

Christians and Life Issues

I. Abortion

Two Statements:

First statement: "Society has a responsibility to affirm through the laws of the state a high view of the sanctity of human life, including fetal life, in order to protect those who cannot protect themselves"

Second statement: We should "work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother."

Abortion in the Ancient World

Tertullian:

"For us, indeed, as homicide is forbidden, it is not lawful to destroy what is in the womb while the blood is still being formed into a man. To prevent being born is to accelerate homicide, nor does it make a difference whether you snatch away a soul which is born or destroy one being born. He who is man-to-be is man, as all fruit is now in the seed."

John Noonan:

“Although therapeutic and social reasons for abortion were known from the best of doctors and philosophers, these reasons were never mentioned [by early Christians] as justification. All the writers agreed that abortion was a violation of the love owed to one’s neighbor. Some saw it as a special failure of maternal love. Many saw it also as a failure to have reverence for the work of God the creator. The culture had accepted abortion. The Christians condemned it. Ancient authorities and contemporary moralists had approved, hesitated, made exceptions, but the Christian rule was certain.” John Noonan, *The Morality of Abortion: Legal and Historical Perspectives*, 18.

The Philosophical Divide

“[The abortionist] was doing abortions in a clinic about four blocks from our church. I went to lunch armed with my arguments that unborn children are human beings and therefore should not be killed. I was unprepared for what I heard. He said, almost incidentally, that the main driving force behind his involvement was his wife, because for her and thousands of other women, he said, this is a root issue of women’s rights. Will they govern their own bodies and their reproductive freedom or will others? More essentially, and even more surprisingly, he conceded my arguments immediately and said I didn’t have to waste my time proving that the unborn were human beings. He said bluntly that he believed that. The issue was whether the taking of human life is warranted by the greater good of a woman’s rights. I have found this position repeatedly in talking with other pro-choice professionals; when

pressed they don't dispute they are taking the life of human beings. They admit it is not ideal but the lesser of two evils, especially in view of the tragic situation in which so many of these children would be born." John Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, 220-221.

Abortion and the Bible

First, the Bible clearly asserts the dignity and worth of human beings.

Genesis 1:26-27 God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Psalms 139:13-16 ³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Second, the humanity of the fetus even before birth.

Luke 1:41-44 ¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

Third, the Bible is strong and unambiguous in its prohibition against taking innocent human life.

Genesis 9:6 ⁶ If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; For in the image of God has man been made.

Exodus 20:13 You shall not murder.

Jeremiah 22:3 "Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place."

Fourth, the clear assertion of God's right to rule the universe.

Psalm 93:1-5 ^{ESV} The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. ² Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting. ³ The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. ⁴ Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty! ⁵ Your decrees are very trustworthy; holiness befits your house, O LORD, forevermore.

Special Focus: Exodus 21:22-25

RSV: Exodus 21:22-25 ²² "When men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that there is a miscarriage, and yet no harm follows, the one who hurt her shall be fined, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. ²³ If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

ESV: Exodus 21:22-25 ²² "When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. ²³ But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

So what can we do about abortion?

II. Other Issues in Bioethics

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.