sway. I do not consider this accords with the biblical emphasis on the responsibility God has bestowed on mankind to control our environment" (*ibid.*).

He argues, incredibly, that by teaching people never to abort the unborn, the Church has removed the question of abortion from the realm of ethics. On the contrary, the Church has reaffirmed the ethical decision. It is not a question of "to abort or not to abort under which complex, difficult, dilemma-filled situations?" It is a question of "to abort or not to abort under **any** situation?" The Church has called abominable the position defended by D. Gareth Jones, Ph.D., and he feels the heat. But it is nothing compared with the heat that he will face approximately ten seconds after his death, unless he abandons the position he maintains in this most abominable book.

He says that "Abortion for therapeutic reasons demands a serious response by those professing to follow Christ" (p. 183). Indeed, it does. The serious response is: "Don't." The serious reason is: "God says not to."

### The "Potential for Personhood"

He says that "each fetus is a human life, representing a potential for personhood early in its development. From this early stage it is a potential person, and from about eight weeks onwards has a recognizable individuality as manifested by its circulation and brain activity. It is well on the road to full personhood, and for most practical purposes may be considered to be a person. Nevertheless, I do not wish to draw a line between when a fetus *is not a person* and when a fetus *is a person*. Throughout the whole of its development the fetus is potentially an actual person, and deserves the respect and treatment due to a being with this sort of potential" (p. 174). This is medical **ethics**? This is a call to responsible decision-making?

If Mary, a virgin who found herself pregnant, had decided to "take the easy way out" and had aborted her "fetus" in, say, the first month of her pregnancy, would she have eliminated a true Person? Or just a potential Person? Dr. D. Gareth Jones offers no principle that would give us a clear indication. Instead, he offers language that would have confused her, had she not understood the ethics of the Bible.

It gets worse. "A fetus is part of a more extensive continuum, the end-result of which is the emergence of an individual human being manifesting, under normal circumstances,

the myriad facets that go to make up full personhood. The processes of this continuum, however, do not begin at conception; neither do they end at birth" (p. 175). The **continuum**: here is a key idea in the biological analysis of D. Gareth Jones. First, "A new-born baby is a very incomplete human being" (*ibid.*). Second, "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 early rather than later during gestation, but that is a biomedical and not an ethical decision" (pp. 175-76). Not an ethical decision? Strictly a biomedical decision? You mean a strictly **technological** decision? This is precisely what he means. The official justification of this monstrous book is that it is bringing Christian ethics to bear on biomedical technology, but in the end it imposes the satanic ethics of abortion on Christian consciences in the name of autonomous biomedical technology.

But what about the unstated third but obvious point? What about a definitional "continuum" for personhood which does not "end at birth," to quote Dr. Jones? In short, **what about euthanasia**, "mercy killing"? Is this, too, strictly a biomedical decision? Dr. Jones is not about to say . . . not in 1984. Maybe in 1994. And you know what his answer will have to be, if he remains consistent to his stated presuppositions in this book. It will no doubt be a "difficult" answer, based as it is on "complex" issues. But when he gives his answer, pray that no civil government accepts it, and also pray that you are not 85 years old and no longer fully competent mentally or economically.

The arguments he offers in support of a family's decision to abort a child can be used equally well by a family looking for excuses to murder a senile adult. The person is unable to learn. He is unable to take care of himself. He may create terrible psychological burdens for other family members. In short, caring for him is costly, and there is no economic payoff at the end of the road. Such a person is the economic and psychological equivalent of a highly retarded child. He is, in terms of Dr. Jones' analysis, an **expendable elderly fetus**. Kill him. But do it lovingly, of course.

### The Quality of Life

He includes a section, "Possible grounds for therapeutic abortion." Biomedically possible, yes. Morally possible, no. But this is not what he concludes. What about the mental health of the mother? Maybe. He is not quite sure. This is "a difficult realm" (p. 177). "These are not easy issues, and I do not believe there are easy answers to them" (p. 178). "Fetal preservation is generally the course of choice in Christian terms. . . ." (*ibid.*). **Generally**. Meaning, in short, not always.

Then what are the grounds of decision-making? By what measure do we "weigh" the issue of abortion? Not the Bible. Not God's inscripturated word. No, the key issue is that slickest of slick slogans of the late 1960's: **the quality of life**. He tells us this at the beginning of the book. "Biology is power over the living world, and biomedicine is power over human nature. There are numerous consequences of this, and they are already the subject of daily decision-making, namely, the quality of life we demand for the populations of technologically-advanced societies and for individuals within these societies. All other issues, whether at the commencement of life or at the end of life, revolve around this fulcrum" (p. 10). He tells us again in the chapter on abortion: "In making the decision, a balance needs to be attained between the pursuit of biological quality and the potential that a deformed child within a family holds out for that family to be humanized and to grow as a loving, human unit" (p. 179). In short, **more loving through chemical abortion**. Or to re-

verse a 1960's advertising slogan of the Monsanto Chemical Company, "Better Dying Through Chemistry." As Jones concludes: "Unfortunately some families cannot cope with such a challenge, and a compromise must be reluctantly adopted, namely, termination of the pregnancy" (*ibid.*).

Such is the quality of life when it is not defined by the Bible, in terms of the ethics of the Bible. Such is the aesthetics of the self-professed autonomous man.

### Humanism's Ethics of Sentimentality

A compromise **must** be adopted, this ethicist tells us, just so long as the decision is made **reluctantly**. This is the ethics of sentimentality, as Schlossberg has called it. "If good and evil are purely a matter of sentiment, then no action can be judged, since sentiments remain opaque to outside certification. Only the motives count, not the action. In this way sentiment, not reason or law, is determinative of right and wrong." (*Idols for Destruction*, Thomas Nelson, 1983, p. 45.) Schlossberg has identified the source of the ethics of sentiment in our day: **humanism**. "Humanism thrives on sentimentality because few religions are more dishonest in their doctrinal expressions. Unable to withstand dispassionate analysis, which would reveal its lack of foundation, it stresses feeling rather than thought. That is what makes sentimentality so vicious" (p. 46.)

The incomparable hypocrisy of D. Gareth Jones, Ph.D., is found in the closing paragraph of this chapter: "Decisions relating to the handicapped should always be difficult and will prove too onerous for some to bear. This is the knife-edge along which we walk. But as we do we should be encouraged by the prophecy of Isaiah that, ultimately, 'then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy' (Isaiah 35:5-6)" (p. 184). Not if their parents aborted them, they won't.

### Franky Schaeffer Protests

We can understand Franky Schaeffer's outrage at InterVarsity Press. He went on Pat Robertson's *700 Club* television show in the summer of 1984 and called attention to what should be obvious, namely, that it was the income from his father's books which created the economic base of InterVarsity Press in the late 1960's, and now they are using that capital base to spew out books like Ron Sider's *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* and *Brave New People*. I agree entirely with his response to all the gibberish about complex moral issues. "The real issue is simple. *What do we do now?* It is a choice, not between competing slogans and word games, right or left, but between godlessness and godliness. Between humanity and inhumanity. Between life and death. Between Joseph Fletcher [author of *Situation Ethics* - G.N.] and Jesus. Between the dignity of the individual (whether handicapped, unwanted, born or unborn) and death as a 'liberal' solution for social problems such as poverty, race, and medical costs. Between a sanctity of life ethic and the bestial gaggle of ethicists, judges, and doctors who cry for the blood of the innocent, all in the name of economics and 'compassion,' not to mention convenience. Between freedom and prosperity, or subservience, slavery, and the ever-expanding power of the welfare state." (*Bad News for Modern Man*, Crossway, 1984, p. 84.)

### A Slick Solution

Jones says, "There are no slick solutions" (p. 169). Oh, but there are. The slickest of all is the saline solution. It is this solution which burns the unborn to death. But the heat of such solutions is nothing compared to the heat which awaits the biomedical practitioners of abortion and their morally corrupt apologists. Also, the publishers of their tracts.

I suggest that we pray specifically for D. Gareth Jones and **James Sire**, the editor of InterVarsity Press. I suggest the use of Psalm 83. Such a prayer can become part of husband and wife devotionals. It can also become part of public worship by elders in churches. If time is limited, use verses 13-18 only. Continue the practice from time to time until God answers your prayer. This prayer will eventually have its stated effect. Use it.