

Fort Bend Christian Academy- Honors Apologetics

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**A Message to the Christian: The Historical and Theological Christian Perspective on
Abortion**

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
Linguistic Note.....	6
Ancient World Practices.....	8
Who and Why.....	8
Abortive Methods.....	9
The Pagan World.....	13
Ancient Greece.....	13
The Roman Monarchy and Republic.....	16
The Roman Empire.....	18
The Jewish World.....	20
The Alexandrian School.....	20
The Palestinian School.....	23
Christian Beginnings: The First Three Centuries.....	30
New Testament.....	30
Early Discussion.....	31
The Apologists.....	33
<i>Athenagoras</i>	34

<i>Tertullian</i>	36
<i>Minucius Felix</i>	39
Christian Theologians.....	39
Christianity Established: The Fourth and Fifth Centuries	42
The Councils.....	42
<i>The Council of Elvira</i>	42
<i>The Council of Ancyra</i>	43
The Fathers.....	45
<i>Basil of Caesarea</i>	45
<i>Ambrose</i>	46
<i>Jerome</i>	47
Apostolic Constitution.....	48
Augustine and Chrysostom.....	49
<i>Augustine</i>	49
<i>John Chrysostom</i>	51
Abortion and the Early Church	53
The Cultural Context.....	53
The Ethical Context.....	57

Relevance of the Early Church Today.....	61
Evaluating the Early Church.....	61
The Biblical Christian Perspective on Abortion.....	64
What Does the Bible Say That Humanity Is?.....	65
What Does the Bible Say that Murder Is?.....	66
When Does Someone Become in the Image of God?.....	69
What If The Embryo Is Simply An Extension Of The Mother?.....	70
Abortion Principles.....	72
Cases of Rape or Incest.....	72
Case of Contraceptives.....	73
Conclusion.....	74
Bibliography.....	75

Introduction

There are many issues in modern day where the Christian perspective on said issue is clear. Some of these topics include cohabitation, sex outside of marriage, blasphemy, and murder. Obviously, the Christian religion stands against all of these, and it would be outrageous to argue otherwise. However, there are additional everyday issues that should be just as clear as these; however, the social norm of modern day has skewed the Christian vision regarding what is correct in the eyes of the Lord, and what is incorrect- abortion being one of these issues.

The issue of abortion, in a legal sense, is arguably the most emotionally charged argument in modern day times. Countless people, including so called Christians, believe abortion to be acceptable due to their ideals regarding “women’s rights” or “feminism.” In these cases, Christians do not refer to the Bible for advice simply because they simply do not want to adhere the plainly logical argument. However, ignorance cannot be bliss in this situation due to the countless writings and overwhelming evidence from the Christian perspective against abortion. In light of this, the goal of this thesis is to convey the overall history of Christian thought on abortion, in addition to a holistic view of abortion, murder, and humanity as based on Biblical teachings.

This thesis will first go through the ancient practice of abortion, including the means and methods for this practice. Then, the pagan perspective on abortion will be given, with detail from the time periods beginning with Ancient Greece, the Roman Monarchy and Republic, and concluding with the Roman Empire. Next, the Jewish opinion on abortion will be explained, with detail on both the Alexandrian and Palestinian schools of Jewish thought. Afterwards, the Christian perspective and response as derived from the Church Fathers, the Apologists, and contemporary Christian philosophers will be explained. After this historical argument is finished,

an argument stemming from the holistic view of the Bible will be given and will address murder, humanity, and the like as they pertain to abortion. At the conclusion of this paper, there will be absolutely no question on whether or not abortion aligns with Christianity- and it does not. Due to the history of the Christian church and Biblical teachings, Christians should be absolutely against abortion in all cases.

Additionally, this thesis definitely does have political implications, but is itself not a political thesis. Instead, this thesis is simply geared toward the morality and everyday thinking of the typical Christian. However, hopefully the conversation of the political implications of the Christian view on abortion will one day be explored by a future Honors Apologetics student, and will explain how these Christian anti-abortion ideals translate to policy.

Linguistic Note

When discussing the topic of abortion, many different terms are used depending upon the view held regarding abortion. In order to have an unbiased historical review of the pagan, Jewish, and Christian views, this thesis will utilize the terms most commonly used by the people group being analyzed, according to each section. This means that pagan terms regarding abortion will be used in the pagan section, while Jewish terms will reside within the Jewish section.

In the pagan portion of this thesis, “embryo” will be the term used for the presence within the womb in the 40 days following conception, and “fetus” will be used when referring to the presence in the womb beginning after this 40 day mark, and continuing until the exit of the womb. Once the exit from the womb has occurred, the presence will be considered a human life, or a child. However, in the Jewish and Christian worlds, the presence inside the womb is considered to be a human life, created in the image of God, at majorly all stages following

conception. Due to this, the life in the womb will be called a child for the entirety of the pregnancy while the life outside of the womb will be called a newborn. In addition to this vocabulary usage issue, because the pagan community does not consider the embryo or fetus to be life, the result of an abortion will be considered an “elimination of the fetus,” rather than a murder. These specific terms will be used because the pagans do not believe that a human life is being destroyed, so to them, it is not murder and it would be unfair to use incorrect terms when referring to pagan beliefs. Contrastingly, the Jewish and Christian communities believe the child within the womb to be a human life, and therefore in these specific sections, abortions will be considered as murder because a human life is being taken away.

Ancient World Practices

In both Ancient Greece and Rome, abortion was very popular among the pagan community, and was practiced scarcely among Jews and Christians. Of this select pagan group, typically only the wealthy could afford abortions, making it viewed as a privileged procedure among pagans. Whether someone was married or unmarried, abortion occurred just as frequently. The method for abortion was universal among pagans, Jews, and Christians and this section details the common reasoning behind abortions, in addition to the abortive methodology in the ancient world.

Who and Why

The multiple motives for abortion for the wealthy in ancient times are just as numerous as they are in the present day. The most frequent reason to take part in an abortion would be to hide illicit sexual activity that, if entered into fruition, may hurt a person's social status. Women also had abortions in order to maintain their "sex appeal." Many upper-class women did not enjoy the lasting effects of pregnancy on their petite figures, and therefore would have abortions in order to avoid this unwanted bodily transformation.¹ Additionally, polygamy was just as popular as abortion and even included marriage between multiple social classes. Occasionally, the socially adept man of the relationship would even go as far as forcing his lower class lover to partake in an abortion so that he did not have to share his wealth with lower class children who were mothered illegitimately.² Also, wealthy pregnant women who had recently gotten a divorce would have an abortion in order to avoid the offspring from the man she despised. In addition to

¹ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

² Ibid.

this, prostitutes would increase their prices for nights that could result in a pregnancy so that they could have an abortion and be able to continue in their illicit profession. John Chrysostom said that prostitutes had “a view of drawing more money by being agreeable and an object of longing to their lovers.”³ In light of this, the prostitution community found it to be economically savvy to partake in abortions.

In antiquity, Plato and Aristotle recommended for couples to limit the excessive size of their families by having abortions.⁴ During times of the Roman Empire, the extreme decline in population was due to more and more people taking these philosophers’ advice by means of abortion. Though the wealthy were the major partakers in abortion, the poor also capitalized on this “elitist opportunity,” thus contributing to the extreme population decrease. But overall, the wealthy desired abortions in order to hide sexual activity and maintain their wealth, while the less fortunate were simply trying to limit the size of their individual families in order to become “successful.”

Abortive Methods

In the times of Plato and Aristotle, there were both many reasons to have an abortion, in addition to many chemical and mechanical methods to conduct an abortion. According to Soranos of Ephesus, the most common method for abortion was the introduction of pessaries.⁵ Pessaries are substances that a gynecologist would inject directly into the womb through the birth canal. This method eliminated the fetus by breaking it into smaller pieces while the fetus still resided in the womb. Other methods similar to this caused the eliminated fetus to exit the womb

³ Chrysostom, John. *Homily IV*. New York, NY: Hellenic Orthodox Church St. Eleftherios, 1946.

⁴ The typical family size of that time was 10-12 children per family.

⁵ Rasmussen, John A. *Concordia Theological Quarterly*. 1st ed. Vol. 43. Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia.

in one piece, rather than multiple pieces. A well-known physician of the time, Galen, wrote that specific drugs could “destroy the embryo or rupture certain of its membranes,” thus leading to an abortion.⁶ The pessary drugs were usually effective alone, but would sometimes be coupled with other chemical or physical means to take the fetus out of the womb. In addition to these abortive drugs, women took abortifacients, or oral poisons. Medical expert of the time, Soranos, stated that various plants were mixed together in order to create these abortifacients.⁷ In the early stages of pregnancy, women would take wine mixed with wallflower seed, myrrh, myrtle, and white pepper. In the later stages of pregnancy, women would take ammoniac salt or hedge mustard in tepid wine in order to eliminate the fetus. Soranos also reported of philosophers, such as Pliny, who facetiously claimed that there were few “abortive odors” that could eliminate a fetus simply by smell. These “successful” odors listed by Pliny included dragon plant, onion, or even the smell of light being put out, an odor common to everyone in ancient times. In his abortifacient studies, Pliny poked fun at those in the medical field who claimed that their concoctions could abort a fetus. Pliny made the statement that these concoctions offered by doctors were not reliable, and that the doctors were simply trying to make money off of desperate women.⁸ Despite the facetious findings of Pliny, potential mothers actually would spend money for these odors, thus proving their desperation. In addition to the seemingly crazed doctors, magicians created an abortifacient market in which they sold potions and charms said to abort a fetus, though these usually did not work. Women of the time would even hire astrologists to determine which day the solar system deemed fit for a successful abortion so that the women could plan their procedures accordingly.

⁶ Galen, Claudius. *On the Natural Faculties*. Heinemann, 1963.

⁷ Noonan, John T. *The Church and Contraception: The Issues at Stake*. New York: Paulist Press Deus Books, 1967.

⁸ Pliny. *Natural History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.

If women did not find success in using chemicals or drugs to abort their fetus, they turned to mechanical methods. The most desperate of women would utilize mechanical means in order to abort the fetus both effectively and quickly, though these methods took a toll on the women's bodies. The most common mechanical method was to bind the body so tightly with rope around the womb in order to asphyxiate the fetus from the outside.⁹ Women would also strike the womb with a stick enough times so that the fetus would be eliminated. Another mechanical method involved abortive instruments. Tertullian described two of the most common instruments used by women in these times. The first was a "copper needle or spike" which would be injected into the uterus.¹⁰ The second, and most horrific was described by Tertullian in the following quote:

"Among surgeon's tools there is a certain instrument, which is formed with a nicely-adjusted flexible frame for opening the uterus first of all, and keeping it open; it is further furnished with an annular blade, by means of which the limbs within the womb are dissected with anxious but unfaltering care; its last appendage being blunted or covered hook, where with the entire fetus is extracted by a violent delivery."¹¹

After the fetus had been eliminated in whichever mechanical means the mother chose, then the doctor would insert his index finger into the uterus, followed by his pointer finger, until his entire hand was in the uterus. At this time, the doctor would take his hand out and grab a hook, then reinsert his hand into the uterus while holding the hook. If the fetus was lying vertically in the womb, the first action was to find the dead fetus' eye, forehead, or ear with the hook and pull the fetus out of the womb. If the fetus was lying horizontally, then the doctor would insert a knife into the womb, cut the fetus in half, and then pull it out of the womb in two

⁹ Hippolytus, and M. David Litwa. *Refutation of All Heresies*. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016.

¹⁰ Tertullian, and J. H. Waszink. *De Anima: Translation*. Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1933.

¹¹ Ibid.

separate pieces. This latter method was typically only conducted in the second and third trimester of the pregnancy, being always fatal to the mother in the third trimester.¹²

Though abortion in antiquity was much more dangerous for women than it is today, it was still widely practiced and readily available through many methods. But before analyzing the statement made by the Church fathers regarding these methods, the next portion of this thesis will cover the ideas and opinions of their pagan contemporaries.

¹² Celsus, Aulus Cornelius. *De Medicina*. Translated by Walter George. Spencer. London: W. Heinemann, 1960.

The Pagan World

Ancient Greece

In Ancient Greece, many documents surfaced regarding both the ethics and the techniques of abortion that were able to reflect the opinion of this widespread practice at the time. Unfortunately, documents regarding the actual legality of abortion in Ancient Greece are few and far between. However, there is one letter written to Roman physician, Galen, which states that both Spartan law giver, Lycurgus, and Athenian lawgiver, Solon prohibited abortion.¹³ However, the author of this letter is unknown and therefore historians cannot know whether this author had firsthand knowledge, or was completely reliable. Though this letter is not absolute proof, it is absolute truth that the exposure of newborns in Ancient Greece was common and usually went unpunished. Many scholars believe that because of this practice, it is highly unlikely that abortion was a punishable crime in Ancient Greece. Scholars believe that if any anti-abortion laws were in practice during this time period, their motivation would stem from the concern regarding life of the mother, but never the life of the child.¹⁴

Medical opinion on abortion in Ancient Greece is typically viewed through the Oath of Hippocrates, in which he vows that, "I will not give to a woman a pessary to cause an abortion."¹⁵ The Hippocratic Oath, taken by all doctors and physicians in current day, also follows this rule. However, though the Hippocratic Oath was formed in this time period, it is unknown as to when this oath took on true importance in the medical field. Nonetheless, most scholars believe that Ancient Grecian physicians opposed all nontherapeutic abortions, which

¹³ Huser, Roger John. *The Crime of Abortion in Canon Law*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1942.

¹⁴ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

¹⁵ Hippocrates. *Hippocrates: Works*. Translated by W. H. S. Jones. London, 1962.

includes situations when the life of the mother is not endangered by the fetus, and when the pregnancy is not a result of incest or rape. Though it is unsure the exact time frame when this oath took importance, it eventually won acceptance among the Jews, Arabs, and Christians and currently serves as the only standing Greek medical opinion.¹⁶

Though medical ethics seem to oppose the majority of abortions, philosophical ethics seem to advocate for the practice. In the *Republic*, Plato ordered for all pregnant women over the age of 40 to have an abortion because of the lower life expectancy of women. He believed that if it was probable that the woman would not be able to fully raise the child, then she should not have the child at all. As stated earlier, Plato worried regarding large family sizes and promoted abortion in order to benefit the State as a whole. In that time, the State could not successfully accommodate for an extreme increase in population, which is where Plato's concern stemmed from. Interestingly enough, Plato also believed that the fetus was actually a life, but that the State's ideals were more important than the unborn life of a child, therefore making abortion necessary.¹⁷

Aristotle strongly argued that it was in the State's best interest to regulate marriage and the number of children per family based on health, in order to produce the finest human material. He believed that abortion was not necessary unless the fetus was deformed, or if the family had surpassed their child limit, much like the ideals of the One Child Policy practiced in modern day China.¹⁸ Aristotle believed that there were lawful and unlawful abortions- lawful being when the fetus was not yet human and unlawful when the fetus was human. He believed that life was

¹⁶ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

¹⁷ Plato. *Republic*. Translated by Heath Dixon. Houston, TX: Communican, 1990.

¹⁸ The one-child policy mandated that couples from China could only have one child in order to regulate rapid population expansion.

present in the womb when the fetal organs had been formed. For males, this was 40 days after conception and for females, it was arbitrarily 90 days after conception. Aristotle's philosophy was the first time that someone made a distinction between life and premature life in the womb. Aristotle based his ideals on Exodus 21:22-23 which states, "If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life."¹⁹ Aristotle believed that "serious injury" referred to the fetus' life being taken, but that if no "serious injury" had occurred, then the fetus' life had not yet begun.²⁰

Many modern day philosophers are confused by Plato and Aristotle's support of abortion. Neither of them had any personal gain from the practice, yet they did both believed that the individual exists solely for the State. In this way, no rights were guaranteed to the individual, and all rights, including the right to life, were inferior to the best interest of the State. A major issue that Greek city states faced was overpopulation, so abortion was an easy route to avoid this problem and thus benefit the State, which is the main reason why scholars believe that Aristotle and Plato chose their position.

Plato and Aristotle are the only pagan philosophers who took a strong stance on abortion, however there were a few other pagan groups who held opinions on this topic. The Orphics were the first Greeks to show concern for the unborn's fate in the afterlife. They believed that people who die prematurely, such as those who are aborted, are condemned to an evil fate after death. This sparked some of the first ideals against abortion and infanticide, and influenced another

¹⁹ Exodus 21:22-23

²⁰ Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by H. Rackham. London: Heinemann, 1959.

large group called the Stoics. The Stoics, members of a Greek philosophical school, believed that life begins only after the fetus has taken its first breath outside of the womb. It seems that with this view, the Stoics would have no problem with abortion; however, they believed in larger families and therefore abortion was viewed as impious.²¹ Regardless of differing views on abortion, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics believed that the State was the most important aspect of society. Plato and Aristotle favored the quality of people over quantity in order to best serve the state and therefore favored abortion, while the Stoics believes in quantity over quality so that the State could have a larger following and get more work done, and therefore opposed abortion. But still, neither of these pagan positions put forth any concern regarding the actual fetus.

Though the popularity of abortion in Ancient Greece is unknown, it can be inferred that it was widely practiced due to the abundance of writings and opinions on the subject by Plato and Aristotle. Scholars believe that newborn exposure was much more common than abortion, but that abortion was definitely not looked down upon in the pagan world at the time. As time progressed, Aristotle, Plato, and even the Stoic viewpoints would continue to serve as contrasting views against early Christian thought.

The Roman Monarchy and Republic

The general Roman ideal toward abortion was that it was an offense against the father of the aborted fetus. According to Plutarch in an account of Roman law, if a woman used poisonous drugs in order to have an abortion, it was a sound reason for her husband to divorce her.²² Ancient Rome was a patriarchal society, meaning that the father of the house, or paterfamilia, was in complete control of his individual family, and that the Roman men were in charge of the

²¹ Hardon, John A. *Euthanasia and Abortion*. Bardstown, KY: Eternal Life.

²² Plutarch. *Plutarch's Lives*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

State as a whole. Wives and children were slaves and possessions to paterfamilias, and were inferior to their rule and reign. The paterfamilias had the power to also kill or sell their possessions, including their wife and children. This extreme power given to the males continued into the beginning of the Roman Empire and was held over both the born, and the unborn. In the *Twelve Tables*, the earliest Roman law code, a law permitted the father to expose any female infant or any deformed baby, male or female.²³ Socially, there was disapproval shown when husbands forced their wives to have abortions for no reason, but there was no penalty by law.

From 145-130 B.C., the Roman Republic faced a period of revolution in which crimes of murder, adultery, divorce, and abortion increased. In this period, the *Lex Cornelia* was enacted which fought against murderers and poisoners, thus including mothers who had aborted or doctors who had supplied abortifacient drugs.²⁴ Beginning in 170 A.D., the punishment for women having abortions was banishment from the Roman Republic. Many scholars argue that the women who had abortions were punished because they were murderers and poisoners, however Roman law never viewed the fetus as life, so it is more likely that the women were punished due their intake of poison, rather than their actual murderous crime.

One of the most common and straightforward examples of Roman thought towards abortion is embodied in the literary works of Cicero. Cicero told the tale of a woman who had a secret abortion and was then put to death. Cicero approved the punishment of death toward this woman and furthered it by calling for capital punishment to all women who have had intentional abortions without male consent. This wish to enforce criminal penalties on women stems from

²³Durant, Will. *Caesar and Christ: A History of Roman Civilization and of Christianity*. New York: MJF Books, 1992.

²⁴ Justinian. *The Digest of Justinian*. Translated by Theodor Mommsen and C. H. Monro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

the Roman ideal of abortion as a wrong against the father, the family name, and the human race as a whole. He never worries about the well-being of the mother or the fetus, but the solely the reputation of the father.²⁵ This perspective, once again, places no value on the life of the fetus, but solely favors punishment against the mother due to her disobedience toward the paterfamilias.

Throughout the Roman Monarchy and Republic, abortion rose in popularity. However, it was not until 27 B.C., during the reign of Caesar Augustus, when abortion reached its height in popularity and continued to climb higher and higher as the Roman Monarchy moved toward the Roman Empire.

The Roman Empire

Though opinions on abortion were relatively scarce throughout Ancient Greece and Rome, the same is not true for the Roman Empire. The majority of Christian rebuttals are directed toward the Empire majorly because pagan philosophers of the Roman Empire and early Christian philosophers were contemporaries. In the Roman Empire, the rich, poor, tall, short, old, young, slave, and free all had abortions, no matter the situation. All Christian efforts, and even some pagan, went toward limiting the practice of abortion, but nothing was put into law until the third century.

The Roman Empire began with the reign of Caesar Augustus who believed that the State could not be strong without having strong families. In order to carry this out, he began to take more and more power away from the father and gave the excess power to the mother and father as a unit. He believed that with fortified families, the State could regain the economic and social

²⁵ Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Pro Cluentio*. Translated by Jones Daniel Maillard. London: W.B. Clive, 1896.

prosperity that it had lacked since the revolutionary period of the Roman Monarchy. In his reign, Augustus spoke out against celibacy, childlessness, and family limiting by means of abortion or exposure.²⁶ However, despite his efforts, the Romans took on the Stoic view that the fetus was not a life until its first breath, so therefore, the State became more pro-family and less anti-abortion.²⁷ Additionally in the Augustan period, many medical advancements took place, including the creation of Gynecology as an official science. With this development, abortion became less harmful for women which increased the popularity of abortions, though abortions were still equally as harmful for the fetus. Also, advancements took place in both the practices of chemical and mechanical abortions in order to make the procedure easier on the potential mothers.²⁸

From the historical record, scholars believe that there was no punishment for abortion in the Roman Empire as long as the father gave consent, no poisons were used, and the mother did not die. The concern for the unborn had basically disintegrated and the importance on the paterfamilias was still vibrant, despite legislation by Caesar Augustus stating otherwise. A common Roman motto was “born for the State” which embodies the idea that the fetus was not a life until it breathed its first breath, but even after it was considered a life, that life did not have value in itself, but rather in what it could contribute to the State. The Roman Empire and its largely pagan ideals continued in the fifth century, but would soon be opposed by the reign of Constantine and his seemingly “Christian” empire.

²⁶ Durant, Will. *Caesar and Christ: A History of Roman Civilization and of Christianity*. New York: MJF Books, 1992.

²⁷ Noonan, John T. *The Church and Contraception: The Issues at Stake*. New York: Paulist Press Deus Books, 1967.

²⁸ Durant, Will. *Caesar and Christ: A History of Roman Civilization and of Christianity*. New York: MJF Books, 1992.

The Jewish World

Though many of their contemporaries consented to abortion and exposure, the Jewish population did not. Reproduction was very important to the Jews, and this ideal inspired their abhorrence of both abortion and exposure. The Jews, just as other groups, had distinct views on the importance of human life. First, Jewish life was important in order to carry on the Jewish familial line. Second, life was important because it was the creation of God, and if He created something, then it was meant to continue and live. Finally, the Jewish population loathed bloodshed, thus contributing to their disapproval toward abortion, as they viewed abortion as murder. Though the overall outlook against abortion was the same throughout all Jewish culture, the multiple schools of thought are typically defined as the Alexandrian School, the Majority Palestinian School, and a small focus on the Minority Palestinian School. Each of these three schools held slightly different approaches to the issue of abortion from both an ethical and a legal perspective, but overall all held the similar view against abortion.²⁹

The Alexandrian School

The two largest impacts on the Alexandrian School were Ancient Grecian thought in addition to the actual pagan practice of abortion. The Alexandrian School also struggled with interpretation of Exodus 21:22-23 which states, “If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows. But if there is harm, you are to take life for life.”³⁰ The serious injury spoken about in these verses was interpreted by the

²⁹ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

³⁰ Exodus 21:22-23

Alexandrian School to mean harm toward the mother, and not toward the child. When analyzing the *Septuagint* (Greek Old Testament), there appears to be a differentiation between a child that is formed or unformed. The *Septuagint* says that “if two men fight and they strike a woman who is pregnant, and her child comes out while not yet fully formed, the one liable to punishment will be fined; whatever the woman’s husband imposes, he will give as is fitting. But if the child is fully formed, he will give life for life.”³¹ This new translation changes the idea from “if the woman is harmed,” to “if the child is formed”, which was thought to be 40 days after conception. This expresses a belief to siding with Aristotle which states that there is life within the womb after conception, but before birth, and that an abortive action would be considered murder, assuming the child is “formed.” This idea is enhanced by Philo of Alexandria who writes specifically about the Ten Commandments and the issue of abortion in his work, *Special Laws*. Under the commandment of “thou shall not kill”, he states that:

“If a man comes to blow with a pregnant woman and strikes her on the belly and she miscarries, then, if the result of the miscarriage is unshaped and undeveloped, he must be fined both for the outrage and for obstructing the artist Nature in her creative work of bringing into life the fairest of living creature, man. But, if the offspring is already shaped and all the limbs have their proper qualities and places in the system, he must die, for that which answers to this description is a human being, which he has destroyed in the laboratory of Nature who judges that the hour has not yet come for bringing it out into the light, like a statue lying in a studio requiring nothing more than to be conveyed outside and released from confinement.”³²

³¹ Dines, Jennifer M., and Michael Anthony Knibb, trans. *The Septuagint*. London: T & T Clark, 2005.

³² Philo, and Charles Duke Yonge. *The Works of Philo Judaeus*. London: H.G. Bohn, 1854.

The ideals of Philo of Alexandria were held by the majority of the Alexandrian School because they focused more on the spiritual punishment of a “formed” fetus abortion rather than the legal statutes capitalized on in the *Septuagint*. Philo’s overarching concern is not with the father, nor really the mother, but with the child who cannot defend itself and must therefore be defended by Nature, or God in Nature. He sees abortion as a moral issue related to the commandment against murder, rather than simply a legal issue. Philo was one of the first to capitalize on the connection between abortion and murder which eventually carried into all Christian writings which further developed the act of abortion as a heinous crime.³³

Though there is an obvious distinction in the Alexandrian writings regarding the “unformed” and “formed” child, this was not the primary concern of the Alexandrian writers. The overarching issue for them was the intentional death of any unborn at all, and the immorality connected to that action.³⁴ This is emphasized by two Alexandrian writings that have absolutely no legal affiliation at all, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* and the *Sibylline Oracles*. *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* is comprised of multiple ethical truths about Jewish daily life. The author stated that “a woman should not destroy the unborn babe in her belly, nor after its birth throw it before the dogs and the vultures as prey.”³⁵ In this, there is no legal distinction, but solely the opinion stating that the pagan practice of abortion should be avoided and should be absent in the Jewish community. In addition to the obvious favor demonstrated toward the child, the writer is much in favor of the Stoic view of positive procreation and therefore abhors the practice of abortion.³⁶

³³ Philo, and Charles Duke Yonge. *The Works of Philo Judaeus*. London: H.G. Bohn, 1854.

³⁴ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

³⁵ Phocylides. *The sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*. Translated by P.W Van Der Horst. Leiden: Brill, 1978.)

³⁶ Ibid.

A contemporary to this work is found in the *Sibylline Oracles*, which is a collection of first and second century apocalyptic literature. Part two of this collection highlights the punishment of the wicked, including women who have aborted their children. This work states that “having burdens in the womb [they] produce abortions; and their offspring cast unlawfully away.”³⁷ As the piece continues, these women who have had abortions suffer God’s wrath along with sorcerers, adulterers, thieves, and oppressors of the poor. Once again, the author has no legal interest with this practice, but rather the fundamental immorality of abortion.³⁸

Overall, the Alexandrian Jewish position viewed abortion as absolutely immoral and punishable by either a fine or even by death. Ethically, the immorality of abortion was largely capitalized on, while the legal perspective was set aside. But even in the writings concerning the legal side, abortion was still punishable, it just depended on the “form” of the child. But overall, the ethical side is emphasized much more and the overall consensus defines abortion as extremely immoral and deserving of punishment in both this life, and in the afterlife.

The Palestinian School

The majority of Palestinian opinion on abortion stems from the *Mishnah*, the writings of Josephus, and the *Talmud*. The *Mishnah* is comprised of different sections that address many centuries of Rabbinic Legal Pronouncements. The writings of Josephus come from a historian, who is famous for his defense of the Jewish faith and his critique of pagan society. Finally, the *Talmud* is the overarching law that is comprised of both the *Mishnah*, and the commentary on the *Mishnah*.

³⁷ Bate, H. N. *The Sibylline Oracles*. London, 1937.

³⁸ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

Four key issues are at the basis of Palestinian discussion on both the child and on death. The first is the development of the child, the second is the religious and legal status of the child, the third is accidental or necessary feticide, and fourth is deliberate feticide. Unlike Alexandria, the concern in Jewish Palestine revolved around the legal status of the child, especially when dealing with miscarriages and “necessary” abortions. Additionally, the Palestinian School, unlike the Alexandrian School did not actually refer to early abortions as actual abortions, but rather as miscarriages.

Most scholars state that there was basically one Palestinian opinion on abortion which actually contrasted the Alexandrian School. However, after closer examination, there appears to be two schools of Rabbinic thought within the Palestinian School, one being the liberal majority opinion and the other being a strong willed conservative minority opinion.

Similar to Alexandria, the debates in Palestine on the formation and soul of the child were very present. Unlike the pagan world, the Jewish ideals stemmed from three key verses in the Bible- Genesis 1:27 which states, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Also, Genesis 2:7 which states, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Finally, Genesis 2:19 which states, “Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.” From these early verses, the Palestinian Jews found importance of form and soul due to their usage in Genesis. Originally, the Jews were not sure if the time of ensoulment was at conception, formation, or birth. In a quest to uncover this mystery, Rabbi Judah, who compiled the works of the *Mishnah* reported that the soul enters into the body of the child at the

time of conception.³⁹ His justification for this comes from the idea that unsalted meat cannot go three days without becoming putrid. In the same way, the body will spoil without the soul, meaning that the child's ensoulment occurs at conception because the child cannot last even one second without the soul.⁴⁰ Though the Jews held this view on the time of ensoulment, it did not actually alter any of the Jewish laws. However, Jewish perspective on formation did impact the law, demonstrating the importance of in-womb formation to the Jewish culture. In the Palestinian School, the majority of Rabbis believed that formation occurred forty days after conception for both male and female.⁴¹ The majority also believed that a miscarried child had to be fully formed (40 days) in order to be considered valid, while the minority believed that a miscarriage at any time required purification of the woman's house. According to the Palestinian Jewish law, human life is not the concern when dealing with abortion; however, though the abortion laws did not reflect an opinion on the life of the child, the Jews did have an opinion on the young life. The Palestinian Jews, like the Alexandrian Jews, derived their opinion from Exodus 21, but took a different approach than in Alexandria. The Hebrew text states:

“If men strive together and strike a pregnant woman, so that her child comes out of her, but there is no harm, [the guilty one] will surely be fined according to what the woman's husband demands of him, and he will pay according to the judge's decision. But if there is harm, then you must give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth.”⁴²

This situation described by the Hebrew text refers to an accidental miscarriage, not a deliberate one as Philo or the *Septuagint* speaks about. In this text, the word “harm” refers to the

³⁹ Shachter, Jacob, H. Freedman, and Isidore Epstein. *Sanhedrin*. London: Soncino Press, 1987.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Slotki, I. W., and Isidore Epstein. *Niddah*. London: Soncino Press, 1989.

⁴² Exodus 21

actual death of the woman, not to the miscarriage, which alone would only receive a fine.

Josephus, who many refer to for Palestinian Jewish thought, stated in his work, *Antiquities*, that

“He that kicketh a woman with child, if the woman miscarry, shall be fined for the judges for having, by the destruction of the fruit of her womb, diminished by the population, and a further sum shall be presented by him to the woman’s husband. If she die of the blow, he also shall die, the law claiming as its due the sacrifice of life for life.”⁴³

Overall, the Palestinian Jews did not consider the child as a legal person, which means that it still could be a human life, just a human life legally under the control of the mother.

At this point in the thesis, it is now time for the highly anticipated portion- the Jews’ actual perspectives on abortion. Just like the Romans, some abortions were viewed as permissible or even mandatory according to the Jews. One of these acceptable situations being if the life of the mother is in danger. In this case, if the child is not aborted, then the mother could lose her life. When faced with this situation, abortion is mandatory unless either half of the body or half of the head of the child has already been birthed. The *Mishnah* states that:

“If a woman was in hard travail, the child must be cut up while it is in the womb and brought out member by member, since the life of the mother has priority over the life of the child.; but if the greater part of it was already born, it may not be touched, since the claim of one life cannot override the claim of another life.”⁴⁴

It is important to note here that the *Mishnah* does not deny the presence of life in the child in any way, shape, or form. Rather, the passage’s sole purpose is to save the already born

⁴³ Josephus, Flavius. *Flavius Josephus: Antiquities*. Edited by Louis H. Feldman. Boston: Brill Academic, 2004.

⁴⁴ Goldin, Hyman E. *Mishnah*. New York: Hebrew Pub. Co., 1933.

life of the mother when compared to the in-womb child. The child is viewed as an appendage of the mother with no “juridical personality,” but this view is taken solely in a legal sense when dealing with accidental abortions.⁴⁵ Contrastingly, the issue of deliberate abortion had a very strong answer. The Palestinian Jewish law did not even address deliberate abortions because it was such a rarity in their culture, therefore there is not legality referring to this issue. However, the overarching opinion on deliberate abortions can be easily found ethically, rather than legally, which speaks louder than legislation. In *Against Apion*, Josephus writes that “The Law orders all the offspring to be brought up, and forbids women either to cause abortion or to make away with the fetus; a woman convicted of this is regarded as infanticide, because she destroys the soul and diminishes the race.”⁴⁶

Many worldly scholars will argue that there are many flaws with the text. They will ask, which law is Josephus talking about? Or, what he is saying about the formed or unformed child? But what these scholars forget to note is that despite Josephus’ opinion on the legal status of the fetus, from an ethical perspective, he deems a deliberate abortion as absolute murder. From this, “The Law,” which is stated in his quote, is understood to be the Ten Commandments, more specifically, “thou shall not kill.” This perspective against deliberate abortions is shared by the majority of contemporary Jewish Palestinian rabbis and proves that the leaders deemed some accidental abortions as legally permissible, but all abortions as ethically atrocious, even to the point of murder.

Despite the majority opinion, the minority view continued to argue that the child was in fact a legal person and should have legal rights. They believed that a dead child in the womb was

⁴⁵ Feldman, David M. *Birth control and Abortion in Jewish law*. New York: Schocken Books, 1978.

⁴⁶ Josephus, Flavius, and John M. G. Barclay. *Against Apion*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

just the same as a dead person outside of the womb. This argument was due to Genesis 9:6 which stated, “Who sheddeth the blood of man within another man, shall his blood be shed.”⁴⁷ This motivated the minority to believe that the “man within another man” is the child inside of the murderers, and the murderer being the abortive mother.⁴⁸ So through the eyes of the minority, the verse would read more like “Who sheddeth the blood of man, within [that] man [himself] shall his blood be shed.” Despite their strong willed efforts, the minority could never overrule the majority, so the minority eventually joined the Alexandrian Jewish viewpoint, which was much more similar to their own.⁴⁹

The two views in the Jewish school are recognized by the majority of modern day scholars. According to many of these scholars, the Alexandrian view was stricter because it required punishment for even damage to the child, according to its stage of development, while the more lenient Palestinian school did not view the child as a person, and therefore required punishment for harm to the mother only. But after careful analysis, this is not at all true. First, both the Alexandrian and Palestinian schools discussed personhood of the child from only a legal standpoint, and rarely from an ethical standpoint. Just because the legal perspective says one thing does not mean that the ethical perspective would be the same, as seen through Josephus’ writings. Also, both schools only address the legality behind accidental or therapeutic abortions, rather than deliberate. Neither of the schools addressed the possibility of a deliberate or induced abortion for anything other than a life threatening reason, simply because it was absurd to even discuss such an obvious topic. Third, the Palestinian view was not in itself united, because it did have a loud minority view. But overall, besides the two schools and their specific differences, the

⁴⁷ Genesis 9:6

⁴⁸ Feldman, David M. *Birth control and Abortion in Jewish law*. New York: Schocken Books, 1978.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

main idea that they did share is that deliberate abortion shows a disrespect for life and are murderous. In the Jewish mindset, there was debate on accidental or therapeutic abortions, but there was never any wavering of opinion on deliberate abortion. Clearly, there was not a difference between a “strict” Alexandrian school and a “lenient” Palestinian school when dealing with deliberate abortion from an ethical perspective. The difference of opinion between the schools only actually revealed itself when determining the severity of punishment for accidental abortion. Overall, this Jewish detestation for deliberate abortion from both the Palestinian and the Alexandrian schools formed the foundation for the Christian writings to come on the subject.

Christian Beginnings: The First Three Centuries

The scene that has been described through both the Jewish and Pagan perspectives on abortion is the environment that Christianity faced at its introduction into the world. At its birth, Christianity was forced to combat all of the developed pagan views on abortion, in addition to some aspects of strong willed Jewish views. Through the course of the first three centuries, three main themes were evident in Christian writings when dealing with the issue of abortion. These themes include:

1. The child is the creation of God which is an indisputable fact.
2. Abortion is murder in its purest form.
3. The judgement of God falls on those who have had an abortion, no matter the reason for the abortion.

In the first three centuries of the Christian faith, the main question that circulated in society regarded the point at which the conceived child became human life. This portion of the thesis will now analyze this very issue through both the lens of the New Testament in addition to the earliest discussions of abortion in the Christian faith.

New Testament

In the New Testament, the actual term “abortion” is not used simply because it was not a common term, though the people of the time understood the concept. Rather, the idea of “pharmakeia” was used in order to refer to drugs, as given by a sorcerer or magician in order to murder a child.⁵⁰ These types of drugs were typically used for evil, and abortion is included in

⁵⁰ Liddell, Henry George, and Robert Scott. *Greek-English Lexicon*. Salt Lake City, UT: Digitized by the Genealogical Society of Utah, 2009.

this. In Galatians 5:20, Revelation 9:2, 18:23, 21:8, and 22:15, this idea of “pharmakeia” is referenced with a negative connotation. Though there is no explicit condemnation of abortion singularly, pharmakeia is explicitly rejected in both Galatians and Revelation by rejecting the use of magic, drugs, potions, and abortifacient drugs.⁵¹ Therefore, because abortion was grouped in this sector, it too was rejected by the Biblical texts.

Early Discussion

Two of the earliest written references to abortion originate from the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabus*. The *Didache* is comprised of a code of Christian morality, in addition to a manual of church life and organization. Contrastingly, the *Epistle of Barnabus* focused more on Christian life and theological thought.⁵² In both of these writings, there are sections called “Two Ways” which speak about the two Jewish ways of either Life and Light, or Death and Darkness. The *Didache* says that there is a substantial difference between these two ways. When referring to the Way of Life, the author of the *Didache* makes a list of multiple “thou shalt not” statements. Included in this list is “Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion or destruction.” In the *Didache*, the statement actually says “Ou Phoneuseis teknon en phthora.”⁵³ In this, “phthora” means “destruction” and actually refers to the destruction of the child, or abortion. The *Epistle of Barnabus* shares this idea against abortion, but adds the statement, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor more than thy own life.”⁵⁴ In this, the child is not considered to be a part of its mother, but rather the child is considered to be the mother’s neighbor, making it even more wrong to take that life away. Contrastingly, the Way of Death, according to the *Didache*, is overflowing with adulterers,

⁵¹ Waszink, “Abtreibung,” states that it is very likely that these texts include condemnation of abortion.

⁵² Robinson, John A. T. *Redating the New Testament*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000.

⁵³ Niederwimmer, Kurt, and Harold W. Attridge. *The Didache: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

⁵⁴ Collection), Apostolic Fathers (Early Christian. *The Epistle of Barnabus*. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1948.

hypocrites, robbers, and worst of all- murderers of children.⁵⁵ The term “murderer of children” was the most common third century Latin reference to abortion. This reference against the murder of children in the *Didache* is obviously referring to abortion, and defines the mother as the murderer of the child. Additionally, these two commonplace phrases referring to abortion were usually summed up by the Latin word “abortuante” which demonstrates the exact same connotation as the Greek term “phthoreus” for abortionists, as stated in the *Didache*.

But aside from the detail of the linguistic abortion reference, these two works are important because they both agree that “thou shalt not have an abortion” is a sub-commandment underneath “thou shalt not murder.” Both the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabus* also put this sub-commandment on the same authoritative level as all the Ten Commandments because it has to do with the well-being of human life. So not only is there an actual commandment specifically against abortion in two of the major Christian ethical works, but these two works also note that abortion defies the Second Great Commandment to “Love thy neighbor as they self.” Therefore, abortion is depicted as not only a sin of sexual immorality, but also as an evil no less severe than the oppression of the poor or the use of poisons, as stated by the two main Christian works of the first century.

These writings prove to be a continuation of the Jewish perspective on abortion. The only difference is that the Christian perspective seems to not care whether the child is formed or unformed when dealing with humanity and life. Many Christian scholars today have a difficult time with this, but there is no evidence of the formed or unformed argument in Christian writing, only in Jewish. Also, the *Epistle of Barnabus* and the *Didache* serve as documents that officially

⁵⁵ Niederwimmer, Kurt, and Harold W. Attridge. *The Didache: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

included abortion in the definition of murder, which was a view shared by Christians at that time period, and in the time to come.

A contemporary to the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabas* was the *Apocalypse of Peter*. This extremely influential, non-canonical apocalyptic piece was held in great esteem by the early church. In one portion, the author paints a picture of hell's population, which includes this scene:

“And near that place, I saw another gorge in which the discharge and excrement of the tortured ran down and became like a lake. And there sat women, and the discharge came up to their throats; and opposite them sat many children, who were born prematurely, weeping. And from them went forth rays of fire and smote the women on the eyes. And these were those who produced children outside of marriage and who produced abortions.”⁵⁶

This text is important because it speaks about the fate of both the aborted and the aborters. This graphic image is drawn from deep ethical and emotional convictions from Peter, but does include that these abortive women will reside in hell for eternity. Because he states that their fate is hell, it can be implied that abortion is not of God, but rather of Satan. Later in the passage, Peter speaks about how angels will deliver the aborted children to safety, but that the parents will suffer punishment because of their sins. Overall, the perspective is still that the aborted remain as God's children and will receive grace in spite of a crime being committed against them by their mothers.⁵⁷

The Apologists

⁵⁶ Bremmer, Jan N., trans. *The Apocalypse of Peter*. Leuven: Peeters, 2004.

⁵⁷ *The Apocrypha*. Cambridge: University Press, 2009.

In the first and second centuries, the emergence of Christianity had two major tasks in order to stay alive: self-definition and self-defense. Though these necessary explanations are seemingly intertwined, the works previously examined (*Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabas*) largely focused on the ideals of self-definition of the Christian faith. But self-definition could not stand alone, and had to be paired with a self-defense mechanism that allowed for the explanation and justification of the Christian beliefs regarding abortion. At its conception, the Christian faith obviously faced many opponents, some due to understanding and disagreement, and many due to misunderstanding and disagreement. In order to fix the latter, Christian writers emerged addressing those who simply misunderstood the Christian ideals. This Christian group was known as the Apologists, and their task was to answer the pagan criticisms of the Christian faith.

Athenagoras

In 177 A.D., Athenagoras, who was the most able of all the Greek apologists, addressed Emperor Marcus Aurelius.⁵⁸ Athenagoras' sole goal was to answer for three charges made against Christianity: incest, atheism, and cannibalism. The charge of cannibalism stemmed from a misunderstanding of communion and the idea of consuming "the body" of Christ. Athenagoras explained that cannibalism implied murder, and that Christians would never even watch a murder (such as a gladiator fight), much less partake in one. A personal favorite from Athenagoras' full response states:

"What reason would we have to commit murder when we say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give account of it to God? For the same person would not regard the fetus in the womb as a living thing and therefore an object of God's

⁵⁸ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

care [and then kill it]... But we are altogether consistent in our conduct. We obey reason and do not override it.”⁵⁹

Athenagoras claims to represent the majority of the Christian population, and if he didn't, then his argument would have no momentum against Emperor Marcus Aurelius. However, Athenagoras was fully supported by his Christian contemporaries and followers, proving it to be a widely accepted view. Once again, through Athenagoras in the second century, the same three Christian themes from the first century are evident, but maybe even more defined than before. They include:

1. Abortion is murder.
2. Those who have had an abortion must give account to God (a milder form of the apocalyptic imagery from the Apocalypse of Peter)
3. The child is a living being and is the object of God's care.

Athenagoras points out that Christians believe this way about murder and abortion based on the Christian perspective on the sanctity of life. He mentioned that Christians have renounced murder in all forms- including the common Roman practice of gladiator fighting. It is the absolute abhorrence of bloodshed of any form that drove Christian away from practices such as gladiator fights, and even criminal executions. This Christian view was completely opposite to the Roman view, as gladiator fights and criminal executions were cobblestones in Roman culture, but Athenagoras still prevailed against the charge of cannibalism, and consequently against abortion and murder.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ The lines not quoted base a similar argument as to the lines quoted. *Athenagoras. Legatio. Translated by William R. Schoedel. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972.*

⁶⁰ Athenagoras. *Legatio*. Translated by William R. Schoedel. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972.

Tertullian

In 197 A.D., Tertullian, who is known to be the most eloquent apologist, wrote the *Apology*. This work was directed specifically at Emperor Septimus Severus and governors of the Roman provinces. Like Athenagoras, Tertullian also had to defend Christianity on different charges or misunderstandings. However, unlike Athenagoras, Tertullian focused more on immorality, atheism, and treason. One charge against Christianity stated that Christians observe a holy ritual in which they slaughter a newborn and then eat it. Tertullian refuted this by explaining Christian practices and beliefs which completely oppose the murder of a human.

Tertullian states:

“In our case, murder being once for all forbidden, we may not destroy even the child in the womb, while as yet the human being derives blood from other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to the birth.”⁶¹

Tertullian reveals that the basis of the early Christian perspective on abortion stems from the commandment against murder. Similar to his contemporaries, Tertullian believed that the child was a human life, though it is still dependent on the mother. However, despite the child's dependence on the mother, its humanity, or “life” status, does not change. Tertullian believed this way because a newborn baby is dependent on its mother in order to receive food, and a newborn baby is definitely human and is definitely a life. Tertullian did not believe that the child's dependence meant that the child was part of the mother. If the child was part of the

⁶¹ Tertullianus. *Tertullian: Apology*. Translated by Marcus Minucius Felix. London: Heinemann, 1966.

mother, then it would have the exact same DNA as the mother, but it doesn't. The child has DNA from both the mother and the father, making it a separate being.

In *De Anima: On the Soul*, another work written by Tertullian, he addresses the Christian perspective on the soul of the child. Tertullian uses two main verses to explain his view on the soul. Tertullian references Luke 1:41-46 and Jeremiah 1:5 by saying:

“They [John and Jesus] were both alive while still in the womb. Elizabeth rejoiced as the infant leaped in her womb. Mary glorifies the Lord because Christ within her inspired her. Each mother recognizes her child and each is known by her child who is alive, being not merely souls but also spirits.⁶² Thus you read the word of God, spoken to Jeremiah: ‘Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee.’ If God forms us in the womb, he also breathes on us as He did in the beginning: ‘And God formed man and breathed into him the breath of life.’ Nor could God have known man in the womb unless he were human. “And before thou camest forth from the womb, I sanctified thee.’ Was it then, a dead body at that stage? Surely, it was not for “God is the God of living and not of the dead.”⁶³

Tertullian is the first Christian to have recorded this connection between the two passages and the issue of abortion. Though his main purpose in *De Anima* is to convey his perspective on the soul, he does this by criticizing the practice of abortion, even therapeutic abortions, because it takes away a human life. Tertullian then goes on to say:

“The embryo, therefore, becomes a human being from the moment when its formation is completed. For, Moses imposed punishment for the man who was guilty of causing an

⁶² Tertullian, and J. H. Waszink. *De Anima: Translation*. Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1933.

⁶³ Ibid.

abortion on the group that the embryo was “rudimentary man,” exposed to the chances of life and death, since it has already been entered into the book of fate.”⁶⁴

On first reading this, this allusion to Moses seems to agree with the *Septuagint* view that formation determines the humanity of the child. Many people who align themselves with the *Septuagint* use this reading from Tertullian to aid their argument, however Tertullian goes onto say that flesh without a specific form cannot be a human being.⁶⁵ Though the child is not fully formed, Moses still believes that the child is from the point of conception a “rudimentary man” because he deems punishment for the person who aborts the child, serving as a punishment for murder. Murder, as deemed by God, can only take place when man slaughters man, therefore proving Tertullian’s opinion that the child is alive from the point of conception. Tertullian also notes that formation is an arbitrary term. No human is every fully formed because when a baby is born, it still continues to grow as a living being that is “not fully formed.” Moses is not trying to distinguish between a living or nonliving fetus, but rather, he is proving that although the child is not a human being as people typically think of them, the child is a human life because of God’s involvement in the early development. Tertullian says that the fetus is a “person-in-process” but so is a 12 year old boy going through puberty, and he is still a human, and he is still alive, and he is still dependent on his mother for basic life necessities. In agreement with *Tertullian*, modern day texts state that the child is more than simply part of the mother because it has the DNA of the mother and of the father. The mother has her own DNA and everything that has the same DNA as the mother is part of the mother, but anything that has even the slightest difference from the

⁶⁴ Tertullian, and J. H. Waszink. *De Anima: Translation*. Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1933.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

mother is no longer part of the mother. This is a firm break from Roman law which stated that the fetus is neither a human, nor a person, and therefore hold no rights under the law.

Minucius Felix

Minucius Felix was the only third century apologist in the West. He wrote *Octavius* which conveyed Christian thought through a dialogue in which a lawyer mediates between a Christian proponent and a pagan proponent. In the end of the dialogue, the pagan converts to Christianity due to the Christian proponent's compelling and truthful argument. After denouncing paganism, the Christian proponent goes on to address the same claim that was faced in the *Apology*, that in order to be a Christian, one must slaughter a baby. The Christian's answer parallels the answer from Tertullian, and Minucius goes on to say that that whoever could even think of slaughtering a newborn must be capable of doing so, but that a true Christian would never even have that thought. The Christian proponent then continues this dialogue by condemning the pagan practice of abortion, thus going directly against Roman law once again. It can be inferred that the argument Christian proponent was the greater Christian opinion because if it weren't, the argument would not have been compelling enough for the pagan proponent to convert to Christianity.

Christian Theologians

Although it is obvious that the Christian perspective was against abortion, Christians were still influenced by pagan thought, so the abortive vocabulary was not absent from all Christians. Abortion was not unknown to "so-called Christians", and this was very disturbing to the church. Two church fathers, named Hippolytus and Cyprian, addressed this internal issue in their teachings and writings.

Many apologists praised the Christian refusal in taking part in pagan practices, while Hippolytus was very concerned regarding the pagan influence on the Christians and the little to no preventative action taken on this matter. The pope of the time, Pope Callistus, allowed concubine marriages under Roman law and realized that these marriages could result in an unwanted child. Hippolytus responded that if women began to resort to drugs in order to seem sexually pure, but are not actually sexually pure, that that is just as detestable of a sin as sexual immorality. He believed that the church could not just allow abortions to cover up the sin of sexual immorality.

Similarly, Cyprian, who was a very popular writer, also believed that abortion is murder and made this very clear in his famous address to the apologist Novatian. When discussing Novatian, Cyprian stated:

“The womb of his wife was smitten by a blow of his heel; and in the miscarriage that soon followed, the offspring was brought forth, the fruit of a father’s murder. And now he dares to condemn the hands of those who sacrifice, when he himself is more guilty in his feet, by which the son, who was about to be born, was slain.”⁶⁶

This text finally makes the connection between abortion and guilt, while still emphasizing abortion as murder. This theme of guilt in relation to abortion began in the third century and has continued on from that point. Although there are no texts regarding abortion in the second half of the third century, it is safe to assume that the Christian perspective on abortion remains the same because it appears the same in the early fourth century. Abortion remained regarded as murder, human life was still highly valued due to God’s interworking in creation of

⁶⁶ Cyprian. *The Writings of Cyprian*. Translated by Robert Ernest. Wallis. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868.

the child, and that the child was human life from the point of conception. The newest addition to this list was the guilt attached to abortion on the part of the mother. The issues regarding methods in “justifying” this guilt and also what to do with believers who had had abortions would be addressed in the fourth century.

Despite the pagan influence on Christian thought, the first, second and third century perspectives proved that the Christian momentum had increased and had even begun to impact Roman law. Although there is no direct connection between Christian belief on abortion and Roman law, there are a few suggestive actions that hint at it. First, the Christian perspective spread throughout the entire population and transcended the class system. Also, men like Tertullian and Athenagoras actually addressed political leaders, which means that Roman law was being challenged and considered change. In the third century, the prescript of Septimus Severus and Antonius Caracallas was passed which created regulations regarding abortifacient drugs. It is no coincidence that the first Roman legislation regarding abortion followed the Christian influence on the emperors, which continued into the fourth and fifth centuries as well.

Christianity Established: The Fourth and Fifth Centuries

After the rule of Constantine and the so-called “Christianization” of the Roman Empire, the practice of abortion definitely increased in the church. Pagan influence was directly responsible for an increased use of contraceptives by Christians, and when those failed, abortion.⁶⁷ During the first three centuries of Christianity, all of the followers were very new to the religion and therefore simply followed the fathers without asking questions. However, as years passed people began to challenge the theology and legality behind certain Christian perspectives, including the perspective on abortion. During the fourth and fifth centuries, the first laws were passed regarding abortion and the five main church fathers- Basil, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Chrysostom- all commented on the practice.

The Councils

The Council of Elvira

In 305 A.D., the Council of Elvira was created and was the first Christian body to designate a punishment for abortion. In this council, nineteen bishops from all over Spain gathered in order to decide how they would take preventative methods to ensure that the pagan culture did not influence Christian ideals in a negative way.⁶⁸ As for abortion, the council created Canons 63 and 68 which stated:

⁶⁷ Hardon, John A. *Euthanasia and Abortion*. Bardstown, KY: Eternal Life.

⁶⁸ Hefele, Karl Joseph von, William Robinson Clark, Henry Nutcombe Oxenham, and E. H. Plumptre. *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007.

“Canon 63: If a woman becomes pregnant by committing adultery, while her husband is absent, and after the act she destroys the child (abortion), it is proper to keep her from communion until death because she has doubled her crime.”⁶⁹

“Canon 68: If a catechumen should conceive by an adulterer, and should procure the death of the child, she can be baptized only at the end of her life.”⁷⁰

Although the subject of these two canons is more addressing infanticide than abortion, Canon 63 was still applied to abortion cases by fourth century Christian writers, such as Basil the Great. In Canon 63, the mother is given the worst punishment that the church could possibly give, since the death penalty was not in the church’s vocabulary. The severity of this punishment peaks volumes regarding the church’s abhorrence of abortion due to its murderous qualities. Many argue that Canon 63 has such a horrific punishment because of the adultery, and not because of the abortion. However, Canon 43 states that the punishment for adultery one time is five years of penance, and the punishment for continuous adultery is 10 years of penance. Therefore, it is not solely the adultery that earning the severity of the punishment, but rather the abortion itself. Canon 5 prescribes five years of penance for striking a slave who then subsequently dies, and Canon 71 states that sodomites are to never have communion again. This means that the church fathers saw the severity of abortion as somewhere between killing a slave and sexual perversion.

The Council of Ancyra

⁶⁹ Hefele, Karl Joseph von, William Robinson Clark, Henry Nutcombe Oxenham, and E. H. Plumptre. *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007.

⁷⁰ A catechumen is a Christian that has converted but has not yet been baptized or confirmed.

In 314 A.D., the Council of Ancyra met with the purpose to deal with Christians who had participated in pagan idolatry and immorality. The council wrote concerning infanticide and abortion:

“Canon 21: Women who prostitute themselves, and who kill the children thus begotten, or who try to destroy them when in their wombs, are by ancient law excommunicated to the end of their lives. We, however, have softened their punishment and condemned them to the various appointed degrees of penance for ten years.”⁷¹

The only different between the Council of Ancyra and the Council of Elvira is that Elvira had a harsher punishment for abortion. Though the Council of Ancyra designates a softer punishment for abortion, it does not mean that abortion is acceptable on any grounds. Abortion is still abhorred by the church and is still murder. The reason for this is because as Christianity developed more and more, it set up almost a legal system that maintained a distinction between moral and legal evaluations. From a legal perspective, abortion was classified somewhere in between unpremeditated murder, which was punishable for five to seven years, and premeditated murder, which deserved a life sentence. This is why the Council of Ancyra decided to change the punishment, though the severity of the abortion in God’s eyes never changed. This ten year sentence for abortion would continue into the Middle Ages. The two most distinctive factors of the Council of Ancyra go as follows:

1. The Council of Ancyra made no distinction between the formed or unformed fetus.

⁷¹ Hefele, Karl Joseph von, William Robinson Clark, Henry Nutcombe Oxenham, and E. H. Plumptre. *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007.

2. The Council of Ancyra said nothing about those who help a woman to abort or forced a woman to abort, but instead only addressed the mother.

These two main factors paved the way for one of the most profound and powerful fourth century statements on abortion made in a letter from Basil of Caesarea to the bishop of Iconium, Amphilochius.

The Fathers

Basil of Caesarea (Basil the Great): 330-379 A.D.

Basil of Caesarea's writings were read and appreciated by pagans and Christians alike.⁷² His dogmatic lifestyle was centered on the purity and unity of the church. In modern day, scholars are able to understand Basil's teachings through his letters sent out to confused bishops. Amphilochius, the bishop of Iconium, wrote to Basil in order to better understand church order and moral problems, one of his concerns being murder. In Basil's response to the bishop, he included this statement addressing abortion:

“She who has deliberately destroyed a fetus has to pay the penalty of murder. And there is no exact inquiry among us as whether the fetus was formed or unformed. For, here it is not only the child to be born that is vindicated, but also the woman herself who made an attempt against her own life, because usually the women die in such attempts. Furthermore, added to this is the destruction of the embryo, another murder, at least according to the intention of those who dare these things. Nevertheless, we should not

⁷² Basil of Caesarea was one of the Cappadocian Fathers, an Orthodox Theologian, and the founder of Eastern Monasticism.

prolong their penance until death, but should accept a term of ten years, and we should determine the treatment not by time, but by manner of repentance.”⁷³

In this letter, Basil removes any notion of legalism which would minimize either seriousness of abortion or the grace of God. First, he dismisses the formed or unformed argument as irrelevant. For him, intention is what matter above all because all life- that of the child and of the mother- is sacred. Second, Basil recognizes the value and necessity of condemning abortion as a crime and a sin, but he views sincere repentance as a valid sign of God’s grace and repentance.⁷⁴ Basil states that abortion is not to be seen as an unforgivable sin, but it does have serious disregard for the sanctity of human life, and usually results in two murders deserving punishment.⁷⁵

Later in the same letter, Basil goes on to condemn those who help, encourage, or force women to abort by saying: “Moreover, those, too, who give drugs causing abortion are deliberate murderers themselves, as well as those receiving the poison which kills the child.”⁷⁶ Overall, Basil condemns all abortion as murder and deems the murderers to include the woman having the abortion, in addition to anyone directly involved. Basil, however, notes that abortion is a sin to be judged by God through the church, and also to be forgiven by his grace only when there is repentance.

Ambrose: 339-397 A.D.

Another great Western father was Ambrose, a well-educated bishop of Milan who modeled his teachings after Basil the Great. Ambrose is famous for his series of teachings on

⁷³ Basil, and James Scudamore. *Letter*. Paris, 1638.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

creation. During this series, Ambrose speaks of the birds and their nurturing example to humanity. Ambrose criticizes the “females of our species” for not nursing their own children, or for exposing their own children. He notes that the wealthy are especially guilty of abortion and states:

“The wealthy, in order that their inheritance may not be divided among several, deny in the very womb their own progeny. By use of parricidal mixtures they snuff out the fruit of their wombs in the genital organs themselves. In this way, life is taken away before it is given... Who except man himself has taught us ways of repudiating children?”⁷⁷

In the same work, Ambrose later addresses the procreative purpose of intercourse. He exalts the unborn child as God’s handiwork and quotes Jeremiah 1:5 which states, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.”⁷⁸ Ambrose then goes onto say that because God carefully and specifically formed the child in the womb, abortion is not only murder, but that it also shows utter disrespect for the Lord.⁷⁹

Jerome: 342-420 A.D.

One of Basil’s Western contemporaries, Jerome, who was known to be an “uncompromising and outspoken critic of contemporary morals.”⁸⁰ In one of Jerome’s most famous letters, he states his observations on Roman society and its impact on the Mother Church:

“The Mother Church loses unmarried women daily to immorality, for they drink potions to ensure sterility and are guilty of murdering a human being not yet conceived. Some,

⁷⁷ Ambrose, and John J. Savage. *Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

⁷⁸ Jeremiah 1:5

⁷⁹ Grisez, Germain. *Abortion: The Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments*. New York, 1972.

⁸⁰ Jerome. *The Letters of St. Jerome*. Translated by Thomas Comerford Lawler. New York: Newman Press, 1963.

when they learn they are with child through sin, practice abortion by the use of drugs, Frequently, they die themselves and are brought before the rulers of the lower world guilty of three crimes: suicide, adultery against Christ, and murder of an unborn child.”⁸¹

In this graphic observation, Jerome points out his concern of abortion, especially when practiced by women who have conceived outside of marriage, which he forcefully condemns. The two traditional themes of murder and guilt both reappear here in Jerome’s letter as well. But, Jerome brings up a new theme that when a woman has an abortion and dies, that it is suicide.

The Apostolic Constitution: 380 A.D.

Another work contemporary to Basil, Ambrose and Jerome was a manual of Christian life and principles that was compiled in Syria. This piece, the *Apostolic Constitution*, was a combination of the former ideas of the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Didache*, in addition to fourth century ideals. In a list of immoral practices, including illicit sexual relations, magic, witchcraft, and fraud this statement is present which states, “Thou shalt not slay thy child by causing abortion, nor kill that which is begotten. For everything that is shaped and hath received a soul from God, if it be slain, shall be avenged, as being unjustly destroyed.”⁸²

This text parallels the *Didache* in its condemnation of abortion and infanticide, but adds the idea of an in-womb soul. This soul idea was unknown to second century Christians and was very rare in the fourth century. Many people argue that this quote makes a differentiation between formed or unformed when it speaks about a child being “shaped.” However, even if the author does make this distinction, he still calls the destruction of formed or unformed as murder, so it ultimately does not matter. This *Apostolic Constitution* proves that the thoughts of second

⁸¹ Jerome. *The Letters of St. Jerome*. Translated by Thomas Comerford Lawler. New York: Newman Press, 1963.

⁸² Pius. *The Apostolic Constitution*. 1956.

century Christians survived into the early fourth century unharmed. Despite pagan influence, the church managed to maintain its ethical position on abortion, no matter formed or unformed. The late fourth century and the early fifth century soon would produce two great commentators on the subject, one producing an extremely liberal view, and the other very strict.

Augustine and Chrysostom

Augustine is known to be the early church's greatest theologian in the West, and Chrysostom is known to be the early church's greatest preacher in the East.

Augustine: 354-430 A.D.

No church father ever gave more attention to the topic of abortion than did Augustine, and no church father has ever received more attention on his position regarding abortion than Augustine. But, before addressing Augustine's actual position on abortion, one must first understand Augustine's history with the origin of life, sin, and marriage. Throughout his career, Augustine continually had trouble with the origin of the soul. He went through a time in which the soul was pre-existent, then he believed that the soul came from the parents, then that the soul is created by God and given at conception, or maybe even that the soul is infused at the time of formation.⁸³ Augustine generally distinguished between the formed or unformed human. He believed that the destruction of a formed child was murder, but that the destruction of the unformed child was only immoral and worthy of a fine, but was not murder.⁸⁴ Augustine strongly opposed contraceptives and abortifacients because they denied the purpose of sex and marriage. He stated:

⁸³ Huser, Roger John. *The Crime of Abortion in Canon Law*. Cleveland, OH: John T. Zubal, 1986.

⁸⁴ Augustine. *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*. Compiled by Albert Cook Outler. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.

“Sometimes, indeed, this lustful cruelty, or if you please, cruel lust, resorts to such extravagant methods as to use poisonous drugs to secure barrenness; or else, if unsuccessful in this, to destroy the conceived seed by some means previous to birth, preferring that its offspring should rather perish than receive vitality; or if it was advancing to life within the womb, should be slain before it was born.”⁸⁵

In this, Augustine absolutely condemns sterilization and continues to distinguish between the formed and unformed child. Augustine held a high view of life and defined it as the work of God from conception. In his work *Enchiridion*, Augustine began to ponder the fate of the “unformed” child if its fate were not death. He asks questions such as, “Is the unformed child damned by God?” or “When does the child actually become human?” Augustine then begins to reconsider the logical consequences of his doctrines of the soul and of sin. He also examines the extremely difficult topic of therapeutic abortions, or abortions due to medical reasons. He states:

“To deny, for example, that those fetuses ever lived at all which are cut away limb by limb and cast out of the wombs of pregnant women, lest the mothers die also if the fetuses were left there dead, would seem much too rash.”⁸⁶

Later, Augustine notes that as he began to handle abortion from a theological perspective, his thoughts on abortion matured and were able to find expression. He realized that life is “God’s own work” and that humans are unable to truly understand God at work. Therefore, humans cannot ascertain the point at which the fetus begins to live, so Augustine chooses to emphasize the value of human life, whether actual or potential, and decides that abortion truly is murder at

⁸⁵ Augustine. *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*. Compiled by Albert Cook Outler. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

all stages of the pregnancy, simply because Augustine was not positive at which point life began.⁸⁷

John Chrysostom

On the other hand, John Chrysostom was an impassioned Christian who dedicated his work to moral conviction of Christians. His sermons in the late fourth and early fifth century thundered against moral laxity in society and in the church. He actually earned his name of Chrysostom, which means “golden-mouthed,” through his fiery sermons. In a sermon on fornication, Chrysostom vividly condemns abortion:

“Why sow where the ground makes it its care to destroy the fruit? Where there are many efforts at abortion? Where there is murder before there is birth? For even the harlot thou dost not let continue a mere harlot, but markest her a murderer also.⁸⁸ You see how drunkenness leads to whoredom, whoredom to adultery, and adultery to murder; or rather to something even worse than murder. For I have no name to give it, since it does not take off the thing born, but prevents its being born. Why then do you abuse the gift of God, and fight with His laws, and follow after what is a curse as if a blessing, and make the chamber of procreation a chamber of murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter? For with a view to drawing more money by being agreeable and object of longing to her lovers, even this she is not backward to do, so heaping upon the head a great pile of fire. For even if the daring deed be hers, yet the causing of it is of another.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Augustine. *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*. Compiled by Albert Cook Outler. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006.

⁸⁸ A harlot is another name for a prostitute.

⁸⁹ Chrysostom, John. *Homily IV*. New York, NY: Hellenic Orthodox Church St. Eleftherios, 1946.

Chrysostom combines almost all of the themes of his predecessors into one sermon. He associates abortion with sexual immorality, calls abortion murder, deems a punishment for abortion, and sees the child as an object of God's care. Chrysostom even classifies abortion as "something worse than murder." Chrysostom closes by stating that the solution to this problem is found in Romans 13:14 which states, "Let us put on Christ and be with him continually... having Him evermore visible in us."⁹⁰

Augustine and Chrysostom obviously approached abortion from two different perspectives. For Augustine, it was a case of theological and moral ambiguity. However, for Chrysostom abortion was a clearly moral evil. Yet both, like Basil, saw that the grace of God could still be given to those who had sinned through the power of redemption. This agreement explains the shared belief between the three theologians that God's care for human life begins before birth.

Despite legal and theological disputes, the fourth and fifth centuries maintained the earlier Christian stance against abortion. In addition, the themes of forgiveness and grace were introduced for those who had committed the sin of abortion and had repented. This thesis will now will examine the forces that spread this Christian view across the world.

⁹⁰ Chrysostom, John. *Homily IV*. New York, NY: Hellenic Orthodox Church St. Eleftherios, 1946.

Abortion and The Early Church

Thus far, this thesis has addressed the Christian perspective on abortion, and has mentioned the fight against Christianity as posed by the pagan community. But, how was the rest of the non-Christian world dealing with the abortion issue? Christians definitely were not alone in their opposition against abortion; Jews and even pagans opposed the practice for various reasons. To understand the motives for the early Christian position on abortion, we must compare it to Christian and non-Christians reasons for opposing it. We must also consider the relationship of the Christian anti-abortion stance to other Christian ethical beliefs both culturally and ethically.

The Cultural Context

A careful study into the interworking of the Christian perspective on abortion reveals that the Christians, Jews, and pagans alike had some of the same concerns. Concern about abortion was shared by Christians with outspoken pagans in medicine, law, philosophy, rhetoric, and even religion. Both pagans and Christians criticized abortion as a method to hide illicit sexual activity. Both groups cared deeply about the safety of the mother who took poisons in order to abort. Concern for the life of the child was what distinguished the Christian view from the pagan view. Pagan anti-abortion statements were consistently mindful of the welfare of the state, the father, and occasionally the woman, but never of the fetus. Christians discarded all pagan opinion about the child being part of the mother's body. Instead, Christians believed that the child was an independent human being, having DNA from both the mother and the father, thus distinguishing it from the mother. In addition to this, Christians always considered the unborn as God's creation, while pagans typically discarded the idea of the Christian God as a whole.

A more noticeable difference between the Christians and pagans that contributed to their individual stances on abortion was that pagans were typically Stoics. Christians were actually very similar to the Stoics, but there was one major difference. Stoic ethical views were expressed in the form of diatribes, which are well organized rhetorical essays in which questions were answered and arguments were made regarding right and natural acts, but no behavior was demanded. Contrastingly, Christian ethics consisted of commandments requiring action in order to please the living God. The strictness that was part of Christianity truly set it apart from the Stoic pagans.

Before completely leaving Stoicism in order to address the Jewish position, first it is important to consider two issues important to both the Stoics and to the Jews: the purpose of marriage and the morality of contraception. The Stoics believed that marriage had only two purposes: community between husband and wife, and procreation.⁹¹ Similarly, the Jews saw marriage as a companionship that was obligated to procreate in order to further the population. For both Stoics and Jews, marriage was obviously very important, but procreation was the more important, ultimate goal. The Stoics however only believed in intercourse for procreation, and detested it for pleasure, while the Jews allowed procreation for both pleasure and procreation.⁹² The Stoics, therefore, of course would reject contraception because they only believed in intercourse for procreation. The Jews, on the other hand, did not reject contraceptives due to any opposition to the reasoning behind marital sex, but they did disapprove of contraceptives because the Jews did not like any prevention of the flow of the seed into the woman's body. Such means

⁹¹ Sterba, James P. *Ethics: Classical Western Texts in Feminist and Multicultural Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

⁹² Ibid.

of contraception were believed to be corrupt because they destroyed the seed and hence, life itself.⁹³

The earliest Christians, however, did not mirror either Stoic or Jewish thought on procreation. Unlike the Stoics, Christians did not consider the sole purpose of sex in marriage to be procreation, but rather, as a unifying action between man and woman. Christians did, however, absolutely detest contraceptives for three main reasons. First, many contraceptives were classified as poisons and were dispensed by people of sorcery, which Christianity was against.⁹⁴ Second, contraception was used to cover up illicit sexual activity, which was not allowed in the Christian church. Finally, the Christians were repulsed by the sexual lifestyles of the Gnostics, who utilized contraceptives frequently. In some religious ceremonies, Gnostics would indulge in non-reproductive intercourse by means of contraceptives, and Christians detested this.⁹⁵ Gnosticism was a major opponent to Christian ethics, and therefore can usually serve as a foil to the Christian faith.

The question now arises: Did Christians not accept abortion due to their frustration of contraceptives and the purpose of sex, or for other reasons? Well, Christians did sometimes prohibit contraceptives and abortion in the same context when speaking about drugs, magic, or concealing sexual immorality. In addition, taking sterilizing drugs and having sexual intercourse during pregnancy were sometimes viewed, like abortion, as a means of preventing human life. However, condemnation of abortion and contraception originally appeared at different times for different reasons.

⁹³ Feldman, David M. *Birth control and Abortion in Jewish law*. New York: Schocken Books, 1978.

⁹⁴ Noonan, John T. *The Church and Contraception: The Issues at Stake*. New York: Paulist Press Deus Books, 1967.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

The timing of the condemnation of abortion is much earlier than the first condemnation of contraceptives. Explicit condemnation of abortion stems from the early second century works such as the *Didache*, *Epistle of Barnabus*, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*. In contrast, the first condemnation of contraceptives does not occur until the third century writings of Hippolytus.⁹⁶ Even then, Hippolytus only refers to “drugs producing sterility,” which could be a poor translation for abortive drugs anyway.⁹⁷ In fact, most Christian references to contraception are more likely to be references to abortifacients or acts of castration, homosexual intercourse, or masturbation, which are contraceptives by nature.⁹⁸ More frequent than specific references to contraception were references to the procreative purpose of sex. Such statements that implicitly banned contraception would not surface until 50 years after the first writings of abortion were produced. This time difference proves that the Christian ideals on abortion did not stem from Christian ideals against contraceptives, but rather, these ideas on abortion emerged independently. Not only this time difference, but Christians had different motives for the abhorrence of abortion and contraceptives. Christians disliked contraceptives because they allowed for leisurely sex at no cost, and the church wanted to emphasize the sanctity of marriage and sex. Contrastingly, Christians were against abortion because it was murder and expressed a disregard for life, life being something valued greatly by Christians. Finally, abortion and contraceptives are typically addressed in different contexts and are not usually paired together. Abortion is spoken about as a form of violence, tagging along with murder and infanticide, while contraception is not allowed due to the procreative purpose of unifying sex.

⁹⁶ Hippolytus, and M. David Litwa. *Refutation of All Heresies*. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016.

⁹⁷ Noonan, John T. *The Church and Contraception: The Issues at Stake*. New York: Paulist Press Deus Books, 1967.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Early Christian opposition to abortion did not arise because it hindered procreation, but rather, because it was the murder of an unborn child. Though Stoic ideals influenced Christian thought on procreation and contraceptives, the Jewish opinion against abortion dominated the Christian ideals. The sanctity of life was fundamental to the Jewish faith, just as it is in Christianity. Therefore, Christians were not alone in their opposition to abortion.

The Ethical Context

The early Christian love toward life and hatred toward bloodshed, both inherited from the Jews, contrasted sharply with the violence and disrespect for human life which plagued the pagan society and culture. In pagan society, the lowest class containing slaves, the poor, women, and children were often maltreated. The Greco-Roman society demonstrated its disregard of human life through war, gladiator fights, crucifixions, exposure of newborns, and through abortions. Christians believed that the surrounding culture favored bloodshed over love, which was opposite to Christianity.

Christians had to continually fight against the social norm and had to choose love over hate through nonviolence and compassion. Jesus' life on earth was the epitome of these two qualities. He commanded his followers to "Love your neighbor as yourself," and to "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."⁹⁹ Throughout Jesus' life, crucifixion, death, and resurrection, He continually exhibited this neighborly love to all he encountered. He permitted no violence and called for his disciples to be "peacemakers."¹⁰⁰ Jesus also commanded his followers to provide for the poor, weak, and oppressed. Jesus was known for his unusual love to

⁹⁹ Matthew 5:43

¹⁰⁰ Matthew 5:9

social outcasts such as lepers, the poor, women, children who Romans, and even some Jews, absolutely detested.

Christians demonstrated love not only to each other, but to all of God's creation, as commanded by Jesus Christ. This lifestyle of love, even towards non-believers, soon became very connected with the issue of nonviolence. The link between the two is stated by Clement of Alexandria in an addresses to wealthy Christians. He strongly encourages the Christians to abandon the Roman custom of buying a legion, and to instead form an "army" of the poor and weak by providing for them.¹⁰¹ He states:

"Contrary to the rest of men enlist for yourself an army without weapons, without war, without bloodshed, without wrath, without stain- pious old men, orphans to dear God, widows armed with gentleness, men adorned with love. Obtain with your wealth as guards of body and soul such as these whose commander is God."¹⁰²

Clement's statement is not crazy; it simply represents the entire body of Christian literatures from the first three centuries by capitalizing on Christian discipleship and love and emphasizing the abhorrence for violence and bloodshed. Jesus' definition of a "neighbor" challenged Greco-Roman thought on classes. Distinctions between people- Gentile and Jew, man and woman, adult and child, slave and free, rich and poor- were obliterated by the commands to love all and forsake violence. All people are one's neighbor, therefore no blood can be rightfully shed. Bloodshed of any kind was equated to murder, which eventually became one of the three mortal sins, in addition to idolatry and immorality.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ A legion is until of 3,000-6,000 men in the Ancient Roman Army.

¹⁰² Clement of Alexandria. *Who Is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved?* Translated by William Wilson. Memphis: Bottom of the Hill Publishing, 2012.

¹⁰³ Bainton, Roland H. *Christian Attitudes Towards War and Peace*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960.

Christians extended this prohibition of bloodshed specifically to acts such as infant exposure, infanticide, gladiator fights, and abortions.¹⁰⁴ Logically following this was the Christian opposition to military service and war deeming pacifism as the official position of Christians until the time of Constantine.¹⁰⁵ These Christian ideals of nonviolence go much deeper than what this paper will address. The point is that the Christian abhorrence of abortion stems from the Christian hate of murder, and because abortion is murder, the subsequent detestation of abortion. Also, this love of life and hate of murder applies to all other Christian ideals including military and basic treatment of people by Christians.

The Christian case for abortion proceeded in this way: Jesus taught and lived a life of love for his neighbor, especially his lower class neighbor. He also exemplified a life of nonviolence, teaching that God is the Creator of all and that any form of attack on another is murder. The unborn child is a human life, a neighbor. Violence against the child, therefore, is violence against one's neighbor, and the shedding of the blood of the child is murder of one's neighbor, the ultimate lack of love.¹⁰⁶ Since Christians viewed abortion as bloodshed, murder, and lack of neighborly love, of course they had to reject abortion because they fundamentally believed against all of its qualities.

The increased popularity of abortion in the Christian community began as war became more and more accepted in society. As the times of the Crusades came about and men were forced into war, in order to justify the fight, many Christians felt the need to abandon their fundamental view against bloodshed. However, the Christian perspective still stands as a murder

¹⁰⁴ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Bainton, Roland H. *Christian Attitudes Towards War and Peace*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960.

¹⁰⁶ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

against an unborn human life, though so-called “Christians” decided to put this “inconvenient” view aside. From Constantine to Jesus, the Christian perspective can be described as consistently pro-life. These ideals were in favor of life for all humans, regardless of age or social standing. These beliefs also chose love instead of hate, peace instead of war, justice instead of oppression, life instead of bloodshed. Rooted in a Jewish love of life and hatred of bloodshed, the Christian perspective was formed and holistically has not changed, because the persona of Jesus Christ has not changed. To follow Jesus Christ was to forsake bloodshed, and many Christians just were not strong enough to live this truth out, while others were.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & the Early Church: Christian, Jewish & Pagan Attitudes in the Greco-Roman World*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

Relevance of The Early Church Today

When determining a Christian perspective, it is important to understand and consult the thoughts and opinions of Christians in other time periods, and in other places around the world. As modern philosopher Daniel Jenkins stated, “Theology is a conversation with living voices of the past and of the present.”¹⁰⁸ Though the men spoken about in this section lived many years ago, the importance of the early church history is undeniable. In this period, a fresh new religion captivated the hearts of many. But why? Only their first hand sources will tell. Living out this new faith in a largely pagan environment proved to be challenging, but very fruitful because the many implications of Christianity were able to unfold and truly develop the newly introduced religion.

Evidence for the early Christian’s position on abortion is conclusive, but relating that position to the problems confronting the modern church is sometimes difficult. Nevertheless, no historical discussion would truly be complete without interpreting the significance and applying it to modern day.

Evaluating the Early Church

In the early church, Theologian C.J. Cadoux writes in his work, *The Early Christian Attitude to War*, that:

“The example of our Christian forefathers indeed can never be to itself a sufficient basis for the settlement of our own conduct today: the very variations of that example would make such dependence impossible. At the same time, the solution of our ethical problems will involve a study of the mind of Christendom on this same or similar questions during

¹⁰⁸ This quote is derived from Daniel Jenkins in a lecture of Princeton Theological Seminary.

bygone generation, and for this purpose, perhaps no period of Christian history is so important than that of the first three centuries.”¹⁰⁹

There are four main questions that are used in interpreting church history and evaluating and applying beliefs and practices of Christians of the past to today’s situations:

1. Is the historical belief or practice based on Scripture?
2. Does the belief or practice stand the test of universality?¹¹⁰
3. Does this belief or practice stand the test of time?
4. Is the past situation somehow analogous to the contemporary situation?

The first and fourth questions are based on interpretation, while the second and third deal with church history. The tests of universality and time reveal that during the first five centuries, abortion was rejected by Christians everywhere. It is only in the last 30 years that abortion has truly picked up momentum in the Christian community. The test of analogy shows many parallels between the situation faced by early Christians and the situation faced by Christians today. Though the modern abortive methods are safer and more sophisticated, they are still committing the same crime as 2000 years ago. Also, the practice of abortion is undeniably wide spread, reaching the church and the pagan world around them. However, one thing that has stayed stagnant is the debate of when human life actually begins.

The abortion argument answers questions two, three, and four, but question one must be answered as well. The evaluation of the early church on abortion mostly consists of the decision of whether or not the perspective against abortion reflects Scripture or not, which is what the

¹⁰⁹ Cadoux, Cecil John. *Early Christian Attitude*. Edinburgh: Clark, 1955.

¹¹⁰ This is testing whether or not a belief was only in a certain area, or if it was true for Christians in multiple regions.

next section of the thesis will address. In totality, the consistency and logic of the church's view on abortion is coherent and merited the consideration of even those who are not accepting of it. Rooted in Biblical themes, the abortion perspective functions as a guide within the Christian community and a moral influence in the surrounding world.

The perplexing issue of abortion is not only divisive in society, but within the Christian community as well. Among non-Christians, the only appeal from the Christian perspective is general morality rather than the rational purpose of man in society. Because Christians are not completely in agreement on the issues of legitimate or illegitimate abortions, the theological grounds for and against must be examined. Even if one specific verse seems to indirectly or directly reference abortion, the theology behind it must still complete the task of providing the rationale within which the topic of abortion may be discussed.

The purpose of this section is to discuss the specific theological issues that abortion addresses, and give a concrete answer as to how the Bible responds to these concerns. In this way, a more theologically consistent view on abortion may be created and therefore utilized by Christians. Abortion, in this section, will be treated as a non-fundamental issue of systematic theology. What this means is that though abortion is not one of the typical fundamental issues of systematic theology, it will be treated as one in its analysis.

The method of systematic theology analysis was chosen among two other methods- exegetical analysis, and tractarian. Exegetical analysis is meant to be an objective analysis of Biblical text, showing what the authors believed and taught in their individual time periods. The issue with this is that everything the authors believed and taught, though it is a part of the Christian church, may not be applicable in the same way today. As an extreme example, God commanded the Israelites to “wipe out” the Canaanites in order to further His kingdom. However, very few Christians today would argue that a command to slaughter thousands of non-believers in the current day would be a command from the Christian God. Tractarian theology aligns with the beliefs and teachings of Martin Luther. In this way, whenever Luther approaches a contentious issue, he created a “tract” in which he would write down the Christian approach to

the issue, according to his own merit. On the other hand, systematic theology is an attempt to convey the overarching Christian message in a coherent and consistent fashion. This methodology demonstrates that the Christian faith is not at all comprised of loosely held theological convictions, but rather, a “system” of sorts. Tractarian theology takes portions of the Bible and analyzes them separately, while systematic theology analyzes all pieces of the Bible as a whole unit. Many people attempt to deal with the issue of abortion through tractarian theology; however, this thesis will address the issue within the context of the Christian worldview and the Christian principles regarding life.

What Does the Bible Say that Humanity is?

In the Genesis 1:26-27 it states, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” This verse demonstrates the fact that when God created Adam and Eve, He created them “in His image.” Humanity is the sole species created by God and in the image of God, therefore humanity specifically, in terms of Christianity, is defined by being in the image of God. By being in this image, God enables humans to have a limited understanding of Him and of His vast character. Because humans are created in God’s image, they can share His attributes by being be compassionate, faithful, honest, kind, patient, and fair. The difference is that in humans, these attributes are distorted by sin, which also resides in human nature.

In addition to this likeness in God, humans are differentiated from the remainder of creation by being given authority over the beings of the Earth that are not in the image of God. For example, humans have dominion over animals, sea creatures, and plants because these living

species are not in the image of God, while humans are. This control thus puts humans at the highest point in an Earthly hierarchy as deemed by God the Father.

What Does the Bible Say that Murder is?

In Genesis, murder is first viewed through the story of Cain and Abel.¹¹¹ In this, Adam and Eve, the primary humans created by God, gave birth to two children. The first child was named Cain who worked in the fields day and night, while the second child was named Abel who was a shepherd to a flock of sheep. At their entry into adulthood, the brothers were asked to each bring a sacrifice to the Lord. In an answer to this command, Cain brought the fruit of the ground, while Abel brought the first of his flock, the finest sheep he had. As a result, the Lord had favor on Abel, however, the Lord detested Cain because Cain did not sacrifice his very best for the Lord. In his anger and jealousy toward his brother, Cain murdered Abel. The Lord then spoke to Cain and asked him, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”¹¹² This story of the murder of Abel is the first human-to-human slaughter in the Bible, and therefore gives God the first opportunity to address this type of situation. After God announces Cain’s punishment to him, Cain replies by saying that the punishment is greater than he can bear, which demonstrates the harshness of the punishment. Rather than striking Cain down, God gives him the most horrible of punishments which basically takes Cain’s chance of success in a career away. If God did not absolutely detest murder, He would not have given such a horrible punishment to Cain.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Genesis 4:1-16

¹¹² Genesis 4: 10-12

¹¹³ Genesis 4:13

Therefore, God allows the severity of the given punishment to speak for the horrendous crime and its brutality.

As a result of this previous conclusion, the question of “What is murder according to the Bible?” can be answered. Thus far in Genesis, two different types of deaths have taken place, that of animals and that of humans. The killing of animals by Adam in the Garden of Eden as a source of nutrient is encouraged by the Lord because the animals are underneath human reign, and are therefore subject to human power. Any malicious killing of animals is definitely considered as cruelty, but not murder. True murder, which is deserving of harsh punishment according to God, is when one human in the image of God takes the life of another human bearing the image of God. This definition excludes man killing animal or animal killing animal, because these situations simply exhibit the circle of life. However, it does include man killing man, which is demonstrated in the Cain and Abel situation.

Contrastingly, not every instance of death of man by man is considered murder according to the Bible. According to Exodus 21:12-13, an accidental killing of a human by a human is not murder. This verse states, “Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate.” This verse indicates that intentionality dictates between murder and non-murder. If a human is intentionally being slaughtered by another human, then it is murder. This idea of unintentional killing is reinforced in Numbers 35:22-25 which states, “But if without hostility someone suddenly shoves another or throws something at him unintentionally or, without seeing him, drops a stone on him that could kill him, and he dies, then since he was not his enemy and he did not intend to harm him, the assembly must judge between him and the avenger of blood according to these regulations. The assembly must protect the one accused of murder from the

avenger of blood and send him back to the city of refuge to which he fled.” Also, the killing of a human by a human for self-defense reasons is also not considered murder. Exodus 22:2 states, “If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed.” Once again, the intention of the killer is the topic in question. Because the killing was not premeditated, it is not murder according to the Bible. In addition to this, a killing performed in an attempt to save the life of an innocent person is not murder. The verse pertaining to this, Exodus 2:11-12, states, “One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (God did not judge Moses as a murderer because he was protecting the life of the slave).” Killing becomes murder when, and only when, it is not properly justified, and intentionality behind it is clear. According to the Bible, Christians can use whatever force necessary to protect their own life from a hostile aggressor, or to save the life of an innocent from such imminent, life-threatening danger. The difference between the legal or illegal use of deadly force is really a matter of motive, intent, and justification, which all stem from the pages of Scripture.

It is true that an argument cannot be based solely off of a one-time instance of Cain and Abel, but the Bible repeatedly warns against the crime of murder. One of the most telling instances is demonstrated by the Ten Commandments. One of the Ten Commandments is “Thou shalt not kill, or murder.” The Ten Commandments are the most direct form of God’s expectations to His followers, besides sending His son as an example. “Thou shalt not murder” explicitly commands Christians against murder, and aligns with the same view taken by God in the Cain and Abel situation. In conclusion, as proven throughout the history of the church and

now through the Cain and Abel story, murder is obviously hated by God, and is therefore against the Christian faith. In the case of abortion, since it is an intentional killing of a human being, abortion is murder.

When Does Someone become in the image of God?

Prior to understanding full humanity, one must comprehend the aspects of Christian humanity, one of which includes the “Image of God.” When studying this idea, Genesis 1:27 is present which states, “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” The Hebrew translation of this verse is crucial and assists Christians in finding exactly how this “Image of God” is applied. The Hebrew word for “man” in this verse is adam (אָדָם). Depending on the usage, this Hebrew word can mean “man,” “mankind,” or the name “Adam.” The two subcategories of mankind, male and female, are also distinguished in this passage. This linguistic choice by God is profound because it makes the point that the image of God is only available to mankind, and not to simply male and female of any species, as many people argue. Additionally, God only breathes the breath of life into the nostrils of mankind, and to no other creatures.¹¹⁴

As a result of this conclusion, the image of God is taken on by mankind at the point of humanity, which is at conception. Humanity begins at conception because when the sperm fertilizes the egg, a new organism with unique DNA is created. Because this organism has both a human mother and a human father, it is thus in the early stages of humanity, but is still in humanity. And because humans are in the image of God by definition, then this human takes on the image of God at conception because that is when humanity begins.

¹¹⁴ Genesis 1:26, 2:7

Many people believe that the embryo does not taken on humanity until 40 days after conception. Through this belief, the killing of the embryo would not be murder at 39 days, 23 hours, 59 minutes, and 59 seconds, but it would be murder at exactly 40 days. This is a faulty argument, however, because it is illogical to argue that one second, much less one millisecond, could be the deciding factor between humanity or non-humanity, killing or murder, life or death. The logic of this argument is absent not only for this temporal reason, but also because, if the developing child is not human prior to this 40 day mark, then what is it?

A hypothetical situation will now be analyzed in order to test the logic of this counterargument. Hypothetically, a fetus is not yet in the Image of God because it has only been in the womb for 30 days and is not human yet. However, the fetus is most definitely alive, and it is therefore absolutely being slaughtered at the point of abortion. The murder of a “non-human” living embryo or fetus, out of non-defense reasons, is still extremely cruel at the absolute least. Any living being resides in the created order of God, and any malicious killing toward this created order is absolute cruelty. However, this is a hypothetical situation, with the real situation being much more serious. The fetus actually being eliminated is in fact a human, therefore, the slaughtering of this child is absolute murder because the child is in the image of God. Therefore, because the image of God is taken on at the point of humanity which coincides with conception, abortion is murder of a human being in the image of God and it absolutely detested by the Father.

What if the Embryo is Simply an Extension of the Mother?

Many present arguments, even in the Christian community, argue that the embryo is just an extension of the mother for the first 40 days following conception, meaning that it is not a separate human in the first few weeks. In actuality, for the mother to have a living extension, this

extension would have to have the exact same DNA coding regions as the mother in order to still be classified as the mother. Each individual has a specific DNA sequence that is unique only to them. The conceived child does not fit this specification because the fetal genome contains half of the DNA from the father, and half from the mother. Because the child has half of the DNA from each parent, its DNA is unique to both the mother and the father, making the child a separate being, apart from the mother, with unique genetic makeup. Though the child does rely on the mother for life, this does not mean that it is not its own human being. Newborn babies rely completely on their parents for food water and shelter, just as a child in the womb does to the mother, and newborn humans are definitely not extensions of the mother, and definitely are part of human life.

Abortion Principles

Case of Rape or Incest

The cases of abortion when rape or incest is involved are very difficult topics for many Christians. Christians typically want to be against abortion, but have sympathy for the mother and therefore believe that abortion is acceptable in these specific cases. However, it is important to first analyze once more why the Christian perspective is against abortion. The Christian perspective is against abortion because the act of abortion takes the life of an innocent child away, and is thus murder, which is detested by God. In actuality, the circumstances of a child's conception do not change whether the conceived child is living or not.

In order to make this argument more reasonable, a hypothetical situation will be analyzed. Suppose a woman became pregnant through an incident of rape, but decided to go through with the pregnancy and gave birth to a healthy baby boy. After six years, the mother decided that her son resembled the father too much and was not able to handle it. In terms of Christianity, does the mother have the right to kill her son? The answer is obviously negative not because that would be murder; however, what some Christians do not realize is that this situation is no different than abortion in the case of rape. In both cases, rape was involved, and in both cases the mother murdered her son. The only difference is that in one case the son was in the womb, and in the other, he was out of the womb. The fact that the son was alive does not change because he was a human life in both cases, he just resided in different environments. The circumstances surrounding conception do not change the reality that the son is a human life, and his death in or out of the womb is still absolute murder.

This analysis does not degrade the horrific nature of rape or incest in any way and does not justify the crime either. This issue is more difficult for Christians because of the emotion behind rape. Many Christians argue that the mother who was raped should not be further punished by having the resultant child of the rape. However, though rape is horrific, the resultant child did absolutely nothing to deserve death. Adoption is always an option for mothers who cannot endure caring for this child, but abortion is not an option for the Christian because it is murderous, and the same principle applies to incest.

Case of Contraceptives

As stated in the previous section, the circumstances of conception do not change the fact that the elimination of an embryo, child, or fetus is murder. In the case of contraceptives, if the intention of the contraceptive is to eliminate the conceived child, then this is murder as well and is not acceptable. Because a human life that is in the image of God is formed at the point of conception, any elimination of this life after that point is murder. The value of life in the Christian church is at the utmost importance, and murder is against life in every single aspect.

Conclusion

As stated countless times in this thesis, the Bible, and in the actual writings of the church fathers, murder is absolutely detestable to Christians. At the point of humanity, God says that humans are “in His image,” in God’s very words should never be questioned by Christians.

Abortion is absolutely detestable in the eyes of the Lord and should be abhorred by all Christians. The overwhelming evidence from every single church father shares this view, as does the Bible. Many Christians believe abortion to be an undecided subject in the Bible, but it actually crystal clear. The only hindrance fogging the Christian vision is the worldly view stemming from society, which is not of God. To the Christian, the argument regarding abortion does not relate to “women’s rights” or “feminism,” but rather the value of life as deemed by God the Father.

Abortion is not a tool to fix past mistakes. It itself is a mistake, and most likely a larger mistake than the sin of sexual immortality that abortion attempts to hide. In the eyes of the first century church, abortion is murder. In the eyes of the second century church, abortion is murder. In the eyes of the third century church, abortion is murder. In the eyes of the fourth century church, abortion is murder. In the eyes of the fifth century church, abortion is murder. And finally, in the eyes of God, abortion is murder, without question. If this is not convincing enough to the Christian, then abortion should not be a contemplative issue, but rather their faith in God as a whole.

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