

## REVIEWS

**D. Gareth Jones, *At the Margins: A Life in Biomedical Science, Faith and Ethical Dilemmas*. Eugen.,OR: Resource Books/Wipf & Stock, 2022. (198 PP.) [ISBN 9781666744729]**

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Gareth Jones' *At the Margins* gives a personal and powerful insight into his experiences of interfacing bioethical dilemmas with Christian faith. It is clear that the rigours of science and theology equally enthral Jones, who says he has always had a longing for satisfactory and consistent explanations. And while the Bible does not provide specific answers for many of our most pressing bioethical questions today, Jones proposes scripture does show helpful ways forward for responsible decision-making.

As Emeritus Professor of Anatomy and previously director of the Bioethics Centre at the University of Otago New Zealand, Jones has published many scientific papers and books in anatomy and neuroscience, and in a wide range of bioethical areas. However, this is not an autobiography of Jones' life; instead *At the Margins* allocates a chapter, sometimes two, to contexts as widely disparate as his early ethical contribution to changing the University process from previously using unclaimed human cadavers to only using bodies gifted for anatomical research; his family experience with the genetic inheritance challenges of cystic fibrosis; his examination of the value of the human embryo and the age old question of when does human life begin; the increasing polarisation between individual rights versus collective responsibility during the Covid pandemic; and society's current wrestling with gender identities.

While Jones explains a range of current views in each of these areas, not just his own, he does give a personal reminder to those with Christian faith to keep contributing into these areas of ethical turbulence in ways that are relevant to the real issues that surround society currently and to be informed by the reliable, evidence-based data and knowledge that peer-reviewed science provides. Over his extensive career and life experiences, Jones has seen that theology combined with the use of scientific skill and knowledge often brings opportunity for synergies – he sees the skills given to biomedical professionals as a blessing to be used by God for the healing of people; the scientific and medical knowledge being gifted by God who works through people, and the service of Christian medics and scientists as an act of worship. Jones again reminds Christians that they are commissioned to assist the disadvantaged, to save lives and to have compassion on all people, no matter their health, abilities, gender and sexual preferences. An inspiring example of this is his historical account of the discovery of the molecular basis of cystic fibrosis, followed by the increasingly sophisticated treatments and preventions that have become available, and the range of different supports needed by families who may choose to only implant embryos without the disease or families who will need extra help for any children born with the disease.

In talking about the Covid pandemic years, Jones sees the hand of God in the historically rapid production of effective vaccines, with global entities working collaboratively and in many cases helping poorer countries to access vaccines. And he believes that thankfulness and gratitude to God by the people of God would be a fitting response to the Covid vaccines. Jones notes that historically the church has always been in the vocation of medical care and nursing of others, and while there has always been a small opposition to vaccination and mandatory treatments, the increasing rejection of scientific interventions is a worrying trend.

All through his discussions, Gareth Jones models a process of ethical decision making by considering who is harmed, who benefits, where is fairness and justice apparent or missing, and takes the reader into the shoes of each stance. And in doing so, Jones arrives at the value of occupying the in-between grey area for each situation and person, which is often a complicated and messy position. For example, he examines the ethical boundaries for embryos and the current status of research on viable embryos not being allowed in Aotearoa New Zealand. While a considerable number of unused embryos are currently discarded sometime after IVF by fertility clinics, researchers are not able to use these embryos for beneficial reasons such as improving IVF conditions and outcomes, or increasing knowledge in genetic diseases carried by some of the embryos. For Jones this is an inconsistency that needs remedying.

*At the Margins* bravely dissects bioethical contexts where idealism must be reconciled with the realism of a broken world. Gareth Jones believes that the power of the gospel is shown when Christians work hard to include others, especially those who are marginalised and not like ourselves. Rather than occupying the polarised viewpoints in areas such as abortion, pandemic measures and reproductive treatments, Jones encourages Christians to listen, be informed by science and then contribute in the space between so that a collective responsibility for future actions and agreed boundaries can be reached. In doing this, traditional theological thinking may need to be increasingly more nuanced for Christians to be authentically faithful, compassionate and caring of all people.

**Paul S. Fiddes (ed.), *Love as Common Ground: Essays on Love in Religion*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021. (344 PP.) [ISBN 978-1793647801]**

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As Baptist theologian Andy Goodliff notes on his blog, Oxford Baptist theologian Paul S. Fiddes continues his prodigious rate of academic production and shows no sign of slowing down despite being an academic theologian for over half a century and well into retirement. In the last two years, not only has he had