

## CBHD Board of Trustees Appoints C. Ben Mitchell, Ph.D. as Center Director

The Board of Trustees of The Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity (CBHD) is pleased to announce that C. Ben Mitchell, Ph.D. has been appointed Director of The Center for Bioethics & Human Dignity.

Dr. Mitchell will also continue to serve as associate professor of bioethics and contemporary culture at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois, and as editor of *Ethics & Medicine: An International Journal of Bioethics*.

In addition, Dr. Mitchell is a Fellow of the Institute for Biotechnology and a Human Future at Illinois Institute of Technology/Chicago-Kent School of Law, Chicago, Illinois; a consultant with the Center for Genetics & Public Policy at Johns Hopkins University; and a Fellow of The Wilberforce Forum, Reston, Virginia.

He received his doctorate in philosophy with a concentration in medical ethics (with honors) from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. His program included a year-long clinical residency at the University of Tennessee Medical Center at Knoxville, Vanderbilt Medical Center in Nashville, and a summer-long residency at the East Tennessee Mental Health Institute.

Dr. Mitchell also studied genetics for non-scientists at the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories, Cold Spring Harbor, New York, and has twice been visiting scholar at Green College, the medical college of Oxford University. From 2003-2005, Dr. Mitchell was a member of the Templeton Oxford Summer Symposium on Religion and Science.



A widely published author, Dr. Mitchell has authored or coauthored numerous books, book chapters, journal articles, and other pieces. In early 2007, Georgetown University Press will release a significant and highly anticipated new volume entitled *Biotechnology & the Human Good*, which Dr. Mitchell co-authored with Edmund Pellegrino, Jean Bethke Elshtain, John F. Kilner, and Scott Rae.

In addition to his academic work, Dr. Mitchell regularly consults on matters of public policy. He has given testimonies before policymaking groups including the U. S. House of Representatives, the Institutes of Medicine, and the Illinois Senate. A number of radio, television, and print media outlets regularly interview him. They include National Public Radio, Fox News, MSNBC, The Washington Post, and many others. **CBHD**

# Public Language and the Common Good

C. Ben Mitchell, Ph.D., Center Director

Lee Silver, professor of molecular biology and public affairs at Princeton, recently published another provocative book. *Challenging Nature: The Clash of Science and Spirituality at the New Frontiers of Life* is a 400-page rant favoring his own version of *scientism* against nearly every form of religion and spirituality. His is an equal opportunity harangue. Anyone who is skeptical about Silver's optimism about some kind of technoutopian future gets blasted, whether Catholic, evangelical, green, Mother Nature worshipper, or something else.

Moreover, professor Silver says that we should not concern ourselves about future developments in genetics and biotech. "Clearly," he opines, "it makes no sense to worry about, or try to control, a future society that we can't possibly understand" (pp. 349-350).

The notion that since we cannot fully know the future we shouldn't worry about its shape and form is truly troubling to me. Why shouldn't our concern for the common good of all humanity include future generations of our species? Just because we can't control the future does not mean that we should not try to minimize harm and maximize good for our progeny.

Not surprisingly, Silver has some rather unkind things to say about some of us.

Evangelical Christian think tanks and lobbying groups proliferate with innocent-sounding names like the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity, which is directed by the fundamentalist Nigel Cameron. When Ben Mitchell, a senior fellow at this center, was interviewed in a story about biotech policy on the nationally syndicated radio program *NPR Morning Edition*, he presented himself as a "philosopher." He didn't want the mostly secular NPR audience to know about his primary academic appointment at an "evangelical divinity school" with a stated mission of "forming students to transform the world through Christ" (p. 118).

Anyone who knows the Center's work will laugh at the number of errors in this single paragraph. First, while a good friend of the center, Nigel Cameron is neither a fundamentalist nor does he direct the center. Second, I myself have obviously been "googled." But, professor Silver didn't google enough. Had he done so he would have discovered that my Ph.D. is in philosophy from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, which has one of the most senior programs in medical ethics of any school in the country. I did my coursework, took my exams, attended my clinical rotations, wrote, and defended my dissertation. I am as much a philosopher as professor Silver is a molecular biologist. At the same time, I am a Christian. The last time I checked, one could be both a Christian *and* a philosopher.

Professor Silver apparently has psychic abilities of some sort, because he claims to know my motives—that I didn't want NPR listeners to know about my academic appointment. In an internet world, how could I possibly have kept that a secret, even if I wanted to?

But this brings me to my point. When it comes to the public debates in bioethics, like most of my colleagues, I argue for the common good. Yes, as a Christian, I have an epistemology that is informed by divine revelation. But when I'm on NPR, I can't expect listeners to share my epistemological commitments. So, I make arguments that will be as persuasive as possible, whether or not one believes the Bible to be true. And, my arguments for or against specific policies must point to a future that is good, not just for other Christians, but for everyone.

How is it wrong to use public language to argue for the common good? Is this some kind of Trojan Horse strategy to smuggle in theistic assumptions? Professor Silver apparently thinks so. He claims, for instance, that in the current debates "Theological terms and ideas are translated into secular-sounding code words and phrases. *Sanctity* is converted into *dignity*, and *soul* becomes *life*, and the biblical version of *morality* is presented as a secular *bioethics*" (p. 118).

## THE CENTER FOR BIOETHICS AND HUMAN DIGNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS:

**Robert D. Orr, M.D.** (Board Chair)  
Director of Ethics,  
University of Vermont College of Medicine  
(Burlington, VT)

**Harold O. J. Brown, Ph.D.**  
Professor of Theology & Philosophy,  
Reformed Theological Seminary  
(Charlotte, NC)

**Samuel B. Casey, J.D.**  
Executive Director, Christian Legal Society  
(Annandale, VA)

**Amy B. Coxon, Ph.D.**  
Biologist, National Institutes of Health  
(Bethesda, MD)

**Paige C. Cunningham, J.D.**  
Board of Directors, Americans United for Life  
(Chicago, IL)

**Scott E. Daniels, Ph.D.**  
Senior Research Associate,  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
(Richmond, VA)

**Richard M. Doerflinger, M.A.**  
Deputy Director, Secretariat for Pro-life Activities,  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
(Washington, D.C.)

**Claretta Y. Dupree, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor/Director of Research,  
Medical College of Wisconsin/  
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin  
(Milwaukee, WI)

**Carrie Gordon Earll, M.A.**  
Bioethics Analyst, Focus on the Family  
(Colorado Springs, CO)

**Luke Gormally, Lic. Phil.**  
Senior Research Fellow,  
The Linacre Centre  
for Health Care Ethics  
(London, England)

**C. Christopher Hook, M.D.**  
Hematologist, Mayo Clinic;  
Director of Ethics Education,  
Mayo Graduate School of Medicine  
(Rochester, MN)

**Henk Jochemsen, Ph.D.**  
Director, Lindeboom Institute for  
Medical Ethics  
(Ede, The Netherlands)

**David A. Prentice, Ph.D.**  
Senior Fellow for Life Sciences,  
Family Research Council  
(Washington, D.C.)

**William Saunders, J.D.**  
Director and Senior Fellow,  
The Center for Human Life and Bioethics  
Family Research Council  
(Washington, D.C.)

**David L. Schiedermayer, M.D.**  
Hospitalist,  
Waukesha Memorial Hospital  
(Waukesha, WI)

**David L. Stevens, M.D.**  
Executive Director,  
Christian Medical & Dental Associations  
(Bristol, TN)

**Mary R. Thompson, R.N., M.S.N.**  
National Director, Nurses Christian Fellowship  
(Madison, WI)

**Allen D. Verhey, Ph.D.**  
Professor of Christian Ethics, Duke University  
Divinity School  
(Durham, NC)

Continued on Next Page

## Center News

The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity

### A Personal Statement from Dr. Andrew Fergusson

It has been both a privilege and a pleasure leading CBHD in this last year of transition. I believe we have maintained CBHD's high standards in educating and equipping, as evidenced at the recent international conference on neuroethics, and seen exciting developments in our mission aim of engaging. There have been many more media opportunities, and significant developments with the web-sites and with podcasting.

It is therefore with some sadness that I now move on, by mutual agreement with the Board. We acknowledge it is time for new leadership to take CBHD on to the next stage of its development. CBHD will always have my heart and my prayers.

Dr. Andrew Fergusson

### Summer Conference

Plans are well underway for the 2007 summer conference! *Bioethics Nexus: The Future of Healthcare, Science, and Humanity*, scheduled for July 12-14, 2007, will peer into the future as much as possible to anticipate bioethics challenges we will face between now and mid-century. Instead of developing the ethical reflection after the fact, it would be better to anticipate where we are going and perhaps shape the direction of the future.

Mark your calendar now to save July 12-14, 2007, and watch this space for more information on plenary speakers, institute and seminar titles, and registration information.

The fact of the matter is that the words “human dignity,” “life,” and “bioethics” mean something to those who hear them. So we argue for a future, whether near or distant, where bioethics aims to protect the dignity of every human life. We trust listeners of NPR to understand what those words mean and to be able to judge whether or not our arguments actually are convincing on their own merits.

That's the way it works in a democracy. We have discussions, make arguments, debate questions, suggest legislation, and enact regulations, laws, and policies. And because we live in a democratic society both professor Silver and I have the opportunity to persuade others of a vision for the future of humanity. When it comes to biomedicine and biotechnology, both of us owe it to future generations to argue for the common good, not just for our own idiosyncratic preferences. [CBHD](#)



### SELECT ARTICLES AT CBHD.COM

**Bobby Maddex**, editor of the magazine *Salvo* and the online resource *The Crux Project*, explores the cultural cache—or sense of cool—that complicates bioethics issues in “**Celling Out: Bioethics and the Culture of Cool.**”

([http://www.cbhd.org/resources/bioethics/maddex\\_2006-04-28.htm](http://www.cbhd.org/resources/bioethics/maddex_2006-04-28.htm))



**Amy Laura Hall, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School, discusses biotechnology and humanity in “**Finding the Human in Christian Bioethics.**”

([http://www.cbhd.org/resources/bioethics/hall\\_2006-04-07.htm](http://www.cbhd.org/resources/bioethics/hall_2006-04-07.htm))

“**The Sanctity of Life**” by **David P. Gushee, Ph.D.**, University Fellow & Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. This article is the first in what will be a series of articles exploring the concept of the sanctity of life.

([http://www.cbhd.org/resources/sanctity/gushee\\_2006-06-16.htm](http://www.cbhd.org/resources/sanctity/gushee_2006-06-16.htm))



# SELECT RESOURCES

## EN ESPAÑOL

**Two newly translated Center articles are now available in Spanish:**

**(<http://www.cbhd.org/espanol/index.html>)**

**“Envejecer exitosamente: Cómo vivir el final de la vida para la gloria de Dios”**

(“Successful Aging: Living the End of Life to the Glory of God”

by CBHD Fellow John T. Dunlop, MD)

**“Dignidad humana: aún desafiando la devaluación”**

(“Human Dignity: Still Defying Devaluation”

by CBHD Assistant Director Matthew Eppinette, MBA, MA and Andrew Fergusson MRCGP)

### 2006 Conference Audio CDs

The complete audio recordings from the 2006 CBHD summer conference discussing issues revolving around neuroethics. Complete Recordings \$68.75 (CBHD Members \$55)

Audio recordings of the seven plenary sessions at the 2006 CBHD summer conference discussing issues revolving around neuroethics. Plenary Sessions Only \$37.50 (CBHD Members \$30)



### The Bioethics Podcast

Audio versions of several Center articles are now available as podcasts. You can listen online at the podcast section of [cbhd.org](http://cbhd.org), or subscribe for free in the iTunes music store or at Yahoo!



Subscribe



## AUDIO