

6th General Assembly, 1978, Appendix O, page 270

REPORT OF THE AD INTERIM COMMITTEE ON ABORTION

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. All scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible). 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; cf. *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, pp. 68-69, and *Westminster Larger Catechism*, pp. 135-136, where the requirements and prohibitions of the commandment are set forth).

Scripture Foundation

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, often expressed in doxological language, 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" (verses 41,44). 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.

Apart from pro-abortion arguments which seek to place one command of God against another, denying both the inerrancy of Scripture and the absolute ethic therein, the one argument frequently set forth alleged to be based on Scripture centers around Exodus 21:22-25. This passage, it is claimed, teaches that the unborn child is of less value than a child after birth. Some would claim it to teach that an unborn child was not a human person. We therefore specifically consider this passage because it is the most prominent "proof text" of those promoting abortion.

Instead of devaluing the unborn child or taking lightly his death, the exegetical evidence to the contrary is overwhelming. The 1971 report on abortion of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church contains an extended discussion of Exodus 21: 22-25, and the following is a portion of that report:

The term *yeled* in verse 22 never refers elsewhere to a child lacking recognizable human form, or to one incapable of existing outside the womb. The possibility of such a usage here, as the interpretation in question requires, is still further reduced by the fact that if the writer had wanted to speak of an undeveloped embryo or fetus there may have been other terminology available to him. There was the term *golem* (Ps. 139:16) which means "embryo, fetus." But in cases of the death of an unborn child, Scripture regularly designates him, not by *yeled*, not even by *golem*, but by *nefel* (Job 3:16; Psm. 58:8; Eccl. 6:3), "one untimely born." The use of *yeled* in verse 22, therefore, indicates that the child in view is not the product of a miscarriage,

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as the interpretation in question supposes; at least this is the most natural interpretation in the absence of decisive consideration to the contrary....

Further: the verb *yatza'* in verse 22 ("go out," translated "depart" in KJV) does not in itself suggest the death of the child in question, and is ordinarily used to describe normal births (Gen. 25:26, 38:28-30; Job 3:11, 10:18; Jer. 1:5, 20:18). With the possible exception of Num. 12:12, which almost certainly refers to a stillborn, it never refers to a miscarriage. The Old Testament term normally used for miscarriage and spontaneous abortion, both in humans and in animals, is not *yatza'* but *shakol* (Ex. 23:26; Hos. 9:14; Gen. 31:38; Job. 2:10; cf. 11 Kings 2:19, 21; Mal. 3:11). The most natural interpretation of the phrase *weyatze' u yeladheyha*, therefore, will find in it not an induced miscarriage, not the death of an unborn child, but an induced premature birth, wherein the child is born alive, but ahead of the anticipated time.

We should also note that the term *ason* ("harm"), found in both verse 22 and verse 23 is indefinite in its reference. The expression "*lah*" ("to her"), which would restrict the harm to the woman in distinction from the child, is missing. Thus the most natural interpretation would regard the "harm" as pertaining either to the woman or to the child. Verse 22 therefore describes a situation where neither mother or child is "harmed"-i.e where the mother is uninjured and the child is born alive. Verse 23 described a situation where some harm *is* done- either to mother *or* child *or* both An induced miscarriage could hardly be described as a situation where there is "no harm". Verse 22, therefore, describes, not an induced miscarriage, but an induced premature birth.

In this light translations using the word "miscarriage" or its equivalent are both inaccurate and misleading. The intent of this passage appears in the following paraphrase: "And if men fight together and hurt a pregnant woman so that her child is born prematurely, yet neither mother or child is harmed, he shall be surely fined, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if either mother or child is harmed, then thou shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, etc."

There are two fundamental principles to be drawn from this passage even if one chooses the weaker interpretation in which miscarriage is used and a fine is the severest penalty relating to the child. First, the passage is obviously not a case of deliberate abortion, the intentional killing of an unborn child. It is an accidental premature birth (or miscarriage). If such an accident has a penalty attached to it, any intentional act of this nature would certainly be forbidden. Secondly, a disparity in punishment does not necessarily imply, let alone prove, a disparity between persons and non-persons. At most we can conclude that accidental killing receives a lesser punishment. The passage immediately preceding this one in question (Exodus 21:20-21) presents a situation where a master kills his slave accidentally and escapes without any penalty. We certainly would not seek to prove from this passage that the slave is less than a human person.

Given the positive command regarding the sanctity of life in the sixth commandment, the burden of proof is on those who would deny the preferred exegesis cited above. It is worth noting also that the proper understanding of this passage would, if anything, elevate the value of the unborn child rather than devalue his life. This appears in that the penalty for the accidental killing of an unborn child is death, while Scripture explicitly exempts from a capital punishment those who accidentally kill

persons other than a pregnant woman or her unborn child. This is a strong testimony to God's concern for and protection of the unborn child.

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). Scripture repeatedly affirms the joy and blessing of conception, while barrenness is seen as a curse. God's involvement with the unborn child has already been mentioned. We are even told that John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15). These and many other references are adequately set forth in other studies.

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.

We must again stress, however, that both exegetical options, even the one we think is wrong, have the same result for the question of abortion, which is not accidental. Exodus 21:22-25 offers no support to any who would seek justification for the intentional killing of an unborn child.

Medical Understanding of Abortion

Although the basic considerations of this report are religious and ethical, information provided through scientific means is valuable in helping the believer to understand and to thereby confirm the clear teaching of Scripture. We will begin our consideration of the medical aspects of the abortion issue by looking at the beginning and continuing development of human life. Although there has been much discussion of when life begins, the scientific community does not seem to have much doubt on this issue. The question is usually raised to obscure the real issue, namely, that abortion is the intentional killing of a living unborn child. The conclusion of the First International Conference on Abortion held in Washington, D.C., in October of 1967, was that no point in time could be found between the union of sperm and egg and the birth of the infant which could not be considered human life. The changes described below are merely stages of development and maturation.

Genetically speaking the human being is characterized primarily by the fact that within each cell of our body there are forty-six (46) chromosomes. This fact distinguishes us from other created beings. Man was created by God with a reproductive potential so that he might be able to obey His commandment to multiply and replenish the earth. In this reproductive cycle the sperm from the man and the ovum or egg from the woman is produced by their respective bodies as the end product in their reproductive cycles. Both the egg and sperm will die unless fertilization occurs. After sexual intercourse the sperm traverses the female genital tract until it reaches the Fallopian tube. When the woman in her menstrual cycle ovulates, the ovum travels from the ovary into the Fallopian tube. If sexual intercourse has occurred at the proper time, fertilization will take place. At conception, which is synonymous with fertilization, the sperm permeates the egg, and the twenty-three (23) chromosomes

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which are in the sperm and the twenty-three (23) chromosomes within the egg align themselves to form a forty-six (46) chromosome human cell unlike that of any other living being. This union of the twenty-three (23) chromosomes from the woman and the twenty-three (23) from the man brings about the beginning of a unique living being. There are no other human beings who have the potential or same characteristics as this one nor will there ever be in the future. The genetic structure established at this moment guides the development of this individual in regards to its sex, its physical characteristics, such as skin color, eye color, hair, weight, height, and many other characteristics. The only thing that is added is time and food.

The development of this unique being begins at this moment of conception and continues until death. The intrauterine development, however, is usually separated into three stages, zygote, embryonic, and fetal. In the zygote stage rapid division of cells occurs as the development and the formation of this human being proceeds. In a few days the zygote moves down the Fallopian tube and in about five or six days implants itself into the mother's uterus which has been prepared for this act by hormonal influences within the mother itself. The zygote stage lasts through the fourth week after conception. After implantation into the mother's uterus the placenta through which the developing baby is nourished is rapidly formed. Within four weeks a precursor to the fully developed heart has formed and is actually pumping blood through the baby's developing body. The next stage is called the embryonic and exists from the fourth to the seventh week after conception. During the embryonic stage all major internal and external structures are developed. At the end of the embryonic stage the head, ears, eyes, nose, mouth, legs, fingers, and toes are recognizable though small. The baby at this point is only about one half inch long. The primitive skeletal system is completely developed by the end of the sixth week, and an electroencephalogram (brain wave detector) can detect brain wave activity as early as forty-three days after conception. During the sixth and seventh weeks the nerves and muscles begin working together for the first time, and the lips become sensitive to touch. The next and last stage of intrauterine development is the fetal which occurs from the eighth week to birth. This stage is so called because of the ease of recognizing human features with the unaided eye. At this point all internal organisms of the adult are present. The stomach produces digestive juices, the liver manufactures red blood cells, and the kidney is eliminating uric acid from the blood. The arms are still very short, but hands with fingers and toes are recognizable, and legs have knees, ankles and toes. From this point in development until age 25-27 years when full growth and development is complete the only major changes will be in size and sophistication of the function parts.

The lines in the hands begin to develop at eight weeks and will remain a distinctive feature of the individual. The eyelids and palms of the hands become sensitive to touch at about eight and one-half weeks. At this point if the eyelids are touched, the child squints, and if the palm is touched, the fingers close in a small fist.

The sex hormones estrogen and androgen have been identified as early as nine weeks. At ten weeks growth hormone is detectable, and at ten and one-half weeks the thyroid and adrenal glands have begun to function. Also at ten weeks it is possible to record the electrocardiogram, and new ultrasonic techniques can be used by the obstetrician to detect the child's heartbeat.

Twelve weeks is a very important milestone in the development of the baby because at this point all organ systems are functioning. The child swallows its surrounding amniotic debris and has bowel movements. The child swims about within

the amniotic fluid. The child has inhaling and exhaling respiratory movements moving the amniotic fluid in and out of its lungs preparing itself to breathe air. Thumb sucking is first noted at this age. The fingernails appear also at this time. The child kicks his legs, turns his feet, curls and fans his toes, makes a fist, moves his thumb, bends his wrist, turns his head, squints, frowns, opens his mouth, and presses his lips tightly together. The child even at this point can be taught. If a sharp instrument is inserted through the mother's uterus and touches the baby, the baby would recoil in pain. If this painful stimulus is preceded by a noise, the baby will eventually learn that he is about to get hurt and will recoil in pain prior to the stimulus.

Growth continues very rapidly during the fourth month of life as weight increases six times, and length eight to ten inches. In the fifth month the unborn child will become one foot tall and weigh approximately one pound. Hair begins to grow on the head and eyebrows, and a fringe of eyelashes appear. The child sleeps and wakes just as he will after birth, and he may even be aroused functionally by external vibrations. At eighteen to twenty weeks the mother perceives fetal movement, and this is defined as quickening. From then on the child develops and adds weight and length to the time of birth.

It must be pointed out here that this developing baby is a separate but dependent new life with its own chromosomal pattern and at no stage of development can be considered as an appendage or part of the mother's own body. Physiologically it is the baby that determines the development of the pregnancy not the mother. The baby, however, is highly dependent upon its mother for protection and nourishment.

Another area in which factual information is vital for understanding the true nature of abortion is the means by which it is accomplished. The following is a brief description of the techniques of abortion commonly used today. The technique most commonly used until the twelfth week of pregnancy is suction. Under a great deal of vacuum pressure the contents of the uterine cavity are torn apart and then sucked out. A second procedure also used during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy is called a D&C which stands for dilation and curettage. In this procedure the cervix is dilated to a point where a curette or knife-like instrument can be inserted into the uterus. After dilation the baby is torn apart and cut up with a curette and then is scraped out. During the twelfth through the sixteenth week of gestation the prostaglandin infusion method is used. In this procedure, prostaglandin, which is a hormone-like substance, is injected into the mother to stimulate premature labor and subsequent delivery. From the sixteenth through the twentieth week of pregnancy the "salting out" technique is used. In this procedure a sterile, very concentrated and caustic solution of salt is injected into the embryonic cavity which poisons the baby and causes it to die. The mother will go into spontaneous labor about twenty-four hours later and will deliver vaginally. Another method is hysterotomy, used after the twentieth week until birth. In this technique the usual operative procedure of a caesarean section is accomplished except that the intended result is to remove the infant and allow it to die. Virtually all abortions done this way produce live babies who are either allowed or encouraged to die.

Also significant to the discussion are complications which can result from induced abortions. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has stated, "The inherent risk of a therapeutic abortion is serious and may be life threatening and this fact should be fully appreciated by both the medical profession and the public. In nations where abortions may be obtained on demand considerable morbidity and

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mortality have been reported." This is supported by a statement issued by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (Great Britain).

Those without specialist knowledge, and these include members of the medical profession, are influenced in adopting what they regard as the humanitarian attitude to the induction of abortion by a failure to appreciate what is involved. They tend to regard induction of abortion as a trivial operation free from risks. In fact even to the expert working in the best conditions the removal of an early pregnancy after dilating the cervix can be difficult and is not infrequently accompanied by serious complications. This is particularly true in the case of the woman pregnant for the first time. For women who have a serious medical indication for termination of pregnancy, induction of abortion is extremely hazardous and its risks need to be weighted carefully against those involved in leaving the pregnancy undisturbed. Even for the relatively healthy woman, however, the dangers are considerable.

Obviously the worst complication resulting from a legal abortion is death itself. In the majority of countries where legal safeguards from abortion have been eliminated a woman is more likely to die from legal abortion than she is if she were to carry the pregnancy to term. This is true for legal abortions performed on healthy women by licensed physicians in fully accredited medical facilities.

Another complication centers around pelvic infection. Pelvic infection is a common sequel to legal abortion. While the incidence varies from country to country, consensus reveals an astonishing high rate. The incidence of pelvic infection appears to be highest two to three weeks after the abortion at the time when the patient has been lost to follow-up. There is also good evidence to suggest that young women pregnant for the first time are at much greater risk of infection (55% of New York City abortions are performed on women pregnant for the first time.) These infections are the direct result of the instrumentation involved in the abortion technique and are manifested as salpingitis - "infection in the Fallopian tubes or endometritis (infection of the lining of the womb)." When out of control these infections can cause septic shock with rapid death or pelvic thrombophlebitis (inflammation and bloodclot formation in the pelvic veins) with sudden death by pulmonary embolus (bloodclot from the pelvic veins which dislodges and is carried to the lungs). These infections can also result in sterility because they scar the tubes to the point where they do no longer function properly.

Major hemorrhage is another complication and can result in death by exsanguination. Again the incidence is much too high to be acceptable from a medical standpoint. During the first year of California's new abortion law 8% of patients needed one or more blood transfusions. It should be mentioned that every time a blood transfusion is given there are certain inherent risks, for example allergic reactions and hepatitis which have mortality and morbidity in themselves.

The next complication is uterine perforation. The perforation of the uterus can occur as a sequel to dilation and curettage. This occurs primarily because the surgeon operates by "touch" alone and not under direct vision. Secondly, the pregnant uterus is much softer than the non-pregnant uterus lending itself to easier perforation. The problem with uterine perforation is the fact that peritonitis (inflammation of the abdominal lining) can occur, necessarily leading to an exploratory abdominal operation with its attendant complications and morbidity.

Menstrual disturbances following abortion are not infrequent. This usually means gross irregularity in the appearance of the menstrual period, heavy bleeding with the menses, or complete absence of menstruation. These disturbances may persist for many years and are mostly the result of endouterine adhesions or infection.

Subsequent pathological pregnancies are quite frequent following abortion, and this without question represents one of the most serious complications of induced abortion. Pathological pregnancies are the following: Premature deliveries, ectopic pregnancies and spontaneous abortions and stillborns. The prematurity rate in Czechoslovakia prior to abortion on demand was 5% which was not much different from the United States. Several years later this had increased to 14%. Hungary and Japan have reported similar trends. It should be pointed out that prematurity is the leading cause of infant death in the United States and one of the major contributors to mental and motor retardation. A number of countries have also reported a significant increase in the incidence of ectopic pregnancies (those pregnancies which occur some place other than the womb). In fact, Japan sees ectopic pregnancies in 3.9% of women which is 4-8 times more frequent than in the United States. Another study indicated a tenfold increase in the relative risk for ectopic pregnancy in a woman with a previous induced abortion. Ectopic pregnancies are not infrequently life-threatening because of rupture and hemorrhage. Again tubal malfunction secondary to infection seems to be the prime cause. Spontaneous abortions and fetal death before the onset of labor are reported to be significantly more common following legal abortion in those countries with weak abortion laws. There is a tenfold increase in the rate of second trimester spontaneous abortions. Complicated labor such as prolonged labor, placenta previa, adherent placenta, and excessive bleeding at the time of delivery are also more common when compared to women who have not had legal abortions. Sterility is also a complication which is related to abortion and which does not appear immediately following the abortion. Post-operation sterility has ranged in various reports from 1 % to 27.7%. Poland has reported that 6.9% of women were sterile four to five years after abortion, and Japan has reported 9.7% with subsequent sterility on three year follow-up, and other countries have had similar experiences. There is evidence also to suggest that sterility has an adverse psychological effect on the woman. A number of miscellaneous complications occur which deserve mention.

1. The Czech's have reported that 33% of patients had decreased sexual libido nine months after the abortion. Similarly, a study from Poland showed 14% to have decreased libido four to five years after the abortion.
2. Changes in the coagulability of the blood following legal abortions by the salting out method have been reported. In almost every woman undergoing salt abortion intravascular coagulation of the blood occurs.
3. Pregnancies following hysterotomy will need delivery by caesarean section to eliminate the possibility of rupture of hysterotomy scar.
4. Edometriosis is a common sequel to hysterotomy.
5. A particular problem associated with suction curettage is the perforation of the bladder.

The psychiatric sequela of the induced abortion are most difficult to elucidate but are present in a significant degree. Reports on the incidence of emotional difficulties following abortion vary from 0-85%. The true figures obviously lies some place between. The pro-abortionist would have us believe that unless an emotionally

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unstable woman's pregnancy is terminated her instability will worsen. They fail to mention that there is a significant degree of emotional instability resulting from the abortion.

In summation it seems obvious that abortion is not the simple uncomplicated procedure its proponents would suggest but rather a risky medical procedure which even on humanistic medical grounds should be carried out only with extreme caution, if at all.

Alleged Special Case

At this point we want to consider what is frequently alleged to be a special case in which an exception is granted by those who would otherwise oppose all abortion. This special case is that abortion may sometimes be necessary to save the life of the mother. The situation is one in which the mother's very life is threatened by the continued existence of a pregnancy. It is posed as a question of one life or the other.

It is necessary first of all to reduce the emotional character of this "special case" with its accompanying misrepresentation. In many instances one would be led to believe this is an ethical decision faced regularly by physicians and parents. This is not to deny in any way the extremely painful choice when such a decision should confront us. But medically speaking, such a situation would be extremely rare in today's world. Advances in medical technology and in the knowledge and treatment of pregnancy complications have carried us to the point when almost any pregnancy can be carried to term or to the point where premature delivery can be accomplished with good results. The moral and ethical question is more theoretical than practical.

We have seen how the Word of God considers an unborn child as a person, entitled to the same provisions God gives for all human life. The destruction of such life without proper Biblical warrant is a grave sin. The question must therefore be formulated in terms of whether it is ever justifiable under any circumstance to sin, indeed to sin against an absolute prohibition of God Almighty. God's sovereignty and providential care govern all things. Being perfect in holiness and righteousness, hating all sin, God will not place His creature in a situation in which sin would be approved or justified. To so affirm would be to make God the author of sin. If the intentional killing of an unborn child is sin, there is no situation, no special case, that could warrant its being committed.

In explaining the sixth commandment, the *Larger Catechism* question 136, states: "The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in the case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life...." If there is to be Scriptural evidence for abortion, it must be in exception to the sixth commandment through public justice (capital punishment), lawful war, or self-defense. It can easily be seen that an unborn child could not be guilty of a crime requiring the death penalty, nor could the unborn be the object of lawful war, leaving only the alleged possibility of self-defense of the mother as grounds for intentional abortion.

The Scripture speaks to the issue of self-defense in Exodus 22:2-3 asserting that if one is killed while breaking into another's home, the homeowner is not guilty of murder because of the aggression of the thief; yet if the break-in occurs during the day, the owner would be guilty of murder because seeing the thief and comprehending the circumstances, the homeowner could avoid the aggressive confrontation.

So the question is asked, Is the unborn child aggressively attacking the mother, threatening her life? Does the mere presence of the child constitute aggression? There can be no evidence to validate an affirmative answer. To intentionally kill the baby because of an "assumed" health hazard, can not be justified by the self-defense exception to the sixth commandment.

It must be pointed out that there is a vast difference between the *threat* of death to the mother and the *certain* death (intentional) of the baby in the alleged special case for abortion. No man, trained physician or not, is able to say with 100% accuracy that a woman will definitely die because of a pregnancy. The woman's life is not in her own hand or in the hands of her physician, but it rests in the hands of a loving, sovereign God, who is holy and righteous. We do not pretend to understand all that God does, nor would we imply that this is an easy question for one who must face it. Like other areas of the Christian's walk, this calls for us to have a strong faith and trust in God to carry on a pregnancy in these circumstances.

The conclusion drawn from Scripture is that all life is precious to God, and He especially loves the life of the innocent (Exodus 21:20-21; Proverbs 6:16-17; Deuteronomy 19:10; Isaiah 59:1-9). Therefore there can be no abortion, and there is no "special case". Our decision, in this matter as in all of life, must be determined by God's absolute revelation to us in His Word.

Legal Aspects of Abortion

Having affirmed throughout this report the absolute authority of Scripture in forming our decisions, it is nevertheless true that we are aided in our practical implementation of Scriptural teaching by our understanding of various other disciplines. We will be aided in our opposition to abortion if we understand something of the history of legal developments in regard to abortion.

Abortion, with varying degrees of permissiveness, is legal in many of the nations of the world today. That is, women are permitted to abort their babies, and their doctors can perform the operation without risk of prosecution. Generally speaking, however, in the ancient civilizations this was not the case, and the practice of abortion, though fairly wide spread in pre-Christian times, was by no means universally approved and was indeed explicitly condemned as immoral, dangerous, and harmful to the general welfare by the most important pre-Mosaic law codes and by some of the most celebrated thinkers, philosophers, and moralists of pagan Greece and Rome.

Ultimately the Christian influence which was growing in the Empire from the first century on would deter both the practice of infanticide and abortion. It was through the influence of the Church that Valentinian I, in 374 A.D., made infanticide a capital crime. The early Christian Councils, Elvira (306 A.D.), Chalcedon (451 A.D.), and Constantinople (692 A.D.), which served to shape medieval law, either declared abortion an almost unpardonable sin or branded it as manslaughter. The church so influenced secular law in the middle ages, so strengthened the concept of the sanctity of marriage, the home and family, that abortion was forbidden for a period of some six hundred years. Thus the traditional western view of the sacredness of human life was firmly established by centuries of precedent.

A period of legal uncertainty ensued under English Common Law due partly to the natural limitations of the scientific knowledge of that day. Only mild penalties were levied for abortion before "quickening" because it was felt that prior to that time the baby was not actually alive. After "quickening", when life could be felt in the womb

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and it was known that life was present, severe restrictions and penalties were administered. Apparently there never was a time under Common Law when abortion was not regarded as a crime. By the end of the seventeenth century the abortion of a "quicken" baby was considered murder or "a great crime", a "great misprison" (felony).

Discovery of the ovum in 1827 led to a reassessment of the significance of abortion. Law followed science, and in 1837 Parliament enacted a new abortion statute that effectively protected the unborn child from the moment of conception. The English lawmakers, having been shown biological evidence that life began at conception, were moved to protect that life in every stage of gestation.

In the United States in the nineteenth century several states interpreted the Common Law so as to render abortion criminal at all stages of pregnancy. Most states, however, did not prosecute for abortion prior to quickening. No state held that abortion after quickening was not a crime, and almost all of the then existing states enacted abortion statutes. A New York statute of 1829 imposed a second degree manslaughter charge upon any abortionist who caused the death of a quickened child or its mother unless the reason was to preserve the life of the mother. The same law required imprisonment in the county jail not to exceed one year or a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars for any abortive act prior to quickening.

In 1859 the American Medical Association protested that the quickening distinction allowed the fetus rights for civil purposes but still did not protect its life before that took place. They assailed the unwarranted destruction of human life and called upon state legislatures to revise their abortion laws to conform to the new scientific knowledge that life began at conception and should be protected from that point. One by one each state ruled that human life should be equally and fully protected by law, not from quickening, but from its actual beginning at conception.

In 1868 the fourteenth amendment was ratified which forbade the state to "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The child in the womb was regarded as a "person" in the legal sense, and for over one hundred years, until 1967, all states fully protected human life from conception until the first permissive abortion law was passed in Colorado.

In June, 1970, when New York passed the first law allowing abortion on demand during the first six months of pregnancy, it was the sixteenth state to permit abortion for other than very restrictive reasons. After that only one more state, Florida, legalized abortion, while thirty-three states debated the issue in their legislatures. All of these states finally voted against abortion for any reason except to save the mother's life.

In April, 1972, New York repealed their liberalized abortion law, but Governor Nelson Rockefeller vetoed the repeal, and the law remained in force. New York City's Health Services Administration officials reported in February, 1971, that approximately sixty nine thousand abortions were performed during the first six months of legalized abortion in the state, about half of them women from other states. As other states modified and liberalized their laws, the practice of abortion became widespread. Unofficial statistics in 1972 from fifteen states with the most permissive laws indicated that at least four hundred thousand pregnancies were terminated in this manner.

In 1973 the Supreme Court (*Roe v. Wade*) ruled that the termination of an unwanted pregnancy is properly the decision of the woman and her doctor. This ruling

struck down all laws against abortion in all fifty states and evaded the protection clauses of the fourteenth amendment by declaring the unborn child to be a "non-person" in the legal sense, i.e., "legal personhood does not exist prenatally." The new ruling provided for no legal restrictions at all upon abortions in the first three months of pregnancy and no restrictions in the middle three months except those needed to make the procedure safe for the mother. Abortion was even allowed until birth if one licensed physician judged that it was necessary for the mother's health. The Supreme Court's definition of health is revealed in the decision of *Doe v. Bolton*. It said that abortion could be performed "in the light of all factors--physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age--relevant to the well being of the patient. All these factors may relate to health."

The abortion laws of the United States are probably the most liberal in the world. This is evidenced by the fact that about one third of the abortions performed in the United States are paid for by federal funds. Several versions of a constitutional amendment which would protect the life of the unborn have been introduced into Congress, but at this writing none have gotten out of committee for floor debate. A number of states have called for a Constitutional Convention to amend the Constitution with a "Human Life Amendment", but this requires a call by two thirds of the states, and it has not yet been achieved.

A good summary of the current legal situation is set forth in the Christian Action Council's brochure, "Abortion: What Can I Do?":

"There are only four ways in which *Roe v. Wade*, the abortion decision (or any Supreme Court decision) can be overturned:

1. The Supreme Court could reverse its own decision in a subsequent ruling.
2. The President could try to change the Supreme Court's make-up by adding to the Court new Justices who value the sanctity of life.
3. A constitutional amendment can be passed in Congress and then ratified by 3/4 of the state legislatures within seven years (U.S. Constitution, Article 5).
4. A constitutional convention can be called to draft a constitutional amendment and then pass it through 3/4 of the state legislatures within seven years (U.S. Constitution, Article 5).

"We immediately see that (1) is very unlikely. Since 1973 the Supreme Court has reaffirmed its 1973 position. *Planned Parenthood v. Danforth*, July 1, 1976 is even more sweeping. (2) has already been attempted once (by Franklin Roosevelt in 1937 in his Judiciary Reorganization Bill). This effort was viewed as "packing" the Court - i.e. with Justices favorable to the President's positions. It was soundly criticized by both the Congress and the press. With the delicate balance of powers in our federal government, transforming the Supreme Court at the present time does not seem feasible. We can pray that the President will uphold the sanctity of life in nominating replacements when vacancies occur in the Court. (3) and (4) are really the only courses of action available to the ordinary citizen to effect a change in that 1973 decision. Clearly both involve active participation in the democratic process. Therefore, the only effective *Christian* answer to that 1973 Supreme Court decision must be largely a

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political answer. If we do not recognize this, we in effect surrender our rights as citizens."

In all legal discussions we must remember that our authority is not legal precedent. As with the medical testimony, there will be important confirmation of the revelation of God's Law, but there will also be abundant evidence of man's sin affecting civil law. Thus our argument must not be based on legal history but the Word of God. From divine revelation we know when life begins and that it is holy to the Lord. In that light the Christian can concur with the words of Thomas Jefferson: "The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government."

The Church's Relation and Responsibility to the State

It is one thing to point out the Scriptural foundation, the medical understanding, and the legal aspects of abortion. But what relation and responsibility does the church have beyond her own people? Are we indebted to all men by virtue of the Word of God we have on this matter? One thing is clear. God is God; He is Creator; beside Him there is none other. He will not abdicate His throne and submit His laws to a popular vote. The Christian is characterized pre-eminently by obedience, and whenever there is any conflict, there is only one option. "We must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). But has the Church a responsibility to society other than obedience to legitimate authority?

The Church is under orders. The cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 is given substance by God Himself revealing laws to govern its implementation. Throughout the Old Testament men of God spoke to kings and nations on the basis of revelation. In the New Testament the great King and Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, reiterates this mandate in the Great Commission. "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18-20). The command is comprehensive, "teaching them to observe *all*" that Christ commands, and implies that we who enjoy His promised presence are to proclaim His Word of both Law and Gospel. "Thus says the Lord" is to be heard until Christ Himself returns.

In light of these comments relating the universality of God's law for His creation, we want to consider more closely the specific New Testament teaching on church and state relations. Roman 13 and 1 Peter 2 are fundamental passages, and we will especially look at Romans 13.

Note specifically Romans 13:1, 2:

Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

Here we are commanded to obey the civil authorities. Why? On what grounds is this obligation set forth? The reason is that in so doing we obey God. "There is no authority except from God," and in verse 4 the state is said to be "a minister of God to you for good." The context here is not the Old Testament theocracy, but pagan, corrupt Rome! Caesar, a "minister of God" in regards to civil authority.

Unhappily Caesar falls far short of bringing his sphere of responsibility under God's Law. So also the government of the United States. Yet even in such an

imperfect situation two things are clear. They *ought* to conform to God's law, and we are obligated to obey even corrupt governments except where it would cause us to violate God's law. At that point, "We must obey God rather than men." But clearly there is the responsibility of government to obey God's law, and to the extent possible, we as citizens must do all we can to assure the state's conformity to that law.

As regards our own nation, it was within Christian context that our government was founded. The "establishment of religion clause" or the concept of church-state separation was never understood as separating the state from ethical and moral considerations, which is what the law of God provides. The separation of church and state pertains to the separation of two *institutions* and their respective *spheres* or *functions*. This does not mean they have a different moral authority. It means the church cannot require the state to enforce distinctive Christian duties (i.e. participation in sacraments or tithing to a particular church, etc.). The state is not exempt from the authority of God. God's law is directed to both institutions, church and state, as regards their respective functions.

According to Scripture, then, there can be no question but that both church and state are divine institutions. Both owe their authority, not to autonomous human decisions, but to God. Both church and state have their sphere of authority, and within their sphere we are obliged to be in subjection (cf. Rom. 13:1-6; 1 Peter 2:13, 14). In distinguishing these two authorities, however, we must not miss the fullness of the state's purpose. The state as the servant of God has many duties in the service of the spiritual realm. Failure in these duties does not relieve responsibility for them.

The civil magistrate is responsible to God. He is to discharge his duty according to God's will. The Bible is the supreme revelation of God's will. Because church and state are neither subordinate to the other but to God, the civil magistrate is under obligation to recognize the Bible as authoritative in the exercise of civil magistracy. The Lordship of Christ in all areas of life is fundamental.

Does the state's obligation to rule according to God's revelation have any bearing on the church. Clearly it does. As the repository of God's revelation the church is culpable if she does not inform the state about God's will. John Murray gives a good summary statement.

To the church is committed the task of proclaiming the whole counsel of God and, therefore, the counsel of God as it bears upon the responsibility of all persons and institutions. While the church is not to discharge the functions of other institutions such as the state and family, nevertheless it is charged to define what the functions of these institutions are, and the lines of demarcation by which they are distinguished. It is also charged to declare and inculcate the duties which devolve upon them. Consequently when the civil magistrate trespasses the limits of his authority, it is incumbent upon the church to expose and condemn such a violation of his authority. When laws are proposed or enacted which are contrary to the law of God, it is the duty of the church to oppose them and expose their iniquity. When the civil magistrate fails to exercise his God given authority in the protection and promotion of the obligations, rights, and liberties of the citizens, the church has the right and duty to condemn such inaction, and by its proclamation of the counsel of God to confront the civil magistrate with his responsibility and promote the correction of such neglect. The functions of the civil magistrate, therefore, come within the scope of the church's proclamation in every respect in which the Word of

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God bears upon the proper or improper discharge of these functions, and it is only a misconception of what is involved in the proclamation of the whole counsel of God that leads to the notion that the church has no concern with the political sphere (*Collected Writings of John Murray*, I, 255).

While Scripture alone is our final authority it is also of value to consider this issue in light of our *Westminster Confession of Faith*. There is some confusion today as to whether our speaking out to the civil authorities is consistent with our Confession. The specific section which speaks to this states:

"Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or, by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate" (Chapter XXXI, 5).

Many reacted against the abuse of the church's power in recent decades and operate now in an ecclesiastical isolationism. Yet an abuse in one direction is as bad as an abuse in the other. Fear of the social action movement has caused many of us at times to superficially appeal to the *Confession* and imply that all communicating to the civil government is "intermeddling". While Scripture, and not the *Confession*, is our supreme authority, the *Confession* itself does not permit such isolation.

First of all, such isolationism was not the practice of the Westminster Divines even in their writing of the *Confession*. Chapter XXIII is given over exclusively to "The Civil Magistrate" and defines for the state what his duties are. The framers of the *Confession* thought it proper for the Church to declare the prerogatives and limitations of the civil magistrate's jurisdiction. The implication is that the Church has the right and the duty to declare when necessary what God expects of civil governments. The writings and practice of the authors of the *Confession* provide no support for ecclesiastical isolationism.

In Chapter XXXI, 5, we confess that "synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical." Again the reaction against abuse has led many to see "ecclesiastical" as restrictive, while in reality it is a broad term. We have just noted above how the sphere of the magistrate's jurisdiction forms about three percent of the content of the church's "ecclesiastical" confession (one of thirty-three chapters). For a General Assembly to deal with ecclesiastical matters only is not restrictive but includes the whole counsel of God. The *Confession* indeed denies the church's right to intermeddle in "civil affairs," but we must not regard God's law as "civil affairs" distinct from the church. Murray is helpful in his reference to this.

But to declare the whole counsel of God in reference to political matters, as well as other matters, is definitely an ecclesiastical function and was surely considered to be such by the framers of the *Confession*. Furthermore, the terms used by the *Confession* ... indicate that what is regarded as beyond the province of synods and councils is something quite different from proclamation of the whole counsel of God as it bears upon the conduct of civil affairs (*Collected Writings of John Murray*, I, 256-267).

Ignoring the sanctity of life by destroying it through abortion clearly falls within the purview of the church's ecclesiastical responsibility to speak for God to the state.

We need further to note that when the *Confession* forbids intermeddling with civil affairs, there are two exceptions given. The first of these, "unless by way of

humble petition in cases extraordinary," apparently gives opportunity for petitioning the state directly in what is specifically commonwealth business. The intent is to grant exceptions in the area beyond the church's ongoing proclamation to civil government. Whatever areas would be envisioned here would not affect the fundamental position of the *Confession*, which is the right of the church to address issues in the political sphere if they touch in extraordinary ways moral and spiritual issues. And even if the understanding of "ecclesiastical" given above were in error (which we do not think is the case), surely our church would be obliged to recognize the intentional killing of millions of innocent lives through abortion to be an extraordinary case in which the people of God must speak out. One cannot use the *Westminster Confession* to support ecclesiastical isolationism on the abortion issue.

The other exception given in the *Confession* is "by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate." Perhaps the only thing that need be said here is that such a request by government authorities is highly unlikely in our nation at this point in time.

To speak publicly to our churches and to our government on God's revelation regarding the sanctity of life, even at conception, is contrary neither to the Word of God nor our *Confession*. The church is under orders to proclaim the whole counsel of God. This will necessitate speaking God's truth to the world in general and civil government in particular. We must not say, "Thus says the Lord," where He has not spoken. We must strive for a unified voice when we speak. And we must exercise extreme caution in any corporate pronouncement. Those to whom we speak may not listen. But we are obliged to speak to public sin for the purpose of proclaiming the Word of God, of vindicating God's authority, and honoring the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

The fundamental task of the church is the proclamation of God's Word as it bears upon individuals and institutions. The Holy Scripture, which is God's Word written, is graciously given as the power of God unto salvation for those who believe. But it is no less the absolute authority given to regulate any institution or individual as regards the created life which only God has the right to give or take away. On this basis we believe the intentional killing of an unborn child is a violation of God's command and authority. Scripture considers such a child a person and thus covered by Divine protection even as a person after birth. Any medical support or historical precedent can only be of secondary authority when we have a clear Word from God on moral questions. Yet as often is the case, a candid evaluation of secondary authorities supports the teaching of Scripture. All truth is God's truth, and any alleged conflict is thus but a misreading of one area of His truth.

We are convinced Scripture forbids abortion. The premise of the personhood of the unborn child and the premise of the universal validity of the Sixth Commandment, if true, necessitates the conclusion that abortion is wrong. In a day in which situation ethics has left its mark, the question easily arises in the minds of some, "But what if?" The familiar objections are then presented: population control, economic hardships, unwanted children, psychological or physical health of the mother, rape or incest, deformed children, and protection for the mother's life. We have not dealt with these particular cases with the exception of where the mother's life is threatened. Neither have we dealt with frequently raised objections such as "freedom of choice" and dangers of illegal abortions. There are two primary reasons for not going into detail.

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One is practical. It would unnecessarily enlarge this report, and these objections have been adequately dealt with in the [OPC](#) and [RPCES Reports](#) and in other readily available sources. The other reason is to emphasize the principle set forth in this report. Abortion is wrong; it is sin. God as the righteous and holy Judge will not permit sin to be justified by human "situations." Thus the practical application in each of these cases is the consistent application of God's absolute prohibition and the comfort derived from the knowledge that our greatest good is dependent upon our obedience to God.

We cannot stress too strongly our authority in this matter. God in His Word speaks of the unborn child as a person and treats him as such, and so must we. The Bible teaches the sanctity of life, and so must we. The Bible, especially in the Sixth Commandment, gives concrete protection to that life which bears the image of God. We must uphold that commandment. There is a danger of weakening our witness by either retreating from an absolute ethic revealed in God's Word or by uncritically associating ourselves with a humanistic philosophy of right to life based on human wisdom. The Church as the repository of God's revelation must speak from that authority and must do so without compromise or equivocation.

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
Wonderful are Thy works,
And my soul knows it very well.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
and lead me in the everlasting way.

(Psalm 139:13, 14, 23, 24)

Appendix: Selected Resources Organizations

Christian Action Council
788 National Press Council
Washington, D.C. 20045

CAC represents an evangelical Protestant voice, seeking to persuade Christians to involve themselves in constitutional and political discussion, and to persuade legislators to be attentive to Biblical values.

Two excellent brochures are available: "Abortion on Demand?" and the very practical, "Abortion: What Can I Do?"

Citizens For Informed Consent
286 Hollywood Ave.
Akron, Ohio 44313

Having successfully promoted a local ordinance regulating abortion, Citizens For Informed Consent has become a national clearing house for providing information to those wishing to introduce similar restrictive legislation.

Local and National Right to Life Groups

Right to Life is a broader based organization, including those from Judeo-Christian background, which has been effective in pro-life efforts. A good source for general information as well as current issues and opportunities.

Audio-Visual

"The First Days of Life," a film available from many Right to Life Committees or Pyramid Films, Box 1048, Santa Monica, CA 90406.
"Crusade for Life" slide/tape program, Box 1433, Whittier, CA 90607.
"Abortion Kills," a slide/tape program by George Knight, Covenant Theological Seminary, 12330 Conway Rd., St. Louis, MO 63141.

Miscellaneous Publications

"Action Line," 788 National Press Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20045. A Christian Action Council Newsletter.
"Human Life Review," Room 540,150 East 35th St., New York, NY 10016.
"Lifeletter," Box 574, Murray Hill Station, New York, NY 10016.
"National Right to Life News," 1299 Arcade St., St. Paul, MN 55106.

Bejema, Clifford E. *Abortion and the Meaning of Personhood*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976.

Brown, Harold O.J., *Death Before Birth*, New York: Nelson, 1978.

Hilger, Thomas W., *Induced Abortion: A Documented Report*. Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life, Inc. 1976.

Koop, C. Everett. *The Right to Live: The Right to Die*. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishing, Inc., 1976.

Orthodox Presbyterian Church. [Report of the Committee to Study the Matter of Abortion](#). Philadelphia: O.P.C., 1971.

Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. "[Abortion: The Disruption of Continuity](#)." *Minutes of the 153rd General Synod*. Lookout Mountain, TN., 1975.

Willke, Dr. & Mrs. J. C. *Handbook on Abortion*. Cincinnati: Hiltz Publishing Co., 1972.

Dr. Carl W. Bogue, Chairman

Dr. Warren Diven

Rev. Thomas Cheely

Mr. Richard L. Kennedy

Rev. Charles Dunahoo

Dr. William Russell

Rev. William Fitzhenry

Dr. William Thompson

Rev. Fred Thompson

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Scripture alone gives us the revelation from God which governs all of life. The commandments are the clearest testimony by which we regulate our life and discipline our church. The Church of Jesus Christ, through the sessions, presbyteries, and General Assembly, is responsible to implement the Law of God in the life and discipline of the Church. Failure to do this is an indication of spiritual decay, for which the Church comes under judgment. Therefore, we recommend to the Sixth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America the following:

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1. That because Scripture clearly affirms the sanctity of human life and condemns its arbitrary destruction, we affirm that the intentional killing of an unborn child between conception and birth, for any reason at any time, is clearly a violation of the Sixth Commandment; *Adopted*
2. That presbyteries, sessions, and congregations be encouraged to utilize available resources so that the cruelty and sinfulness of abortion may be fully understood; *Adopted*
3. That the Committee for Christian Education and Publication, under the auspices of the Stated Clerk, be directed to have this report published in an acceptable pamphlet format as soon as possible (expenses to be borne by the General Assembly), and that this publication be sent to each church and pastor, with additional copies available for sale through the Christian Education and Publication Office, in order that Christians may use this as a guide for their own study and for distribution by them to governmental officials and others;
Referred to Committee of Commissioners on Administration for financing
4. That the General Assembly make available through the Christian Education and Publications office a Slide-Tape presentation on abortion based on the presentation by the Ad-Interim Committee on Abortion, accompanied by a copy of this report; *Adopted as Amended*
5. That we remind all Christians of their duty to show compassionate love and understanding to families in distress as a result of pregnancies, and to offer these families sympathetic counsel and help for physical needs where required. This duty is especially incumbent upon us as we minister to persons contemplating abortion. Further, that Presbyteries and congregations give every assistance to Christian groups whose purpose is to help pregnant women to have full term pregnancy rather than resorting to abortion. That the Courts of this Church and their members give this assistance through their Deacons, their Sessions, and where possible, through their women's groups; *Adopted as Amended*
6. That all members of the Presbyterian Church in America be encouraged to seek to bring about substantial changes in existing legislation so that the human life of an unborn child be recognized and protected, and that special attention be given to informing our elected representatives at all levels of government of God's Word pertaining to abortion and to lift up in prayer these ministers of God in civil affairs; *Adopted*
7. That the Presbyterian Church in America invite those churches with whom we have fraternal relations to unite with us in issuing the following declaration: "We condemn the intentional killing of unborn children." The Sub-Committee on Interchurch Relations shall arrange implementation of this recommendation *Adopted*
8. That the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in America, be directed to communicate to the President of the United States, the leaders of Congress, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, this report along with the following statement: "God declares in Sacred Scripture that civil government, no less than the Church, is a divine institution and owes its authority to God. The Bible is the supreme revelation of God's will and teaches that the unborn child is a human person deserving the full protection of the Sixth Commandment, "You shall not murder". We who love our nation, in the name of God who alone is sovereign, call upon you to renounce the sin of

abortion, to repent of the complicity in the mass slaughter of innocent unborn children, who are persons in the sight of God, and to reverse the ruinous direction of both law and practice in this area. The obedience to God which places us in subjection to your rightful authority, requires of us to proclaim the counsel of God as it bears upon the same God-given authority."

Adopted as amended

Concern Over:

1976, p. 65, 4-57, 3a. The General Assembly answered Overture 4 in the affirmative and expressed its grave concern over the murder of hundreds of thousands of the unborn through widespread practice of abortion and that the Assembly appoint a committee to study and bring back to the 1977 General Assembly a biblical, theological statement on abortion with practical application. [NOTE: This committee reported in 1978 as noted above.]

...That the Presbyterian Church in America protest, decry, and abhor this mass slaughter of unborn babies who are "persons" by every right of the just laws of God and man. And that the Presbyterian Church in America call upon every responsible citizen to support the enactment of moral legislation that will protect the life of the unborn child.

Position on, Amended

1979, p. 97, 7-37, III, 3. That Overtures 15 (p. 33), 18 (p. 33), 33 (p. 34), be answered by amending Overture 15 to read as follows:

Whereas, the Sixth General Assembly was of one mind in its general consideration of the abortion issue, but was divided on the question whether abortion might be justified if deemed necessary to save a woman's life,

Therefore, be it resolved that the General Assembly revise the Assembly's statement on abortion (*Minutes of the Sixth General Assembly*, p. 72) to read as follows:

1. That because Scripture clearly affirms the sanctity of human life and condemns its arbitrary destruction, we affirm that the intentional killing of an unborn child between conception and birth (abortion) is clearly a violation of the Sixth Commandment in all situations except possibly that in which it appears finally that no other remedy will save the life of the mother. The Assembly is divided as to whether this situation would justify abortion. In every case where it is determined that it is an immediate medical necessity to terminate a pregnancy to preserve the life of the mother, all possible efforts are to be made to preserve the lives of both the mother and the child.

Adopted

Position Clarified

1980, p. 97, 8-69, III, 2. The Overture as amended is as follows:

Overture 12: From Evangel Presbytery

Whereas, the General Assembly, as a Court of Jesus Christ, should speak with a united voice in affirming the sanctity of human life under the protection of the Sixth Commandment.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Eighth General Assembly clarifies the action of the Seventh General Assembly and reaffirms the statement of the Sixth General Assembly on abortion:

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"That because Scripture clearly affirms the sanctity of human life and condemns its arbitrary destruction, we affirm that the intentional killing of an unborn child between conception and birth, for any reason at any time, is clearly a violation of the Sixth Commandment."

Adding to this statement are the following affirmations:

"Concerning crisis pregnancies in which it appears that the premature removal of the unborn child from the mother is a necessary consequence of medical procedure essential to preserving the mother's life, we affirm that:

1. The Sixth Commandment not only forbids the taking of innocent life for whatever reason, but also requires the preserving of innocent life wherever possible.
2. The life of the mother as well as her child comes under the full protection of the Sixth Commandment and all moral medical wisdom and skill must be used to preserve her life as well as the life of her child.
3. To say that we are ever placed in the position of choosing between two sins (killing the child or neglecting the preservation of the mother's life) is to surrender our belief in the sovereign overruling providence of our All-wise and All-holy God (I Cor. 10:13), and to allege that we must "do evil that good may come"...a philosophy clearly condemned by Scripture.
4. An exception is not made even in the extremely rare case in which in the judgment of competent medical authorities, the unborn child's continuing presence inside the mother's body will necessarily lead to the mother's death. In such a case, the premature removal of the unborn child may be justified, provided that all medical wisdom, judgment, and skill are used to preserve the life of the child as well as the life of the mother. This premature removal of the unborn child shall be at that juncture of time where the greatest possibility for recovery is indicated for both mother and child. If life is lost in such a case, and the death occurs not out of criminal negligence, but merely out of the limitations of human knowledge and skill, all has been done morally that could be done. If we cannot save both lives, we are nevertheless morally bound to save the life we can.

Grounds: The concern of the Sixth General Assembly was to stop abortion. The concern of the Seventh General Assembly was to preserve the life of the mother in crisis pregnancies. We believe this overture as amended addresses and reconciles the concerns of the two assemblies.

Adopted

Pro-Life Movement

1980, pp. 99, 8-69, III, 6. That the General Assembly adopt Personal Resolution #1 made by Teaching Elder John Ragland and Ruling Elder G. O. Funnells, as edited and amended.

Therefore, Be It Resolved that Eighth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America recommends its churches to make a concerted effort in their opposition to abortion and to develop positive ministries to those considering abortions such as evangelism, Christian nurturing, Christian counseling, and provision of financial and material needs to the mother and her baby, aid with obtaining medical service, aid with adoption when indicated, and Christian homes (homes for unwed mothers and homes of Christian families who are willing to share their

homes with a pregnant woman in need of a place to live away from her immediate family. *Adopted*

1986, p. 187,14-85, III, 2. Response of the Committee of Commissioners on Bills and Overtures to Personal Resolution #2 from Lindsey Sampson, p. 80

Whereas both the 7th and 8th General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church in America affirmed our pro-life, anti-abortion stand;

And Whereas thousands of unborn babies are still being killed daily;

Therefore, be it resolved that this, the 14th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, reaffirms our church's pro-life and anti-abortion stand, and that we communicate our position to the President of the United States, the Supreme Court, and the United States Congress; further, that we encourage our pastors and sessions to emphasize this position of our church in the congregations and communities in which they serve. *Adopted*

NOTE: See also under CHURCH AND STATE Report (pp. 140):

1987, p. 459ff, Appendix Q, Part V, "Propriety of the Christian's Disobedience to the Civil Magistrate in the Abortion Controversy."