

## Abortion and the sanctity of life

Abortion issue generally depends on whether you think a foetus is a human being or not. Some Christians believe a foetus is human from conception, with the same rights and value to God as a child who has already been born. Therefore, abortion is murder. Others believe the foetus is not yet a person, so its life is not sacred. It is a potential person, but not a person yet. Therefore, abortion might be justified.

### The Bible and Abortion

The Bible says very little about abortion because it was not as common as today. Girls were often married very young and did not have careers. Abortion was not a safe medical procedure. There were no tests for any health problems for the mother or the foetus. The Bible does not use the word "abortion" or deal with the issues directly, but Christians use Bible passages both for and against abortion.

#### Bible quotes used to argue AGAINST abortion

**"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born I set you apart"** *Jeremiah 1:5*  
God has a plan for every human being even before they are born Also:

**Before I was born, the LORD chose me and appointed me to be his servant.** *Isaiah 49:1*

**"You saw me before I was born"** *Psalms 139:16*. **"God... chose me even before I was born"** *Galatians 1:15*  
These help support the idea that life begins at conception or, at the very least, that the foetus is a person.

Once Christians establish that the foetus is a human being, the sanctity of life teachings all apply:

**"In the image of God"** - *Genesis 1:26*

**"Do not kill"** - *Exodus 20:13*

**"You yourselves are God's temple"** - *1 Corinthians 3:16*

#### Bible quotes used to argue FOR abortion

Surprisingly, the Old Testament supports the idea that a human life is not as valuable before birth.

**God made Adam, and then "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."** *Genesis 2:7*

This suggests that we are not human until we breathe (i.e. we are born). However, more convincing arguments come from examples of how foetuses are treated in the Bible:

**"If some men are fighting and hurt a pregnant woman so that she loses her child, but she is not injured in any other way, the one who hurt her is to be fined whatever amount the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if the woman herself is injured, the punishment shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth."** *Exodus 21:22-25*

This suggests that causing the death of an unborn child is not as serious as killing someone who is already born. Also in *Genesis 38:24* Tamar is ordered to be burnt to death because she committed adultery and became pregnant. Although her life is spared, this has nothing to do with the twin foetuses she carried which seem to be given no value or consideration.

**"If a man does not get his share of happiness.....then I say a baby born dead is better off. It does that baby no good to be born.....It never sees the light of day or knows what life is like, but at least it has found rest."** *Ecclesiastes 6:3-5*

**"But better off are those who have never been born, who have never seen the injustice that goes on in the world."** *Ecclesiastes 4:3*

These can be used to show that abortion is better than being born into a life of suffering, e.g. unwanted babies.

### Roman Catholic Church

**"Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception; abortion and infanticide are the most abominable of crimes."** *Second Vatican Council, Encyclical Gaudium et Spes*

Abortion is always wrong. Life begins at conception, therefore abortion is murder.

- Unborn child is a sacred human life; it deserves the same respect as any other human being.
- Rape: RC Church does not support abortion - the foetus is paying for someone else's crime.

"Humanae Vitae", 1968: "Human life is sacred".

Pope John Paul II, 1985: "The unborn human being's right to live is one of the inalienable human rights"

"Declaration on Procured Abortion", 1974: Abortion is a serious sin. Everyone, whether Catholic or not, should have a proper respect for human life.

**"From the time that the ovum is fertilised a new life is begun which is neither that of the father or the mother. It is the life of a new human being with its own growth. It would never become human if it were not human already"** *Declaration on Procured Abortion (1974)*

### The Church of England

Abortion is an evil to be avoided if possible, but can be justified in 3 circumstances:

- i) Risk to the mother's life or her mental and physical health.
- ii) Baby likely to be deformed and mother feels she can not cope.
- iii) Rape.

**Although the foetus is to be specially respected and protected, nonetheless the life of the foetus is not absolutely sacrosanct if it endangers the life of the mother.**

*Church of England - Board of Social Responsibility Report 1984*

CofE DOES NOT MORALLY AGREE with abortion, but often accepts it may be the only way forward for someone. They do not condemn someone who has an abortion, but would help a woman get through it, come to terms with it, and move forward. Women often feel they have done something very wrong, and need help. Sometimes abortion is the most loving thing to do. If Jesus forgives people, then so should Christians.

**"We affirm that every human life, created in the divine image, is unique... We therefore believe that abortion is an evil... and that abortion on demand would be a very great evil. But we also believe that to withdraw compassion is evil, and in circumstances of extreme distress or need, a very great evil... In an imperfect world the 'right' choice is sometimes the lesser of two evils."** *Church of England 1988*

**"To regard the life of the mother as less valuable than that of the unborn child does not consider her 'right to life' in terms of her wider roles of wife or mother (actual or potential) of other children, as well in terms of her own person."** *Abortion, an Ethical Discussion, Church information office 1965*

### The Salvation Army

Life is sacred from the moment of conception, but accepts abortion if:

- Mother's life is in danger.
- Baby can not survive for more than a few days, e.g. severely deformed.

### The United Reformed Church

Recognises a wide range of views among its members. There is a difference between a foetus almost ready to be born, and one in the early stages of pregnancy. Sometimes abortion is necessary, but should be taken seriously.

### The Methodist Church

**"Abortion... may be the lesser of two evils. Some embryos are grievously handicapped. If born alive, their only prospect is of immense suffering and usually early death. Where the pregnancy is the result of rape, the abortion may be necessary for the recovery of the victim... Termination of pregnancy may be the right course because of the social circumstances of the existing family, or the mental or physical health of the mother."** *The Methodist Church, quoted in What the Churches Say CEM 1995*