

Book Reviews

Genetic Turning Points: The Ethics of Human Genetic Intervention

James C. Peterson

Wm. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2001, 364 pp., \$22 (paperback)

JAMES C. PETERSON HAS WRITTEN AN easily accessible, highly informative book concerning the ethical issues raised by the ongoing revolution in genetic knowledge. The book is aimed at a broad audience, encompassing professionals and interested laypeople in a variety of fields, although its Christian perspective may make it especially useful to pastors. The author seeks to provide a systematic treatment of the whole range of related questions occasioned by progress in genetic research, genetic testing, and genetically based therapies.

Peterson prefaces his discussion with three general chapters. The first reviews the historical and intellectual relationship between science and Christian theology, the second considers the possibilities and risks of technology, and the third gives an account of the legitimate aims of technology from a Christian standpoint.

The remainder of the book is organized into four parts, each of which treats questions arising in a particular area of genetic science. Peterson presents these issues according to the order in which they have come into actual use and affected our lives and our decision making: the impact of genetic knowledge and research; genetic testing; genetically engineered pharmaceutical products; and genetic surgery and direct intervention in the human genome. The author discusses the implications of each development, and the questions that each raises, for the three arenas in which they have an impact: the individual, the family, and the wider human community. The book's organization is helpful because it imposes a certain order upon a

complex array of related issues that recur and shift across a variety of particular topics and settings. The author has also provided an index and a detailed set of internal cross-references, both of which enable a reader to follow a particular topic throughout without having to read the whole book.

Peterson's book has both the benefits and the inherent limitations of a general introduction. The author presumes no specialized knowledge of either religious ethics or science on the reader's part, and so must not only define his terms carefully but also lay the groundwork for every discussion "from the bottom up." This method preserves the book's generality of address. However, because Peterson's analysis remains fairly basic, his book may be somewhat frustrating for readers who have an extensive background in one or the other of the fields discussed. Readers who have strong views at variance with the author's conclusions may be dissatisfied with his relatively superficial treatment of contested points. His discussion of these points will not allay such readers' concerns.

For example, Peterson's discussion of the possibilities and dangers of reproductive human cloning takes up a number of arguments both for and against the practice. However, space limitations keep him from going very deeply into the philosophical and theological rationales for either position. The discussion of whether cloning would violate human dignity occupies a page and a half. In the end, Peterson suggests (on pp. 304-305) that a proposal to clone a human being may be tested against four criteria, which

can be summarized as follows: Is it safe? Does it bring about a genuine improvement for the recipient? Does it leave the recipient free to make his or her own choices? Would it be the best use of resources? To some readers, the author's willingness to apply such standards in this area may suggest an unwarranted optimism about the reliability of human judgment and the transparency of

human motivation. It may be that Peterson can rebut that charge, but he has no real opportunity to do so in this volume.

In sum, this is a useful book that will provide a general background for non-specialists and raise for discussion a wide range of issues that deserve attention in the church and among the general public. It is a fine place to start.

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Business Ethics in Healthcare: Beyond Compliance

Leonard J. Weber

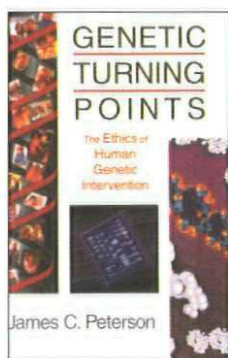
University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, IN, 2001, 264 pp., \$35 (hardcover)

Business Ethics in Healthcare: Beyond Compliance is an important contribution to the field of health care management and organizational ethics. Leonard Weber, its author, explains that health care business ethics is "beyond" clinical ethics, compliance, and personal integrity. It comprises a variety of ethical considerations pertaining to an organization's responsibility as caregiver, employer, and citizen.

Weber insists that the business of health care is distinctive. He identifies health care organizations as community service organizations, whose purpose is to both meet the health care needs of individuals and promote the health of the community. Because health care management is a service profession, Weber argues, business ethics in health care is "business ethics with a difference."

Because Weber's goal is to help people make better practical judgments, his book "does not describe a range of theoretical positions on the issue." Instead,

Continued on page 54



the author proposes "specific ethics-driven perspectives and responses." According to Weber, the basis for these responses is a community-based ethics; the framework for them consists of "priority principles" that make it possible to order potentially conflicting interests, values, or goods in terms of their importance.

The author proceeds to apply community-based ethics and priority principles to dilemmas that health care organizations face as caregivers, employers, and citizens. Most of his chapters contain summary guidelines, criteria, or principles pertaining to the dilemmas discussed. The book's practical, nontheoretical approach may leave some moral philosophers unsatisfied; but then, the work of moral philosophers often leaves people "in the trenches" scratching their heads. Weber does not offer his ethical framework as a comprehensive moral theory. This reader notes, for instance, that his brief section on a justice-based ethics does not do justice to that perspective.

Weber does a good job of identifying the foundations of health care business ethics: a clear position on the nature and purpose of health and health care, which provides a moral framework; a strong ethical culture; organizational systems that support and reward appropriate behavior; and a serious management commitment to reflection and discussion in an effort to achieve organizational integrity. Weber insists that ethics is every manager's job.

The author's appreciation of the common good is evident in his selection and treatment of specific issues. For instance, he dares to raise the moral relevance of cost and appropriate use of resources in the moral assessment of individual clinical cases. He believes that health care providers need to shift their thinking to accommodate both cost and quality considerations. His community-based ethics, grounded in a notion of justice, recognizes cost control as an ethical value that recommends a standard of using not the best, but the least expensive, intervention that works well. This

reviewer appreciates his selection of the important but sensitive issues of just compensation and unions.

The reader may be frustrated at times by the fact that Weber's management focus results in less than complete consideration of an issue. Weber states, for example, that because his chapter on unions and strikes is written for management about management's responsibility, it will not address "important ethical issues that should be considered by union organizers and employees." The "organization as citizen" chapters on socially responsible investing and environmental responsibility provide helpful analysis of issues not uppermost on many managers' radar screens. This reviewer was seriously disappointed not to find a chapter in that section on management's responsibility for advocacy and public policy. Health care managers, who are quick to understand the importance of lobbying for better reimbursement, seem less inclined to engage in sustained efforts on behalf of a more rational, just health system.

Two chapters in the last section, on institutionalizing business and management ethics, address the components of a business ethics program and the organizational ethics committee, a likely component of many such programs.

This book will be very helpful for those attempting to "get a handle" on organizational ethics. It is clearly written, well organized, and, very importantly, addresses many of the tough issues in a way that managers and others on the front lines can understand and appreciate. This reviewer, having perused much of the recent literature in business and health care management ethics, selected it for the graduate course she teaches in health care management ethics. The students rated it very highly.

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BUSINESS ETHICS IN HEALTHCARE
Beyond Compliance
Leonard J. Weber

MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

Continued from page 8

out. We try to bring back, to 'dust off' our ancestry, our history. For black people, we're so caught up trying to show that we are super-competent in our work and champions in our communities that we don't have the energy or time left to honor our spiritual sides. We often get caught in places that don't deeply feed our souls. As you move up higher in many corporations, you get sent around the country and the world. You can find yourself away from your family, your church, your support community. I tell people you have to develop a 'pocket spirituality.'"

Bell found the Internet a useful tool in her own spiritual life. Her Charlotte church broadcasts services over the web, so she can sit at the computer in her Dartmouth office any day of the week and listen to Sunday services complete with preaching and Gospel choir. "One day, I was really having a bad day. I called some people into my office, sat them down, and we had church right there."

Bell's goal of helping people bring more of themselves into the workplace reminded me of poet David Whyte's diagnosis that most people leave 30 percent of themselves in their cars in the parking lot at work and another 10 percent at home in bed, too afraid to face the world. In his work with Fortune 500 companies, Whyte uses poetry to help managers find deeper, life-giving meaning in their work. In his new book *Crossing the Unknown Sea*, he turns to his own experiences—as a naturalist in the Galapagos Islands, an executive directing a non-profit organization, a poet, and a corporate consultant—to describe the journey of discovery that is available to all of us through our work. In good work, "done well for the right reasons and with an end in mind," Whyte says our very identity is at stake. "Perhaps it is because we know, in the end, we are our gift to others and the world."¹ □

NOTES

1. David Whyte, *Crossing the Unknown Sea*, Riverhead Books, New York, 2001.