



Christian Reflection

A Series in Faith and Ethics

Focus Article:

📖 Cloning Promises, Profits, and Privilege
(*Cloning*, pp. 29-36)

What do you think?

Was this study guide useful for your personal or group study? Please send your suggestions to:

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Christian Reflection

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Cloning Promises, Profits, and Privilege

Who is funding cloning research, and who will reap the benefits? We should make sure that the common good, solidarity among rich and poor, and the justice of health care and health research economics become central in debates about reproductive cloning, research cloning, and stem cells.

Prayer

In peace we pray to you, O God.

For those who set government policy with regard to human cloning and stem-cell research, who draw the line between what we *can* do and what we *should* do, (*silent prayers*), Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those in desperate need of basic health care, who will rarely benefit from sophisticated medical technologies and whose voices are lost in debates about cloning, (*silent prayers*), Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen.**

Scripture Reading: Wisdom 7:1-6

I also am mortal, like everyone else,
a descendant of the first-formed child of earth;
and in the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh,
within the period of ten months, compacted with blood,
from the seed of a man and the pleasure of marriage.
And when I was born, I began to breathe the common air,
and fell upon the kindred earth;
my first sound was a cry, as is true of all.
I was nursed with care in swaddling cloths.
For no king has had a different beginning of existence;
there is for all one entrance into life, and one way out.

Reflection

Most hotly debated questions about human cloning involve the status of the clone. In reproductive cloning, would the parent or parents have too much control over a genetically planned child, and could a clone develop nourishing relationships with his or her parents and siblings? Also, cloning is "too unpredictable and dangerous," Lisa Cahill notes, and "to improve human reproductive cloning through experimentation on human embryos and infants would be unethical." Therapeutic (or research) cloning raises other questions about the moral status of an embryonic clone: would it be permissible to destroy one to obtain stem cells, or even to create one with the purpose of so destroying it?

However, "an ethical issue that is still below the surface of public consciousness is the economics of cloning, especially cloning for stem cells." Cahill urges us to consider:

- ▶ *Who is funding cloning research?* Since unregulated "for profit" companies generally support cloning research in the U.S., we should be concerned about "fairness in accessing future therapies...[and] the pressure of profit motives on research directions." Some states may follow California in funding cloning research "to increase business opportunity," but no federal



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guidelines apply to such ventures. For instance, what will prevent “the exploitation of poor women who might submit to the invasive procedure of egg extraction for a fee”?

- ▶ *Who will reap the benefits?* If reproductive cloning becomes an infertility option, only the wealthy will be able to afford it. And while we pour billions of dollars into therapeutic cloning to cure Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s, Cahill observes that “millions die around the world, and at a young age, from treatable causes like malaria, anemia, and tuberculosis.”

She proposes, as a compromise on stem cell research, having “one law, applying to both federally and privately or state-funded research; a ban on the creation of embryos for research; permission to use donated, spare IVF embryos; a ban on patents deriving from work on embryo research; and advocacy for more aggressive and better financed research on adult stem cells.”

Study Questions

1. What are the key moral issues, according to Cahill, raised by reproductive cloning? By therapeutic cloning? Do you agree?
2. How might the insights and perspective in the scripture reading, a speech ascribed to King Solomon in the Apocrypha, apply to the key moral issues raised by human cloning?
3. Discuss Cahill’s concluding proposal for stem cell research. How is it a compromise among competing views today? Would it promote social justice?

Departing Hymn: “O God of Life, Your Healing Touch” (verses 1, 2, and 4)

O God of life, your healing touch
brings wholeness and salvation!
In you, this world you love so much
becomes a new creation.
Through Jesus Christ you blessed the poor,
unleashed your gifts of healing.
You gave new sight, new strength, new life—
to all, your love revealing.

O Christ, the loving healer still,
you gather us for mission
to serve your people who are ill,
whatever their condition.
You send us to the suffering
with medicine and caring;
now make our lives an offering
to those who are despairing.

How long, Lord, shall we serve the poor—
a week, a month, a season?
We ask the question, hoping for
a limit to our mission.
But open wide our hearts anew
and show us, as we’re giving,
your lifelong call to serving you
in daily, generous living.

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (2004)

Suggested Tunes: KETY or ST. COLUMBA

Cloning Promises, Profits, and Privilege

Lesson Plans

<i>Abridged Plan</i>	<i>Standard Plan</i>
Prayer	Prayer
Scripture Reading	Scripture Reading
Reflection (skim all)	Reflection (all sections)
Questions 1 and 3	Questions (selected)
Departing Hymn	Departing Hymn

Teaching Goals

1. To outline the hotly debated moral issues concerning reproductive and therapeutic (or research) human cloning.
2. To spotlight the justice of health research and health care economics of human cloning, by asking “Who is funding cloning research?” and “Who will benefit from it?”
3. To discuss Lisa Cahill’s proposal for stem cell research.

Before the Group Meeting

Distribute copies of the study guide on pp. 6-7 and ask members to read the Bible passage in the guide. Distribute copies of *Cloning (Christian Reflection)* and ask members to read the focus article before the group meeting. Download the departing hymn “O God of Life, Your Healing Touch” paired with the lovely tune KETY from www3.baylor.edu/christianethics/hymnGillette.pdf. Or adapt the familiar tune ST. COLUMBA, which is in your church’s hymnal or on the web at www.cyberhymnal.org, by repeating the tune for each four lines of the hymn text.

Begin with a Story

“In July 2001, President George W. Bush paid a visit to Pope John Paul II. In relation to Bush’s impending policy decision about stem cell funding and policy, the pope reminded the president that the creation of research embryos was, in his view, ‘an assault on innocent life.’ This warning was widely reported in the secular press. Much less frequently noted was the pope’s opening call for the U.S. to exercise leadership in helping those who suffer from economic marginalization regarding the essential goods of life. ‘Respect for human dignity and belief in the equal dignity of all the members of the human family demand policies aimed at enabling all peoples to have access to the means required to improve their lives....’ A serious moral issue is whether proposals to clone for stem cell research are aimed at access for all people, or at prestige, profits, and products for the privileged” (*Cloning*, p. 34).

Prayer

Invite members to share their personal celebrations and concerns with the group. Using the prayer in the study guide, pray silently not only for who develop government health policies, but also for the poor whose voices rarely are heard when those policies are created. The leader begins and the group reads the lines in bold print.

Scripture Reading

Ask group members to read Wisdom 7:1-6 in unison. The book of Wisdom in the Apocrypha presents this text as a meditation by King Solomon on his equality with all human beings.

Reflection

Lisa Cahill introduces two distinctions to help us sort out the key moral issues raised by human cloning: (1) the goal of the procedure is either reproductive or therapeutic, and (2) the alleged wrong of the procedure is either it mistreats the clones or it does not serve the common good. Therefore, four types of moral problems are associated with human cloning:

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| 1. (Re)producing children by cloning harms or does not respect the clones. | 2. Embryonic stem cell research intentionally destroys clones (embryos). |
| 3. (Re)producing children by cloning does not serve the common good. | 4. Embryonic stem cell research does not serve the common good. |

The moral issues that involve the alleged mistreatment of clones (types 1 and 2) are hotly debated. Yet these debates have followed different paths because (a) reproductive cloning is many years away, while embryonic stem cell research is underway, and (b) a high moral status for cloned children is generally accepted, but the moral status of cloned embryos is disputed.

Cahill urges us to broaden the public debate to include moral issues concerning the common good (types 3 and 4). Human cloning would not serve the common good, for example, if it were to further distance the rich from the poor, distort priorities for health care and health research, or undermine the bonds of family life.

Study Questions

1. Moral problems arise with reproductive cloning when it is used to address infertility. (Because physical and personality traits cannot be determined solely by genes, Cahill dismisses as “highly unlikely” the prospect of cloning “whole classes of elite or subservient humans.”) She worries that reproductive cloning (1) “might give the parent or parents of a clone too much control over the child,” (2) “would seriously challenge the meaning of intergenerational relationship and parenthood,” (3) is “too unpredictable and dangerous to be used in humans,” and to develop cloning procedures “through experimentation on human embryos and infants would be unethical,” (4) will be an expensive service available only to the rich, and (5) will further the trend toward the “commercialization of family and parenthood.”

Research (or therapeutic) cloning to produce embryonic stem cells (1) intentionally destroys embryos; (2) will lead us to create new embryos with the purpose of destroying them; (3) will encourage “the exploitation of poor women who might submit to the invasive procedure of egg extraction for a fee”; and (4) is diverting health care resources from alleviating deadly but treatable diseases like malaria, anemia, and tuberculosis.

2. Wisdom 7:1-6 beautifully speaks to both the *equality* of human beings (they are descendants “of the first-formed child of earth” with a common “entrance into life”) and their *solidarity* (they “breathe the common air” and live on “the kindred earth”). The implied speaker, the great King Solomon, identifies himself with people of all ranks and classes. This perspective encourages us to support the common good and address the needs of the poor.

The passage provides insight into the *moral status* of each human being, even when one is merely an embryo or newborn child, and regardless of one’s abilities and accomplishments. God cares for each human being, for within a mother’s womb one is “molded into flesh” in a manner that repeats God’s creation of Adam, “the first-formed child of earth.” Parents also care for their newborn baby, who is “nursed with care in swaddling clothes.” The *context of birth* is a family cooperating with God to welcome a child’s “entrance into life” – for the person is “compacted with blood from the seed of a man and the pleasure of marriage.”

3. Cahill’s proposal is a compromise in that it allows embryonic stem cell research, but limits it to using spare embryos that have been created for *in vitro* fertilization and donated to researchers by the parent(s). The dignity of the human embryo is respected by (1) banning the creation of new embryos for research and (2) encouraging research on adult stem cells.

The proposal directs stem cell research toward the common good by (1) providing legal oversight of all research and (2) limiting commercial abuse with a ban on patents derived from embryo research. The ban on creation of embryos would eliminate pressure on poor women to undergo risks to provide eggs for embryonic stem cell research.

Departing Hymn

If you choose not to sing the hymn, you may read the hymn text in unison, or silently and meditatively as a prayer.