

Playing God

by Bob Pulliam

Perhaps you have ignored the great debate over stem cell research that has gone on in the media, and in the political arena, the past few years. I can understand why. It isn't exactly the subject matter I just dream of thinking about. One problem is it's complexity, and the other is relevance (*i.e.* what does it have to do with me). I can't help you much on the first item. I don't know how they harvest the cells, and how they "program" them to do what they want them to do. However, relevance is another matter, if we are talking about "embryonic stem cell research". In this we are dealing with the destruction of human embryos. A human embryo is life C human life! Much is being said to sway you and me toward support for such destruction. Even celebrities are lobbying (as if they have the credentials to know up from down in the matter) for government dollars and our sympathies.

We are not being given the truth about this research. For example, after President Reagan passed away, the following was stated in a news release by Senator Dianne Feinstein C "This issue is especially poignant given President Reagan's passing. Embryonic stem cell research might hold the key to a cure for Alzheimer's and other terrible diseases." (found in her 04Releases/r-stemcell-ltr.htm) Compare that with, "given the lack of any serious suggestion that stem cells themselves have practical potential to treat Alzheimer's, the Reagan-inspired tidal wave of enthusiasm stands as an example of how easily a modest line of scientific inquiry can grow in the public mind to mythological proportions. ... It is a distortion that some admit is not being aggressively corrected by scientists." ("Stem Cells An Unlikely Therapy for Alzheimer's", *The Washington Post*, June 10, 2004, p A3)

Much more could be noted about misrepresentation on this subject. Most notably, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's unprecedented push for **embryonic** research to the exclusion of adult stem cell research. This in spite of the fact that adult stem cell research has shown promise of curing many forms of diabetes within the next decade. While embryonic research has not only shown no promise; but also holds great dangers of run-away cancers in human recipients.

The Real Issue...

But all of this bypasses the real issue. Destroying a life to improve the lives of others is what we are really discussing here. Embryonic research destroys a human fetus. This is nearly the same issue as that of the abortion debate. In this case embryos are produced and stored for future use, whereas in abortion the embryos were an unintended, inconvenience. No matter what the reason for producing the embryo, or the circumstances of it's destruction; we are still dealing with human life.

The Bible on This Issue...

No, the Bible does not discuss embryonic stem cell research; but it does speak of what comes to reside within the womb of the woman. In referring to the embryo and fetus, the Bible has some telling information to offer.

In the Lord's instructions to Samson's mother, she was to abstain from all of which he would eventually be prohibited from partaking (Jdgs 13:7). If he isn't a "him" until birth, or late in the pregnancy; then why was she to *abstain from the beginning*? She was not to

partake, because **he** was going to be living within her! As long as **he** was within her, she could not have what **he** was not to have during **his** life!

Luke wrote that Elizabeth had a "babe" in her womb:

ANow indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this in now the sixth month for her who was called barren. ... And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.... >For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.' " (Luke 1:36, 41, 44)

The word for "babe" in these verses is the same as that found used of Jesus after birth in Luke 2:12 & 16. It is also used of infants who were brought to Jesus, Luke 18:15; and of the infants killed by Pharaoh Acts 7:19. You might also note that the babe in Elizabeth's womb leaped "for joy". That doesn't really sound like the reaction of tissue or body organs.

We find many other references to children still within their mother. For example, after Rebekah had conceived, the record says, "the children struggled together within her" (Gen 25:22). In Genesis 16:11, Hagar was told by the Angel of the Lord that she was "with child". The word used by this angel is the same as that used in Isaiah 26:17 of a pregnancy that has come to term: "As a woman with child is in pain and cries out in her pangs, when she draws near the time of her delivery...". Luke 2:5 says of Mary that she "was with child.@

Jeremiah wrote: "Because he did not kill me from the womb, that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb always enlarged with me." (Jer 20:17) Why would his mother have been his grave rather than a specimen jar? We bury dead human beings in graves. Body tissue, however, is discarded. If the abortionist is correct, and the fetus is simply body tissue, then it would simply need to be discarded. But Jeremiah knew that human life begins in the womb! Therefore, his mother's womb would have become a "grave".

David also knew this when he wrote Psalm 139:13 - 16. David's identity was woven and established in the womb of his mother. "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.

And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them." (v16) Although he was yet "unformed", the Lord knew **him**. David obviously was not an "it" while in the womb.

Conclusion...

How will the diabetic, or the paraplegic justify destroying human life (human embryos) to better their own? Is it self defense? Is it a just punishment for crimes committed? No, they simply put the fact that it is human life out of their minds. And then on the issue of stem cell research, they will argue that the embryos in storage will probably be thrown out anyway. I don't know who will have the greater guilt C the one who stored human life on a whim to begin with; or the one who throws it away. But I do know this: destroying innocent human life is a sin. In fact, not so many years ago it was a crime that involved prison time if convicted. Oh, how far we have progressed. Our games include **playing God...**