

Arguments Against Human Cloning

In-vitro fertilization has provided for the commodification of human gametes, but cloning goes further, making possible the commodification of human embryos. We would then progress from the already problematic practice of pursuing “designer babies” to choosing “designed babies” whose genotype would be fully determined.

The divinely bestowed privilege of “procreation” has already been secularized as “reproduction,” but with cloning it has become “production,” the dehumanized activity of the factory. As Nigel M. de S. Cameron put it, “it means moving from the bed to the photocopier.”¹

The process used to produce “Dolly” involved considerable experimentation and failure (277 attempts, 1 surviving lamb). Even if human cloning could be developed more quickly and performed more successfully (resolving the present concerns of the National Bioethics Advisory Commission), the failure rate through the experimentation process would constitute an unacceptable price.

It is likely that cloning would only be available to the very wealthy, or that it would be used as part of a scientific “screening” program (read “eugenics”) that would reflect ethnic, economic, or intellectual elitism.

God has established a system in which life is characterized by diversity. Even if cloning did not destroy the human gene pool (assuming that most children would still be conceived “the old-fashioned way”), it would challenge the natural order and demonstrate a misunderstanding of God’s ideal, which has more to do with community than personal perfection.

God’s character and power are often seen in human weakness and disability. Cloning is part of our society’s pursuit of technological perfection, which is accompanied by a devaluation and misunderstanding of both personal suffering and the common good. Genetic cleansing would leave us poorer and, in a sense, less human.

We recognize that every human person (including potential clones) is made in the image of God with inherent dignity. However, our personal sense of dignity is often derived from family and society. Clones (even more so than those

¹ Nigel M. de S. Cameron, “The Ethics of Human Cloning,” *Discernment* 6 (Summer 1999), 10.

conceived through assisted reproductive technologies already in use) would too easily be regarded by others as products, and their sense of dignity would be diminished.

Given the economics of human trade around the world, in which people are bought and sold as laborers, sex slaves, and soldiers, is it unreasonable to suppose that some would be tempted to customize clones for such purposes in the hope of personal gain?

Doctors are already plagued by wrongful birth lawsuits when prenatal screening fails to give adequate evidence of birth defects. If a clone failed to meet expectations, or if the technology failed in some way, would the “parents” abort? send the baby back to the factory? ask for their money back? “To what extent will such children be treated as commodities?”²

It is true that clones would be no more alike than monozygotic (“identical”) twins, but what would life be like for them if they were not just one of two or three individuals with the same genotype, but one of a whole *class*? What would it be like to be one of 2000 Michael Jordan clones (especially if you didn’t really care for basketball)? As one writer put it, such men would not be regarded as individuals, but as “variations on a theme.” “People tend to see twins and triplets as interesting anomalies; they might see a hundred clones as a herd.”³

If a woman gave birth to a clone of herself, would she be both mother and sister to the baby? Would her mother be both mother and grandmother? Would the woman’s husband be a father to his wife’s sister? Such family complications are beyond what is presently experienced in blended households or in adoptive families, both of which bring additional persons into an existing child’s life for the child’s benefit.

Women have already been devalued (or perhaps assigned a price) through surrogate motherhood’s sub-letting of the womb. One such mother was referred to in court as an “Alternate Reproductive Vehicle.” When children are increasingly regarded as commodities, what does that say of those who bear them?

Some have said that cloning will never be popular because it offers reproduction without sex when what people really seem to want is sex without reproduction. Unfortunately, what cloning really offers is reproduction without relationship, a procedure that devalues both marriage and the family.

² Ted Peters, “Cloning Shock: A Theological Reaction,” in *Human Cloning: Religious Perspectives*, edited by Ronald Cole-Turner (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 23.

³ David Byers, “An Absence of Love,” in *Human Cloning: Religious Perspectives*, 75.

Homosexual couples could use cloning to reproduce without the “outside” assistance of donor sperm (for lesbians seeking artificial insemination) or adoption. (Note: many see this as an argument *in favor of* cloning.) This would take rebellion against nature to another level.

The pride already so characteristic of technicism would be increasingly evident in cloning. Al Mohler wrote, “Most fundamentally, the eugenicist vision represents our human attempt to define ourselves and our destiny. By unlocking the genetic code, by laying naked the genome, we will become masters of our own destiny. As human beings, we will define ourselves, improve ourselves, customize ourselves, replicate ourselves, and, in the final act of hubris, redeem ourselves through our genetically enhanced and clonally produced progeny.”⁴

It would not be appropriate to clone a dying child to provide either a replacement or to provide donor organs (even if there is no risk to the life of the clone, who might be called upon to donate bone marrow, for example). At the very least, in these cases the clone would be intentionally brought into existence as a means rather than an end, and the expectations for his or her life would be inappropriately oriented around the life of another. At worst, parents might regard the clone as “take 2” on the life already lived by another, misunderstanding (and thereby compromising) personal identity.

Abigail Rian Evans of Princeton Theological Seminary opposes human cloning because “(1) it is not a necessary solution to any human tragedy; (2) it fosters a reductionistic rather than a holistic view of human nature while treating people as means not ends; (3) it undermines the structure of the family and human community; and (4) it creates a pressure to use this technology and make it a god.”⁵

Evans wrote, “We would do well to remind ourselves of John Calvin’s claim that the purpose of life is ‘to maintain humanity among individuals.’ Life is not just a question of private ethics. It is also a question of public morality. The ultimate criteria for any technology are these: How do we glorify God, recognize God’s sovereignty, honor each person’s dignity, practice stewardship of the earth, and enhance life to the fullest? Human cloning fails to meet these criteria adequately. It should be banned.”⁶

⁴ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., “The Brave New World of Cloning,” in *Human Cloning: Religious Perspectives*, 99.

⁵ Abigail Rian Evans, “Saying No to Human Cloning,” in *Human Cloning: Religious Perspectives*, 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

The people who desire to be cloned are arguably so self-infatuated that the rest of us will undoubtedly desire that they *not* be cloned.

When the Nicene Creed spoke of Jesus as “begotten, not made,” its emphasis was on His equality with the Father. In a sense, clones would be “made, not begotten” – products subordinated to the will of others. This does not mean they would be less than fully human, but it does mean that they would likely be regarded by others as different and, perhaps, as subordinate.

Cloning with experimentation will inevitably lead to additional ethical crises. What if clones were created and raised in an artificial womb with their development of certain physiological systems suppressed? Scientists could essentially “grow” organs for transplant. Would that be good? or grotesque? I think the latter.