

Discussing Fetal Tissue Research With A Friend

By James W. "Bill" O'Clock

All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the Lord. (Proverbs 16:2)

In 1993, President Clinton signed the National Institute of Health (NIH) Revitalization Act, effectively lifting the ban on federally funded research involving the transplantation of fetal tissue. Once the ban was lifted the University of Washington in Seattle opened an NIH-funded embryology laboratory that ran a round-the-clock collection service at abortion clinics. NIH itself advertises its ability to "supply tissue from normal or abnormal embryos and fetuses of desired gestational ages between 40 days and term" (World, p.17, 1999). Not to be outdone, fetal-tissue entrepreneurs such as Anatomic Gift Foundation (AGF) and Opening Lines began to emerge as providers of "baby parts" to research centers and pharmaceutical companies. AGF and Opening Lines, like the NIH funded laboratory, formed close relationships with abortion facilities. Each of these firms supplied the abortionists with information and consent forms to be used by the counselors to inform the aborting mothers of the option to donate their babies' bodies to medical science. "According to AGF executive director Brent Bardsley, aborting mothers are not approached about tissue donation until after they've signed a consent to abort"(World, p.17, 1999). The problem with Mr. Bardsley's statement is his assumption that the abortion industry, which is totally unregulated, has no medical oversight, and has a history of documented deception, will ignore the financial incentives and ties with the medical research community to justify their practice as they counsel abortion minded women.

It also should be noted that it has been approximately seven years since President Clinton signed the NIH Revitalization Act. The concept of using fetal-tissue from aborted children to find potential cures for Parkinson's, AIDS, and cancer is becoming general knowledge within our society's socio-economic groups. There is a very high probability that many women have already rationalized their abortions before arriving at the killing centers thinking they are doing something good which overshadows the elective abortion. The aborting moms may even bring up the subject before a counselor even opens his or her mouth to get added support that their decisions will turn into something wonderful instead of tragic. Many members of the research community, through their relationships with government, media, and the abortion industry over the past decade have knowingly or unknowingly created a means to an end for many abortion minded women. For me, to say researchers, who work hand in hand with fetal-tissue marketers, are not directly involved in the abortion process is becoming very difficult indeed.

In 1997 a pro-life group based out of Denton, Texas launched an undercover investigation. "The probe unearthed grim, hard-copy evidence of the cross-country flow of baby body parts, including detailed dissection orders, a brochure touting 'the freshest tissue available' and a price list for whole babies and parts"(World, p.16, 1999). Videotaped testimony from a former AGF employee revealed gruesome and horrific details: "sometimes, the fetus appeared to be dead, but when you'd open up the chest cavity you'd see the heart beating."

Fetal-tissue entrepreneurs circumvent federal law against selling human tissue or body parts by having the abortion facilities donate the fetal material to them. These fetal-tissue traffickers then pay an on-site fee to the abortionist for the right to dissect "fresh" baby parts at their facility. The tissue is then donated to researchers who, in turn, pay organizations like AGF for the cost of retrieval. Depending on the dissection orders or protocols set up by the researchers the body parts are shipped overnight through UPS, FedEx or via special courier. The demand for "fresh" fetal tissue is high and one of the main drivers for this material is the research community.

A typical scenario could have a baby aborted on the morning of Day 1, dissected that same morning, shipped across town and in the researcher's hands the afternoon of Day 1. The money trail, including grant monies, can become quite lucrative and attractive, revealing the true motives of the abortionist, organizations like AGF and medical researchers.

Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done? (Proverbs 24:11,12)

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." (Proverbs 31:8)

Another disturbing factor that relates to having the blood of innocent children on one's hands, centers on the existence of alternative methods that can be used to repair and regenerate human tissue. There are a number of new techniques including using stem cells from bone marrow or even from the placenta or umbilical cord blood in live births. An enormously promising new source of more mature stem cells is fetal bone marrow. Such cells do not need to be derived from babies who were intentionally aborted, but could instead be obtained from spontaneously aborted babies or stillborn infants. Other research in neural stem cells and somatic cell gene therapy is producing results that strongly suggest that it is not necessary to continue fetal-tissue research using material obtained from elective abortions.

My closing statement can be best summed up by Christopher Hook, a fellow with the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity in Bannockburn, Illinois. Chris calls the exploitation of pre-born children "too high a price regardless of the supposed benefit. We can never feel comfortable with identifying a group of our brothers and sisters who can be exploited for the good of the whole. Once we have crossed that line, we have betrayed our covenant with one another as a society, and certainly the covenant of medicine" (World, p.19, 1999).

My closing, closing statement: Rik, during our conversation you mentioned that the fetal-tissue from aborted babies is not inherently evil. I agree. The spirit of those young ones are in the presence of God and their flesh is just flesh, but the motives of those who had a part in the destruction of those children are evil. I do believe we also touched on the point that, if there wasn't any research done in this area of interest, those same babies would be aborted anyway. I

would agree with you in part, but regrettably, the research community cannot hide from the fact that they have had a part in fostering the utilitarian belief that an unwanted baby donated to research could produce a greater good for our society. Babies who are not yet born and who have been given a Godly purpose in their lives will be aborted by their mothers, because the path of least resistance to many abortion decisions will be aided by the medical research community's role in supporting fetal-tissue research. In essence, it is as if researchers are out in the streets convincing women who are experiencing a crisis pregnancy to abort their child. Instead of grabbing them by the arm and indoctrinating them on the benefits of aborting their children for medical science, a cadre of informational sources and day-to-day medical practices are constantly influencing men and women to look to their own selfish desires and ignore those who are defenseless and vulnerable.

I believe the medical community should be speaking up for those who now and in the future will take up residence in their mothers' wombs. Instead, medical science chooses to condone the practice of abortion by gladly accepting the fruits of abortion's labor for its utilitarian research. With the many alternatives to regenerate and repair human tissue why does medical science still put so much emphasis on using "body parts" from aborted babies to continue their quest into fetal-tissue research? If I haven't answered this question for you, I hope our conversations will come to an adequate conclusion for both of us. I wish I had better analogies or examples to express my arguments, but for me and my house, we can connect the dots between the abortionist and the researcher when it comes to who has blood on his or her hands.