

## Cloning and Flockhart Review Input

Context: Australia had a government enquiry into cloning and stem cell research in 2005. One of the positive things was that there was a lot of submissions (near 600). The following comprises a follow up email sent to the policy team, which included the following:

The composite picture from all the submissions brought out the key issues whilst also managing to address the subtle “ethical flavors” of various streams; thus making a more complete and robust presentation than one entity could have done on its own.

God the Creator relishes in diversity. It is human nature to try and develop the “ultimate” tomato and then impose it on everyone else, but when we look at nature we see God repeatedly creating variations and mutations. Sometimes these variations are more robust than the original, sometimes a new disease infects a region and it turns out that only one of the seven kinds of tomatoes grown in the area is immune and survives.

I don't believe that God's creation is meant to be monolithic. One of my core beliefs is that any human creation, whether it be physical or cultural, that attempts to be the peak image or sole legitimate representative of God is doomed to failure. This correspondence was done in September 2005, which was before the major hurricanes in the US, so it has a Christian flavour referring to the “bodies of Christ”. In hindsight of the Pakistani earthquake and the US hurricanes, we might need to think of integrating our thinking to higher level referring to the “bodies of the Ultimate Creator”. If that cultural proposition is taken on board, then the content of this paper applies equally to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews etc. as it does to Christians.

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Over the weekend I entered into a prayer agreement that I would thank and compliment your team and the combined submissions from all the Australian churches to the Lockhart Review This was an excellent example of the benefits of having diverse “bodies of Christ”. The composite picture from all the submissions brought out the key issues whilst also managing to address the subtle “ethical flavors” of various streams; thus making a more complete and robust presentation than one entity could have done on its own.

Again, from reading the Lockhart review submissions, I was struck by the machiavellian elements of some bodies who seemed to cast ethics aside for the short term rewards (where is the recognition of consideration of the legal precedent that is being laid open for future generations)?

The debate is global and there are major issues as can be seen by the results of a survey linked to CNN's website today  
<http://www.medpagetoday.com/PublicHealthPolicy/StemCellResearch/tb/1929>

Once again, it appears that there is a need for the churches' ability to contemplate the “long term” view e.g. delaying gratification for our generation so that our children are not left with a legacy of a legalistic framework that counts groups of people as disposable commodities that can be murdered for the sake of parts. I couldn't help wondering if the people in the US survey even knew that there were alternative sources of stem cells that can be harvested without killing the donor (e.g. placental blood, stem cells from adult organs).

In fighting the deceiver and his minions, God uses very simple absolute boundaries e.g. to Adam and Eve you might of all trees but this one. It is human nature to become proud of personal accomplishments and understandings, and the deceiver uses this to create exceptions and loop

holes so that he can squirm his way into our psyches. Jesus' message is to raise all of humanity's consciousness to the point that we recognize this cyclical game; recognize that the deceiver uses our self-absorption, pride and fear to defy or distort God's Will; and recognize that it is only through Jesus and the Holy Trinity's grace that we are able to recognize the early warning signs and pre-empt the worst excesses of sin.

Sometimes intervention is required to not only overturn abuse that is happening but to recognize early warning signs that the foundations are being laid that could take humanity into a "dark ages". There are many examples of how early legislation is approved for one set of altruistic reasons but can be later distorted and used for less honourable reasons e.g. establishing the legal framework for the holocaust <http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide/Frank.htm> , the role of censorship to contain and repress <http://www.alia.org.au/publishing/alj/53.2/full.text/byrne.html> , the creep of legislation leading to the extreme of South Africa's apartheid <http://www.zuidafrika.nl/introduction/state.html>

I could go on and on but need to stop at some point. There is some overlap between the playing the media by obvious self-interest groups in the stem cell debate, but the same debate also applies to whether or not to countenance anti-vilification legislation. It has also become personal for many those witnessing the debate about orthodox versus liberal Anglicans. There are many who would stifle the debate to "keep up appearances". However, I am of the belief that this will take humanity into a violent and repressive dark age within a matter of a few years.

Anglicans have the reputation of being able to find the common ground and arise above self-interests for the common good. What a lot of people might not yet appreciate is that our public debate on how or whether to incorporate prophetic revelations (e.g. global south Micah challenge) or extremes (e.g. the liberals offering fellowship to homosexuals) is not unique to Christianity.

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Context: This was my personal submission to the Flockhart review (which was then forwarded to the policy arm for information). It is by no means the best submission, but there are points raised that apply beyond the context of cloning and stem cell research.

My vision is for a world in which each and every child that is conceived out of deliberate mutual consent and choice by both parents, who are in turn committed and have the faith that they will be able to raise the child to the best of their abilities so that child will grow into a healthy and well-adjusted adult with a reasonable future for both themselves and their future progeny.

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The following is an extract from a recent personal letter that articulates the boundaries that I, as a Christian woman, consider would be ethical and that I would be prepared to face Jesus on Judgment Day and said that I had supported. Some of the content is only indirectly related in that it refers to trying to postulate "ideal" family and parental relationships and responsibilities. However, even though these appear to be indirectly related, they are pivotal to formulating a suitable ethical response.

### **Abortion and contraception**

The opening of a womb is an intimate relationship between the woman and God. In a healthy, godly world a woman's womb is only opened when she has the capacity to love and nurture the child – not just with food and shelter, but also with spiritual and emotional food. To treat a woman's womb as something that should always be ready to conceive is to diminish her into nothing more than glorified cattle, further it diminishes the child into a commodity that can be thrown away or used as desired, because it denies the need for spiritual training.

Some women have a natural capacity to love and nurture and can easily raise ten godly children, other women are more intense and can really only do justice to one or two children (for example they need more time between children to recover from postnatal depression).

Where women are blessed with godly husbands, their capacity to suitably raise and nurture children is increased. Thus large numbers of godly offspring are a manifestation of God's grace to both the mother and the father.

For the Catholic strands, condoms, the contraceptive pill, and the morning after pill, can not keep closed a womb that God wants opened. There are enormous amounts of evidence that women still end up having babies, despite using such forms of contraceptive. Thus if God wants a womb opened, He will find a way. Thus this is not sin to give women back a certain level of control.

This actually increases the joys of children. Those that are conceived are conceived with love, and the mother knows that they come with the grace of God, and are not some demon spawn forced upon them because they have no choice.

Further, to deny women the right to contraceptives plays straight into the hands of the deceiver in other ways, e.g. vicious men who deliberately rape women with the intent to force a bastard child upon them. It also insinuates an element of fear into the relationship between husband and wife. If the wife's womb is already weak from a previous pregnancy, having sex can put the life of the wife in jeopardy, which in turn affects their joyful union between man and woman.

Contraception that addresses the possibility of successful implantation is different to eliminating that which is successfully implanted. The latter is murder. When it happens to a child that is capable of surviving in an external neonatal crib it is premeditated murder. No excuses.

## **Cloning**

The deliberate creation of a human being, with the intent of killing it for a particular organ later down the track is murder<sup>1</sup>. Any synthesis of a human by genetic engineering or robotic/computer technology is also human. They are to be granted the same legal rights as any other human. If you do not do this, then machiavellian scientists and the super-rich will do abominations, because such people are defiantly outside of the grace of God.

However, I have no problem with artificial organs being developed from stem cells being used from say placental cells, extracted from a fetus, child or adult (provided they are not killed or maimed in the process). My suggestion to those families with known genetic

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<sup>1</sup> On the outcomes of the Flockhart Review, we actually lost this point of the debate, and now have a legal model that tolerates a eugenic concept for very early term embryos or embryos that have not been implanted in the womb. This has a long-term ripple risks (e.g. classifying something that could be human as non-human because it is not raised in a woman's womb. This could lead to scenarios such as "Blade Runner" where a soul has the form of humanity but is legally denied the protection of humanity). The second issue is on the legitimacy of eugenics, this fascinating article about the early third Reich points out that the initial targets of this tyrannical regime were the disabled. There is an alarming parallel in both instances, namely that we embrace a model that tolerates eugenics because we are looking to make a more "perfect" form of humanity. See <http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051203/OPINION03/512030318/1007/METRO>

illnesses in their family tree, is that they freeze their babies placental fluids as a form of future insurance. This is a benefit that we can anticipate for our future children, and we'll simply have to accept that it comes after our own time.

The common theme in all of this is that life is created that could feasibly move onto to become a sentient human being without intervention (e.g. some smart alec giving a lobotomy to deny sentience) should be respected as being made in God's image (male or female). Whether conception occurs naturally in a the womb, by an electrical discharge to create the spark of life in a cloned cell, or through in-vitro fertilization, or through impregnation into an artificial or other animal womb, it is still human and be entitled to all the legal, moral and theological protection we would grant to any other human. Jesus exhorted us to love our God with all our heart and soul, and to love our neighbor as our self. Our neighbor also includes unborn fetuses, who are the most defenseless of all humans, as they don't even have vocal cords to protect themselves.

There is a very, very gray and murky period in early conception, however I would distinguish between sin of fallibility and weakness and defiant sin. Defiant sin is the premeditated creation of life with the intention of destroying it. Defiant sin is completely and absolutely outside the grace of God. The gray area comes from women who are raped, or so abused and disoriented that they are not aware or capable of protecting their wombs from unwanted pregnancies. Such women need our love and support, not our condemnation or accusations. If poor women were used to conceive children by those with the intent of harvesting the fetus for medical purposes, they would be deemed to be guilty (but it would be the guilt of being brainwashed and/or so abused and deprived that their reasoning could be said to be diminished or coerced). In this case the burden and responsibility of the sin would fall squarely on those who knowingly and deliberately initiate and foster such practices and cultural ethics.

Any government, organisation, institute, medical practitioner, business sponsor, ethical or religious organisation needs to have a fundamental understanding that premeditated cold-blooded murder is defiant sin.

The sin of euthanasia or assisted early abortions, where the body is treated as human and given suitable "burial" rites (i.e. not cannibalized for parts) is a very murky area, and the people involved would need to be praying heavily for God to forgive them of their sins. Further, any who are involved in such practices should be doing such things as events of absolute last resort, these are symptoms of absolute failure in the system and, especially with abortion, every case would require close scrutiny to consider how the conception happened and what needs to be done for it to be avoided in the future. To be blunt, if the same woman requires more than one abortion, then consideration should be given to the state having legal rights to give her contraception (e.g. IUD or implanted hormones NOT permanent sterilization (unless she asks for it)), even without her consent.

From the bible:

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.  
(Isaiah 49:1-2)

Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem. You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place."

So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it. As often as it comes it will carry you away; morning after morning, by day and by night, it will sweep through.” (Isaiah 28:14-19).

Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?” You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, “He did not make me”? Can the pot say of the potter, “He knows nothing”? In a very short time, will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field and the fertile field seem like a forest? In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down—those who with a word make a man out to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimony deprive the innocent of justice. (Isaiah 29:15-18)

Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding; those who complain will accept instruction.” (Isaiah 29:24)

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, “Away with you!” (Isaiah 30:18-22)

Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen. The mind of the rash will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear. No longer will the fool be called noble nor the scoundrel be highly respected. For the fool speaks folly, his mind is busy with evil: He practices ungodliness and spreads error concerning the LORD; the hungry he leaves empty and from the thirsty he withholds water. The scoundrel’s methods are wicked, he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just. But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands. (Isaiah 32:3-8)

He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil— this is the man who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar. In your thoughts you will ponder the former terror: “Where is that chief officer? Where is the one who took the revenue? Where is the officer in charge of the towers?” You will see those arrogant people no more, those people of an obscure speech, with their strange, incomprehensible tongue. (Isaiah 33:15-19)

For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us. (Isaiah 33:22)

No one living in Zion will say, "I am ill"; and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven. (Isaiah 33:24)

For those who have read and understand the bible would appreciate that God recognizes His own, even before they are born, that God is all knowing and that there would be a time in history where humanity would be so proud of its technology and cleverness that it would become as morally bankrupt as Babylon. Yet God also promises us that there would come a time when the scheming of the arrogant, the callousness of the selfish, the cunning of the vicious would lay exposed and their edifices (cultural and physical) would be seen as the hollow husks that they actually are. With everything that has happened in the last year, surely it is time for the ethics and morality of our society to not be driven by those who seek to make a "name" or money for themselves, with no regard to the morality of their actions or their consequences?

My prayers are that this paper encourages us to imagine society structures and moral codes that acknowledge God's sovereignty and ensure that all the people in His creation can be treated decently and with dignity. It also tries to acknowledge where people are at risk of being exploited at an intimate level and suggests frameworks that might help reduce the damages of sin. If we are going to move into a post Revelation period, then we need to start imagining a world that is not dominated by sin, a world where people live godly lives and sin is intuitively recognized as being abhorrent and to be avoided. This is a world in which people know and understand the bible very well, find it easy to talk to God, where truth comes easily to their lips, compassion to their actions, and honour to their conduct. This is a world where people can look each other in the eye without fear or favour, where what is said is what is done. Where fear and pride are seen to be only controllable by God's grace and no longer drive us into excesses and addictions. Rather, we easily live and breath for the possibility of witnessing and honoring the glory of God's magnificent creation.

May God Bless All His Children. May we be privileged to witness the first fruits of this new era devoted fully to God's glory and honour.