“Is Cloning Inherently Evil?”

I have several questions about cloning.

1) I understand the dangers of cloning, which in themselves are enough to warrant banning the practice. But I’m trying to understand if there is there anything inherently evil or anti-biblical about cloning (for reproductive purposes). Is it simply a technology, comparable to in vitro fertilization, that could be used for good or evil, or is there something inherent in it that is against God’s will? (Perhaps removing the nucleus of the original egg cell?…I just don’t know)

2) I’m wondering about the biblical laws against sexual relations with a close relative (brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, etc. from Leviticus 18). Is it true that children born to parents who are close relatives are more likely to be deformed? And if so, is there a known reason this occurs genetically? And to relate that to cloning, is this possibly why clones are often deformed? I wonder if the deformations are a result of problems with the “process” or if there’s a “built-in” reason that cloning will always, on the whole, fall short of sperm-and-egg conception?

3) How long would the cloned human embryo in November 2001 have lived in order to divide to six cells? Is that a matter of seconds, minutes, hours, days? I imagine it’s very short but wondered how short.

You ask some good questions. Here are my brief responses.

> *Is there anything inherently evil or anti-biblical about cloning?*

1. The only inherent evil in cloning that I see is the resulting devaluing of the individual, since you have brought this particular person into existence for a reason that is

beyond simple reproduction in marriage. This places unrealistic expectations on the clone and tells them their value lies in those expectations and not on their intrinsic value as a human being. Some hold that the process itself is evil since it clearly deviates from the God-ordained union of sperm and egg. But that is also the case with identical twins. The second twin was the result of a budding process delayed from the initial union of sperm and egg, similar to cloning.

> *Is it true that children born to parents who are close relatives are more likely to be deformed? And if so, is there a known reason this occurs genetically?*

2. Children resulting from incestuous relations do have a higher incidence of genetic deformities which is the reason for state laws forbidding them. All of us harbor harmful recessive genes in single copies that are not expressed because they are masked by normal dominant gene copies. Siblings and first cousins will share many of these same recessive genes because the genes came from the same parent or grandparent. But when close relatives have sexual relations and a child results, these shared family recessive genes can be paired in a homozygous condition which allows the recessive harmful gene to be expressed. Such children are not always born with these defects but the chances are much higher than normal.

But this probably has little to do with the problems faced by cloned embryos. Nobody really knows what is going wrong with the cloned embryos but my suspicion is that the process of removing the original nucleus in the egg and the subsequent placement of the new nucleus in the egg cell disrupts the complex and intricate arrangement of important signal proteins in the egg cytoplasm and membrane. Rearrangment of this critical spatial orientation could put important proteins in the wrong places, meaning early development signals are missed or misplaced. This would have devastating consequences for the

embryo. If this is the case, then at least current cloning techniques may never be able to escape the low success rates currently experienced.

> *How long would the cloned human embryo in November 2001 have lived in order to divide to six cells?*

3. The cloned embryo which reached the six cell stage was probably no more than 3-4 days old when it stopped dividing.

Hope this helps.

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