

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,

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