

STATEMENT DE444

Embryonic Stem Cell Research: Humane for Whom? ¹

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Two years ago in this column I reiterated the truth that the only thing necessary for evil to triumph was for good men to do nothing. This was evident already in 1973 when Christians quietly passed by a major battle in the war against abortion. Two and a half decades later, the far-reaching impact of this silence is being felt in a raging debate over human cloning. Now my worst fears are beginning to be realized, for Great Britain has become the first nation to legalize human cloning. The House of Lords approved a law allowing embryos to be created for the harvesting of stem cells. Thankfully, there are some good men doing something. Chuck Colson, for instance, has spoken out eloquently against misguided citizens and celebrities who are pleading with Congress to endorse government-sponsored research involving the use of human embryos. His insights are so significant that I asked him to reiterate them in my Practical Apologetics column. Pandora's box is already open, and Christians must do all that is permissible to prevent a human clone from emerging.

— Hank Hanegraaff

Some of America's hottest celebrities have been delivering emotional performances, designed to strike a resonant chord with their audience. They're pleading with Congress to endorse government-sponsored research involving the use of human embryos.

Why would Hollywood celebrities enter the world of congressional hearings? Because fetal tissue research — especially research on embryonic stem cells — is being trumpeted as a great scientific breakthrough and a biomedical revolution. This revolution, they say, could lead to cures for Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes, AIDS, and more.

They're campaigning because they want to see taxpayer dollars go for research programs that may alleviate suffering. That's all well and good, but the real problem is that fetal tissue research requires scientists to engage in unethical and immoral experimentation.

Some may ask how anyone with a heart could oppose such well-meaning research. The answer is that stem cell research requires the destruction of living human beings. Only human beings produce the precious stem cells that scientists desire; so, to get enough of them for research purposes, babies, even eight-weeks-old embryos in the womb, must be aborted and die. Such researchers are willing to overlook these troublesome facts for the so-called "greater good of society," an argument straight out of Dr. Mengele's Nazi laboratories.

From the Hippocratic Oath of the fourth century before Christ to modern-day documents, medical ethics explicitly prohibit the harming of human life. "First, do no harm" has been the solemn oath of generations of physicians, but advocates of stem cell research would have us believe it's not a problem.

Some go further, saying that refusing to conduct such experiments is unethical! What's the basis for their assertion? It's the possibility that the therapies derived from stem cell research could potentially alleviate the suffering of millions. The argument, however, is logically insupportable. Destroying life in order to save life is irrational and wrong, and it cannot be construed as an ethical act.

Furthermore, government-sanctioned destruction of human embryos isn't just unethical, it violates existing law. Federal funds may not be used for research in which embryos are destroyed. Some have tried to circumvent the law, but if Congress succumbs to the pressure to compromise, they'll be setting dangerous precedents for how human life is valued in the twenty-first century.

Thankfully, several members of Congress are fighting for the unborn; and you can help them. Contact your representatives and let them know how you feel. Urge them to stay the course and make sure federally funded stem cell research remains illegal — regardless of what Hollywood superstars may say.²

— *Charles Colson*

1. Transcript of the radio broadcast commentary BreakPoint with Charles Colson, which aired 24 January 2001 (Commentary #010124 at www.breakpoint.org).
2. General information about, and a Christian perspective on, stem cell research, may be accessed at www.stemcellresearch.org. Contact information for representatives is available at www.house.gov and for senators at www.senate.gov or through the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121.

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