



## **BIOTECHNOLOGY ISN'T RISK FREE, SAYS ECONOMIST**

### **But Notes Its Promise for Ending Recession**

ROME, OCT. 29, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Biotechnology might be the secret to ending the economic crisis, but it comes with both risks and promises, according to the president of the Institute for the Works of Religion.

Economist Ettore Gotti Tedeschi reflected on biotechnology in an editorial today in L'Osservatore Romano.

He pointed to three challenges facing the world today: resolving the economic crisis as soon as possible; taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the technological revolution, without forgetting its dangers; and taking account of the international competition to appropriate gains from biotechnological advances.

After reaffirming that the real origins of the economic crisis are "in the collapse of the birth rate and unsustainable development," Gotti Tedeschi explained that biotechnologies can be "a truly revolutionary element in economic and moral relations."

In fact, he said, biotechnology can be "the motor for getting out of the economic crisis, though it has the risk of relativizing the ethical dimension."

The IOR's president made a distinction between vegetable, animal and medical biotechnologies -- possible motors of development -- and biotechnologies that intend to clone and manipulate the human embryo -- ethical threats.

He pointed to the possibilities that come from "productive activities based on biotechnology, with enormous prospects of growth in several economic areas linked to the satisfaction of basic needs: food, energy, health."

Gotti Tedeschi contended that there could be "a biotechnological revolution that can develop a Silicon Valley made up of technological centers of science for life -- useful to man, to the environment and, consequently, also to gross domestic income -- thus speeding up the solution to the economic crisis. And this could be a good."

"However, the biotechnological revolution, in addition to producing elements and resources that are otherwise scarce in nature -- for example, petroleum -- has demonstrated its capacity to modify genetic matter and structure and to produce biological organisms synthetically -- with the illusion of understanding the secret of life, of being able to program and even to construct it," noted the economist.

At this point the IOR's president expressed his concern over the possibility "of selection and modification of living organisms for human use."

"The ability to transfer genes from one organism to another and to produce each thing by synthesis could cloud the perception of the difference between intervention in favor of man's health and that directed to the creation of artificial life. And this, of course, would not be a good," he wrote.

In this context, the IOR's president noted that "competition is under way for world leadership in the new geopolitical scene generated by the crisis," and he suggested that it is "competition that will probably develop precisely in the search for affirmation in the biotechnological sector."

If this were to be the case, "moral criteria of evaluation would be even more relativized regarding what is right and useful for man," he cautioned.

In conclusion, Gotti Tedeschi said that "it is clear that we will come out of this crisis also through the biotechnological revolution" and that "the danger is that it not be limited to the prudent satisfaction of man's needs, but that, because of thirst for power, it drives us to the point of confusing the truths of human life itself. And, given this risk, the economist also has the right to conscientious objection."