

"HELLO, DOLLY" II

I enjoyed B'way's "Helly, Dolly" I, & even more I'm enjoying "Hello, Dolly" II, that cloned sheep that recently startled the biology world with its bleat-bleat as much as, now more than a generation ago, Sputnik I startled the astronomy world with its beep-beep (which I, duly awed, heard over my head).

1 Why should God feel obligated to provide a soul for a laboratory-made human clone? No, that's not my question; it's one I read three days after the "Dolly" reality went public. My personal thinking is so distant from the writer's that for me to try to close the gap seems almost farcical. I might say, God provides souls only for bodies conceived within a marriage that began with two virgins. With that response, I'd get a lot of business done. Or, I might say, God provides souls only for "babies," defined as breathing neonates (pre-breathing human beings not being individuals [separate from the mother] & therefore not persons). That way, I'd get some other business done. But my honest business in the matter is to say that God gives a soul to nobody, i.e. no body: each of us is, by creation, a soulbody/body-soul, as the Bible basically says (though the later layers in Scripture make some use of the notion of the separability of body/soul).

2 Yesterday's WASHINGTON POST announced that, by authority of the FDA's David Kessler, morning-after pills can now be prescribed freely by America's physicians. Not abortifacients such as RU486: abortifacients destroy embryos/fetuses. But already some antiabortionists (anti-choicers) are objecting to Kessler's ruling on the ground that the morning-after pills kill *human beings* & so are, too, abortifacients.

Is Dolly II really a sheep, or only a clone? In other words, are you agreeable to letting Dolly into the category "sheep"?

3and are you willing to let an unattached zygote (fertilized egg, cell) into the category "human being"? How could you not? Every zygote is a distinct human individual, lacking only the nourishment & protection womb-attachment can provide. Unimaginable billions of zygotes never manage womb-attachment & are, you might say, aborted (by slightly extending the word "abort").

4& perhaps you would be agreeable to extend the category "human being" to include gametes, the sexually mature (ready to "marry," the meaning of *gam-*) cells (spermata & ova) each lacking nothing for becoming an individual of our species other than a sexually opposite gamete? If so, untold trillions of these human beings are aborted year after year.

5 Or you may be less generous--should I say, inclusive?--as to what you'll allow into the "human being" category. Say, only the fetus, the implanted entity after the second month. Or, a bit more generous, the embryo, the implanted entity during the first two months. Or, less generous than either, but traditional (e.g.) in Judaism, breathing neonates (as in §1, above).

6 Me? I call zygotes, & all later developments, human beings. Artificial insemination makes human beings (let's save "create," as the Bible does, for what God does: is everything "made" necessarily "created"?). Human beings are made also in petri dishes: no womb needed. Those who object to the latter are thereby defining zygotes as human beings.

My point? The call as to what is "human being" is yours, everybody's, nobody's to tell anybody else. And if human being is, thus, not a fixed category for religious, philosophical, political, & legal purposes, neither can be the category "abortion." Ergo, "abortion" being an indeterminate & disputed category among the electorate, *government should make no laws pertaining to "abortion,"* as any law would presume a definition thereof, exceeding government authority & privileging some citizens over others.

7 As it says in Yiddish, not to worry. A cloned human being would be, as it were, a delayed identical twin. As for the headline "MEN NO LONGER NEEDED," God would not permit the boredom of a no-men world. Women can hardly stand it now.

8 In §6, I raised an unorthodox question: "Is everything 'made' necessarily 'created'?" After you & I say the orthodox "Yes," I invite you to do some (perhaps) loose-cannon thinking with me. Some contrarian thoughts:

(1) Not so fast! If "created" & "made" were synonyms, why would the Old Testament (& even modern Hebrew) be careful to reserve a word, *bara'*, for the former, as **God's** action (somewhat as Eng. vis-a-vis "create"--though we use the same root for "creature," ie, what God makes; though mod. Heb. does not even do that). We human beings can "make" (*'asah*) but can't "create": is an in vitro baby, which is made in the lab, also created?

(2) Biblical faith's rootage is not in nature (the Fertile Crescent's nature-religion god/desses with their mythological-ritual year) but in **history** ("the mighty acts/deeds of God" related to his covenant with people chosen to live & preach the redemptive promise). Deut.26.5-10, the earliest description of the faith, does not even mention creation (in contrast to a later summary, Neh.9.6-31, which begins with creation, as the Bible does). Biblical faith is basically "redemption spirituality," not (as, eg, Mt. Fox) "creation spirituality." God's character-&-will ("holiness") appears primarily not in nature (which under this qualification is not sacred) but in history.

(3) Science became possible because, in the main culture in which it emerged, nature was not sacred, ie, **inviolable**: to "make" experiments is to transform, thus violate, the "natural" order/processes. Amerinds opposed agriculture as "ripping up the belly of Mother Earth." Seamless-web life-worshippers oppose humans' "making" of death: meat-eating, contraception, abortion, murder, war, suicide, physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia, the use of animals in bio-experimentation.

(4) While God's the Source of all that is, is he the Doer ("Creator") of all that's done? Israel's wisdom-teachers' theological reflection on the mystery of the divine order in nature **heightened** & enriched the Bible's doctrine of creation as the ground of their conviction of universal rationality (parallel with the Gk. *logos*). Out of this strand of our spiritual heritage came Jefferson's "created [+ a political idea] equal."

ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS
309 Lake Elizabeth Drive
Craigville MA 02632

