

Key verses and Summary of PCA position on Abortion

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Abortion in distinction from miscarriage, is the intentional killing of an unborn child between conception and birth. The moral question raised in any abortion is whether the life of the unborn child is included in the Biblical teaching respecting the sanctity of life. The special protection God gives to human life is founded upon His making man "in His own image" (Gen. 1:26, 27). So basic is this to His created order that God declares: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Gen. 9:6). This protection is then summarized in the sixth commandment, "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13)

The clear and absolute declaration of the sixth commandment, founded upon God's making man in His own image, defines for us the most fundamental question which must be answered from Scripture. Is the unborn child a human person in God's image? While Scripture may not provide a precise scientific statement in answer to this question, the theological understanding of man revealed in Scripture leaves no doubt about the continuity of personhood which includes the unborn child. Simply, yet profoundly, the life resulting from conception is designated "man" both before and after birth (Gen. 4:1, Job 3:3). A "man-child" is conceived; the unborn child is not less than a man.

What we see revealed in Scripture is a marvelous truth... that there is a continuity of the individual man from "before the foundation of the world" into eternity. All life is a gift from our sovereign God. And in words of adoration, Scripture clearly includes prenatal life. In Psalm 139:13-16, David marvels at God's involvement with him (David between conception and birth. "For Thou didst form my inward parts: Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made ...Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance (Hebrew *golem*, embryo, or fetus); And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them."

In the New Testament we see this same emphasis in Luke 1:24-56. An unborn child of six months is said to express the human emotion of joy. "When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb ... For behold when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb with joy". And in verse 36 of this passage the baby is designated a "son", implying continuity. This pattern is seen through Scripture where those in the womb are commonly referred to by the same language used of persons already born (cf. Gen. 25:22; Job 3:3; Isa. 44:2, 49:5; Hos. 12:3).

In Psalm 51:5 the continuity extends back to the actual time of conception. "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." The point of continuity is David's humanness even at conception. To speak of oneself at conception in terms of personal sinfulness is to affirm one's humanity.

As the Church of Jesus Christ we confess that "God, from all eternity, ordains whatsoever comes to pass." It should not surprise us, therefore, to see this continuity extend even prior to conception. God Himself declares in Jeremiah 1:5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." It was Jeremiah in the womb, not an impersonal organism. God was forming him, as with all His creatures, for his appointed post-natal responsibilities.

The Word of God affirms throughout the continuity of personhood both before and after birth. Abortion, the intentional killing of an unborn child, is to destroy that continuity. Abortion would terminate the life of an individual, a bearer of God's image, who is being divinely formed and prepared for a God-given role in the world.

The continuity of personhood before and after birth is wonderfully underscored in the way Scripture describes the sovereign activity of God in conception and birth. In Genesis 1:28 God gave man the directive to multiply and to fill the earth. In obeying this instruction, man reproduced human beings who were also formed in the image of God (Gen. 5:1-3). This is not to imply the activity of God ceased. As Eve gave birth to Cain, she acknowledged, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord" (Gen. 4). Psalm 100:3 reminds us that we are the Lord's for He has made us. Psalm 127:3 says, "Children are a gift of the Lord: the fruit of the womb is a reward."

Conception, then, is not a mere human happening. Apart from the sovereign intervention of God, conception (which Scripture designates a divine blessing) does not take place (Genesis 21:1-2; 30:1-2, 22; 1 Samuel 1:19; Job 31:15, 33:4). It would therefore be a willful act of defiance against the Creator intentionally to kill an unborn child whose conception is so intimately a Divine as well as a human act. No child belongs only to man. He is God's child. And His Word must govern the protection and care of that child both before and after birth.

Our obedience to the Word of God leaves us with no option regarding how we perceive the unborn child. He is a person, providentially given and cared for by God, with uninterrupted continuity into post-natal life. There are many explicit and implicit passages of Scripture which further support this conclusion. We are not given unlimited or autonomous sovereignty over our own bodies or the bodies of others (cf. 1 Cor. 6:15, 7:7).

Were there to be no support in the whole history of ethical and moral thought, were there no acknowledged confirmation from the medical sciences, were the history of legal opinion to the contrary, we would still have to conclude on the basis of God's Holy Word that the unborn child is a person in the sight of God. He is protected by the sanctity of life graciously given to each individual by the Creator, Who alone places His image upon man and grants them any right to life which they have.