Is stem cell research moral or immoral?

Thanks be to God for our Heavenly Father has heard our prayer in our struggle to protect the most innocent and helpless of all human beings, the human embryo. **When stem cells are taken from the embryo, the embryo dies. This is what makes embryonic stem cell research immoral.** Of course, research on stem cells taken from a forcefully aborted fetus is immoral also. There is no law that protects the unborn human. Embryonic stem cell research is legal. But due to recent discoveries it may not be as desirable to pursue and this is what we must be thankful for.

Why would embryonic stem cell research be desirable? Well, first understand that a stem cell has in it the incredible ability to replicate and make different types of cells required to build or repair an organism. This amazing ability gives hope to stem cell therapies. The embryonic stem cell is called "pluripotent" meaning it can turn into nearly all the 200 plus cell types found in the adult body as the embryonic stem cells of the human embryo do under the ideal conditions of the womb. In fact, this has only ever happened in the womb, never in the laboratory after 25 years of research costing billions of dollars – one of the realities that have undermined the hype of "potential" touted by the Bio-Tech industry through the media.

Back up. How about the stem cell treatments that you have heard of in the news? Our bodies use stored stem cells to repair tissue damage throughout our lives. These stem cells can be found in bone marrow, the skin, nose, eyelid, teeth, hair, and blood of born human beings. Research on these stem cells have provided therapeutic benefits to hundreds of thousands of patients in 73 treatment areas including cancer, spinal cord injury, auto immune diseases, blood conditions, and so on. **These stem cells are called adult stem cells and because of the nondestructive techniques used to harvest them, adult stem cell research is morally acceptable.** Because we need clear cut categories based on morality, stem cells taken from children and those found in the umbilical cord blood and amniotic fluid are also considered adult stem cells.

Most adult stem cells are multipotent, that is, they can turn into several other cell types, but not every other cell type like pluripotent stem cells. This has been taken to be a severe limitation enticing scientists to research the pluripotent embryonic stem cell. However, there are many kinds of multipotent lines resulting in actual successful therapies in many areas versus no successful therapies using embryonic stem cells. **To be successful, embryonic stem cell therapies require cloning to solve rejection problems. Adult stem cell therapies have no rejection problems, as in most cases, you use your own stem cells to treat yourself.**

In the lab embryonic stem cells grow much faster than adult stem cells. Fast sounds good but actually it isn't. Embryonic stem cells grow uncontrollably into tumors, mostly cancerous. Whereas, adult stem cells grow at a pace that is easily controlled. Embryonic stem cell researchers hope that with enough time and money they will be able to control these faster growing stem cells, especially since the supply is running short, which means embryo farming, a rather painful medical procedure, and of course there is a need for very sophisticated storage facilities. When it comes to adult stem cells there is a ready supply in each of our own bodies.

OK Let's see if I have this right. Embryonic stem cell research has only produced tumors, mostly cancerous. The harvesting of embryos is a rather painful medical procedure. The future shortage of embryos would require some sort of embryo farming. Embryo labs need very sophisticated storage facilities. After 25 years and billions of dollars it is failed research. It has never helped anyone. If it could, it would require cloning to avert rejection problems. Most importantly it is immoral.

So, why would embryonic stem cell research be desirable? It isn't. But the billionaires and large corporations don't like losing money any more than you or I. They join the Bio-Tech industry with their established laboratories, grants, and investments repeatedly boasting "potential" so that people will believe that cures for the likes of spinal cord injuries, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's is in the near future when it clearly is not. They exploit hopes for cures to get support for immoral stem cell research rooted in greed.

So, what is this new discovery that could change all this? God has granted us an incredible opportunity to turn away from the Culture of Death through the recent discovery of induced Pluripotent Stem (iPS) Cells.

What are induced Pluripotent Stem (iPS) Cells? The new iPS cells are obtained by reprogramming an ordinary somatic (body) cell, such as a skin cell, back to a pluripotent state. The skin cell is induced to become a pluripotent stem cell through stimulus caused by other cells. **Praise God. These stimulants need not come from the unborn! And so, iPS stem cell research is ethically non-controversial because it does not require the destruction of human life or the use of human cloning**. However, because the stimulants could be taken from the unborn, we must be careful not to condone research requiring the destruction of human life.

Embryonic stem cells, appearing to offer greater promise of therapeutic breakthroughs because of being pluripotent, ironically are problematic and offer no therapies. A few adult stem cells, found in the umbilical cord, the nose, and bone marrow, have pluripotent properties and have successful therapies attributed to them. So powerful is the Bio-Tech industry that these findings have had next to no publicity. Until recently the media has insisted that in order to study pluripotent stem cells they had to use embryonic stem cells. Fortunately, the discovery of iPS cells has somewhat broken through this barrier. However, the media persists, reporting that immoral embryonic stem cell research is necessary as it is important to support all research.

We must continue to pray for the end of embryonic stem cell research. There are many labs, grants, researchers, and companies set up for embryonic stem cell research and cloning. They will put up a fight to stay open and to continue their research. They will repeat over and over again to the media that the study of stem cells requires real human embryonic stem cells.

Ian Wilmut, the scientist responsible for cloning Dolly the sheep, has announced that he and his lab will not be focusing on cloning or embryonic stem cell research anymore but will instead be concentrating on the new iPS cell research. We can also be encouraged by James Thomson one of the iPS discoverers and the scientist who in 1998 isolated stem cells from human embryos for the first time. "It's going to completely change the field. **These (iPS) cells are more clinically relevant than embryonic stem cells", said Thompson.**

Some people believe that scientific research should not be limited by subjective or arbitrary standards of ethics or morality. However, **we do not believe in the atheistic Communist philosophy that the end justifies the means. Destroying a life to help a life is immoral.** Proponents of embryonic stem cell research and cloning get around this argument by saying that the ends, by far, outweigh the destructive means. Or, they say that they do not believe that the embryo or clone is a human being.

Ironically, **all scientists KNOW, NOT BELIEVE, KNOW that the embryo is a human being.** For the same scientific evidence that proves born persons are human, also proves the unborn to be human. One who bows to that argument might come back with, "yes the embryo is a human being but it is not a person." Yet the term human being comes from being human, which implies personhood. **Responsible people, whatever their vocation, draw the line on reaching their goals when the means are immoral.** We expect scientific researchers and the Bio-Tech industry to do the same.

Oh Heavenly Father, we pray that this new discovery of iPS cells, which you have so graciously granted, will turn scientists away from destructive human embryonic stem cell research and cloning. We pray that You will continue to bless researchers of moral stem cell research with successes that will positively influence the media, our leaders, and investors to turn away from embryonic stem cell research.