

Can or Should?

by Jason Braaten

Just because science can do something, should it?

"[They] were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, that they didn't stop to think if they should," said Dr. Ian Malcolm, played by Jeff Goldblum, in the 1993 major motion picture *Jurassic Park*. Malcolm was referring to the scientists hired by John Hammond, played by Richard Attenborough, that created the dinosaurs for the theme park. And the point that Malcolm is making is that just because we can do something does not at all tell us whether we, in fact, *should* do something.

It's a line that we would do well to consider ourselves. Science is a field of study that tells us what is and what can be. But it is theology that tells us what should be, what ought to be and what must be. Science without theology is rudderless. It provides answers to some but not all the questions.

So when we look at polarizing issues like divorce and same-sex marriage, stem-cell research, abortion, in vitro fertilization, snowflake adoptions, contraception, euthanasia and end-of-life care, and the questions raised by them, science will only give us the answers to the questions that science is equipped to answer. It will only be able to tell us what is and what can be. But it won't tell us what should, ought and must

be. For this we need theology. We need a source that tells us not just how things currently are, but how things should be. And for Christians, the Scriptures, and how the Church has always understood them, are our guide.

When questions of abortion and contraception are raised, we look to the Scriptures for what God says about children, that they're blessings and they're to be gladly received and sought after. When questions about euthanasia, stem-cell research, in vitro fertilization and abortion are raised, we look to the Scriptures for what God says about life, how He is its author; He defines its beginning as well as its end. We look beyond what science can answer. For God shows us not just what is, but He also thereby reveals what should, ought and must be.

Let us turn to the Scriptures together and listen to the wisdom they give. Let us seek counsel from the Word of God even as we look to our pastors and Synod leaders trained to help us understand them. We can become so preoccupied with whether or not we can, that we don't stop to think if we should. May it not be so with us. **LW**

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