

Section Three

Specific Questions

Should We Clone for Specific Purposes?

In Our Image: Procreative Cloning and Faith

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Abstract

This essay seeks to think about human cloning in ways that resonate with our faith. It considers difficulties and problems of human cloning from the perspective of Christian ethics, recommending careful attention to the ways we, as believers, speak here as a precondition for understanding this issue. It seeks bearings from the ways of God, contrasts those ways with cultural assumptions, and searches for resources in central Christian and Lutheran affirmations. The essay analyzes and rejects the appeal to human rights as a way of understanding and resolving the ethics of human cloning. It recommends a communal and biblical approach that relies upon our understanding of the church, of sin, of justification by faith, of love as an essential guide, and of the cloned child's welfare.

Difficulties

Surely human procreative cloning poses important issues for the church and for our country. We should give it faithful and careful thought for the sake of children so conceived, for the sake of ourselves as Christian citizens, for our fellow citizens, and for the sake of God, who places the creation of human lives into human hands. Yet, understanding this topic proves difficult. As in all applied or practical ethics, one must find and digest the facts. Therefore, these papers from the consultation introduce the facts—medical, technological, legal, political. That becomes a challenging task for both authors and readers when biotechnological research, legislative initiatives, and fickle public attitudes change so rapidly. Still, one assumes that if one can learn the facts, then one can also think about them religiously and morally.

The facts themselves, however, never appear in pure or objective form, but have already been selected for relevance, embodied in a particular disciplinary language, and endowed with meaning that can both lead and mislead. The contexts in which facts originate—whether in medicine, technology, law, business, or American values—flavor the meaning of the facts. For those who remember “Draagnet,” we never have “the facts and nothing but the facts.” Using facts about cloning theologically will give them a different flavor—

Lutheran in this context—and will call for different ingredients than those chosen by secular chefs. This point does not argue for staying out of the kitchen, but does remind us to insist on a grain of salt. We cannot be sure of how these efforts will turn out, but we hope that the outcome will be something over which we can say grace. Or laugh. Or do both.

A few specific warnings about ingredients: Biological data appear in biological words. Biological words presuppose biological methods. Scientifically, an individual human life is merely of general research or knowledge interest. Here, believers and God, who may want to interject that all human lives are precious, cannot get a word in edgewise. Similarly, if in human cloning we are dealing with “somatic cell nuclear transfer” or “the denucliation of a somatic cell and the insertion of a cell nucleus from a donor,” how would that differ from manipulating cells of mice, sheep or cows? How then to express the claim that we are dealing with the very beginning of a human life made in the image of God? In science and medical technology, cloning is a matter of “reproduction.” By contrast, “procreation” or “begetting” (user-friendly terms in religious and humanizing contexts), evoke different assumptions and values. What we say is what we get. Or, the same thing, one cannot do ethics or religion in the languages of science, economics, technology, law. If we were to speak any of these specialized languages exclusively or predominantly, we could no longer reason morally. Nor could we then think or reason as believers.

We may not leave this topic to the experts or let them decree our vocabulary. If we seek to understand human cloning in the light of faith, we must draw it into the orbit of our biblical traditions, liturgy and faith. Invoking “the image of God,” for example, contrasts religious seeing with scientific observation. To use a musical metaphor, we need to transpose secular songs into hymns in which we can acknowledge, thank and praise God, and honor God’s creation. In this task we are at constant risk to see and think as everyone else would when we read the “factual score.”

If we let secular experts, whether medical, legal or political, define the reality of cloning for us—set the tone—we would be deaf to the voices of faith. Those who define reality with key words also define what is at stake. In human cloning, as surely in all biomedical issues, there is no objective, non-leading or value-neutral way to speak, and therefore to decide. This reality explains my attention to words.

Believers who resolve to think about cloning faithfully encounter additional difficulties. No biblical text offers a single biological word. How, then, to draw this topic into the light of faith? What is the right use of Scripture and of our religious traditions, the right hermeneutics? Three options appear, each with a legal parallel. Much as Jews invoking ancient judgments in Scripture and rabbinic traditions, or like lawyers who cite case law, we might survey the Commandments for likely precedents, creatively fitting the new into familiar patterns. Which biblical texts, then? Alternatively, as theologians or as constitutional lawyers, we could resort to such theological themes as creation and sin, a biblical view of human nature, covenant, redemption and grace. Finally, finding neither approach satisfactory, and as lawyers who find that the law does not speak to this, we might leave faith out of it. Our Lutheran banner then would be “freedom of individual conscience.” We would deal then with cloning much as we currently treat abortion: saying neither yea nor nay. Just in case there should be something morally wrong with it, we would also add the proviso that we always know where to look for forgiveness.

What might one conclude about these difficulties? Tackling the issue of human cloning requires caution. However we come at it, *we* make texts and precedents and even God speak. No matter how transcendent our references, how imposing our theological-ethical responses and how impressive those foreign and technical words, they remain human, all too human. Here writers find encouragement to sin bravely. Readers seem well advised to retain a sense of humor.

Bearings

After such warnings, one hesitates to move. Heart in hand and falling back upon basics, just what is the task of Christian ethics? It is to relate everything to God; to integrate our heads, our words and lives with what we believe, confess, and worship. Whatever we say about human cloning or anything else for that matter, it ought to resonate with God’s ways. Bible, tradition, and liturgy witness to those ways. What we conclude morally, then, ought to be something we can show to God. And we show it to each other in the name of God. Wrought by us, we may do it badly, but at least God’s ways offer a compass heading.

And we have the community of the church to support and correct our search.

The Ways of God and Human Cloning

What, then, might be God’s ways by which we could find our bearings in uncharted territory? Surely God is for us in giving us life, in calling us children and kin (the abbreviation for “in God’s image”), in inviting us into a personal and communal relationship, and in seeking our well-being in all things. Our God is creatively, lovingly and redemptively pro-life. While that seems to be a basic and sound thing to assert by biblical believers, it remains non-controversial only in a vacuum. In a political or public policy context, it becomes incendiary. Nevertheless, unless we remake God in our own image, this is the Lord we acknowledge—in the matter of cloning or anything else.

One immediate implication for the prospect of human cloning would be that if children are brought into the world by this process, surely God will be for them, welcoming them and expecting us, God’s kin, to do the same. And if there should be prejudice against cloned children—one reads of doubts about their identity and their very humanity—our responsibility to these children will be all the greater. Our God has a special thing for the more dependent and needy, for those in trouble.

But that ignores the question of whether children should be conceived by cloning in the first place. If God offers us human cloning as a blessing, would we be able to recognize it as such? Initial responses to the possibility of cloning were almost wholly negative. Leon Kass echoed that rejection when he condemned human cloning as “the wisdom of repugnance.”¹ Gut feelings surely point us in the right direction in regard to such abominations as incest, bestiality, cannibalism and bloody murder. Yet, revulsion seems less than a safe moral clue when evoked by particularly gruesome human deformities and diseases. With speed that hints more at hostile reflexes than searching deliberation, several European nations have banned experiments that might lead to human cloning. The U.S. government decided quickly that it will not currently support such research leading to “reproductive” cloning. Yet, initial alarm over human *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) be a precedent, perhaps familiarity will breed contempt. Whether rightly or wrongly, popular anxiety over the birth of Louise Brown conceived through petri dish fertilization has faded into indifference and the practice enjoys widespread acceptance. Clearly, our intentions require testing. Could cloning be one way of obeying God’s command to be fruitful? Does it resonate with God’s creative ways? Does it express the biblical images of our calling as co-creators? Many

Jewish voices, for whom having children remains a divine command and continuation of the People of God is a providential imperative, incline to answer YES. Traditional Roman Catholic answers offer a clear NO! Cloning is asexual. That alone is enough to condemn it as unnatural and dehumanizing. Protestants, by contrast, find themselves at sea. For one, they allow the law of love to suspend the commandment to be fruitful. “Been there. Done that.” For another, they prove less bound to the “natural.” To be sure, sexual intercourse is natural in that it does not have to be taught; it has always been the way of man and beast, and has tradition on its side. But new occasions teach new duties. If medical technology enables us to become fertile, we welcome it as a blessing. And cloning, while it does not cure infertility, enables some infertile partners to have a child of their own, not in the traditional sense, to be sure, but one will recognize whose child it is. If the wife’s enucleated egg cell receives the husband’s somatic cell nucleus and the wife brings the resulting new life to birth, it is “their” child, their son, in definite, if novel ways.

A similar argument against cloning as unnatural and therefore defiant of God, is that human cloning dehumanizes by manufacturing (“manu”=hand) children. These would literally be handmade humans. When they are clones of the rich or famous, perhaps even genetically enhanced, they might even be derided as “designer children.” Yet, God’s ways require human agency. God uses human bodies, human hands, human choices, and surely human ingenuity to bring children into the world. When we cannot conceive, we seek medical and technological help and thank God when it works. Would cloning be all that different from justified medical assistance in procreation? If not, one needs other than anti-natural arguments.

Concepts of human nature are notoriously Janus-headed, showing more than one face. The inventiveness, control and design intrinsic to human cloning, going nature one better, constitute key aspects of human nature. Moreover charges of “Unnatural!” have had such hateful uses in the contexts of homosexuality, racism, and sexism, that one suspects it is a synonym for what is offensively strange rather than what is antithetical to God’s ways. Separating sex from procreation surely is the responsible thing to do when we rightly fear the consequences of intercourse. For example, procreation without sex, when doing otherwise might risk a future child’s health or when a couple must remain infertile, seems consonant with love and compatible with our understanding of God’s ways. To be sure, the more the artificial involvement in this new form of begetting, the more worries about modesty, expense, and complications. But finally, claims about mysterious bonds between sexuality and having children remain mysterious to me.

While it may be rash, other fears among non-specialists seem misconceived. These included the specter of armies of cloned super-soldiers or a ruling elite of superior clones. That ignores the influence of time, place, and context of those genetically identical. Identical twins will look alike and even share character traits, but biological nature, even if it defines much of what we are, is not destiny. Similarly, parents will not clone a child to become an organ donor for a grandparent or another child. Our society protects children from exploitation, even when it is attempted by parents. The genuinely worrisome features lie elsewhere.

The Ways of God and American Ways

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we speak and think American. As an immigrant, one who chose United States citizenship, pledged allegiance to it, and served in its armed forces, I remain deeply grateful for what this country at its best is and stands for. I have not suffered discrimination and poverty that marks us at our worst. But American ways, even at their best, are not the ways of God. Individual rights, personal liberty, autonomous choice privacy delineate our cultural ways. Thinking of God and human cloning in cultural conditioned ways, we hear the voice of the times and may mistake it for the voice of God. This phenomenon is ubiquitous and ancient. Biblical insistence on God’s holiness warns against an easy reading of God’s ways. Paul, cautioning against being conformed to this world, insists on thinking in new and transformed ways to discern the ways and will of God (Romans 12:2).

An American way of seeing and describing human cloning is to place this issue under the rubric of rights—*reproductive rights*. One speaks of individual choice and the negative right against interference in this most private of decisions and actions. Such is the language of liberalism and of the law. If America stands for anything, it guarantees individual rights. Should human cloning be categorized under moral and legal rights?

“Rights” is a modern word and concept originating in 17th-century England and the 18th-century Enlightenment. Human rights were instrumental in establishing the freedom of religion, in ending European wars of religion, in endowing with equality first Jews, then Blacks, and finally, women. Roman Catholic bishops invoke rights on behalf of the poor and economically oppressed. Rights form the banner under which our society seeks to correct injustices and to establish a more perfect union. Rights constitute the indispensable banner under which we, as citizens and as Christians, can side with the neglected and oppressed. Thank God and liberalism for human rights!

Yet the appeal to reproductive rights to justify human cloning creates serious moral problems, especially for biblical believers. Rights are protective devices, fences that prevent hostile incursions or assistance that remedies harmful neglect. As such, they are adversarial, and legal rights is the language of the law. Rights might be likened to safety nets: they keep the worst from happening. But we should normally try to avoid having to make use of them. If we do right by each other, it should never come to invoking rights. We owe each other so much more than that. Again, we absolutely need rights. But our moral language must be so much richer. Therefore, when it comes to the liturgies that enunciate, celebrate, and seal our mutual obligations to spouses, children, and our communities, we promise commitment, care, and love—without ever mentioning rights.

A second problematic feature of rights as the central word for understanding our procreative responsibilities is that rights are individualistic. Rightly so, they protect the one from the many. But invoking such rights as autonomy, freedom and choice for the relationships that sustain and carry our shared lives distorts. Attempting to conceive what we owe each other as husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers, sisters, friends, church members and citizens in terms of rights warps our moral perceptions. Specifics will clarify the point.

In the context of “reproductive rights,” no one has been a better advocate of rights than law professor John A. Robertson. Here reproductive liberty is a protected activity for its importance to personal identity and meaning. The focus is on the individual who intends to reproduce, for “reproductive goals should be respected as a central aspect of people’s freedom to define themselves through reproduction.”² When he first addressed the issue of human cloning, Robertson followed the liberal logic that privacy and autonomy remain decisive, and, therefore, one may clone for any reason. More recently, Professor Robertson reaffirmed the presumptive right of infertile individuals and carriers of genetic diseases to clone genetically related offspring.³ “That right should be denied . . . only if substantial harm from cloning to have genetically-related children for rearing could be shown.”⁴ Appealing to current social attitudes and values, limiting this reproductive right for now, allows him to draw the line against the narcissistic and eugenic uses of cloning when sexual reproduction is possible. Cloning simply to have the child of one’s dream would be excluded. The good of children so begun is assured by the interests that parents ordinarily have in the well-being of their children.⁵

Robertson allows risk of serious harm to future offspring—risk of a fate worse than death—to trump

a current right. The problem in the case of cloning, of course, is that we cannot be sure of serious harm unless we try it. And then it will be too late. The cloned child, of course, could sue parents, medical technologists, and all who played a part in his or her origin. But judges have dismissed wrongful life charges by children against their progenitors for the reason Robertson invokes prospectively: “[E]ven if the clone suffers inordinately from her replica status, there is no alternative for her if she is to live at all.”⁶ The National Advisory Board on Ethics in Reproduction rightly notes that such reasoning allows almost any harm to befall cloned children, since it can always be said that they are better off alive than never having existed.⁷ Robertson does not take intergenerational responsibilities seriously enough, for prospective parents clearly owe their offspring reasonable care even before conceiving them. When procreative rights trump the risk of harm to the cloned offspring parent-child, solidarity suffers. The prospective child, here to be created by cloning, does not yet exist and thus has no legal rights or moral claims it can raise in its defense. That is the very reason why rights language simply does not work to protect future generations. Here reliance on rights distorts. Rather than insisting on our rights, a child-friendly perspective must make the good of the child its major concern.

Christian and Lutheran Ways

Admitting sin

By contrast, Lutheran Christian moral bearings focus on the ways of God, and these ways stand in stark contrast to cultural ways. Most striking, as members both of our culture and of our church, we confess a dark or jaundiced assessment of human nature that resists God’s ways. We take sin seriously. Selfish, irrational, destructive humankind requires the restraining chains of the law. Therefore, we cannot assume that cloning decisions will be made by objective, rational, and moral persons or non-sinners. One would do well to remember human pride, egoism and self-assertion in terms of the motives, process, and consequences of human cloning.

Motives will not only be mixed, as they might be in much of time-tested begetting, but brand new occasions for pride arise in the perpetuation of a specific human bodily self and in the novel control over the projected life. If pride be the original human sin, one might suspect a yearning for “guaranteed self-replication”⁸ and a fleeing of finitude.⁹

The process will involve great loss of early human lives not only to experimentation, but also to quality control. The language for this process has already been coined as “great respect” for human lives in their earliest forms (blastocyst, zygote, embryo, fetus), a

now routine verbal curtsy before using such lives and using them up.

The likely consequences of procreative cloning not only include a new mode of conception that overcomes sterility or the barrier of genetic disease, but also promise to become a thriving “reproductive options” enterprise, more like luxury services than basic health care for all. The commodifying and purchasing of these services may not be the same as buying a child, but one suspects that they are in shouting distance of each other.

Such characteristically Lutheran realism seems well remembered in this context of procreative cloning. It need not be the first or last word, but it seems fitting to recall who we are in this as in all contexts. These dark features penetrating human identity should not be obscured by the clinical white of medical technologists or the golden sheen of for-profit reproductive enterprises.

Justification by faith

Justification by faith stands at the heart of the Protestant Reformation. While it seems to point to a human act, gratefully receiving what God offers us, it actually centers on what God does. God’s forgiving love sets us right. This great fulcrum, the heart of Luther’s rediscovery of grace, becomes fundamental for ethics. Biblical ethics responds, one might almost say reciprocates, with the double command to love God with all of one’s being and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5) and to love the neighbor as oneself (Leviticus 19:18). It turns out to be impossible to separate these two commands in the sense that there can be no love of God without caring for human beings. Such responsive love finds its guide in the ways of God and stands at the center of Christian ethics. Would cloning a human child resonate with such love? A simple enough question, but not at all easy to answer. We, the body of Christ, need to reason together. Given Scripture, tradition, experience, and common sense, where would the creative and redemptive love of God point us when it comes to bringing children into the world as clones? That is poorly phrased, since here their very beginning becomes definitive of who they are. Instead, where would God’s love point us about engendering children through cloning? I will try to respond to that question in a moment.

But Lutherans reason morally not only from God’s redemptive love, but also seek bearings from what they deem true traditionally about *life in community*. Since we are members of one another, remain dependent and interdependent throughout life, we may not reason in the preferred mode of our own culture—individualistically. Rather, we are communal by nature; We are born into families, we are members of nation states, we are ultimately “connected”

to any human being, especially those exploited and oppressed. We find ourselves so connected and called both because that is the fabric of our lives and because that is where God is and calls us to be and to do. Moreover these relationships are not just added to who we are “contractually,” as liberal law and politics would have it. Rather they constitute us. If our relationships to God and others were to be taken away—if we could stand it—we would be peeled layer by layer not to a self-reliant hard core, but to a shriveled, desperate remains curved in on itself. Where our American culture imagines the independent person, toughened by risks of unfettered private freedom and adversarial competition—“what does not kill me makes me stronger”—Christians confess their dependence, interdependence and need wholly devoid of heroic pretensions. We live by the grace of God and of each other. We *are* children, sons, daughters, friends, students, teachers, citizens, and human beings, not in the roles we assume, but in ways that define, construct, and sustain who and what we are.

Consequently, it would be false both to our own identity and our confessions if we were to consider procreative cloning a private affair and a matter of individual right, without regard to others and especially without regard to a child so engendered. It is altogether reasonable that contributing authors to this consultation invoke larger issues such as justice and medical care that at first sight seem wholly irrelevant to cloning.

Such community-grounded moral reflections should always focus on the child. It is first for the sake of children so conceived that the church is called to reflect and to witness what it understands about the love of God. In what follows I offer an initial attempt to take the perspective of the child. Who can anticipate all the questions that might arise?! But here are the sort of reflections that seek to take seriously what love of God and neighbor might mean specifically.

Is Cloning the Loving Thing To Do?

God’s ways have been described most inclusively as loving. The heart of biblical and Christian, Lutheran ethics, therefore, is the double love commandment that enjoins us to walk in God’s ways. Could human cloning express such love?

In the fact that it promises life, yes. But cloning is also very destructive, since it will not become a practice without much experimentation. Dolly was preceded by 276 cloning failures. If human cloning should be even more difficult and complex, the early forms of human lives sacrificed for a cloning achievement will be legion. Moreover, even after the practice has been established, in each specific case medical guardians will insist on the strictest quality control.

If the qualities intended in the clone should be compromised, what would be the point? Medical liability as well insists on strict quality control, much as in IVF. Once medical technology has a hand in this process, it must protect its hand as well as the “patients” or customers it serves. Survivors of this rigorous quality control gauntlet will be lucky. Since they have to measure up to the standards of all who have a hand in this, they are not loved or welcomed unconditionally; they are loved for better only, at least until they are born.

Since knowing what love requires is not always self-evident, the negative version of the Golden Rule offers a guide: “Do not do to others what you don’t want done to you”. If cloning is good for future children, would I choose it for myself if I could? Would I choose to be the clone of the best human being imaginable? The question is not wholly fair, since answering affirmatively may imply ingratitude for the life one has. Yet, this is a question a future cloned child might ask or has a right to ask of parents, who are obligated to love their child, even prospectively, in the very act of taking steps to bring it to life. Assuming that I would survive the winnowing of the cloning process, would I delight in being the spitting image of the “best” person in the world?

I think not. For while all other children have two genetic parents, I have only one. The woman who brought me into the world may not be my flesh and blood, unless she cloned herself. And then I would be a second genetic rather than her child, as child has always been defined. In both cases she and I know that. The fact that cloning now may multiply my mothers (ovum donor, nucleus donor, womb mother, rearing mother) is not reassuring. For to whom do I really belong? More important to me, who really belongs to me? In case I am boy, my rearing dad may not be the famous person who was chosen as my predecessor. Accompanying such troubling confusions over my immediate parents will be unclarity about all of my kin. They, in turn, will be unsure of their ties to me—ties that have always been relied upon to protect and nurture children. To be sure, for biblical believers, all children count. Love is or should be thicker than blood. But even the faithful understand their obligations to begin with “their own.” Their responsibilities to God and to others become clear in ways metaphorical of fathers, mothers, children, brothers and sisters. Ties between parents and children speak a universal loving language that we should not confound.

Would I choose to be cloned or affirm my beginnings as a cloned individual? I am told that I was given a better chance in life than most. My folks did not play genetic roulette with me.¹⁰ They did not risk inflicting their genetic abnormalities on me. In

contrast to other couples, they were sure of what they were getting and that such was a good thing, for they gave me what all parents strive to offer their children: the best possible chance in life. Yet, even a grateful child might wonder how to deal with the fact that it is different from all other children. To be sure, our culture prizes the unique. We deem it a virtue “to do one’s own thing.” My thing, however, already has a model in the person in whose image I was created. Do I as clone and survivor to birth then get the chance to be loved unconditionally? Or will parental acceptance insist that I measure up to my physical predecessor in whose image they charted my life?

Our culture prizes control. Cloning (creating an almost exact physical duplicate of an existing living or even dead being) constitutes an emerging form of control. Such control bestows a new power on those in charge of such multiplication. In regard to animals, we have always insisted on being in powerful control. Whether we bring them life or kill them, animals serve us. Without asking whether that is right, human cloning will let us extend such power to our children. One generation can now do a new thing with those who follow. In deciding to give us life, they can also determine our physical identity. Since the choice of physical identity is never capricious, but is always made for the best of reasons, those reasons now become normative for the cloned child. To be sure, parents always have hopes, plans, and dreams for their offspring, but normally they take potluck. Now progenitors can assure at least the physical form and precondition for what may make those dreams possible. Yet, such begetter dreams may become nightmares for the begotten. Is this a loving gift to one’s child? It seems rather “a form of despotism of the cloners over the cloned”¹¹ and an invitation to child abuse.¹²

Human cloning will replicate a specific image. Remarkably, biblical believers have always been committed to the hope and pledge that their children—as well as they!—would grow into and affirm an ancient image. Yet that image, our likeness with God, does not lie within us and is not in our control. Cloning children will not affirm or confirm our identity as children of God. The qualities for which one might choose a clone donor probably do not resemble the ways of the God of Israel or of Christ. Even if they did, cloning a saint would not prove efficacious for the clone unless a cell nucleus contains the miraculous power ascribed to the bones of the saints. As it is, all it takes to claim that ancient image is Baptism, linked with certain communal prayers, promises, and perseverance.

Summary and Conclusion

Faithfully reflecting on procreative cloning is our responsibility as Christian citizens. We owe it to God, to our country, to the church as the body of Christ, and thus to ourselves. And most importantly, we owe it to children so conceived. As a people enmeshed in cultural ways, we also know ourselves to be called to find our bearings from the ways of God. It therefore behooves us to approach this topic cautiously and critically, paying very close attention to the facts, to the words, and to our culture's and God's ways. I have argued that we should not think in individualistic and adversarial terms, that we not speak in terms of rights, but that we affirm relational and communal ways and invoke love. We can be sure that any successful cloning will be heralded under the banner of love. Yet, as Lutherans, we are also realistic enough to know that love can "cover" a multitude of sins, for what love requires when we beget children through cloning is not self-evident. It is a form of begetting and, thus, is life-giving and creative. But would it be judged to be loving by persons so conceived? While the church would welcome such children in the name of God, we must ask before they are conceived: Would such an origin be a blessing or a burden to cloned children?

My conclusion is that we should oppose human cloning on moral grounds. Such begetting gives too much control to begetters over the begotten. Thereby, cloning deprives the child of too much: two parents and two lineages and a unique start in life that is not overshadowed by an existing physical identity carefully chosen and already designated with an identity and human image. Such a lot in life is too heavy, constraining, and cruel for any child. By contrast, the image to which biblical believers testify and to which the child should aspire offers a choice rather than a fate. And while the divine image also imposes a burden, that weight is light, freely borne, and genuinely loving. What, then, should be the witness of our church? Unless human cloning can be shown to be genuinely loving toward children, we should oppose such cloning on moral grounds. Politically, we should support the current ban of federal funding of human cloning projects that was imposed because the process is not safe for children. We should also seek a permanent ban on research leading to "reproductive" cloning even if it becomes "safe," as well as discourage it in private enterprises. We should be clear in explaining why we conclude that God's ways are good for children, for parents, and for our country but are incompatible with this mighty technology that promises us children in our own image.

Endnotes

1. Leon R. Kass and James Q. Wilson, *The Ethics of Human Cloning* (Washington, D.C.: The AEI Press, 1998), pp. 3-59. Kass' essay, "The Wisdom of Repugnance," appeared first in *The New Republic*, June 2, 1997.
2. John A. Robertson, *Children of Choice: Freedom and the New Reproductive Technologies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 18.
3. John A. Robertson, "Two Models of Human Cloning," *Hofstra Law Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Spring 1999), 609-638.
4. *Ibid.*, 619.
5. *Ibid.*, 638.
6. Robertson, *Children of Choice*, 169.
7. "It presupposes that children born of cloning are waiting in the void of nonexistence to be summoned into existence and that if they do not receive the call to life, they are harmed." National Advisory Board on Ethics in Reproduction, "Report on Human Cloning through Embryo Splitting: An Amber Light," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, vol 4, no. 3 (September 1994), 258. While here cloning refers to embryo splitting, the point applies to cloning defined as nuclear transplantation as well.
8. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Who Are We? Critical Reflections and Hopeful Possibilities* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), p. 103.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
10. Joseph Fletcher, *The Ethics of Genetic Control: Ending Reproductive Roulette* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974).
11. Leon R. Kass, *The Ethics of Human Cloning*, 27.
12. *Ibid.*, 78.

Let the Church First Be the Church: Thinking Theologically and Speaking Clearly about Reproductive Cloning

(A Response to Hans Tiefel)

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This is what we have come to expect from religious authorities: dogmatic pronouncements without any support external to a particular religious tradition, self-justifying appeals to a sect's teachings, and metaphor masquerading as reasoned argument. And, of course, the interpreters of God's will invariably fail to agree among themselves as to precisely what actions God would approve.

Ronald Lindsay, "Taboos without a Clue: Sizing up Religious Objections to Cloning"¹

Let us try to be candid and clear at the outset. If the church has any particular word to say on the issue of cloning (or, for that matter, any other issue of medicine and morals), it will be because of who the church is and what has been entrusted to the church, not because of some general surfeit of moral wisdom in churchfolk. There is little reason to think that we will find in the church large numbers of those who are markedly superior, morally speaking, to those outside the church. We've no reason to think that those churchfolk who are moral saints, who are people of uncommon moral goodness, will be able to articulate, in a language accessible to all comers, their moral judgments, the reasoning that has led them to the conclusions they've reached on any particular issue. In short, the gifts to the church are not necessarily those demanded by Mr. Lindsay. The church *qua* church may have no great insight into the best arguments that come from outside the tradition. That is nothing for which the church owes an apology to Ronald Lindsay or anyone else. If the church will address the issue of cloning, it should do so with those gifts, with that wisdom, that is uniquely the church's. Having thought through the issue, *qua* church, we may then attempt to translate our understanding into the language demanded by Lindsay. But that project must always await an assessment of the immediate cultural context and the church's peculiar calling in that context. The church must first be the church, must first know, speak to one another, and live the truth entrusted to it if there is to be a healing for the nations.

Hans Tiefel's counsel that we not leave the topic of cloning "to the experts and their use of words," rather, that we "seek to understand human cloning in the light of faith," is, thus, welcome, implicitly acknowledging the only expertise the church can claim to have, the expertise of faith in response to God's disclosure. "The task of Christian ethics is to relate everything to God," Tiefel says and, therefore, "whatever we say about human cloning . . . ought to resonate with God's ways" as witnessed to by Bible, tradition and liturgy. Helpful words, to be sure, and especially relevant to our thinking about cloning for reproductive purposes. Following a brief summary of Tiefel's paper, I will articulate several theological concerns that go beyond those provided by Tiefel and which should be prominent in the church's thought and speech about reproductive cloning.

Briefly, Tiefel first approaches a cluster of arguments that reproductive cloning is morally problematic because it is asexual reproduction and, as such, *unnatural*. Tiefel finds wanting the "unnaturalness" objection to cloning. First, new technologies require successor generations to rethink what is natural; that is to say, nature is not fixed, static for all time. Cloning is novel, to be sure, but unnatural? Secondly, cloning can be understood as just a further, apparently extreme, stage of technological reproduction and so but another of God's ways requiring human agency; cloning need be no more dehumanizing and unnatural than any other means of reproduction requiring assistance. Thirdly, charges that something is "unnatural" are themselves often morally repugnant, expressing a contempt for what is good but strange, rather than what is genuinely hostile to the ways of God. Finally, worries about separating sex and procreation are, at best, shrouded in mystery. Lutherans worry little about decoupling sex and procreation when the aim is not to procreate, Tiefel argues. Likewise, when the aim is to have a child, reproduction without sex (e.g., for the infertile or the genetically maleficent) may appear to be the blessing of God. Thus, unnaturalness objections fail, according to Tiefel.

If we Lutherans ought not to confuse ourselves with Roman Catholics (for whom an appeal to nature carries much weight), neither should we be content to be only Americans, Tiefel continues. He deftly discusses the proliferation of rights and rights talk in American society, as represented by the legal theorist John A. Robertson. For Robertson and for American individualism, reproductive rights (one's entitlements not only not to be interfered with, but an equal access to resources necessary to make possible the desired reproductive activity) trump all other concerns including the well-being of would-be children. As Tiefel notes, the language and the commitments of American individualism are a great deal less than conducive to the expression and development of robust Christian identities.

Having reminded us of the Lutheran themes of sinful human nature and our essentially social character and the realism about corruption that flows from the former, and the reminder of the immediate social context that follows from the latter, Tiefel concludes by raising the question, "Could human cloning express a love like God's love?" His answer is a qualified "No." Qualified in that God is "pro-life," so that the promise of life is expressive of love. But, finally, "No, the practice of cloning does not comport well with the love of God." Cloning will require a quality control of that which is created that is incompatible with the unconditional love of God and that conditional love of her genetic parents is likely to follow the clone throughout her life. Furthermore, the clone is likely to be confused about her identity, her parents and her kin and, thus, unable to delight in her life. Finally, the control that is expressed in cloning is likely to be experienced by the clone as "despotism" and domination." Better, Tiefel concludes, not to clone.

Speaking Theologically about Cloning and Reproduction

Although I find Tiefel's discussion most helpful, I believe there are additional theological resources we do well to draw upon in discussing reproductive cloning. His rejection of the "unnaturalness" objections to cloning, his rejection of the reproductive rights arguments for cloning, and his rejection of cloning are, finally, I think, rejections based upon a respect for persons (parents, would-be parents, children, and would-be children) a respect not obviously incompatible with the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ. But to say what is not obviously incompatible with faith and faith's God is not the same as integrating "our heads, our words and lives with what we believe, confess and worship." His objections to reproductive cloning appear most frequently in a language closer to that of Lindsay than of Luther, or so it seems to this reader more accustomed to what Lindsay requires.

How might a theologically richer discussion of cloning go? Christians had better be able to say something clearer on the nature of nature and what that means for us than Tiefel here delivers. "I believe in one God . . . the Creator of heaven and earth," we confess. Why do we sometimes speak the language of "peace, justice, and the *integrity of creation*?" What does it mean for cloning to confess the God revealed to us in Christ Jesus as both creator and redeemer of fallen creation? This confession requires us, first of all, to take seriously our status as embodied creatures, as bodies, but not only bodies. We recognize human life as good and the human body as essential to our identities as persons. Medicine, as considered by Christians, must be to serve this good of bodily life. As Michael Banner has suggested, medicine fails in its calling both by "withdrawing altogether from the service of the body" and "by converting service [to the body] into manipulation."²

The problem with the mere manipulation of human bodies is the failure to recognize the created order as having a form, a meaning, independent of our own projects. To confess God as creator is to recognize natural limits (limits entailed by the meaning of natural objects as created by God), to what we should do. Such limits, Oliver O'Donovan rightly points out, "will not be taught us by compassion, but only by the understanding of what God has made, and by a discovery that it is complete, whole and satisfying."³ Believing in God's creation as having form and meaning independent of our projects does not prohibit the expansion of technology. It does require us to ask of each new technological innovation, does this respect the meaning of God's created order or does it manipulate it to achieve our purposes?

Having thought theologically about the nature of creation, having more deeply plumbed the confession that God is maker of heaven and earth, we ought to find the 'unnaturalness' objections to reproductive cloning a great deal more central and a good deal less mysterious than does Tiefel. To engage in a reproduction that so radically unyokes what God has yoked together in creation is to manipulate human bodies, rather than to serve them in their pursuit of creaturely ends and to violate the integrity of creation.

From Creation to the Family

If the prospects of cloning require us to think more deeply and speak more clearly about the goodness of creation, they likewise require us to develop our understanding of the divine mandates or "orders of creation," the family in particular. The chief attraction of reproductive cloning is that it offers the potential for an infertile couple to have a child genetically or biologically related to at least one of the rearing parents. A second use of reproductive cloning would

enable an individual or couple for whom sexual reproduction is possible to have a child without sexual reproduction.⁴

Both Tiefel's embrace of the modern tradition of human rights and his worries about American individualism are well-founded. He is right to remind us how much richer is our theological and liturgical vocabulary than the rights language of law. But until the church speaks a clear theological word on the family, its nature and its relation to the social order, the language of churchfolk will default to the language of legal rights. If families are but the voluntary associations of (at least) two individuals who have consented to a relationship recognized by law, the rights language of American individualism will do perfectly well. If, by contrast, a family has its origin in the fellowship of two who are different, yet called into unity by God, then we require a vocabulary of faith, not merely the vocabulary of rights. What does the church, today, know about the family? What is the church willing to say about family at this time and in this place?

It is not only those who would consider reproductive cloning who await this word from the church. It is a word awaited, as well, by infertile individuals and couples who wish to become parents, those who may be excused for thinking of technological reproduction solely in the language of the marketplace and American law, deafened as they are by our many and conflicting voices on the importance of genetic relationships in a family, the status of "spare" embryos conceived *in vitro*, the costs of technological reproduction, and our obligations as stewards in a world of haves and have-nots. *Reproductive* cloning presents a challenge for the church not first and foremost because it is cloning, but because it is possibly a new and exorbitantly expensive—in terms of the cost to embryonic life as well as financially—means of technological reproduction. Speaking clearly about reproductive cloning requires us first to speak clearly about technological reproduction.

In Sum

- The church's first task is to be the church, a community of those faithful to the Creator God who reveals himself in Christ Jesus.
- Faithfulness to God will require us to read God's creation rightly in Jesus Christ, discovering in creation a form and meaning perhaps not apparent to all.
- The practice of reproductive cloning does not comport well with the meaning of humans as creatures of God and with the integrity of creation.
- Christians must also reflect upon cloning in light of a theology of family and the divine orders.

Endnotes

1. Ronald Lindsay, "Taboos without a Clue: Sizing up Religious Objections to Cloning," in Glenn McGee, *The Human Cloning Debate*, (Berkeley: 1998).
2. Michael Banner, *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Problems* (Cambridge, 1999), 60.
3. Oliver O'Donovan, *Begotten or Made?* (Oxford, 1984), 12.
4. These distinctions are from John A. Robertson's "Two Models of Human Cloning," in *Hofstra Law Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Spring 1999), 609-638.

Reproductive Cloning (A Response to Hans Tiefel)

Robert Roger Lebel

Prayerful posture and thoughtful analysis characterize the writings of Hans Tiefel. Reading his work is both an intellectual treat and an invitation to gospel fidelity. His concern for language and its ownership, its role in communication and its control of the issues is well placed. My life as a Christian geneticist is made complex and sometimes frustrating when scientific colleagues consider me lightweight because of my faith, while fellow believers suspect me of consorting with the enemy—technology run wild pursuing unholy goals. On my better days, I discover my role as a helper in translating the languages, bridging the divides; then my vocation is clarified.

So the effort to transpose talk of cloning into images of faith becomes a battle for the high ground of vocabulary; the king of the hill controls the conversation. Of course, it is always more pleasant when the protagonists elect to join in a common effort to advance human thinking, rather than perceive themselves as rivals, one of whom must prevail while the other retreats in defeat.

Comparison to the events which surrounded introduction of *in vitro* fertilization is apt. I recall a prominent practitioner of IVF, after publicly announcing his disinterest in participating in reproductive cloning. I congratulated him on his stance; he said glibly that this problem would resolve in the same way that IVF did, and that “soon we’ll all be cloning in our kitchens.” If the inevitable intransigent advance of medical technology is hampered by controversy due to transient protest by conservatives, only to be followed by the triumph of the elite innovative vanguard, then this attitude is justified. With Tiefel, I would hope for better from myself and my fellow humans. But that is because we resist temptations to cynicism and opt rather for gospel commitments and the promise of grace.

I would not exercise myself about questions of acceptance for the resulting child of reproductive cloning. Just as there are families prepared to adopt handicapped children today, providing for them loving and

nurturing homes, there should be no need to doubt that such acceptance will be ready for these children. Nor should it take long for classmates and others to overcome superstitious anxieties about their full humanness. And after all, nurturing (mothering and fathering) has long been blurred across the lines of genetic relatedness, both for good and for ill, in a wide variety of historical settings. Who is that boy’s mother? Why, the woman who raises him, of course. That was already well established long before fancy new reproductive technologies were introduced. As for concerns about animation, the inviolability and uniqueness of the soul of a cloned person should be no more difficult to defend than that of a monozygous twin derived from a single zygote, or of a chimaera composed of two fused pre-embryos.

Persons who seek to avoid genetic disease in their children by employing “donor” eggs or sperm hope and presume that he or she does not have high risk of carrying mutations which are known to exist in the people seeking a child. For years, we have warned that the “donors” are not necessarily free of genetic disorders of other kinds, unanticipated and potentially just as worrisome as the one being avoided. The great advantage of reproductive cloning is supposed to be that it sidesteps that concern by showing that the “donor” is already a successful, perhaps even superior adult. Or, if self-cloning is the goal, then the parent is known or presumed to lack any important genetic defects. So Tiefel imagines the child reflecting with pleasure on the parents’ not having “played roulette” but electing a sure route to eugenic bliss.

That is precisely where the point is lost if one understands genetics. On genetic grounds, we may embrace John Robertson’s willingness to reject cloning if it will entail significant risk of harm to the product child, and then confront him with some facts to which I have not found much attention being given. The problem is somatic mutation; it presents us with a compelling reason for caution/concern about potential harm from reproductive cloning.

The fertilized egg (zygote) is a single cell with a complete set of human genetic material encompassing all the information needed for all the functions of a complete human body. That entails approximately 3 billion base pairs of DNA. Translation of that potential into a final product requires cell divisions to accumulate 100 trillion cells in an adult. Every day of routine living calls for some 100 billion cell divisions to replace cells being lost by normal wear and tear. It is inevitable that mutations take place; most are inconsequential, but occasionally one brings about a change in cell behavior, and some such changes lead to development of tumors.

Every day geneticists consult with persons seeking information about increased familial risk for cancer. We explain the above process to them, including a description of how a person inherits two copies each of genes which protect cells from derangement into tumor; cancer occurs only after a sequential cascade of mutation events, disabling the genes which maintain the cells' normal specialized functions. Some persons begin life with one copy of a protective gene already disabled by mutation, but most individuals who develop cancer had all their genetic protection intact at the time of fertilization, losing crucial elements of that system over the years.

If this is true (and we have every reason to believe it is), then on what basis am I confident that the nucleus chosen to produce a cloned offspring for me lacks important accumulated somatic mutations, placing that child at high risk of genetic disease which was not present in me (or my chosen hero "donor") or in our families? Mutations are going on all the time, and many a family is tripped up by a severe one (e.g. Huntington disease), or surprised by a trivial one (heterochromia - different colored eyes). So the child may have my facial conformation and mid-life balding pattern, but also be affected by a genetic disease of which I never thought. I find this daunting, and am surprised not to find it in prominent places of the discussion about cloning. This might be a transient problem, if technology allows for screening of thousands of potential mutations in a pre-embryo, but such an optimism demands considerable progress before it can be fulfilled.

If we are to take some enlightenment from the trinitarian doctrine of relational existence within God and within human community, then we can accept joyfully the notion that love should be the criterion for all ethical debate and scientific decisions. If the cloned child cannot be brought to fullness of life safely in someone else's image, then the process should be rejected. We are far from being able to assure such safety in the production of a cloned individual, and so should not attempt the task.

Humility is just as important as courage in the effort to be a created co-creator, to act decisively and constructively as an agent in the great scheme of evolutionary progress. An example of the limits of our vision haunts my mind. In the 1630s, Jesuit missionaries accompanied the explorers to New France. They were captured and tortured by the native Americans. A layman assistant named Guillaume Couture was later offered an opportunity to join the priesthood, but elected rather to serve as an ambassador between the new settlers and the natives (whose language he had learned, and whose respect he had gained by his courage). His former companions were later martyred. He married, raised a family, and died in bed at age 84. His grandson's great-grandson had a daughter, whose granddaughter's granddaughter came to be my mother.

If Couture could have seen my existence, which is one of the consequences of his decision to marry rather than become a priest, how would it have changed his decision process? The question is meaningless, unanswerable. None of us can know or even imagine the remote events that follow from our actions. But every reproductive choice made by every person has consequences 300 years later in the human community. The fact that those consequences are also mediated through numerous decisions made by others in the meantime does not diminish the mystery of my contribution to the process. Thus, we should make our choices carefully and with well informed consciences (so, have courage!), but also recognize the limits of our vision (so, have humility!).