

Adhering to Bedrock Principles

BY Dave Andrusko

"That attitude [the "loathing of imperfection"] is once again gaining strength. And it speaks in the seductive voices of freedom, compassion, and self-improvement."

Dr. Leon Kass, "A More Perfect Human: The Promise and the Peril of Modern Science," an address delivered last year as part of a series linked to the Holocaust Museum's exhibit, *Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race*

"No parents will in that future time have a right to burden society with a malformed or a mentally incompetent child."

Geneticist Bentley Glass, in his 1971 presidential address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science

"And it was when these self-identified liberal and modernist religious men abandoned bedrock principles to seek relevance in modern debates that they were most likely to find themselves endorsing eugenics. Those who clung stubbornly to tradition, to doctrine, and to biblical infallibility opposed eugenics and became, for a time, the objects of derision for their rejection of this most modern science."

From *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement*, by Christine Rosen

The September edition of the "pro-life newspaper of record" is replete with such encouraging news that even chronic skeptics will smile. The good news covers the waterfront.

After a four-year-long battle, a United Nations ad hoc committee tentatively approved a treaty on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which include the right to life, food, water, and health care without discrimination. The treaty Preamble also affirms the inherent right to life and the "dignity and worth" of persons with disabilities, as you read in the story that begins on the back cover.

On page one, Political Director Karen Cross gives you the inside story on important wins in September primaries and issues a call for action: no sitting on your hands allowed.

Elsewhere, Dr. Randall K. O'Bannon and Joseph Landrum offer a recipe for writing a well-researched/well-received research paper, using the abundant resources found on the NRLC web page (www.nrlc.org). Further on in the edition we cover the findings of a study in *Journal of Medical Ethics* that found that women seeking obstetric and gynecological services overwhelmingly wanted to be informed of all known risks associated with elective procedures in general and with abortion in particular. This is enormously important, given how abortionists try to wave off the questions of wavering women.

And of particular importance is the fascinating study that appeared in *Science* in early September. All too often severely brain-injured patients are labeled "PVS"—persistent vegetative state—after only a few weeks (or less) of testing. The British study "promises, or threatens, to overturn medical dogma about what is happening in the minds and brains of at least some patients in such a state," according to the *Wall Street Journal's* Sharon Begley.

With all this good news, why begin with three very sobering assessments that warn of the onrush of a eugenics ethos that has no room for the less-than-perfect? For many reasons, beginning with the other story on page one.

At one level, pro-cloning forces in Missouri have clothed their agenda in an entire wardrobe of phony assurances, insincere promises, and grandiose assurances of future cures. At another level they are more straightforward, attempting to exploit the average person's lack of knowledge about the humanity of the human embryo. They want to persuade the public that if you're small enough, you're fair game, an uncomfortable echo of past justifications for barbarism.

Likewise, Liz Townsend's story on page 11 succinctly summarizes an important but much underreported breakthrough. Japanese researchers have successfully modified a mouse skin cell into an embryonic-like stem cell. According to stem cell researcher John Lough, this "reveals a roadmap by which pluripotent cells might be obtained for therapeutic purposes, without having to obtain them from embryos."

But have you heard about this? No. But thanks to barrels-full of money, you "know" that if Missouri amends its constitution to add the "Missouri Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative," there are no limits to the number of diseases that will soon become history.

In addition, while we are greatly encouraged by the almost daily discoveries demonstrating the capabilities of people with severe brain injuries, we are not Pollyannas. We know that most people are not immune from what Dr. Kass calls the "loathing of imperfection." We understand with Kass, "The eugenic mentality is taking root, and we are subtly learning with the help of science to believe that there really are certain lives unworthy of being born."

There are an uncomfortably large number of people, especially in academia, who really do grade human life on a curve—with more and or of us flunking. Which is where you and I come in as counterweights.

In our everyday behavior and in our professions of respect for all human lives, we are a standing rebuke to the reductionists who believe, in Kass's words, "that man is just a collection of molecules, an accident on the stage of evolution, a freakish speck of mind in a mindless universe, fundamentally no different from other living—or even nonliving—things." We stand athwart the onrushing assaults on the dignity, worthiness, and awesomeness of the human person.

Where they see people, most particularly the vulnerable, as "raw material for manipulation," we see fellow citizens, joint members of the human family. Whatever the challenges, and they are formidable, we will prevail.

Not just because of your amazing grit and determination, but because the cause we champion is just and right.