

CONCEPTS: A Termite in a Yo-Yo

*By Kenny Digby,
Executive Director,
Christian Action Commission*



Digby

I had the privilege of teaching biblical ethics at Blue Mountain College, one of our three Baptist-affiliated schools in Mississippi, this past fall semester. What a joy to return each Thursday afternoon to the campus where I graduated in May 1974. What a joy to enter the classroom with the Bible in one hand and my ethics textbook in the other.

We can disagree agreeably about ethical applications, as long as we agree that the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God is our touchstone, our standard, our measuring rod (canon). In this ethics class, we covered the basic topics and subjects. I confessed at the time that biomedical ethics was probably the most complicated, difficult area of ethics.

One example of how difficult this subject can be is the discussion of the development and testing of COVID-19 vaccines. At the Christian Action Commission, we try to research and report on issues that are moral and/or immoral. Those issues that are amoral (neither moral nor immoral) are not our priority. Here is the \$64,000 question – no, the \$64 million question. Is there a moral/immoral factor in whether or not I take a Covid-19 vaccine?

My mother, Faye Ellen Montgomery Digby, had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Breathing treatments were part of her daily life. If she were still alive, I'd have her at the front of the line for a COVID-19 vaccination.

That said, I have read many articles by Southern Baptist leaders who often speak for our convention. Having carefully read and reread these articles and reviewed my notes, I still feel like a termite in a yo-yo. I claim James 1:5 – “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

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I am reminded that my finite mind and my depraved, sinful nature muddy the water and cloud my thinking.

Some of my peers over the last five years have ridiculed the idea of choosing the lesser of two evils. They criticize “what-about-isms.” They claim the big picture does not override a snapshot. They would deny a starving man in a desert any water just because the canteen was not sterile. They have shouted in recent years that the “greater good” cannot justify supporting a candidate and his policies, if his personality and/or moral fiber is flawed in any way.

Yet I hear some of these same men recommending that in dealing with the COVID-19 vaccines, we look at the big picture, the greater good, the lesser of two or three or four evils. I'm confused.

I have read that none of the vaccines are perfect in origin, development, and testing, but some are preferable. The pecking order would be Pfizer and Moderna, then Johnson & Johnson, and

worst – AstraZeneca (used in other countries).

The fly in the ointment is the use of fetal cell lines such as HEK 293 in the development and/or testing of a particular vaccine. The origin of these cell lines is:

– IMMORAL. The cells originated from an abortion in years past.

– IMMORTAL, in the sense that the original stem cells are cloned over and over, but there would be no ongoing line without the original abortion.

– The cells are *not* IMMACULATE. these stem cell lines are tainted.

– The cells are *not* IMMEMORIAL. The cells go back to an abortion in the '60s, whether in Amsterdam or wherever.

– The cells are *not* IMMATERIAL. The cell lines used in development and testing do matter.

I hear some of these men use the principle of “proximity” as rationalization for the vaccines. They argue that we are 60 years removed from the original abortion. They argue that the connection between some vaccines and abortion is indirect, not direct.

Well, I believe in universal depravity. When Adam and Eve fell, I fell. When their human natures became depraved, sinful, fallen natures, they affected the entire human race – hence, universal depravity. Though my “proximity” to the Garden of Eden is rather remote (6,000 years), that is the origin of my depravity. Should we not apply a principle like proximity in a consistent manner?

I confess to you that these cell lines have been utilized in much of our modern medical research concerning paralysis, cancer, and other viruses. Have I done my due diligence investigating the role of these cell lines in medical

techniques and breakthroughs from which our family members may have benefitted? Just asking myself.

Our "red" state has one of the most rigid, strict mandates for the vaccination of our children and grandchildren. They can justify it with the demographics of Mississippi that are similar to those of neighbor Arkansas, which has no similar mandate. I am not anti-vaccine. Our 14-month-old grandson, Andy Austin, is on schedule with the mandate thanks to a competent, caring pediatrician who spreads out the shots instead of doing what is convenient.

Listen: Any concern you have about a so-called immoral COVID-19 vaccine that is inconsistent with your pro-life Biblical worldview should have been even greater regarding the long and growing list of mandated vaccines your state government requires for your child or grandchild. Are we more concerned about ourselves than we are our children?

Any concern over religious liberty involving a COVID-19 vaccine should have already been on the front burner in regard to the mandate of multiple vaccinations for our babies. Are we more concerned with access to a commercial flight for a vacation, or access to a public school for the child of a tax-paying parent?

I could kid (if it were not so serious) that this subject is above my pay grade. I realized my need for continuing education when I accepted this role at the Christian Action Commission. I am so grateful for the opportunity I have to serve with you, my fellow members of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

As a professor, I always studied harder and learned more than any of my students. My slogan as a teacher was. "I came to learn." I realize this article leaves us with more questions than answers but remember, whatever is over my head is under His feet.

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