

# Human Cloning

As Christian physicians and dentists, we believe that human life is sacred because each individual is made by God in His own image. God's design is that each individual is formed by the union of genetic material from a husband and wife. We further believe that the family is the basic social unit designed by God to receive and nurture new human life.

There are moral reasons to refrain from proceeding with human cloning. First and foremost, the development of this technology will require the deliberate sacrifice of human embryos. We believe this to be immoral. The use of human life merely as a means to an end is likewise morally unacceptable. Another moral concern is the question of the timing and significance of ensoulment. Furthermore, cloning may deviate from the wisdom of God's design for human genetic diversity and therefore may be unwise.

There are scientific reasons to oppose human cloning such as the potential for mutation, transmission of mitochondrial diseases, and the negative effects from the aging genetic material. There are also societal reasons to be hesitant about human cloning such as questions about parentage, lineage, family structure and the uniqueness of the individual.

Therefore, we believe that human cloning should not be pursued given our current understanding and knowledge. We affirm the need for continued moral scrutiny as research on animal cloning proceeds and proposals for the application of this technology to humans are advanced.

*Approved by the House of Delegates  
Passed with 63 approvals, 3 abstentions  
May 2, 1998. Cincinnati, Ohio.*

## Explanation

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## Background

Cloning, the production of an individual genetically identical to another, has been the stuff of science fiction and theoretical philosophical discussion for the past generation. Although one form of cloning (the stimulation of twinning) has been used in animal husbandry for many years, it was felt by laypersons and scientists alike that technical obstacles would prevent the production of a new baby animal from the cells of an existing adult. This perception changed overnight in February 1997 with the announcement of the successful cloning of a sheep by Professor Wilmut and his associates in Scotland.

## Secular Perspective

This announcement was greeted with mixed response from scientists, philosophers, public policy experts, and laypersons. It rekindled the old debate about the propriety of trying to clone humans.

Some argued that when this technique becomes available for use in humans, it would be a natural extension of already existing techniques of artificial reproduction. It would provide one more way for an infertile couple to have a child. According to these proponents, it would actually be preferable to those currently used techniques which produce a child who bears no genetic ties to either parent; in fact, it would make a child who is genetically identical to one of the parents.

Most who ventured an opinion, however, were more cautious. Many wanted to ban human cloning, either temporarily or permanently. The concerns raised were mostly of a consequential nature: concerns about possible genetic damage to the new individual, difficulties with sorting out relationships, etc. Others were concerned about the motivations to pursue cloning: replacement of a dying child, a source of transplantable organs, duplication of individuals deemed to be superior, asexual reproduction by lesbians, etc.

But many expressed an intuitive feeling that there was something fundamentally wrong with trying to duplicate a human being: questions were raised about individual uniqueness, lineage and family structure, the commodification of life, using people as means rather than as ends, etc. This technological possibility seems like a difference in kind, not merely a difference in degree from current technology.

## Christian Perspective

Among the voices raised in commentary on the revitalized issue of human cloning were many theologians. Some condemned the idea as inconsistent with God's plan. Some raised questions about ensoulment. Others felt that cloning is an amoral technology; the ethical issues were it how it was to be used.

The CMDS statement on **Human Cloning** recognizes the consequential and prudential reasons to avoid cloning, but its opposition relies more strongly on several basic biblical principles. Each individual human life is sacred. This sanctity of human life is because of the mystery of God's implantation of His image in each unique creation (Gen. 1:26-27). God's design for perpetuation of the human race is for sexual reproduction (Gen. 1:28) within a family structure which was ordained by Him (Gen 2:24) and affirmed by Jesus (Matt. 19:5). [see CMDS statement on **Human Sexuality**] Although God does give to humankind dominion over nature (Gen. 1:26, 28), CMDS does not believe that this dominion extends to an alteration of God's basic design for procreation. Natural reproduction, even using some forms of assisted reproductive technology, preserves God design because it results in unique individuals whose genetic makeup is determined by God. Cloning, on the other hand, usurps God's authority by substituting human choice and standards.

## Abstracts

**Kass L. The wisdom of repugnance. Chapter 3 in *Flesh of My Flesh*. Pence GE, ed. Boulder, CO: Bowman and Littlefeild Publishers, 1998.**

One of the original participants of the great cloning debates of the 1970s, Kass vigorously argues against cloning. Kass states that cloning would "undermine the justification and support that biological parenthood gives to a monogamous marriage." He argues that this is the ultimate outcome of the sexual revolution, where fathers are not needed. Furthermore, he believes that by destroying our links to our past, we lose our accountability to our ancestors—forget our debt to the past. He calls us to step back and carefully consider the implications of this new technology—and not to simply be taken by the glamour of it.

The author fears that once cloning technology became as widespread as assisted reproduction techniques, a person would be able to visit a gene bank and select a celebrity or athlete's DNA. Arguing that this is a further extension of the pro-abortion line of reasoning that children should be wanted, Kass wonders if wanted children, designed children, would simply become an extension of the parent—and not autonomous individuals.

Arguing that cloning is simply an act of self-preservation, Kass believes that sexual reproduction involves acknowledging the limitations of corporeal existence, the acceptance of the divine. Furthermore, he states that through the sexual experience one gets a fleeting glimpse at the wholeness we will experience with God, and that through the birth and life of a child we experience transcendence. The child is a product of love for another, not love for oneself.

The author argues further that subjecting a future human life to experimentation, wrought with the possibility of deformity and death, is immoral. He questions whether a clone, no longer a surprise to the world, would ever be able to live a unique life; he would be subject to constant comparison to his 'alter ego.' Kass also vigorously argues that the 'single parent child' would never truly experience belonging in the social relations that we currently subscribe to—brother-sister, mother-child, etc.

Kass proposes an international ban on human cloning. By accepting the deep ethical norms of the people, Kass believes that the scientific community would engender the respect of the general public, and would be free to pursue genetic knowledge. Acknowledging that there are some acts so egregious, so repugnant that we do not even attempt to rationalize them, the author calls us to bring cloning into that realm. Quoting Paul Ramsey, Kass ends by saying "The good things that men do can be made complete only by the things that they refuse to do."

**Meileander G. Begetting and cloning. Chapter 4 in *Flesh of My Flesh*, Pence GE, ed. Boulder, CO: Bowman and Littlefeild Publishers, 1998.**

Meileander argues that procreation is a product of love, the child a gift of the act of love. It is not a human project, as the child is begotten by humans through the work of God. When procreation becomes reproduction, a human act occurring in the laboratory, it ceases to be a gift from God, a selfless act of love. The author argues that cloning is the polar opposite of the selfless love from which a child springs forth. It is selfishness, the attempt to produce a child that will live, and clone, in perpetuity, as the original.

**Johnson, G. Don't worry: A brain can't be cloned. Chapter 2 in *Flesh of My Flesh*, Pence GE, ed. Boulder, CO: Bowman and Littlefeild Publishers, 1998.**

The author argues that regardless of the apparently miraculous achievements of science, it is impossible to clone the human brain with its billions of experience-molded synapses. He states that even if the neurons were identically attached, the simple change in firing of a single neuron would alter that person in such a way that they would again become an individual—concluding "everyone has a soul."

**Orr RD. The temptation of human cloning. *Today's Christian Doctor*. 1997; XXVIII(3):4-7**

The author argues that there are technical and moral reasons to oppose human cloning. While the technical reasons (fetal wastage, perpetuation of genetic disease, unknown effects of aging, mutations, distortion of family relationships, etc.) may be sufficient for many to say "not yet", the moral reasons dictate a stance of not ever. The author believes that it is a violation of God's plan for unique, genetically different individuals and offspring.

**Verhey A. Theology after Dolly. Christian Century. March 19-26, 1997:285-288**

Verhey states that cloning would lead to a loss of the individual, with the process of procreation resulting in a child less of a product of love, and more of a product—bound by the consumeristic desire for perfection. He calls us to reexamine our Baconian lust for technology and knowledge, and to adopt C.S. Lewis awe for the creation.

**Verhey A. Cloning: Revisiting an old debate. Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal. 1997; 4(3): 227-234**

The debate about cloning that took place 25 years ago, although directed toward a different sort of cloning, elucidates fundamental issues currently at stake in reproductive technologies and research. Paul Ramsey and Joseph Fletcher were participants in this early debate. The differences between Ramsey and Fletcher about the meaning and sufficiency of freedom, the understanding and weighing of good and evil, the connection between embodiment and personhood, and the relationship of humans with nature suggest both a broader agenda for the debate about cloning and a cautious move forward in the development of embryo splitting.

## **Bibliography**

**Connors RB. The ethics of cloning. St. Anthony Messenger. March 1998:28-32**

A Catholic ethicist explains his opposition to human cloning based on the loss of individuality, and the usurpation of God's plan for human nurturing and families.

**Wolf SM. Ban cloning? Why the NBAC is wrong. Hastings Center Report. Sept-Oct 1997; 27(5):12-14**

The author argues against the ban on cloning, stating that "it will reduce cloning to a political football, raise serious constitutional problems, and chill important research."

**Parens E. The tools from and for democratic deliberations. Hastings Center Report. Sept-Oct 1997;27(5):20-22**

The author believes that while the National Bioethics Advisory Commission's report is quite simple and conciliatory, it provides the democratic process time to carefully review the process, and develop a more formal response to cloning.

**Stephenson JP. Threatened bans on human cloning research could hamper advances. JAMA. 1997;277(13):1023-1026.**

The author argues against a ban on human cloning, stating that "science fiction should not drive science policy." Sadly, the author fails to address the ethical concerns of such research, calling them "vague and highly speculative."