

## CLOWING FOR SPARE PARTS

The recent discussion in the news about the prospect of cloning human embryos for spare parts indicates just how much the idea has gripped our community that human life is expendable. On the face of it, it looks as if this move would improve human life. Unless I am greatly mistaken, you can't just clone one individual member of a human body. First another human being with the same genetic make-up is duplicated" and then the required organ is plundered from a living individual to replace a member in the original.

The cloned human being would not be just an extension of the original, even though it had the same genetic make-up. If the original died, the clone would not automatically die as well. They are not both the same person. It is like identical twins. If one dies, the other one doesn't die, lock-step. The cloned human being would be a copy of the original, yes, but a distinct individual. When the one has a part plundered for a spare part, it would in many instances die, in order to provide an organ to assist the quality of life of the original. But what about the quality of life of the cloned individual? It is the same situation as in abortions.

What is basic to all morality ought to be the golden rule, that one should do to the other what one would like to have done to oneself. Negatively, one should not do to others what one would not like to have done to oneself. How would the scientist or the recipient of the cloned organ like to be the poor human being who has to die, or have life severely impaired, to provide an organ, without consent? This golden rule extends to the defenceless in our society. By now people are being so accustomed to the expendability of human life through abortion and the talk about euthanasia that no thought is given to the defenceless, the helpless, the destitute. These days the most dangerous place for a human being to be in his or her mother's womb, because of the frequency of abortions. An abortion is the murder of a closest relative. The same thing applies to a cloned embryo for the sake of a spare part. The commandment of God, "You shall not kill" ought to rule out any suggestion of deliberately cloning another individual for the purpose of providing a spare part, so that, in all cases, except where the body normally has two, such as a kidney, the cloned individual would have to die to provide the replacement organ.

After the flood God made a fresh covenant with mankind, this time taking it into account that the human race was corrupted by sin. God said, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man" (Gn 9:6). What sets human life apart from animal and vegetable life is that human life was created to wear God's own image, to be sinless, to know God, and to be free from sin and death.

There are people in our society who do not deserve to live. They are not the aborted babies, and the cloned babies for spare parts, but those who usurp God's prerogative to end a human life. They are the people who take the law into their own hands, or even change the law, in the case of abortion and euthanasia, and now, possibly, cloning for spare parts, to allow for murder. In the original of Genesis 9:6 the Hebrew the word "shall" in "shall his blood be shed" does not necessarily mean "must." The Hebrew imperfect could just as well mean "may." In other words, except in the case of those who have a right to take human life (like a judge who sentences a person to death, and a soldier who shoots an enemy soldier), God has said that the life of a person who takes it on himself to end the life of another is itself forfeit. It is not that the state ought to exercise capital punishment for every murder, but that it may. "Execution, and killing in a just war are not murder, but other kinds of deliberately taking human life are. Every murderer, however, deserves to lose his life. The point here is that the person who attacks human life, which has been made in the image of God, is forfeiting his own right to live. Like Cain, he is a murderer. It makes no difference if the life has been produced through a cloning technique. And no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. What is needed in our society is fear of God, and fear of God's judgment. What is needed in our society is more awareness of the obligations of love to the neighbour, or, which is the same thing, the golden rule. That applies even if the individual neighbour happens to be a clone of oneself.