

where the prognosis is poor but uncertain (as in many spina bifida cases); The question of acts and omissions with respect to patients not selected for remedial treatment, and the dealing with parents and relatives in such cases; The areas covered by the Warnock Report. And there are questions connected with the quality of life and the criteria of personhood. In general there is a wise stress on professional integrity and codes of conduct rather than legal prescriptions.

The book is right up to date. There are many references to work in the last four years, and it even manages to include the recommendations of the Warnock Report. The text is clearly written; there are good and detailed references; appendices include the Nuremberg Code, the Declaration of Helsinki, and the Human Tissues Act of 1961. There is a glossary of medical terms used (oocytes is omitted), an index of persons and one of subjects; and questions for discussion on each chapter.

The author is chaplain of the University Hospital of Wales at Cardiff, and is one of the best known hospital chaplains in Britain. References to the Christian faith occur from time to time in an illustrative context, but the book is in no way a peculiarly Christian treatise on medical ethics. It provides the data needed for anyone to form responsible opinions provided they accept the necessity of knowing what is going on. Autton only occasionally indicates his own opinion. The technical details of each chapter have been checked by a medical expert in the field in question.

Things have been moving so rapidly in medical ethics in the last few years that Autton has rendered a valuable service; the art of *haute vulgarisation* is a valuable one and not all that common. This book is a fine example of it.

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## Birth Defects: Clinical and Ethical Considerations

Finley S C, Finley W H, Flowers Jr C E, eds. 240 pages, New York, March of Dimes, Birth Defects Foundation. Original Article Series Vol 19, number 15, Alan R Liss, 1983. £36.50.

The title of this book is partly misleading and partly correct. In fact, there is only a single chapter by an ethicist, John C

Fletcher, 'Ethics and Trends in Applied Human Genetics', which deals with genetical aspects and one other very short article by R C Baumiller to do with ethics, 'Legal and Ethical Considerations'. This is a minimal contribution.

Fletcher's chapter, however, is very valuable and thoughtful and should usefully be read by everyone concerned with the management of defective newborn, whether the defect is structural or biochemical. It deals, with considerable medical knowledge, (he is not a medical person) about the already existing and possible future application of technology to prenatal treatment for the correction of deformities and disorders. Fletcher feels, I believe correctly, that moral and ethical considerations are not defined once and forever irrespective of social and technical changes in society and takes an intermediate view in this respect. He holds that morality interacts with technology and that social values of great import clearly influence the limits and possibilities of technology and that society itself is shaped and reshaped by their introduction.

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## Brave New People

Jones D G. 221 pages, Leicester £3.95, Inter-Varsity Press, 1984

There is little doubt that developments in biotechnology in recent years have revolutionised the approach to the management of genetic disease and infertility. But these developments have also generated many ethical problems, for the individual patient as well as the doctor. Much has already been written about these problems but often assuming some philosophical and scientific sophistication, thus limiting the appeal largely to a professional readership. And unfortunately the authors have occasionally not been scientists themselves and therefore accuracy has sometimes been sacrificed. But these criticisms cannot be levelled against this little book which is written by a professor of anatomy who writes in a simple, lively, straightforward style, which is both accurate and clear. He writes as a committed Christian and draws on biblical principles in attempting to resolve many of the problems. He is quick to point out, however, that there are no simple

answers. Nevertheless, effort should be made to look beyond controversy and search for underlying principles and guidelines.

The first two chapters are concerned with the general philosophy of biotechnology which may be good at tackling disease but '... is weak at promoting health in a positive way. It cannot take account of environmental, emotional, sociological and spiritual factors which together constitute the uniqueness of each person'. Subsequent chapters deal with major issues of current interest, including genetic screening, prenatal diagnosis (and therapeutic abortion), artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilisation, and genetic engineering. The concluding chapter attempts to put these matters into perspective within the framework of the Christian ethic. The author argues that biotechnology must not be allowed to alter our goals and aspirations, otherwise we run the risk of making it a religion and an end in itself. Finally, there is a useful bibliography to the related scientific and ethical literature and a full index.

This is an eminently readable account of the major moral and ethical problems posed by recent developments in biotechnology, and it can be highly recommended to both scientists and non-scientists.

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## Test Tube Conception

Wood C, Westmore A. 134 pages, London, £4.95, George Allen & Unwin, 1984

At £4.95, the cost of this book is a drop in the ocean compared with the cost of *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF) treatment to the average couple, and as such could be recommended to them without hesitation. Anything which prepares these couples for the considerable stress of their treatment and the likely probability of failure is to be endorsed. However, the book is also aimed at 'medical and counselling professionals' as well as those concerned with ethical, legal and social issues, and in this respect it is rather less satisfactory.

The book is written by Professor Carl Wood, who is head of the department in Melbourne out of which many of the major developments in IVF have come.