

# Bioethics for Believers: The Role of the Church in Matters of Life and Health

**Sarah Flashing, MA, Director of Church Relations**

During the last quarter of the 20th century, Christian thinker Francis Schaeffer and pediatric surgeon C. Everett Koop embarked on a project to equip the church on the crucial issue of abortion and warn of the looming threats against human life and dignity. Their book and video series, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, contributed to the awakening of evangelical Christians from their cultural slumber. It sounded a call to action and birthed a movement that seeks to protect human life and dignity, moved to care and act on behalf of the most vulnerable in our society. On the impact of abortion and its bearing on how society values human life, Schaeffer and Koop wrote,

“Of all the subjects relating to the erosion of the sanctity of human life, abortion is the keystone. It is the first and crucial issue that has been overwhelming in changing attitudes toward the value of life in general.” (1)

Today, the local church is well informed on the issue of abortion yet is still unclear about the relationship between abortion and bioethics. For instance, many Christians understand that it is wrong to kill the unborn. Many others are unsure about the moral status of a human embryo in frozen storage, whether it is worthy of the same respect given to a fetus in the later stages of development. Images of aborted babies have raised awareness of the issue because of the natural repulsion they evoke. Unfortunately, not all bioethical issues can rely on the power of such images. Abortion may have been the first bioethical issue to change attitudes toward human life and dignity, as suggested by Schaeffer and Koop, but there have been many more since *Roe v. Wade*. Now is the time to educate and equip the church on all of the bioethics issues.

## CBHD's Church Relations Division

Following in the footsteps of Schaeffer and Koop, the Center has developed, through the new division of church relations, an intensive strategy for bringing bioethics to the local church. CBHD has always existed to educate and equip leaders in bioethics. But we now have a renewed call to focus more closely with pastors and lay leaders. It is on this front that church ministries can focus on those who are making decisions on matters of life and health. Church leaders are strategically positioned to educate on how to think about life and bioethics. These leaders are also in counseling and mentoring relationships that can directly impact the bioethical decisions people face in their own lives. Both the need and the opportunity exist within Christian circles to communicate a Christian perspective on bioethics. This need and opportunity are seen clearly in the case of Terri Schiavo, in public debates over embryonic stem cell research, and in

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(continued)

## Center News

Joe Carter  
Director of Communications  
The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity

### 13th Annual Summer Bioethics Conference

*Neuroethics: The New Frontier* is the title of the 2006 Summer bioethics conference. This conference will focus on where the science and clinical implications of "neuroethics" are now and where they are headed and will include speakers such as William Cheshire, Jarret Richardson, Thomas Pellegrino, Cindy Province. Institutes and Seminars will include leaders such as William Cheshire, Dennis Hollinger, Joyce Shelton, E. David Cook, John Kilner, and David Fletcher.

Conference - July 13-15  
Pre-conference Institutes - July 10-13  
Post-conference Seminars - July 17-19.  
Please check [www.cbhd.org](http://www.cbhd.org) for more information as it becomes available.

### Hype vs. Fact: An Internet Resource

When it comes to stem cell research, political hype is often substituted for scientific facts. Do No Harm: The Coalition of Americans for Research Ethics is a partnership of researchers, bioethicists, academics, and others devoted to informing the public of the ethics and science of stem cell research. The centerpiece of the Coalition's efforts is the Do No Harm website, [www.stem-cellresearch.org](http://www.stem-cellresearch.org), maintained by CBHD. One featured section is "The 'Political Science' of Stem Cells," a series of one-page 'lessons' that counters hype with scientific fact.

### Call for Papers

Those planning to attend CBHD's 13th annual international summer conference, are encouraged to consider presenting a paper or workshop during this event. Accepted presenters will receive a \$50 discount on conference registration.

Those interested should submit an abstract and biographical profile of approximately 150-250 words each by April 28, 2006, to:

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The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity  
2065 Half Day Road  
Bannockburn, IL 60015  
[jmoscato@cbhd.org](mailto:jmoscato@cbhd.org)

the pursuit of human eggs for cloning research, a procedure which threatens to exploit young and often disadvantaged women.

Through a variety of approaches, the Center will help the leaders in local congregations to understand that bioethics extends beyond the subject of abortion. To be answered for the church are the questions: What is bioethics? Why should I care? What do I need to know? and What should I do? In the language of the evangelical Christian community, the answers to these questions will be clearly presented through articles, audios, bulletin inserts, PowerPoint presentations, and seminars. These resources will, over time, be made available on the new church relations website, [www.churchbioethics.org](http://www.churchbioethics.org). To put a powerful tool in the hands of pastors and lay leaders, CBHD has developed a free audio CD in Q&A format called *Bioethics for Believers: The Role of the Church in Matters of Life and Health*.

### What Can You Do?

Let your pastor and church leaders know that these issues affect their congregations at a very practical level, and that through their ministries the church can help shape how culture views and values human life and dignity. You can continue to support the work of the Center by talking to your pastor about how CBHD can support their work. Find out if we can assist them by arranging for a special speaker or a teacher for a bioethics Sunday school series. Tell your church leaders about the articles and other resources available online at [church-bioethics.org](http://church-bioethics.org) and [cbhd.org](http://cbhd.org). Finally, you can support CBHD financially and prayerfully. Please pray for CBHD, that to the glory of God, we will continue to fulfill our mission by effectively educating, equipping, and engaging people on these issues in the church, the academy, and the public square.

(1) Schaeffer, Francis and C. Everett Koop. *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1983) p. 13.



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### What's a podcast?

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MP3 player, or by subscribing at the iTunes music store or the podcast section of Yahoo. For more information, see "What is Podcasting?" at Yahoo (<http://podcasts.yahoo.com/start>), or the entry on Podcasting at Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast>).