

The Stones Cry Out

If you do not speak out, then who will?

by Sharon Quick

Scientific studies of nature support God's truths.

Adaptation from a six-page article by Sharon Quick. For complete article and references, go to www.cmds-emas.ca, click on "Publications" and select "Focus" magazine.

My husband and I are both physicians but we had to stubbornly resist amniocentesis during my first pregnancy at age 35. A specialist later related that in her practice a majority of unborn children diagnosed with a disorder are aborted. The disorders may be relatively benign; cleft palate was the reason for a late termination in England.¹ Wrongful life suits have now been brought against physicians for allowing a disabled child to enter the world² placing physicians under societal and legal pressure.

**"If they keep quiet, the stones
will cry out." (Luke 19)**

There are now profits to be made. Routine abortions spawn the foetal parts research industry. The United States has a law prohibiting the sale of such parts, but reimbursement for "processing" is allowed. This loophole allows companies to publish catalogues advertising various foetal organs at a particular gestational age for a specific price.^{3, 4} It always seems cheaper to end a life than care for disability.

Human embryos may now be frozen for future use as a convenience to women although the freeze/thaw process has an estimated 65% survival rate.⁵ Some countries like Germany⁶ and Italy⁷ limit or prohibit the freezing of embryos. Human embryos may also be destroyed for use of their stem cells in research but because of the inefficiency of producing embryonic stem cell (ESC) lines, only about one out of 40 donated

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embryos could end up as a cell line.⁵ Each ESC line represents a unique genetic individual, and can be patented in some countries (USA), as can methodology in working with ESCs.

Our world has returned to the ethical landscape confronted by Hippocrates whose patients were unsure if a "physician" would heal or kill. Hippocrates and other doctors realized that physicians could only be healers and never killers. The Hippocratic Oath states that doctors will not take the lives of the unborn or their patients.⁸ And yet today the line has been crossed that preserves the intrinsic value and sanctity of human life. There is no logical stopping point in devaluing an ever-expanding group of humans.

How and why has this happened?

All of these life-dishonouring practices are rooted in a way of thinking about truth that states that scientific truth is universal, but moral truth is personal opinion and cannot be imposed on others. We have rejected the far more ancient premise that scientific truth is limited to the population to which it applies, but moral truth is universal.

Scientific conclusions must be based on facts removed from opinion. Yet all researchers have some degree of bias. Biologist Richard Dawkins states, "Even if there were no actual evidence in favour of the Darwinian theory...we should still be justified in preferring it over all rival theories."⁹ Scott C. Todd from the Biology Department at Kansas State University states, "Even if all the data points to an intelligent designer, such a hypothesis is excluded from science because it is not naturalistic."¹⁰ As Nancy Pearcey points out, these statements constitute a prior philosophical commitment.¹¹

Yet ethical integrity is essential for both the discovery and application of scientific truth. Science must be governed by moral restraint. The Nuremberg Code and other codes of practice place ethical limits on science and medicine. They affirm that medical and scientific research must "do no harm."

The dignity of the individual, their rights and welfare always trump scientific advancement since moral absolutes are universal.

The origin of moral truth is a crucial intellectual debate. Is there absolute moral truth, or does each person decide their own truth? The Christian holds the former position; the naturalist believes the latter. Those who believe that the universe and all its inhabitants are the result of random forces of nature conclude that morals are relative. Richard Dawkins states, "There is at the bottom of it all, no good, no evil, no purpose, nothing but blind pitiless indifference...DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is, and we dance to its music."¹³ Yet, naturalists tacitly know that love is good and murder and stealing are bad. A competitive natural selection environment driven by random mutations provides no explanation for sacrificial love or the power to choose. Naturalists tend to make a leap of faith to conclusions unwarranted by their own philosophy: Dawkins, for example, suggests that we have the power to defy the selfish genes of our birth.¹¹ Such thinking is dishonest and schizophrenic, requiring a division of truth, where naturalism governs ideas about the physical universe and self-gratification governs a personal morality.

In contrast to secular personal morality that does not have external boundaries, Christianity has a clear framework recorded and preserved in Scripture that supersedes one's own ideas. For a Christian, there is only one truth that encompasses every aspect of society—infusing the character of Jesus into science, work, relationships, government and law. For the Christian scientific and moral truths are not opposing forces, the one supports the other.

When is human life worthy of protection?

From a naturalistic perspective, the opportunity to benefit from the *science* of abortion, human embryonic stem cell research, and foetal parts research must be universally available, but the pertinent ethical principles have to be severed from such research or procedures and relegated to *personal morality*. The point at which human life begins becomes moral opinion.

Christian reasoning starts with the universal moral truth of the sanctity of human life created in God's image and consults science about when life begins. The intrinsic value of human life is not an *opinion* but a truth that forms the bedrock of the entire legal system and the framework within which science operates. When cracks appear in that bedrock, the entire foundation of society begins to crumble and sets the stage for anarchy.

Science itself affirms that human life begins with one cell. Biology and embryology textbooks unequivocally state: "A zygote is the beginning of a new human being;"¹⁴ and, "Life began for each of us with the fusion of...a sperm and an ovum."¹⁵ Biologists have defined characteristics by which we recognize living organisms from the simplest one-celled amoeba to complex animals composed of cell(s), molecular and cellular organization, energy use, response to environment, growth, reproduction, and adaptation.¹⁶ We cannot classify a human embryo as "not living" without refuting basic principles of cell biology. Scientific logic forces one to admit that a unique human life exists on a continuum from the moment of conception until a natural death. An embryo is a unique life complete in itself, unlike a clump of cells of one tissue type in culture that may be living, but is not a complete organism.

Differences in abilities (capability of twinning, way of communicating, etc.), location (inside or outside a uterus), size, appearance, or status of being wanted or not by someone else do not change the intrinsic nature of each human individual along this continuum. Even in vitro fertilization clinics recognise this and sometimes give a semblance of a funeral to embryos prior to their destruction.¹⁷ If an embryo or foetus is not recognized as a full person, then how much of a person are they—one quarter or one half? When is full personhood achieved? If one is assessed to be half a person, does he or she then receive half of a right to life?

I used to sit at the bedside of critically ill children and neonates for hours, adjusting drips and ventilator settings, hoping that one day they would be able to walk out of the hospital either on their own or in the arms of their parents. The diseased and disabled are a blessing, not a burden. When patients learn from their difficulties, their wisdom is beneficial to those who take the time to get to know them. The many disabled children and their families that I have cared for over the years have not seen their lives as "not worth living." Certainly society should aim to eliminate or lessen disease, but not by eliminating people.

If we teach the children in our society that it is okay to use any means to solve problems in pursuit of happiness, even taking another person's life, what will that do to their character? What will it do to the character of a nation? It is the Christian viewpoint that upholds both science and universal morality. It is a *personal morality* that discriminates against the youngest and weakest and, in so doing, defies science. Jesus says, "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."
(Luke 19) 

