
A table of contents for the *Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Journal* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_cbrfj.php

for if—as I think they must—they accept that abortion is sometimes justified, they cannot logically refuse the possibility of infanticide, and even for euthanasia.

Abortion then is not an impossible choice to the Christian, whether as gynaecologist or as patient, but it is still a terrible choice, never to be lighly accepted, but always to be considered with much serious thought and prayer.

Three further facets require consideration. In the case of an illegitimate pregnancy, such as that considered above, there is the factor of sin and its retribution. This is inevitable: one factor being the remorse not infrequently seen at the follow-up clinic. However am I commissioned to exact this? Who am I to cast the first stone? Do we not, each of us, daily have to come for the cleansing of the Blood? It is not irrelevant to notice that among some African believers, more guilt and remorse is felt after a bout of anger, than after fornication! And what of the innocent parties—the spouse betrayed perhaps, the trusting children whose home is to be shattered, the deprived child who may be born?

Then there is the forgotten factor of compassion—not the casual "we'll get her off the hook" feeling, but the deep fruit of the Spirit, which shines so clearly in the gospels, and plays such an enormous part in our own testimony.

Pre-eminence, however, must in this, as in every facet of life, be given to the will of God. His we are. Our hands are His. Our reproductive capacities are His. In us the Holy Spirit lives His life and manifests Himself to the world. In His sovereign condescension He shares in the agonies of our decision making. With every thought brought into subjection to Him our decision making on abortion is among those "good deeds which He hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

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2: Some underlying principles

The 1967 Law permitting therapeutic abortion is so vaguely expressed that it can be interpreted in any way from termination in all cases, to termination under no circumstances.

The following are some of the Christian priciples that are involved in any request for termination of pregnancy:-

1) **The Sanctity of Human Life**

a) *Man is made in God's image.* God is a spirit and inhabits eternity, not the earth Is. 57: 15. Man is like God and differs from

others of the animal kingdom because he has this spiritual element in him. The spiritual element is what makes man a person, capable of self knowledge, abstract thought, moral sense and capable of a relationship with God, which at its height reaches that of child to its father by being a joint heir with Christ, Rom. 8: 17.

It is the divine image in man, and not any special or separate development of the physical body of man, which constitutes man's uniqueness. Lord MacLeod took this one stage further when he said "The only reason why man as man has special significance is because Christ died for him."

b) *The Value of Foetal Life.* Both Scripture and experience of reactions to loss of foetal life appear to show that, although of great importance, the value of early foetal life (when practically all terminations of pregnancy are performed) is not equal to that of the established life of a newly born baby.

In Ex. 21: 22 f. there appears to be a distinction drawn between the value of foetal and adult established life, for if as a result of a fight, a pregnant woman should lose the life of her foetus, the penalty was only a fine, whereas if she lost her own life the penalty was life for life.

Any person who has experienced personally or seen the great difference in the reaction of mothers to the loss of their baby shortly after birth to that of mothers who have early spontaneous abortions, however distressed they might be, will recognise that there is not, except in rare cases, the feeling of the loss of a personality but rather that of the impersonal pregnancy or foetus, which fizzled out as described in Ps. 58: 7 f.

The spiritual status of the foetus has been discussed for thousands of years and there is no clear answer as to when the soul enters the body. It is just as arbitrary to say at conception as at any other time, such as final implantation of the embryo into the uterus at about one week after conception or at about 7 months when the foetus is first capable of surviving as a separate organism.

If one does say that it must be the time when conception occurs and a new chromosomal organism first appears, what happens if this splits and becomes twins—does each have half a soul, or does the soul split with the chromatin material?

If, as seems probable, up to 50% of conceptions end in spontaneous early abortions, what happens to these souls which have entered at conception and never reached recognisable human tissue let alone human form or personality? Protestant theology on the principle of the mercy of God affirms that the souls of the innocent

are received into heaven. Clearly these 'souls' would make up the bulk of the human population of heaven but there is no reference to them in Scripture and surely this debases the whole concept of the soul.

On the other hand we see in Ps. 139: 14-16 that God's eyes saw our unformed limbs or substance developing in the womb, and indeed Jer. 1: 5 takes this one stage further back before conception when God says "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you for my own; before you were born I consecrated you, I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

I do not know when the body either receives or becomes a soul, but even if this does not occur till later, therapeutic abortion at the least will remove the vehicle capable of housing the soul, and is therefore not to be lightly undertaken. Dietrich Bonhoeffer on this theme states:- "To raise the question whether we are here concerned with a human being or not is merely to confuse the issue. The simple fact is that God certainly intended to create a human being, and that this nascent human being has been deliberately deprived of his life. And that is nothing short of murder." I find the legal viewpoint helpful. It is retrospective, for if the foetus lives it is presumed to be a person from the time of conception, and can later sue for damages from this time. Whereas if it is an abortion or stillbirth it is not presumed to be a person and has no legal rights.

2) **The Sovereignty of God**

The Bible clearly teaches the Sovereignty of God and passages of particular relevance to this subject are Prov. 21: 1, Ps. 33: 11, Is. 14: 27, Is. 46: 9 f., and Rev. 4: 11.

There are two questions that we must consider:-

a) *Is every conception God's will?* On the personal level I quote from R. F. R. Gardner: "Granted that God can make the wrath of men to praise Him, and that He sometimes uses ungodly men as His instruments, Ps. 76: 10, Isa. 44: 28, I find it difficult to believe that God can look in anything but anger on a drunken wretch impregnating a terrified girl, or even his exhausted wife."

On the worldwide level, in areas where death from starvation has been endemic due to too little food and too many mouths, can it really be the will of a loving God that all these conceptions occurred with such disastrous consequences? Certainly many Christian doctors and nurses in these areas regard a very vital part of their task to be the provision of birth control facilities to help both the individual family and the country counteract the evil of excessive fertility. Indeed Gen. 3: 16 states that as a result of the Fall of man God will among other things "Greatly multiply thy sorrow and *thy conception.*" In summary, surely every conception is not God's will.

b) *Which ways of preventing the birth of children are permissible without contravening the will of God?*

Post-conception methods clearly involve the ethical problems of termination of foetal life, but do they infringe the sovereignty of God any more than pre-conception methods? Any pre-conception method could have thwarted the birth of an individual whom God had chosen. Indeed if Jeremiah's parents had not had sexual intercourse at the appropriate time he would not have been conceived and God's sovereignty would have been thwarted. As abstinence is the most efficient method of contraception known the logical conclusion of this argument is that no Christian married couple should abstain from intercourse lest they frustrate the sovereignty of God. In this way they limit the action of his sovereignty to the narrow field between sperm and ovum. Surely the sovereignty of God is linked to the work of the Holy Spirit in the minds and hearts of man. We fulfil His purpose in this sphere by using His gift of a reasoning mind (Is. 1: 18 and Acts 17: 2) seeking guidance concerning both the number of our children and the method that we should employ in order to achieve that end.

3) **Thou shalt not kill**

The Sixth Commandment (Ex. 20: 13, and cf. 23: 7) has been translated recently as "You shall not commit murder" as the Hebrew work *rasach* means illegal killing inimical to the community. In Matt. 5: 21 f. the Lord Jesus Christ looks beyond the act of murder to the motive behind it, namely anger against his brother. This is not present in the act of therapeutic abortion. Even this commandment was expressly modified by God in different circumstances:- a) An individual's life was allowed to be taken if he had committed premeditated murder, for if he had fled to a city of refuge after killing somebody, he was to be delivered to his pursuers if there had been premeditation, but not if the killing had been an accident. Ex. 21: 12 f. b) Genocide was commanded to destroy the Amalekites. c) The Flood (Gen. 7: 23) was the means employed by God for the deliberate killing of a vast number of men, women and children. d) The State at times had a responsibility to use capital punishment (Rom. 13: 4).

4) **Compassion and love**

Every request for therapeutic abortion evokes some degree of compassion but we must beware of relinquishing all other commands except 'love'. The Greek word in Matt. 22: 37-40 when we are told to love God first and our neighbour next is *agapao* which has been translated 'undefeatable goodwill' by W. Barclay. It has no connec-

tion whatsoever with erotic love which is so often what is meant when the word love is used today, and this meaning must not be allowed to slip in to try to justify wrong behaviour. No action can be accounted loving towards God unless it is in accordance with His nature and that is holy as well as undefeatable goodwill. It is shown in practice by keeping His commandments (1 John 5: 3) This love involves understanding, compassion, personal responsibility and accountability.

5) **The lesser of two evils**

Every case presenting for Termination of Pregnancy arises from a non-ideal situation, the commonest being the married woman, pregnant yet again who can hardly cope with her present family, and the single girl; often in her early teens. The theoretical possibility that the pregnancy will wreck marriage, home and/or career is all too often proved true in practice. No course of action is obviously right in this kind of situation where two related biblical examples apply:-

a) *The Lex Talionis* (an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; Ex. 21: 24; Lev. 24: 20; Dt. 19: 21). This law was given and prevented excessive personal revenge in private hands which was often the prevailing situation and instead brought the penalty into the sphere of public justice where it could be controlled.

b) *The Law of Moses concerning Divorce* (Dt. 24: 1-4, to which Matt. 19: 3-9 also applies). This is a parallel situation to that of abortion as both stem from general low standards of sexual morality to a varying extent.

These regulations concerning divorce were introduced which limited the grounds for divorce and protected the innocent party by giving her a proper bill of divorcement. This made the whole affair above-board, and was an act of mercy. Neither solution was ideal: both were enacted because of human perversity and hardness of heart; but both were an improvement on the existing state of affairs in that they brought the situation nearer to the ideal.

Two principles appear to follow from these examples:-

a) It is better to have an imperfect law and solution rather than none at all.

b) A course of action, namely divorce, (and therapeutic termination of pregnancy?) which is not right in the abstract might yet become our duty because it is the lesser evil when dealing with problems caused by the imperfections of our society.

How do we determine the lesser evil?

Rev. R. M. Horn suggests six questions that we should ask ourselves about any contemplated action in this sort of situation:-

a) Does our action recognize God's absolute standards? This does not mean that we should speak about them but we should be allowing them to guide our mind.

b) Would our action make a good general rule?

c) Will it prevent or hinder a recurrence of the problem?

d) Would our action help or harm conscience?

e) What is our ultimate objective?

f) Does it foster acceptance of personal responsibility and duty?