

The New Tower of Babel

by C. Ward Kischer, Ph.D.

Survivors of the biblical flood decided to build a tower rising into heaven in order to reach God. However, God did not want this, and the tower, made up of inferior materials, collapsed. At that time God also decided to punish the people, who were of one language, by confounding them with a variety of tongues. Thus, they could not understand one another. The result was Babel, which means confusion.

This story is instructive, metaphorically. There have been several pretenders who have rewritten human embryology for the past 38 years. Ignorance of scientific facts is one thing; but, deliberate distortion of facts is quite another. In their search for what they believe as *truths*, they have used inferior and false justifications. As a result, their *truths*, eventually, have been collapsing due to inferior support. Their efforts have left a new tower of Babel, so confusing that we can hardly speak with one another.

Who are these pretenders? And, how did they become so dominant?

Harry Blackmun, Supreme Court Justice, decided to reach for new truths; so, in 1973, writing for the majority in the Roe v. Wade decision, concluded that the beginning of new human life could not be determined [1] We do not teach such nonsense in medical school, and never have. This case hinged on the determination of when new, individual, human life began. Blackmun's silly and pathetic conclusion has given rise to a plethora of fake science, which lasts to this day.

Aside from Blackmun's false and deceptive reasoning there were several other major problems with this case, among them: 1. Robert Flowers, arguing for Henry Wade, District Attorney for Dallas County, Texas, was intellectually unprepared to plead the case for the unborn. 2. The court, principally Blackmun, did not seek out any source of Human Embryology. If there were any *amicus curiae* briefs containing facts of Human Embryology, the court simply ignored them. Had the Court apprised itself appropriately, the case for Roe would have collapsed.

The Roe v. Wade decision provided support for many subsequent and outrageous claims. In 1979, a frog embryologist, Clifford Grobstein, coined the term "preembryo" in a publication in Scientific American [2] and claimed the embryo [now, the "preembryo"], lacked the requirements for a new individual human life until at least 14 days after fertilization, and also declared the embryo at that time was a "prepersion". He also claimed that the preembryo had a different moral status than an established embryo. These claims were amplified by a Catholic priest, no less, Richard McCormick [3]. Neither Grobstein nor McCormick ever answered repeated questions nor any attempts to dialogue about the issue. The term "preembryo" has since been rejected by every known human embryologist [4].

Emboldened by the Roe decision, several women activists made claims that were not only bizarre, but, well, just plain stupid. Eleanor Smeal, a past president of NOW, in 1989 publicly declared "everybody knows that life begins only after birth." [5]. This was also a reference made by Blackmun in the Roe decision when speaking about the belief by the stoics of ancient Greece.

In order to make such a claim sound believable, such claimants had to diminish or reduce the significance of the human embryo.

Scott Gilbert, a Professor of Developmental Biology at Swarthmore College, published his multiple definitions of “life”[6]. Gilbert is particularly deceitful because it is rather easy for a college instructor to “snow” somewhat ignorant students. Gilbert’s definitions were a clear attempt to obfuscate the simple truth of when life begins.

The effort has been made to dismiss the beginning of new, individual, human life on the basis of size! David Baltimore, past President of Cal Tech, publicly declared : “to me a tiny mass of cells that has never been in a uterus is hardly a human being – even if it has the potential to become human”[7].

Dr. Mary Hendrix, a PhD, and former faculty member of an Anatomy Department at Arizona and at Iowa, testified before Senator Tom Harkin’s Committee on stem cell research, and said the early embryo was “so small it can fit on the tip of a sewing needle” [8]. Hendrix, having had experience in anatomy, should know better.

Another example of absurdity is the claim by Bill O'Reilly, host of The O'Reilly Factor on Fox Cable News. He has consistently spoken of the embryo as “potential life”. I have consistently written to him in an attempt to enlighten him, and been told personally by one of his former producers, Mary Bennis, that O'Reilly had seen my letters. But, he has never attempted to respond to me, nor acknowledged my attempts to contact him.

Where is the fallout from such absurd statements? The sources of Human Embryology are not sought out by the mainstream media. The publications referring to Human Embryology are extensive, but they are written by pundits, politicos, lawyers, clergy, bioethicists and developmental biologists, and they tend to reinforce each other with fake science.

In the recent November, 2010 elections, an Amendment 62 appeared on the state ballot in Colorado as an initiated constitutional amendment. That measure was supported by Colorado Personhood, a local branch of Personhood USA. The 2010 version defined a person as : “Every human being from the beginning of biological development of that human being.” That amendment did not pass. It was challenged by the Colorado Medical Society and the Colorado Section of The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [ACOG]. In the ACOG summary it was stated: **“The phrase “the beginning of biologic development” is a vague terminology that is not typically used in embryology or other medical/scientific fields to define embryologic development.”**

This is a bold faced, outrageous lie! Later, the statement invoked the field of Developmental Biology. Unfortunately, Developmental Biology has been corrupting the science of Human Embryology for more than 30 years.

Those who made that statement in the Summary are physicians! They ought to know better. This is what happens when medical students sleep in class or do not attend class, and when physicians do not bother to inform themselves of facts. It may well be due to the fact that less than half of the medical schools in The United States have a *bona fide* credit bearing course in

Human Embryology in the curriculum. I wrote a letter to Colorado State Senator Brandon Shaffer refuting the ACOG statement. I received no reply whatsoever.

Jonathan Turley, a constitutional lawyer, has written an extensive piece on stem cell research and referred to the early embryo as “a holy dot”[9]. I wrote a rebuttal to his article, sent it to him, but he refused to reply.

Recently, there have been articles written by Maureen Condic, neuroscientist, Patrick Lee, bioethicist, and Robert George, political scientist and member of the Princeton faculty [10]. All three disregard the simple facts of human embryology, and, in particular the Carnegie Stages of Human Development, and claim the new individual human being does not begin until the zygote stage [Carnegie stage 1c]. That is 24 hours after first contact of fertilization. Within that time unethical experiments can be done, and have been. None of these authors have ever referred to the Carnegie Stages in any of their writings. Carnegie Stage 1a is : The penetrated oocyte. Carnegie Stage 1b is the Ootid. Carnegie Stage 1c is the Zygote. All three of these writers consistently refer to the Zygote as the point of the beginning of the individual human life. Despite multiple pleas to each one to use the facts of Human Embryology, all have refused to do so.

These are just a few examples of the myriad claims by fake science, which have plagued Human Embryology for the past 38 years. There are many pretenders who have overreached for the truth of science, just as those who built the ill fated tower of Babel. They have built their claims on inferior sources, just as the original tower used inferior brick instead of stone, and slime instead of cement. The tower came crashing down and the fake science claims are similarly crashing down; but, left in its wake are the remains, like the original tower, Babel. The situation in science today is dire because the pretenders will not discuss their fake claims. They will not admit they are wrong.

In all of the presidential Commissions established within the past decades, there has not been a single human embryologist appointed as a member, let alone been called as a witness.

It is not only authors who are pretenders, but certain publications are also assisting in this chicanery. National Review and National Review On Line have published articles with gross errors concerning human embryology, but have categorically refused any rebuttal. The Westchester Institute and the National Catholic Register have done the same. The American Association of Anatomists also has the same kind of record [11].

The Linacre Quarterly, the official Journal of the Catholic Medical Association, resolutely refuses to publish any more articles by a human embryologist. It is the Editor’s job to select reviewers who are familiar with the subject of articles submitted for publication. However, the new Editor of the Linacre Quarterly, William Williams, is unable to do that.

How is it that these and other Journals and publications have virtually shut out attempts to correct the false science so pervasive in the literature? Dr. Dianne Irving has written extensively on the fake science [12, 13]. I, also, have written many articles on the same fake science [14]. However, the pretenders keep on coming, seemingly, with little letup. Readers must question the veracity of all claims and use every source to discover the truth. Also, it is incumbent upon authors, editors and reviewers to seek out human embryologists and persons with resources on

Human Embryology to ensure the most accurate information. These three groups of authority must finally become honest with their responsibilities.

The top several human embryologists in the world are authors of Human Embryology textbooks. It is understandable that they do not want to engage in polemics for fear of hurting their book sales. However, the amount of fake science being foisted on the public is reaching crisis proportion. These authors must now speak out and bring reason and truth back into the public discourse.

In 1989 I predicted that Human Embryology would be rewritten according to political correctness. My prediction has come true. Babel has come to the world of science, and, in particular, to the world of Human Embryology.

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