



## THE PLAN FOR THE "BIBLICAL POWER TO CURE" Is it feasible or even ethical?

As we spoke of the clash of ideas concerning embryonic stem-cell research in the last *Family Concerns*, we spoke of the partisan differences. The Republican Party is busy writing its platform as we write, so we will update you on this and other issues in the next *Family Concerns*.

### The Kerry Position on "therapeutic" cloning or somatic-cell nuclear transfer:

Sen. Kerry was one of the co-sponsors of **S. 303**, a bill that allows human embryos to be cloned and to develop up to 14 days of life. S. 303 restricts implantation, theoretically restricting human cloning for the purpose of reproduction, but allows for the production of embryos for research. Kerry's policy director, Sarah Bianchi, says that Sen. Kerry would allow for scientists to study "leftover" embryos from *in vitro* fertilization that would otherwise be "discarded." However, she states that Kerry is "absolutely not suggesting that embryos should be created for research." The Kerry bill provides for nuclear transplantation, that is, the transfer of a human nucleus into another cell whose nucleus has been removed. One has to ask the question: Does Sen. Kerry advocate experimentation on human embryos or not? The answer appears to be by *de facto* analysis ... yes.

### The polls show Americans do NOT favor human cloning of embryos.

However, most Americans do NOT favor using cloned embryos for research, so perhaps this is to muddy the waters so that Americans do not really know what Kerry or the Democrats are saying about this type of research. An August 23, 2004 poll of 1,000 Americans by International Communications Research shows that Americans prefer funding adult stem-cell research by 61 percent to 23 percent. The survey showed that Americans overwhelmingly oppose the use of human cloning to create embryos for medical research, 80 percent to 13 percent. According to a *Wall Street Journal* article dated August 10, 2004 by Antonio Regalado and Bob Davis, Mr. Kerry has said that he would back the creation of cloned embryos as a way to obtain stem cells from patients themselves that then could be used for treatments. In the same article, his running mate, Sen. John Edwards, said that a Democratic administration would pursue a two-tiered approach: Democrats would lift the restrictions on federal funding AND it would back "therapeutic cloning" for research purposes.

### Embryonic Research: A slippery slope?

While Sens. Kerry and Edwards tout this type of research as "the next crucial step in humanity's uphill climb" and a "giant stride forward for the good of all humanity," there are

warning signals that we should consider. The following is a timeline of scientific forays into reproduction:

- 1978: Louise Brown, the first "test tube" baby. Human life is created by uniting a human ovum and a sperm in the test tube; then implanting that life into the mother's uterus. This is a sexual union, even though it takes place in a test tube, because it is the union of two gametes containing 23 chromosomes each into a new entity. *Homo sapiens* with 46 chromosomes equal a new human being.
- (year?) Asexual reproduction is introduced. Asexual reproduction is the implantation of a DNA-encoded cell nucleus into an extracted female ovum. This process is called somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) and produces an embryo that contains the genetic match for the donor. Cloning (therapeutic cloning) of this sort is a key process in producing the exact genetic code necessary to avoid tissue and organ rejection in the patient to be treated. Reproductive cloning uses the same process, but implants the embryo into a uterus so that it can develop into a human being. There are some scientists who are working on ways to even avoid that necessity by creating artificial wombs.
- (year?) Using "spare" embryos from *in vitro* fertilization is a way to obtain embryos for research, but these embryos would not have the same genetic code as the patient, so could be rejected by the patient.
- 2004?: The means now exist for mankind to perfect the technology necessary to produce the "perfect child" OR a clone that would provide "spare parts" for its counterpart. It could also be used to alter human procreation even further, according to an article by Eric Cohen, "The Party of Cloning" in the August 30 issue of the *Weekly Standard Magazine*. The article suggests that children could be produced with genes from two men or two women, or children produced by parents who are dead fetuses.

When one contemplates these possibilities we have to decide whether or not we will adhere to a principle-driven ethical view or a utilitarian view of medical and scientific practices. The ethical view asks the question, "Is it inherently wrong?" and the utilitarian view asks the question, "Does the good outweigh the risks and harms?" In other words, is it okay to sacrifice an embryo for the sake of those who are already born? Those who hold to the ethical view ask themselves whether it is inherently wrong to create a human life in order to kill it for the "common good" or to produce a "therapeutic product" for the sake of healing another. A utilitarian asks whether a *blastocyst* or *zygote* (they often avoid using the term *embryo* or *fetus*) has human rights. They ask themselves whether "potential life" trumps actual life.