

Editorial

The publication in this issue of *Science & Christian Belief* of a paper discussing the criteria for assessing the value of the human embryo marks a small but significant shift in editorial policy. Since its inception in 1989 the aim of the journal has been to publish well-refereed articles exploring the interactions between science and religion with particular reference to Christianity. Articles related to medical ethics or the more clinically oriented applications of science have been deliberately excluded on the grounds that other journals specialise in such topics and that a journal such as *Science & Christian Belief*, which has only two issues per year, might soon become swamped by articles addressing problems of more specialist interest to clinicians than to the wider scientific community as a whole. However, at a recent meeting of the editorial committee, it was decided that in light of the profound moral questions raised by recent rapid advances in the biomedical sciences, papers addressing questions of fundamental ethical concern arising from the applications of new technologies should now be considered for publication. A further factor in this decision was the complaint by some submitting authors that in fact it was proving difficult to find suitable journals for such material. What still remains excluded from consideration by the new guide-lines are those articles on ethical issues which arise from specific clinical disorders or which are likely to be of limited specialist interest. Using these criteria, a paper concerning the ethical issues involved in the general application of genetic engineering techniques to germ-line transmission would clearly fall within the new remit, whereas a paper discussing the application of prenatal diagnosis to a particular disease would not.

New biological technologies are clearly not the only applications of the basic sciences which are directly changing the type of societies in which we live. The explosion in information technologies during the past decade, for example, has brought about dramatic changes in the way that knowledge is both handled and perceived. What implications do the application of these technologies have for the way that Christians view individuals and societies? What about the more exotic technologies, like virtual reality? Are these value-free, or do they carry with them implicit assumptions that need to be analysed and discussed? Christians are rightly concerned about the physical environment, and the publication of a further environmental article in this issue of *Science & Christian Belief* reflects that concern, but what about the impact of science upon our 'sociological environment'? The recent broadening of editorial policy should be seen for what it is—an affirmation of the urgent need for Christians to think Biblically and with clear heads about the impact that their science is having on society.