

THE CASE FOR PRO-LIFE

AN ESSAY ON THE TEACHING OF

HOLY SCRIPTURE, THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS, AND THE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

CONCERNING

THE ISSUE OF ABORTION

by

A Priest of The Holy Catholic Church (Anglican Rite)

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Dedicated to the millions of innocents in sure and certain knowledge that their cries were heard by a loving heavenly Father and that they now safely rest in peace within the womb of eternity.



Picture taken by the author outside Our Lady of Le Leche Chapel, St. Augustine, Florida, 1995

FORWARD - DESIGNED TO BE READ

Since it was first published in 1993, **THE CASE FOR PRO-LIFE** has been constantly evolving. As new empirical data becomes available, and additional research by the author undertaken, new editions will be published via this web site.

This essay contains various references within the body of the work as well as in the footnotes. Scriptural links have a green underline. All other links have a blue underline. Once opened as a PDF file and then copied to disk, the essay can be viewed offline using Adobe Reader. However, to access the linked references you will need to be online. Once online, left click your mouse on either color and you will be linked to a web site directly related to that specific reference.¹

The author is aware of the various constitutional, moral, legal, philosophical, and feminist arguments regarding the act of abortion.² However, as indicated by the title the focus of this essay is primarily on what the teachings of Holy Scripture,³ the Ecumenical Councils⁴ and the early Church Fathers⁵ say about abortion. Input from other sources will be included only when there appears to be a direct connection.⁶

¹ Depending on your ISP and computer's security settings, the first time you attempt to connect to a linked web site you *may* receive a Security Warning. If you receive a warning, check the box that says "remember my action for the site" and click on the Allow button. You will only need to do this once for each linked web site.

² If desired, the reader can research these arguments by referring to Baird (see Bibliography). This relatively recent edition (2001), presents the reader with "a balanced comprehensive approach toward the differing and evolving viewpoints on this complex issue, ..." (from back cover). However, be warned that this book of some 354 pages is not light reading. Contributors to the more than twenty-five essays include university professors of philosophy, a surgeon, a university professor of constitutional law, a clinical professor of medical ethics, a psychotherapist, and several established authors, editors, and journalists. Albeit difficult to wade through, **The Ethics of Abortion** is a valuable addition to the existing literature and reading it is well worth the effort for anyone who plans to seriously engage in the highly charged emotional debate gestating within the sociological womb of humanity.

³ By "Holy Scripture" is meant The Holy Bible as canonized (accepted) by Christ's One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. For purposes of this essay, arguments as to canonicity of certain Apocryphal books are moot as all Biblical quotations referenced in this essay are taken from the universally accepted 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament.

⁴ When referring to the Christian Church, the word *council* designates any formal meeting in which the hierarchy and other representatives assemble for the purpose of dealing with doctrinal and disciplinary issues. Since the first recorded Church Council (Acts 15:1-29), there have been many such assemblies at the local, national and international level. An *ecumenical council* (from the Greek *oikoumene* meaning 'the whole inhabited world'), is one in which the whole Church is represented. Between the years A.D. 325-787 there were seven such Councils (see page 6 under **THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS** for a list of these councils as well as relevant links). These are historically referred to as *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*.

⁵ As used in this essay, the term *Early Church Fathers* refers to certain Church leaders who lived prior to A.D. 636 in the West and A.D. 749 in the East. Because of his obvious impact on the doctrine of the Church, a quote from the 13th century philosopher and theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, has also been included under this heading.

⁶ Even though there is an obvious connection between the Hippocratic Oath and abortion, a discussion of this connection is beyond the scope of this essay. However, it is important to mention that the Geneva Declaration for Physicians in 1948 which proclaims "I will preserve the utmost respect for human life from the time of conception," is a clear echo of the Hippocratic Oath and indicates a reverence for human life in all its stages.

INTRODUCTION

The act of abortion did not originate in the 20th century. Nor did it suddenly become a divisive issue with the United States Supreme Court decision of January 22, 1973.⁷ The practice of aborting an unwanted fetus has most probably been around since the earliest of times, and was likely a factious issue even before recorded history.⁸

When it comes to abortion it is clear that today there exists three positions. There are those who are pro-life, those who are pro-choice, and those who are still trying to decide what position is right.⁹ This essay was written with the intention of helping all three groups. First, for those who are pro-life this essay will provide information that will help them better explain their position to others. Second, for those who are pro-choice this essay will help them appreciate the position taken by many in the pro-life community. Third, for those who are wrestling with this issue and have yet to decide what they should believe, this essay will help them in their quest.

⁷ In all likelihood, most pro-life and pro-choice advocates have never read the landmark United States Supreme Court decision **410 U.S. 113 (1973)**. It is equally important to read both the court decision by Justice Blackmun and the dissenting opinion by Justice Rehnquist. Just as as interesting and instructive is the German Supreme Court decision on abortion issued a mere two years after Roe v. Wade. The German decision is in stark contrast to Roe v. Wade. It affirms that the unborn have a right to life guaranteed by the constitution (German) and that abortion is “an act of killing”. An excellent summary and highlights, in English, of the German decision can be read on the New Perspectives on Abortion website. Also of interest is Mother Teresa’s Letter to the Supreme Court regarding their decision to exclude the unborn child from the human family. Click here to view this insightful missive. As with Baird (Footnote #2), all three of these historic documents are well worth reading.

⁸ Obviously, when it comes to pre-recorded history it is impossible to prove these two statements because no record exists. However, given the nature of man both seem plausible. We do know that man found it necessary to pass written laws protecting fetal life from abortion as far back as the Sumerian (2000 BC) and the Assyrian (1500 BC) Codes (after opening the web site, scroll down to the Doctrinal Position heading and go to paragraph #2).

⁹ Even though the issue of pro-life verses pro-choice is broader than the abortive act itself (e.g., euthanasia, stem cell research, cosmetic products), for purposes of this essay the terms pro-life and pro-choice will refer only to the act of aborting the fetus.

THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

When we look to the Bible for a specific text on the subject of abortion we come up empty handed. Unfortunately, Holy Scripture does not directly address the issue of abortion.¹⁰ However, it does provide us with valuable information we can use in our consideration of the rightness or wrongness of abortion.

First, several passages in Holy Scripture imply that the fetus is human life.¹¹ The Greek for "babe" in Luke 1:41 (referring to the fetus in Elisabeth's womb), *brephos*, is the same word used to describe the Christ child in the manger.¹² Without getting into a discussion of the intricacies/structure of the Aristotelian Syllogism, suffice it to say that by using the same word to describe both the infant baby Jesus and the fetal John Baptist, Holy Scripture presents them as being in some sense the same.¹³ Historically, this sameness has been interpreted to include at the least their shared humanness.

Second, Holy Scripture teaches that the life of every creature, including human beings, is in the blood.¹⁴ Thus, it follows that by the time blood flows within the fetus,¹⁵ life exists. Please note that while the unborn child is nourished by the mother, it is not transfused by the mother. The unborn child manufactures its own blood. This blood runs through the placenta which is full of maternal blood. Nutrients and oxygen are transferred from the mother's blood to the fetal blood, and waste products are transferred from the fetal blood to the maternal blood. Under normal conditions, the two blood supplies do not mix. Medical research has shown that the major blood vessels begin to develop by day 16 or 17, the heart begins to pump fluid through the blood vessels by day twenty, and the first red blood cells appear the next day.¹⁶ Therefore, from a Biblical perspective, by at most the 21st day life has begun. Think of it! By the twenty first day the fetus has a system of blood vessels, it manufactures its own blood supply, and it pumps that blood throughout its tiny body with a heart that beats between 60 and 70 times each minute. Given that a fetus resulting from human conception cannot develop into anything other than what is commonly referred to as a human being,

¹⁰ Exodus 21:22-25 is the only direct reference to feticide in the Bible. It addresses the issue of what to do in the case of *accidental* feticide. It says nothing about *purposefully* aborting a fetus in order to end a pregnancy. It should also be pointed out that in the Exodus account the fetus seems to have an importance that is clearly inferior to that of the woman. As a consequence, pro-life advocates should probably not use this passage to try and establish equality of moral worth to the woman and fetus. The moral worth of the fetus must be established some other way (see footnote #21).

¹¹ Luke 1:41; Luke 2:23.

¹² Luke 2:12.

¹³ For those who are interested, the Planet Math web site has a good discussion on how Aristotelian Logic might be used to reach this conclusion.

¹⁴ Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11,14; Deuteronomy 12:23; John 6:53.

¹⁵ Throughout this essay specialized terms such as *zygote*, *blastocyst* and *embryo* are not used. Rather, *fetus* is used to refer to the life within the womb regardless of the stage of development.

¹⁶ For further information regarding the stages of pregnancy please refer to the Index of Health-Wellness of the New Jersey University of Medicine and Dentistry web site (when the Index opens scroll down and click on Pregnancy then click on Main.htm), and the American Pregnancy Association website.

it seems reasonable to argue that this fetal life is nothing less than human life!¹⁷

Third, several Old Testament passages clearly forbid the taking of an innocent human life.¹⁸ Except for the stain of original sin, it is doubtful if anyone would argue that the fetus is anything but innocent. Consequently, from a Biblical perspective abortion, at least from day sixteen, is forbidden! But what about the unborn younger than sixteen days. Should they also be considered human? In other words, just when before day sixteen does human life begin?

There are three major points of view about when human life begins: before birth, at birth, or after birth.¹⁹ Among those who believe that life begins before birth, there are three views about when this occurs: before conception,²⁰ at conception, or at some time after conception. Regardless of what point of view one embraces, it seems logical to state that human life begins when the complete set of human chromosomes needed to grow and maintain the human body are in place. In other words, when all that makes a life human is in place, and nothing new needs to be added for human life to develop, human life exists. From a medical standpoint this occurs at a point in time called -- conception. While it is true that after conception there will be continuing development, there will be no additions. **At conception, ALL THAT THE UNBORN CHILD WILL BE IN ACTUALITY, IT IS POTENTIALLY.**²¹ Life -- human life -- has begun! This is clearly not a new thought. Much has been learned through the study of Embryology, fetology, and genetics. For instance, while certain "significant events involving cell differentiation and organ development give the fetus an increasingly more human appearance, ' . . . ' these events (are) already preprogrammed into the genetic code."²²

¹⁷ The position taken by some philosophers that a newly fertilized ovum is no more a person than an acorn is an oak tree seems at best to be a purposefully misleading oversimplification of an extremely complex issue.

¹⁸ Exodus 23:7; Deuteronomy 27:25. The meaning of the word innocent in Exodus 23:7 probably includes more than human beings. However, a discussion of the rightness or wrongness of humans destroying "innocent" environmental life or killing other "innocent" species is beyond the scope of this article.

¹⁹ There are those who believe it is currently impossible to determine when human life begins. Consequently, if the issue of abortion turns on a determination of when human life begins, and if it is impossible to make such a determination, then it necessarily follows that it is impossible to resolve the issue of abortion. However, as has been pointed out by F. LaGard Smith in his book **When Choice Becomes God**, "If, in fact, we cannot decide when human life begins, we cannot safely assume that it hasn't begun" (pg. 125). In other words, even if it is true that a determination as to when human life begins cannot be made (and I do not believe this is a tenable position), it would follow that mankind's only option would be to give the benefit of the doubt to the fetus and assume that human life has begun. The same response can be made to those who attempt to draw a distinction between a fetus that is both human and alive and a fetus that is a living human *being*. If it is impossible to determine when a live human fetus takes on the quality of *beingness*, then the only morally acceptable resolution is to assume the live human fetus is a living human *being*. For purposes of this essay, the terms *human life* and *living human being* are considered synonymous.

²⁰ Proponents of this position usually base their argument on Jeremiah 1:5.

²¹ This is axiomatic and goes beyond the premise *that* abortion is wrong to explain *why* abortion is wrong by establishing the moral worth of the unborn child. As such, it should be *the* argument of pro-life advocates.

²² Komonchak, Joseph A., et al., Editors, **The New Dictionary of Theology**, Michael Glazier, Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, 1989, pg. 4. See also page 5 where the obvious conclusion is drawn that a fetus could "never be made human if it were not human already."

See also Smith, George D. Ed., **The Teaching of the Catholic Church**, "A Summary of Catholic Doctrine," 2 Volumes, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1949, Vol. II, pg. 791. The Christian teaching that the fetus is a human life can be seen in the statement, "all abortions, at whatever period of pregnancy they may occur, should be baptized if

In summary, it can be said that Biblical teaching, combined with the teaching of modern science, clearly shows that deliberate abortion at anytime after conception is nothing less than the taking of an innocent human life. Historically, the taking of innocent human life has been called murder!²³ It seems appropriate to mention that no matter how unethical, immoral, sickening and heinous one may believe the practice of abortion to be, at the current time in the United States it is not unlawful. Thus, the proper response to those who procure or perform abortions cannot be to take the law into one's own hands and torch abortion clinics or kill abortion providers. The blood that flows from the Altar of Convenience will never be stopped by using the Altar of Revenge. Some pro-life advocates like to refer to various Old Testament passages they believe established what is referred to as *lex talionis* (*the Law of Retaliation*).²⁴ However, in order to avoid the charge of using proof-texts to establish a point it is essential to consider several other Scripture passages.²⁵ The two Old Testament passages clearly teach that vengeance (retaliation), if it is to be done at all, is God's responsibility. Just as importantly, and perhaps even more so, the New Testament reference found in Matthew's Gospel setting forth the teaching of Jesus on this matter clearly abrogates the concept of *lex talionis*.

they are alive, and should be baptized conditionally if there is doubt of their being alive."

Note: Even among those who accept the premise that from the moment of conception the fetus is a human life, there are many who believe that under circumstances such as rape and incest abortion is justified. However, if one believes that human life begins at conception, then *regardless of the cause of the pregnancy* it necessarily follows that an abortion still constitutes the taking of a human life. A life that had nothing to do with the events that ultimately resulted in its conception. A life that is innocent! And as has already been shown, Holy Scripture clearly teaches that the taking of an innocent life is wrong (Exodus 23:7 and Deuteronomy 27:25).

²³ "The unlawful killing of a person, esp. when done with deliberation or premeditation" (Random House).

²⁴ Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21.

²⁵ Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Matthew 5:38-48.

THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

It is generally agreed that at least seven councils were ecumenical (Nicaea - 325, Constantinople I - 381, Ephesus - 431, Chalcedon - 451, Constantinople II - 553, Constantinople III - 680, and Nicaea II - 787).²⁶ The decisions of these councils on such matters as doctrine and discipline have historically been considered binding on all Christians. Besides these Ecumenical Councils, there were some local councils (usually called synods), conducted between A.D. 325-787. Many of them also received ecumenical acceptance. Following are quotations from three such councils.²⁷

The Councils of Ancyra: (A.D. 314, Canon XXI). Ancyra was the capital of Galatia. This council addressed many concerns, including how to handle those who had denied the faith during persecution or committed certain crimes before baptism. In addition, they made pronouncements on other important issues: when clergy could and could not get married; appropriate penance for those who were guilty of crimes such as sodomy, adultery, and voluntary or involuntary homicide; and what to do about those involved in abortion.

"Concerning women who commit fornication, and destroy that which they have conceived, or who are employed in making drugs for abortion, . . . we have ordained that they fulfill ten years [of penance], . . ." ²⁸

The Canons of Basil: (A.D. 370, Canon II & VIII from *The First Canonical Epistle of St. Basil*. These canons were subsequently approved in Canon II of the Council in Trullo.)

"Let her that procures an abortion undergo ten years' penance, whether the embryo were perfectly formed, or not." ²⁹

"Women also who administer drugs to cause abortion, as well as those who take poisons to destroy unborn children, are murderesses."³⁰

The Council in Trullo: (A.D. 692, Canon XCI. This synod was called to complete the work of the Fifth (553) and Sixth (680) General Councils. Consequently, it is also called by the name Quinisext Council or Fifth-Sixth Council. It took place in the domed room or trullus of Emperor Justinian II's

²⁶ For a summary of the primary issues/heresies considered and the decisions made by the ecumenical councils, refer to the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate website. For a more in-depth discussion of the issues addressed by each of the councils, refer to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia web site.

²⁷ It is important to note that even before the first Ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea in 325, the issue of abortion had already been addressed. At a Spanish council held around A.D. 306, the Council of Elvira, in which 81 canons dealing mostly with apostasy and adultery were passed, canon 63 states that a woman who conceives while committing adultery and then aborts the fetus "may not commune again, even as death approaches, because she has sinned twice".

²⁸ Schaff, Philip & Wace, Henry, Editors, **The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers**, "Second Series," The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977, pg. 73.

²⁹ Ibid., pg. 604.

³⁰ St. Basil's letter CLXXXVIII.

palace at Constantinople. There is considerable debate about the ecumenicity of this council. It seems that only the East was represented. Perhaps for that reason the West never gave it their stamp of approval. Regardless, there is much value attached to the canons of this council. They provide a look into the mind of the Eastern Church on various issues, including abortion, during the latter part of the 7th century. Interestingly, when compared with Canon XXI of The Council of Ancyra - over 350 years earlier - we find that abortion is still considered wrong. Only the penalty has changed.

"Those who give drugs for procuring abortion, and those who receive poisons to kill the foetus, are subjected to the penalty of murder." ³¹

³¹ Ibid., pg. 404. It seems that later decrees reduced the consequences to ten years of penance before being readmitted to communion.

THE CHURCH FATHERS

THE DIDACHE: (1st Century - The DIDACHE is a short Christian manual. It is primarily concerned with morals and Church practice. It was most likely written sometime during the first century. The only known manuscript was discovered in 1875.)

"You shall not commit murder. You shall not commit adultery, you shall not corrupt the young. You shall not commit fornication. You shall not steal. You shall not practice sorcery. You shall not kill an unborn child or murder a newborn infant." ³²

THE LETTER OF BARNABAS: (2nd Century - Ascribed by Clement of Alexandria to the Apostle Barnabas.)

"You shall not murder a child by abortion, nor kill it after birth." ³³

ATHENAGORAS OF ATHENS: (2nd Century - Christian Apologist. He is best known for his defence of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.)

"Those women who use drugs to bring about an abortion commit murder and will have to give an account to God for their abortion." ³⁴

MINUCIUS FELIX: (2nd Century - Felix is perhaps best known for writing an excellent defence of Christianity. His apologetic takes the form of a conversation between two men - a Christian named Octavius and a pagan named Caecilius. Ultimately, Caecilius converts to Christianity.)

"I see newly-begotten infants at times exposed to wild beasts and birds, or killed by strangling; and there are women who destroy the life growing within their wombs; they murder the child before they have given birth." ³⁵

ST. HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME: (3rd Century - Ecclesiastical writer and doctor. Many consider HIPPOLYTUS the most important 3rd century theologian of the Roman Church. His principal work is his *Refutation of all Heresies*.)

". . . women . . . take a man of their choosing as bedfellow, whether slave or free, and . . . regard such a one as a husband, though not lawfully married. For this reason women who were reputed to be believers begin to take drugs to render themselves sterile, and to bind themselves tightly so as to

³² Roberts, Alexander & Donaldson, James, Editors, **The Ante-Nicene Fathers**, 10 Volumes, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1977, Vol VII, pg. 377. In addition, a good resource that discusses the *Didache* as well as the teachings of Clement of Alexandria and others on the subject of abortion can be found at the Orthodox Peace Fellowship web site.

³³ Ibid., Vol. I, pg. 148, 19.10.

³⁴ Daughters of St. Paul, Editors, **Yes to Life**, Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, Ma., 1977, pg. 21.

³⁵ Ibid., pg. 21.

expel what was being conceived, since they would not, on account of relatives and excessive wealth, want to have a child by a slave or by an insignificant person. See, then, into what great impiety that lawless one (Satan) has proceeded, by teaching adultery and murder at the same time." ³⁶

TERTULLIAN: (3rd Century - African Church Father - considered the founder of Latin Christianity.)

"For us, killing and murder being forbidden once and for all, it is not permitted to destroy even what is conceived in the mother's womb. To hinder the birth of a child is a faster way to murder. It makes little difference whether one destroys a life already born or prevents it from coming to birth. It is a human being and one who is to be a man, for the whole fruit is already present." ³⁷

ST. CYPRIAN: (3rd Century - Bishop of Carthage. Cyprian wrote extensively about the Church, the Ministry and the Sacraments. He is considered a great Bible commentator. He was martyred in A.D. 258.)

". . . he struck the womb of his wife with his shoe and a delivery was brought on . . . an abortion. And now he dares to condemn the hands of those who sacrifice although he himself is more guilty in his feet, by which his son who was being born was killed." ³⁸

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA: (3rd Century - Theologian and teacher.)

"Women who make use of some sort of deadly abortion drug, kill not only the embryo but, together with it, all human kindness." ³⁹

ORIGEN: (3rd Century - biblical commentator, theologian and spiritual writer. He wrote a systematic exposition of Christian doctrine.)

"There are women of high social standing and great wealth, so-called believers, who began taking drugs to become sterile; and then they bound themselves tightly to procure an abortion because they did not want to have a child born of a slave father or of a man of lower rank." ⁴⁰

ST. BASIL: (4th Century - A monk who formed the first monastery in Asia Minor. He is best known for his defense of orthodoxy against Arianism. This heresy maintains that Jesus Christ is not eternal and is not God.)

"A woman who deliberately destroys a fetus is answerable for murder. And any fine distinction as

³⁶ Jurgens, W.A., **The Faith of the Early Fathers**, Vol. I, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN., 1970, pg. 173.

³⁷ Daughters of St. Paul, Editors, **Yes to Life**, Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, Ma., 1977, pg. 21.

³⁸ Ibid., pg. 22.

³⁹ Ibid., pg. 22.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pg. 22.

to whether it is formed or unformed is not admissible among us." ⁴¹

"Those who give drugs causing abortions are murderers themselves, as well as those who receive the poison which kills the fetus." ⁴²

ST. JEROME: (4th-5th Centuries - A Doctor of the Church⁴³ and biblical scholar. He translated the Bible into Latin from the original tongues and wrote many biblical commentaries.)

"Some virgins, when they learn they are with child through sin, practice abortion by the use of drugs. Frequently they die themselves and are brought before the ruler of the lower world guilty of three crimes: suicide, adultery against Christ, and murder of an unborn child." ⁴⁴

ST. AUGUSTINE: (4th-5th Century - A Doctor of the Church whose influence is immense. His two most celebrated writings are *The Confessions* and *The City of God*.)

"If both man and woman are party to such practices (killing the fetus) they are not spouses at all; and if from the first they have carried on thus they have come together not for honest wedlock, but for impure gratification; ..." ⁴⁵

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS: (13th Century - A Dominican philosopher and theologian best known for his *Summa Theologica*. The Roman Catholic Church has accepted the substance of St. Thomas' teaching as its official doctrine.)

"It is in no way lawful to slay the innocent." ⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ibid., pg. 22.

⁴² Jurgens, W.A., **The Faith of the Early Fathers**, Vol. II, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN., 1970, pg. 7.

⁴³ Doctor of the Church is a special title that is given to Christian writers in recognition of their learning and holiness of life. They are considered reliable teachers of the faith. Although the number has now grown to over twenty, originally there were only four. They are: St. Ambrose (c. 339-397); St. Jerome (c. 342-420); St. Augustine (354-430); and St. Gregory the Great (c. 540-604).

⁴⁴ Daughters of St. Paul, Editors, **Yes to Life**, Daughters of St. Paul, Boston, Ma., 1977, pg. 23.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pg. 23.

⁴⁶ English Dominican Province Fathers, Translators, **St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica**, 5 Volumes, Christian Classics, Westminster, Maryland, 1981, Vol. III, Q. 64, Art. 6.

It should be noted that Thomas Aquinas held that the fetus did not receive a soul at the moment of conception. He believed that a male received a soul forty days after conception and a female ninety. However, he still believed that it was a "grave sin against natural law to kill the fetus at any stage, and a graver sin of homicide to do so after ensoulment." (Komonchak, Joseph A., et al., Editors, **The New Dictionary of Theology**, Michael Glazier, Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, 1989, pg. 3).

IN SUMMARY

As is painfully clear, from a Christian perspective those who perform abortions and those who undergo them are guilty of a grave sin.⁴⁷ The good news, however, is that we have a God who is in the sin-forgiving business. As we stand together against this destructive evil known as abortion and rightly condemn the sin, let us also bring God's message of forgiveness to the repentant sinner.

⁴⁷ An illustration of just how grave a sin abortion is can be seen in a statement made by Mother Teresa in the Forward to a book by Drew DeCoursey. Mother Teresa writes, "There is no more choice, once a child has been conceived - a second life is in the womb of the mother. To destroy that life by abortion is a murder - worse than any other murder." Given the medical evidence as well as religious and ethical convictions that exist in the world today, it is almost an insult to one's intelligence to ask them to believe that a woman has a right to have her own child killed.

AFTERWORD

What the Nazis did "illegally" in WWII is tame compared to what has been done "legally" in the United States of America since 1973. The Nazis exterminated 6,000,000 Jews.⁴⁸ Between 1973 and 1993 in the United States more than 25,000,000 innocent infant babies were horribly mutilated and cast away like so much unwanted garbage!⁴⁹ It is now estimated that between 1973 and 2005 no less than 40 million abortions have been performed in the U.S.⁵⁰ What the civilized world vowed would never happen again -- has. However, unlike the holocaust of WWII the holocaust of the unborn continues - there has to date been no truce! In fact, abortion has become so commonplace that prenatal sex determination followed by sex selective abortion has resulted in what might best be called international murder on demand especially in societies where a premium is placed on male children.⁵¹ Ah, the potential slippery slope is a potential slippery slope no more. It has become a reality

I would like to end this essay on a positive, hopeful note. Recently, while reading the Wednesday, April 12, 2006 issue of the Orange County Register (California), I learned about a wonderful organization called The Joyful Child Foundation. This foundation was formed in memory of Samantha Runnion, a young girl who was kidnaped while she played with a friend at a playground, and subsequently raped and murdered. The Foundation is dedicated to keeping children safe from those who would abuse and murder them. On the one hand it is sad to realize we live in a world where such organizations are needed. On the other hand, it is refreshing to learn there are those who are willing to step forward and do something to help protect these children. The more I learned about The Joyful Child Foundation the more I began to see the similarities between a defenseless child playing in a playground and in need of protection, and a defenseless child resting within the womb of their mother.

⁴⁸ Of course, a distinction must be drawn between genocide and feticide

⁴⁹ I have seriously considered including a story related in Baird, pages 19-24 (see Bibliography). It is a story about aborted fetuses "mistakenly" discarded by a hospital in an orange plastic bag labeled HAZARDOUS MATERIAL. Ultimately, the bag fell off the back of a sanitation truck and all that was inside, including the aborted fetuses, ended up strewn about the street. One of those who was present when this happened was a surgeon. He was so moved by what he saw that he subsequently went out of his way to observe an actual abortion procedure (performed in a university hospital) so he would know what had been done to the fetuses prior to them being placed into the orange plastic bag. I said I have seriously considered including the story. But upon further consideration have decided not to do so. The story is so heart wrenching I fear it may cause some to go into a state of depression, which is clearly not the intention of this essay. However, for any who are interested the referenced book is readily available.

⁵⁰ One source for this estimate the Family.org website.

⁵¹ One need only examine what is currently taking place throughout India where abortion is commonly practiced in order to avoid female children. Much has been written about the practice of sex selective abortion in India. An excellent essay by Rita Patel, M.D. of the University of North Carolina University Center for International Studies, Carolina Papers in International Health, titled *The Practice of Sex Selective Abortion in India: May You Be The Mother of a Hundred Sons*, is well worth reading.

Let us pray that more organizations like The Joyful Child Foundation will be formed that are dedicated to keeping children, all children, safe from those who would abuse and murder them, and that before too much more time passes the horrific and inhumane practice of abortion will cease.⁵²

Web Sites of Possible Interest

Presbyterians Pro-Life Position Statement on Abortion

Lutherans For Life

An Orthodox (Church) View of Abortion - (Type abortion in the search box and hit the return key)

2006 Presidential Proclamation regarding the National Sanctity of Life Day

Early Church fathers, Excerpts Pertaining to Abortion

Life Issues: Abortion, Contraception, and Euthanasia

Choose Life specialty license plate

Information on what happens to aborted babies

Embryonic and Fetal Research Laws by State

Encouraging parents to work together to stop crimes against children

National Institutes of Health Revitalization Act of 1993

⁵² If any doubt remains concerning the uncivilized, barbaric practice of abortion, please click here to read the story of Baby Malachi. It is truly heart rending. If you so choose, you can then click on the link at the end of the story to view his precious body after abortion. **However, please be warned that this is a photographic image and is quite graphic.**

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