

## Chapter 6A – The Protection of Life: Abortion

Should governments protect the unborn? What does the Bible say about the nature of an unborn child?  
What governmental policies regarding abortion are appropriate?

### 1. The Issue – Should governments make laws to protect the lives of unborn children?

- If the answer to that question is yes, then there are more specific questions, such as:
  - Should the unborn child be protected from the moment of conception to the moment of birth, or from some later point in pregnancy?
  - What should the unborn child be called, a “fetus,” or an “unborn child,” or a “baby”?
  - What kind of penalties should attach to taking the life of an unborn child?
- If the answer is no, there are questions as well:
  - Should governments pay for women to have abortions?
  - Should physicians and other health care providers who think abortion is morally wrong be compelled to perform abortions?
  - Should government policies promote or discourage abortions?

### 2. Relevant Biblical Teaching

#### a. The unborn child should be treated as a person from the moment of conception.

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry . . . . “Behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy” (Luke 1:41-44).

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Psalm 51:5).

You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb (Ps. 139:13).

The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger” (Gen 25:22-23).

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. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe (Ex. 21:22-25).

(1) If this causes a premature birth but there is no harm to the pregnant woman or her unborn child there is still a penalty.

(2) But “if there is harm” to either the pregnant woman or her child, then the penalties are quite severe: “Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth . . . .” (Vv. 23-24). Both the mother and the unborn child are given equal legal protection

#### b. Scientific information on the distinct personhood of the unborn child

“Upon fertilization, parts of human beings have actually been transformed...into a single, whole human being. During the process of fertilization, the sperm and the oocyte cease to exist as such, and a new human being is produced.” (Dr. Dianne Irving, biochemist and biologist, Georgetown University)

#### c. Objections regarding the personhood of the unborn child

(1) Unable to interact and survive on its own

- But this is also true of infants and comatose patients

(2) Birth defects

“Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?” (Ex. 4:11).

When Jesus saw a man who had been blind from birth, his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:2-3).

(3) Pregnancies resulting from rape or incest

- We must recognize the genuine pain and hardship experienced by the mother who is involuntarily pregnant
- Christians who know of such situations should be ready to give encouragement and support in many ways.
- Would we think it right to kill an infant conceived through rape or incest after it is born?  
"Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. 24:16; compare Ezek. 18:20).
- Such instances are quite rare, constituting at most 1% of all abortions, but probably much less than that.
- We should not justify taking the life of the unborn child in such cases.

(4) Abortion to save the life of the mother

- According to the CDC, abortion carried out to save the life of the mother is extremely rare (less than 0.118% of all abortions).
- The choice is between the loss of one life (the baby's) and the loss of two lives (both the baby's and the mother's).
- It would be morally right for doctors to save the life that can be saved and take the life of the unborn child.
- But in politics, proponents of "abortion rights" too often lump together "life" and "health," (For instance, *Doe v. Bolton*, defined maternal "health" as: "all factors – physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age – relevant to the well-being of the patient.")

3. Arguments from reason and evidence apart from the Bible

- Medical evidence about the distinct genetic identity and distinct DNA of the child shows the unborn child is far different than any other part of the mother's own body.
- Modern ultrasound technology can give highly realistic images of the unborn child with great persuasive force.
- Arguments from how we would treat an unborn child after it is born can have significant persuasive force
  - The only differences between babies *in utero* and babies that are born are (1) their location, (2) their size, (3) their level of dependence, (4) their level of development (*ESV Study Bible*)
- The incalculable loss to the nation from the deaths of over one million babies per year.
- The instinctive sense a pregnant woman has that what is growing in her womb is not a piece of tissue or merely a part of her body, but is in fact a baby. (see Rom. 2:14-15).

4. Objections

a. A wrongful restriction of freedom:

- Individual freedom is important and should be protected. But the real question is not freedom in the abstract but what appropriate restrictions the law should place on individual freedom. The law already restricts freedom in many ways that people agree on. (For instance, driving while intoxicated, stealing a neighbor's car, assaulting someone, firing a gun in city limits, putting living children to death.)
- If the unborn child is considered a human person, the question is whether the government should allow people to commit murder against their own children.

b. "All children should be wanted children":

- If we consider the unborn child to be a person, then this argument is merely another way of saying that people should be allowed to kill other people that they do not want to care for.
- Once a child is born would we say that a parent who does not "want" to care for that child any longer should have the right to put the child to death because "all children should be wanted children"?

c. "I'm personally against abortion, but I just don't support laws against abortion."

- This argument fails to understand the difference between personal moral persuasion and governmental laws.
- This position would be similar to saying, "I'm personally opposed to drunk driving, and I wouldn't personally recommend drunk driving, but I don't support having laws against it, because I think individual drivers should have the right to decide for themselves whether to drive when drunk."
- This argument is in fact a subtle attempt at changing the subject from but what the *laws* of a government should prohibit to *personal preferences* of individuals.

d. "Christians should not try to impose their moral standards on other people."

- But many of our laws are based on moral convictions that are held by the vast majority of the population.
- The question is not whether laws should be based on some moral convictions, but whether laws about abortion should be based on these moral convictions.
- Which moral standards support laws against abortions?
  - (1) People should not be allowed to murder other people.

(2) The unborn child should be considered a human person and should be protected as a human person. (This is really where the question lies.)

- In our government, Christians cannot impose their moral convictions on others, but Christians can attempt to persuade others that biblical moral standards are correct and should be used in human government:
  - Paul could reason with the Roman governor, Felix, “about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment” (Acts 24:25).
  - John the Baptist “reproved” Herod the Tetrarch “for all the evil things that Herod had done” (Luke 3:19).
  - Daniel warned the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar about his “sins” and “iniquities” (Dan. 4:27),
  - Jonah warned the entire city of Nineveh to repent (see Jonah 3:4)

## 5. Recommendations for Political Policies

### a. Governments should enact laws prohibiting abortions except to save the life of the mother.

- A government is to protect the lives of the people it governs
- If unborn children are considered to be persons, then certainly government should protect the lives of these children. In fact, it is especially the weak and helpless who should be the objects of governmental protections:  
Give justice to the weak and fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked (Ps. 82:3-4).
- The question of penalties for abortion should be left to individual state legislatures to decide through a normal political process.
- I think that Christians should support “compromise” legislation (no abortion except for cases of rape and incest), since it would still prohibit probably 99% of the abortions that are occurring today.

### b. No government policies should promote or fund abortions.

- No government money should be given to pay the medical costs of abortions (while they are still legal) or to promote abortions (supporting pro-abortion groups such as Planned Parenthood, for example).
- No foreign aid should be given for the purpose of “population control.”
- Democratic and Republican presidents have clearly differed on this question.

### c. No government policy should compel people to participate in abortions or to dispense drugs that cause abortions.

### d. No funding or support should be given to the process of creating human embryos for the purpose of destroying them in medical research.

- The biblical arguments above on the personhood of the unborn child would argue against the validity of creating embryos simply to harvest their stem cells and then put them to death.
- Though it is argued that embryonic stem cells might help to overcome various diseases and disabilities, it is doubtful that such stem cells need to be taken from human embryos—there are other sources that are effective.
- President George W, Bush’s decision in 2001
  - 1) Allowed government funding to continue on stem cell research where the stem cells had already been taken from embryos and the embryos has already been destroyed
  - 2) It did not allow government funding to be used for the intentional creation of and destruction of new embryos.
  - 3) This decision only involved government funding.
  - 4) It did not affect on-going research in the private sector, nor did it prohibit private research companies from using embryonic stem cells.

### e. The ban on partial-birth abortions

- Passing the Bill
  - A bill prohibiting this procedure was passed in October 1996 by Congress, but vetoed by President Clinton.
  - It was passed again in October, 1997 by both houses of Congress, but again vetoed by President Clinton.
  - Then in 2002, Republicans increased their majority in the House and gained a 51-seat majority in the Senate. This enabled them to pass the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act in the House October 2, 2003 and in the Senate October 21, 2003. President George W. Bush signed it into law on November 5, 2003.
- Defending the Bill
  - Pro-abortion forces challenged the ban in several different federal district courts; all three ruled the ban unconstitutional, and the federal courts of appeal (9<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> Circuits) affirmed those rulings
  - All three cases were appealed to the United States Supreme Court and consolidated into *Gonzales v. Carhart*. By a 5 – 4 majority, the Supreme Court upheld the law as constitutional, declaring its decision on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

- f. The most important legal goal regarding abortion is appointing Supreme Court justices who will overturn *Roe v. Wade*
- The United States Congress has no power to pass a law prohibiting abortions at any stage of pregnancy.
  - The fifty state legislatures have no power to pass any law prohibiting abortion. (The prohibition on partial-birth abortion is the only exception: see discussion above.)
  - But will the Supreme Court overturn *Roe v. Wade*?

Would keep <i>Roe v. Wade</i>	Often in middle (perhaps would overturn?)	Would probably overturn <i>Roe v. Wade</i>
Stephen Breyer	Anthony Kennedy	John Roberts
Ruth Ginsburg		Samuel Alito
Sonia Sotomayor		Antonin Scalia
John Paul Stevens		Clarence Thomas

6. The importance of this issue.
- The OT contains sober warnings to Israelites who had begun “to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire,” and God warns that judgment is coming, and “the land shall become a waste.” (Jer. 7:31, 34; see vv. 30-34)
  - What will God’s evaluation of our nation be in light of this decision?

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