

The Ultimate Temptation “You Will Be As Gods”

Response Paper - Introduction to Bioethics

By John Holmes

Christians face the advent of a competing savior of mankind in the new biotechnologies and nanotechnologies. The ultimate temptation used in Genesis 3:5 “*you will be as gods*” slithers again into the yearnings of humanity. Again the morally and spiritually naïve are apt to be seduced by the promise of becoming more, of improving on what it means to live as humans. The prospect that technological miracles will enhance human existence beguiles people who want to undo the damaging effects the fall (Genesis 3) has on mankind. We are told that we will experience “GOOD” if we will eat of the fruit of the super-tree of technology. To “be all that you can be” as the TV recruiting ad put it, describes our human longing. The restless discontentment that affects humans who sense the losses in their lives which resulted from the fall cries out in one deep desire, the need to have and be more. The desire is blatantly expressed in the lyrics of Harry Connick, Junior’s *Golden Ticket* and of Queen’s *I Want It All*:

*It ain't much I'm asking, if you want the truth,
Here's to the future, hear the cry of youth,
I want it all, I want it all, I want it all, and I want it now,*

We need beware of a new world based on self-centeredness instead of self-sacrifice. We need to be aware that the new technological “tree of knowledge,” like the biblical one, brings fruit laced with both good and evil. If we learn from the past, we will not focus on the promise of potential good ignoring the promise of potential evil that comes with every new bite. The potential for debasing human dignity and for destroying lives instead of enhancing lives is a very real danger. Added to the mix are the dangers of biotech and nanotech industries driven by the root of all kinds of evil, “the love of money” (1 Timothy 6:10).

I am puzzled by the many examples of a willingness to disregard the sanctity of human life and it’s God-created design which are documented in [How To Be A Christian In A Brave New World](#) by Joni Eareckson Tada and Nigel M. De S. Cameron. Why can’t people see the looming dangers to the nature of humanity? The ultimate rebellion is looming, a new techno-tower of Babel. Man seeks to become his own designer-creator through the processes of human cloning, designer babies, human harvesting, and redesigning human nature through technological innovations.

The dangers become strikingly evident when we think of what will happen as the old evils of eugenics reemerge in the minds of leftist bioethicists like Princeton University Professor, Dr. Peter Singer who sees people affected by severe disabilities as sub-humans without human or civil rights and sees nothing wrong with parents having the right to euthanize (murder) their disabled babies after birth.

His solution to people affected by severe disabilities parallels what Nazis called the “final solution,” sending people with mental and physical disabilities to extermination camps. He sees the very young with severe disabilities as sub-human and sees the older severely ill, damaged or disabled as post-human. I see Peter Singer as inhumane, a neo-Nazi madman minus the swastika. Should his views permeate pop culture, then what? What would state run universal healthcare do to people affected by disabilities? The deliberate starvation of Terri Schiavo from March 18, 2005 until she died on March 31, 2005 was a tragic and deadly shot across the bow of every disabled person living in the United States of America.

What happens when parents genetically screen their living embryos destroying all but the one “perfect” child? What happens when society again decides to drain the human gene pool of all humans that do not have strong, tall, blue-eyed blond Nordic genes? What happens when the racism of previous generations declares genetic warfare on Blacks, Asians, Latinos, or if the tables turn, on Anglos? Joni Tada and Nigel Cameron document a couple who have aborted three children after high resolution sonograms revealed genetically inherited six-fingered hands, a condition easily corrected in post-birth surgery.

What happens when a woman desiring to keep a high paying job and produce her genetic offspring through surrogate mothers brings them into the life of a family? Such is not God’s design for the family as evidenced in the story of Abraham’s surrogate-born son Ishmael. Much of the turmoil in the Middle East through the centuries to our present time results from this well-intended manipulation of God’s design for the family. Beware of fixing things contrary to God’s design. Future generations’ well-being depends on doing it right, not just getting it done any way we can. Children are not objects to be manufactured and manipulated at our convenience as our personal property. They are not toys for big girl’s amusements.

I am surprised that the ethical issues raised by emerging biotechnology and nanotechnology have created strange bedfellow partnerships between some pro-abortion feminists and pro-life Christians over ethical concerns regarding cloning and embryonic stem cell research. Leftist feminists fear the abuse of using women to produce and to harvest embryos for the economic enrichment of embryonic research industries, considering such abuse as just another way male-dominated society rapes women and strips them of their dignity. Pro-lifers with biblical world views oppose embryonic stem cell research for its abuse of both the women involved and for its abuse and destruction of the embryos themselves, seeing each embryo as a unique human being bearing the image of God. It is barbaric, immoral and inhumane to take the life of someone else involuntarily in order to improve one’s own life.

Thankfully, the Bush administration helped support an amendment by Congressman Dr. David Weldon which was attached to a bill that funded the Patent and Trademark Office to make it illegal to use federal dollars to issue patents on human organisms. In spite of being removed by the Senate under pressure from a well-funded lobby of the biotech industry, it was signed into law after being restored by the Joint Conference Committee of the House and Senate. This is a significant blow, but only a first step toward countering the desire of biotech companies to patent, license, market, buy, and sell human organisms as mere commodities. Human life is not a commodity to buy and sell, at least, not yet. The cultural wars continue. Is there a new form of human slave trading on the horizon?

Another bright spot in the battle for humanity, for human sanctity and dignity is the world's first bioethics treaty. The European Convention on Biomedicine and Human Rights has been adopted by a number of European states. Creating embryos for research and human cloning are forbidden by article 18. In addition the United Nations General Assembly voted three to one in favor of a declaration calling on all nations to prohibit human cloning in all forms. These are small first steps in the defense of God-given human design and dignity but a great deal more needs to be accomplished.

In the meantime great strides have been made in the medical community using stem cells taken from patients' own bodies to treat a variety of ailments with amazing results. There is no rejection factor to overcome in such cases and there are no moral issues involved with such self-generated stem cells assisting the healing process. Spinal cords are being restored and paraplegics are walking. Organs are being repaired and beginning to function anew. Such spectacular procedures for us today will become commonplace tomorrow as the technology improves in these fields. Such restoration of damaged lives does not degrade or destroy the lives of others. It is personal blessing without sacrificing another life.

Too many have the attitude that my life has the right to personal benefits at the expense of your life. Such thinking is the formula for total anarchy and invites the destruction of all humanity. Such is the underpinning of genocide. It is the mentality of robbers, thieves and murderers. Although it is the logical extension of evolutionary theory, "the survival of the fittest," it will never be the path of a better world.

The real issue is do we treat people as people or as things? Are human beings lacking design, dignity and value until society grants those attributes or does society have an obligation to recognize the innate design, dignity and value that already exist because it is given by our creator? It is the morality of the latter that offers the sole path to better lives in a better world. Our job is to make the world a less cruel place for all, not just for some at the expense of others. Restoring lives never requires destroying lives. The new desire "*to be as gods*" poses a very grave threat to us all. "*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.*" (Matthew 6:13).