

bution is of great relevance to educated Christians who cultivate wonder for God's creation and seek to contemplate it through their own, Christian that is, eyes. A translation into English of his work would be extremely useful.

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**D. Gareth Jones: *At the Margins: A Life in Biomedical Science, Faith, and Ethical Dilemmas***

Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2022; 193 pages.

ISBN-13: 9781666744712.

This book is Jones' personal reflection, as a scientist and committed Christian, on a number of bioethical issues he has been involved with over the years. This includes the ethics of procuring and studying deceased bodies, the COVID pandemic, the ethics of cystic fibrosis, IVF and the study of fertilised human eggs, same-sex attraction, and living as a Christian in a secular world.

As professor of anatomy at Otago University, Jones faced the challenge of obtaining anatomical specimens ethically. In the process, he was able to strengthen the procedure of ensuring informed consent before bodies were used. This then meant that bodies from the indigent or those who had no kin were no longer available to anatomists. He also raised the dilemma of using highly detailed drawings taken from political prisoners during the Nazi era by Professor Pernkopf, a committed ideologue of the regime. Jones also examined the ethics of plastination—preserving bodies in a very life-like manner for public display (e.g., BodyWorlds, <https://bodyworlds.com/>) and the role of profit-making in these anatomical displays.

When discussing the scientific response to the Covid-19 pandemic, I agree with Jones' contention that we need to accept the conclusions of science, but I do not see that as in contrast to the directives of politicians. The results of scientific work during the pandemic, as Jones argues, are immense; the development, testing, and rapid implementation of vaccines is an enormous success story, which should be widely celebrated. However, to say that we should follow scientists rather than politicians is somewhat naïve, for there are a number of different opinions between scientists, particularly in the area of public health policy. For instance, opinions on who should be locked down, for how long and at what cost? These considerations have severe economic and business implications. They require society to come together and for all the points of view to be evaluated. That is why we have government leaders, politicians, and bureaucrats, who in an ideal world would dispassionately consider the broader dimensions of public-health policy. The government has the authority and responsibility to implement those policies and take responsibility for the consequences of their decisions, and we hold them to account at the ballot box. Unfortunately, the word "politician" is ambiguous and is often used to describe those tainted by vested interests.

Jones writes in the book of his personal experience of being a grandfather of a child with cystic fibrosis. He discusses the difficult ethical decisions confronting a couple as they consider having further children and the issue of procuring and paying for expensive new treatments for this disease. This is heightened by the fact that medical resources are mal-distributed around the world. We in the West have much better access to the latest and most expensive treatments. It is an honest and moving chapter, showing how different couples handle these issues differently, depending on their ethical stance.

One area where Jones has done much reflection is in the belief in the sanctity of human life from the moment of conception. This has become a sacrosanct position among conservative theologians and ethicists, even though, as Jones has extensively written, its biblical foundation is just not there. Nor could it be, for there is no way that an ancient text can be expected to discuss the nature of human blastocysts and embryos in

the sort of detail known by modern science. Nevertheless, Jones is not cavalier about blastocysts and embryos; his position is far more respectful and nuanced than that.

Jones devotes a chapter to his choice to develop a bioethics centre in a secular environment in Otago. The decision to position this centre in a secular environment might be surprising for a committed Christian, but Jones felt that a secular centre would provide a greater intellectual freedom and influence than one with a Christian foundation. That is an interesting comment on the state of Christian bioethical reflection and on Christian intellectual pursuits generally. Isn't it odd that there is greater intellectual freedom in a secular environment rather than in a Christian one? What does that say about the state of Christian debate generally?

Further, Jones believes that he, as a Christian ethicist, has a role to play in the secular world and that the secular world can teach him. This is refreshing to see because there are some thinkers (including those as eminent as Alasdair MacIntyre in his *After Virtue*) who believe that those of faith may need to withdraw from the world into their own believing community. Jones represents a refreshing counter to such belief.

Such commitment to a secular society is further highlighted by Jones' role on government bioethics committees. As a result, he seeks to find common ethical ground with those from other persuasions, but, in doing so, he alienates himself from doctrinaire Christian thinkers who believe they are right and that the secular world must either adopt the Christian worldview or be dismissed. They would see Jones' position as a sell-out of their Christian position.

Jones helpfully distinguishes between an idealist as opposed to a realist perspective. He claims not to be a theological expert in this area, but such a position has been helpfully explored by Helmut Thielicke who struggled with the ethics of being a pastor in Nazi and post-war Germany. Thielicke helpfully explored ethics as a choice between two unacceptable options. This realism is at odds with those ethicists who choose absolute positions—such as the position that the fertilised human egg is fully human from the moment of conception, a position

which is problematic for those contemplating, for example, IVF or prenatal genetic diagnosis in cystic fibrosis.

Jones' stories related in this book remind us that Christians are often marginalised. "They will put you out of the synagogue," Jesus said, (John 16:1–2). "Blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake ... for in the same way they persecuted the prophets of old" (Matt 5:10a, 12b). The writer to the Hebrews invites his followers to go outside the camp, (Heb 13:13) for Jesus was crucified outside the city and bore disgrace there. So, marginalisation seems to be the lot of Christ's disciples. But whose margins? Clearly at the time the New Testament was written, Jewish Christians were being marginalised from the synagogues, as Jesus predicted (John 16:2). Jones suffered marginalisation from the Christian right who misunderstood his commitment to truth in relation to in vitro fertilisation, seeing his position as a sell-out of evangelical faith but there are other marginalisations that can occur. The current Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury is being marginalised by a group of evangelical bishops who believe that the next Lambeth conference is not committed to truth as they see it. Evangelical ministers in Episcopalian churches in the US and Canada have been marginalised from liberal dioceses for their perceived fundamentalism. Gay people are being marginalised from mainstream society, and straight people are being marginalised from queer communities.

On what basis marginalisation? As far as Jesus is concerned his followers should be committed to truth and righteousness, and that will bring its own marginalisation. This still raises the questions of what is truth and what is righteousness. Dealing with those questions is where differences and marginalisations can occur. Jones' concern is for straightforwardness and honesty, and he feels this has been costly for him, in both church and university, where he has encountered "half-truths and dubious dealings." In spite of this he has not withdrawn but seeks to stay in the marketplace of ideas and be salt and light in the world, but not of the world. No wonder he is my go-to bioethicist.

***Alan Gijbers***

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