

BIBLICAL COUNSEL
FROM THE
PROTESTANT PASTORS
OF THE CHURCH IN IOWA

TO THE
IOWA EXECUTIVE & LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

FOR DRAFTING AND APPROVING LAWS
ON LEGAL PROTECTION OF ALL LIFE IN THE WOMB

RATIFIED & APPROVED BY THE SIGNATORIES HEREIN,
JULY, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, 2023.



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TO THE HONORABLE CIVIL MAGISTRATES OF IOWA

There are a lot of proposals and opinions floating around in Iowa after the reversal of *Rowe*. Abortion legislation presents complex issues, especially today. And yet, Scripture speaks practically and authoritatively on all of the questions we face.

What we, as ministers in Iowa, hope to have done is to present enough support of biblical ethics that you can craft legislation with confidence.

At the outset, we pastors want to affirm that the church and state are separate jurisdictions. Each has its own officers and roles in society. But we also want to affirm that separation of *church and state* does not mean separation of *God and state*. The constitution of our beloved state acknowledges our dependence upon God.¹

Here are our suggestions on how to use this document:

- As you read through “Biblical Guidance on Abortion Legislation,” please know that the meat is in the Biblical support. If we have not spoken according to the Word, then our guidance carries no weight. If it is, however, according to the Word, you can be confident it is the path God wants you to take.
- We wrote a short article specifically for you titled, “Abortion, the Church and the Civil Government: A Fascinating History You May Not Know.” We think you will find it interesting and encouraging for the fight ahead.
- We provided a One-Page Summary at the end of the document for easy reference.

Many of our recommendations will be different than what you have seen in the Pro-Life movement over the last 50 years. We appreciate the faithful men and women who have been part of that movement; however, the Lord is bringing a new movement that is more in line with the Bible and calls for the abolition of abortion.

We recognize that politics lives in the realm of the possible. But we also affirm that all things are possible with Christ. Things are changing in conservative states as equal protection and the complete outlawing of abortion are seizing the narrative. Nine states have completely outlawed abortion today. Praise God! Two of these states touch our borders!

We are honored to be fellow Iowans with you. You are a minister appointed by God (Romans 13:1), and God has commissioned you to promote good and punish evil (Romans 13:2-3). We stand with you in prayer, and we are ready to help in any way.

Alongside you, for the King,

Pastors of the Church in Iowa

¹ The Iowa Preamble says we are “grateful to the Supreme Being for the blessings hitherto enjoyed, and feeling our dependence on Him for a continuation of those blessings.”

FIRST, THE GOSPEL

All mankind was thrust into a depraved condition when Adam yielded to temptation. We are sinners from the start because of Adam's sin and our own. We deserve death and eternal punishment.

God did not have to save us, but Jesus left heaven to do just that. Jesus was eternally God but then he also became man. He did this because of Father's merciful love for us.

The Messiah—Jesus—lived perfectly: every thought, emotion, word, and action was righteous in the Father's eyes. He fulfilled the law for us. He was crucified for us and for our transgressions.

He took our sin and gave us his righteousness. By his stripes, we are healed.

There is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.

We are not saved by our works in any way. We are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone, through grace alone, as revealed in Scripture alone.

Jesus ascended into heaven. He rules now and is in the process of reconciling all things to himself...as far as the curse is found. All authority has been given to him in heaven and in earth. All nations are to obey all that he has commanded.

Jesus is coming back to judge all of us. To those who did not repent and obey, there will be eternal punishment. But to those who have trusted and obeyed, he will grant eternal life with him in paradise.

QUALIFICATIONS & CONVICTIONS OF THE SIGNATORIES

We come from Protestant congregations across denominations and across Iowa. We are not a non-profit organization per se, but rather ministers in Christ's church by his appointment and authority.

- We are all duly-ordained ministers in active churches in the state of Iowa.
- Our churches practice the marks of true churches according to the Bible:
 - We preach the Bible as the very Word of God, living and active, and sufficient for all things pertaining to life and godliness.
 - We administer baptism and the Lord's table according to the Bible's direction.
 - We affirm the requirement for local church membership, and we practice church discipline.
- We affirm biblical and historical Christianity as stated in the Apostle's Creed² and the Nicene Creed.
- We affirm that the Bible is inerrant, infallible, and sufficient for all areas of life and that it is declared by God to be the ethical standard for all mankind for all of history.³
- We affirm that Jesus Christ has all authority on earth and in heaven. Following his ways brings societal blessings and disobeying his ways brings societal curses.
- We affirm the doctrines of the Reformation as necessary for salvation and a righteous society:
 - *Sola Scriptura* — Scripture is mankind's only ultimate authority.
 - *Solus Christus* — We are saved by Christ alone.
 - *Sola Fide* — We are saved through faith alone.
 - *Sola Gratia* — We are saved by grace alone.
 - *Sola Deo Gloria* — All our works, thoughts, and emotions, both individually and collectively, are to be for the ultimate end of God's glory alone.

². The use of the word "catholic" in the Apostles Creed means *universal*.

³. We uphold the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy.

BIBLICAL GUIDANCE ON ABORTION LEGISLATION

Principle 1. Life—and therefore Personhood—Begins at Fertilization. We must get our definition of human life from *the Giver of human life*. Conception occurs at fertilization, and this is when a new life with a new soul is created. Man is created in the image of God from this point.⁴

Biblical Basis: In Psalm 51, David says that his existence began at conception, “*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me*” (Psalm 51:5).⁵ David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says that he was a person at conception.

Considerations: Medical science corresponds to the truth we see in the Bible. With a greater understanding of DNA medical scientists now state, “During fertilization of an egg with a sperm, the haploid genomes of each parent are unified to form the diploid genome of a new and unique individual.”⁶

Some mistakenly believe that pregnancy does not begin until the fertilized blastocyst implants the uterine lining (Implantation View). This view must be rejected because fertilization could have begun up to six days prior to implantation.⁷

Recommendation: *Draft and approve legislation that affirms that life begins at fertilization and that the new life is a person.*

Note: The term “conception” could be used as it is biblically correct, but “fertilization” most clearly and accurately conveys the timing.

Note: The Iowa code already indicates the biblical understanding of personhood, but it is in an obscure place and could be more direct. 146A.1 Prerequisites for abortion. 6.b reads, ““Unborn child” means an individual organism of the species homo sapiens from fertilization to live birth.””

⁴ “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

⁵ This is also the “forming in the womb” that Jeremiah 1:5 mentions. Psalm 139:15-16 shows that fashioning of a person happens in the womb. See also Isaiah 44:24, Galatians 1:15.

⁶ Clift D, Schuh M. “Restarting life: Fertilization and the Transition from Meiosis to Mitosis” 2013 Aug 14. PMID: 23942453; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4021448/> (accessed January 4, 2023).

⁷ The Implantation View is growing in popularity and supports IUD and “Plan B” usage (see change of definition from 1995 to 2000 in *Stedman’s Medical Dictionary*). Other views on when life begins: Embryological View – life begins 12-14 days after fertilization. Neurological View – life begins at 20-26 when neuropathways have developed. Ecological View – the fetus is human when it can exist outside the mother’s womb. Birthday View – life begins when the umbilical cord is cut.

Principle 2. Persons in the Womb are Entitled to Equal Protection. This new person is just as alive on day one in the womb as they will be on their first birthday out of the womb. The main difference is that life in the womb is even more helpless. It is the civil magistrate's God-given role to protect this helpless life.

Biblical Basis: Exodus 22:22-24 says, "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless."

Considerations: The Iowa constitution says, "All men and women are, by nature, free and equal, and have certain inalienable rights..."⁸

Recommendation: *Draft and approve legislation that affirms all life in the womb must be afforded equal protection under the law.*

Principle 3. Exception Clauses are Immoral and Self-Contradictory. The Bible requires we treat all life on an equally valuable basis. If we allow the termination of a life that comes from rape or incest, we are punishing the innocent, which is specifically forbidden.⁹

Biblical Basis: The Bible says, "For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11). One law is to be for the citizen and the stranger (Ex. 12:48-49).

In Scripture, it is never right to disobey a command of God. In other words, we are only authorized to take the life of someone guilty of a capital crime,¹⁰ in self-defense,¹¹ or of an enemy in a just war.

Considerations: Currently nine states have banned abortion with no exceptions for rape or incest: Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas.

Exceptions for rape or incest undermine the moral stance that all life begins at fertilization and all life is entitled equal protection under God.

Exceptions for rape or incest punish the innocent, and that is prohibited by the Bible.

We do not believe it is necessary to make a law allowing a doctor to perform an abortion to save the life of the mother. These instances are extremely rare and the doctor is free to use his best judgment in preserving life to the maximum extent.

Recommendation: *Do not include any exceptions for rape or incest. Do not pass any legislation that legalizes—and therefore enables—abortion up to a certain date (i.e. Heartbeat Bill).*

⁸ ARTICLE I. Bill of Rights. Rights of Person. Section 1.

⁹ "Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked" (Exodus 23:7).

¹⁰ "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death" (Exodus 21:12).

¹¹ "If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft" (Exodus 22:2-3).

Principle 4. Public Repentance is Required for the Healing of Our State. God holds the whole state, and particularly the civil magistrate, responsible for allowing abortions to occur in our state and for them to go unpunished.

Biblical Basis: Romans chapter thirteen says that the civil magistrate is appointed by God to be his minister “for good” and to “execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:4).

Only after confessing the public sins will a state and the land be healed (2 Chron. 7:14). The civil leaders play a primary role.¹²

Considerations: The confession needs to be in the name of our Lord Jesus for this to be honored by his current reign.¹³

Recommendation: Proclaim a state Day of Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer. President Lincoln provides a very good example in his proclamation for a *Day of National Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer*.¹⁴ We highly recommend you read it as an example of the civil magistrate honoring God.

¹² Various kings confessed the sins of Israel. Jehoiada (2 Kin. 11:17); Josiah (2 Kin. 23:3); and Asa (2 Chr. 15:9, 12).

¹³ Kings are commanded to “Kiss the Son,” which means to give him public recognition (Ps. 2).

¹⁴ See Proclamation 97—Appointing a Day of National Humiliation, Fasting, and Prayer.

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-97-appointing-day-national-humiliation-fasting-and-prayer>

Principle 5. Abortion is a Violation of the Sixth Commandment and Therefore Murder (Ex. 20:13). Since the Bible confirms life begins at fertilization, any willful termination of this life can be nothing other than murder and is a capital offense according to God.¹⁵

Biblical Basis: The Bible gives an explicit case of a baby being killed in the womb. If two men fight and hit a pregnant woman causing the death of her baby, God commands the man to be put to death (Ex. 21:22-25).¹⁶

Blood atonement is required for murder. Otherwise, the land is under a curse (Num. 35:33-34).

Considerations: It should be noted that in the above example in Exodus 21, capital punishment is required even for the unintentional death of the baby. How much more, then, will premeditated murder deserve capital punishment.

In the current Iowa code, abortion is criminalized after the second trimester. Partial-birth abortion is also criminalized.¹⁷ Both of these crimes are class “C” felonies, punishable by no more than 10 years and a fine of up to \$10,000. This punishment does not fit the crime and falls far short of the biblical requirement *lex talionis*, “an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, stripe for stripe, wound for wound,” etc. (Ex. 21:23-25).¹⁸ It also does not comply with blood atonement for murder (Lev. 17:11).

A class “C” felony is shamefully inappropriate for the murder of the unborn. Abortion can hardly be compared with money laundering, which is also a class “C” felony (§706.B.2.2.a).¹⁹

Recommendation: *Recategorize abortion as Murder in the First Degree as a class “A” felony (move abortion to §707.2).*

Remove exception for mother. Insert verbiage to delineate parents as complicit who consent to the unborn child’s death.

¹⁵ Exodus 21:22-25.

¹⁶ “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein” (Genesis 9:6–7). See also Deut. 5:17.

¹⁷ **§707.7** Feticide. 1. Any person who intentionally terminates a human pregnancy, with the knowledge and voluntary consent of the pregnant person, after the end of the second trimester of the pregnancy where death of the fetus results commits feticide. Feticide is a class “C” felony.

¹⁸ Other crimes much less severe are class “C” felony in Iowa.

¹⁹ Iowa outlawed the death penalty in 1964 under Democratic leadership. The last execution of an Iowan was Dustin Honken in 2020 under federal authority, a man guilty of multiple murders. Iowa must reinstate the death penalty if we want to live in a state free of blood-guilt (Num. 35:33-34).

Principle 6. Both Parent(s) and Doctor are Culpable in an Intentional Abortion. The Bible requires equal punishment for equal crimes. If either or both parents voluntarily have an abortion performed on the unborn child, he/she/they are complicit in the crime. The distinction between murder and manslaughter should be according to the normal civil code and judicial procedures. As such, in order for abortion to be murder, it requires knowledge and intent.

Biblical Basis: King David arranged for the murder of Uriah, an innocent man. He told his general to move Uriah to the front of the battle and then withdraw to leave Uriah to be killed by the overwhelming enemy (2 Sam. 11:15). Even though David did not directly kill Uriah himself, he was guilty in God's eyes. God even said David killed Uriah (2 Sam. 12:9).

Based on this Scripture, the parent(s) that ask for an approve the abortion are just as culpable than the doctor who performs it. The Bible holds those with knowledge of the evil deed to a greater punishment.²⁰ There is none more knowledgeable than the parents.

The Bible demands that all people are under the same law. People cannot be excused from a crime based on position (Lev. 24:22, Deut. 10:17, 2 Ch. 19:7).

Considerations: Iowa code requires the mother's "knowledge and voluntary consent" for an abortion to occur. (**§707.7 Feticide**).

Iowa code also requires an ultrasound prior to abortion. Information must be offered to the mother about her baby (§146A.1 Abortion Prerequisites).

The Iowa code currently does not assign guilt to the mother. This violates the concept that the crime should correspond with the sin.²¹ Upholding a punishment with the severity required by the Bible will prevent women from abortions and prevent the emotional harm that comes from it.

We recognize that having the mother be guilty of murder does not seem right to many Christians. Scripture demands equality under the law, and we would have no problem charging a mother with murder if she took her two-month-old baby to the doctor to be killed. In fact, Iowa code would demand punishment for murder.

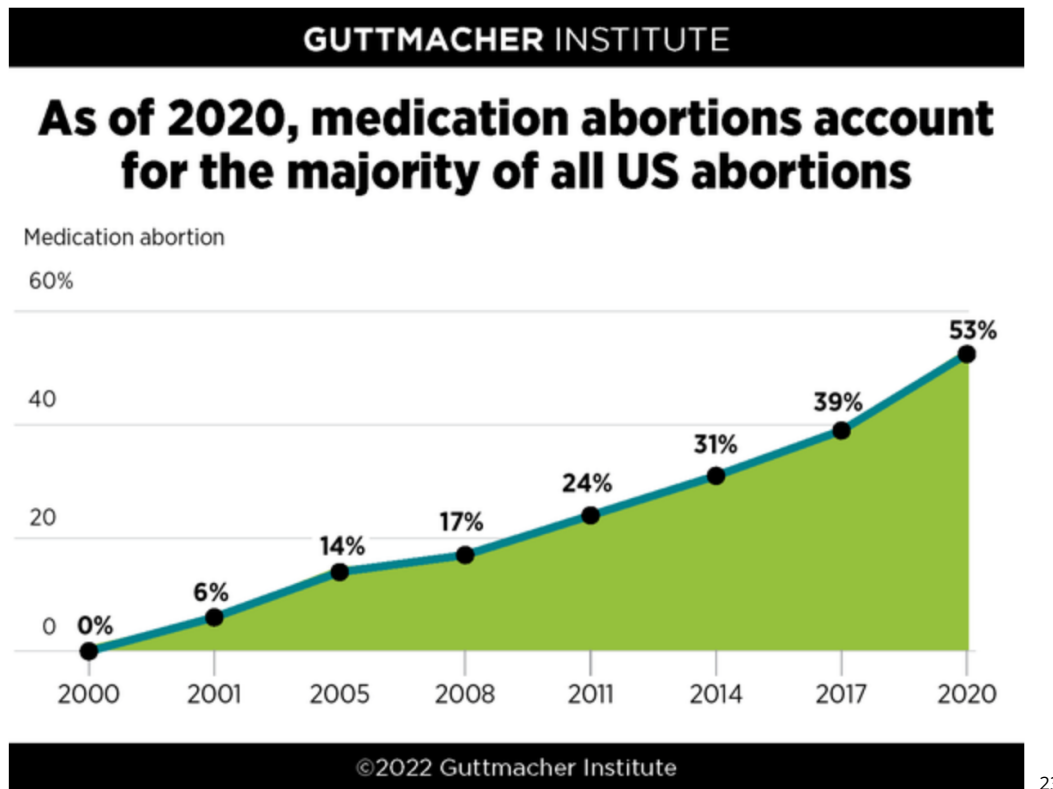
The law of the Lord is good. If we follow God's plan of appropriate punishment, applied to all guilty parties, crimes will decrease and women will not endure the guilt from sin and emotional distress of murdering their own child.

Recommendation: *Rewrite **§707.7 Feticide**. Change to class "A" felony. Include verbiage to say those who are guilty of violating this statute include those who authorize the abortion and those who perform it.*

²⁰ "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48).

²¹ **§707.8A.6.** A mother upon whom a partial-birth abortion is performed shall not be prosecuted for violation of subsection 2 or for conspiracy to violate subsection 2.

Principle 7. Chemical Abortifacients, If Effective At Ending a Life, Violate the Sixth Commandment. To say, as the Mayo Clinic says, abortifacients can be used to “end an unintended pregnancy”²² is a deceptive and evil understatement. Chemical abortions may not be as gruesome as surgical abortions, but they are still ending a life that God has started.



Biblical Basis: The methods or instruments of killing life in the womb do not lessen the evil of the crime or the severity of punishment in the Bible’s ethics. The Bible is concerned about the activity and result of murder, not the method.²⁴

Considerations: Legislation only aimed at surgical abortions is behind the times.

Recommendation: *Draft and approve legislation to outlaw and criminalize abortions induced by chemical drugs in Iowa. We recommend a general statement and also a statement that specifically outlaws the following drugs used in any form (orally, vaginally, buccally, or sublingually):*

- *Mifepristone (Mifeprex)*
- *Misoprostol (Cytotec).*

²² <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/medical-abortion/about/pac-20394687>

²³ <https://www.guttmacher.org/node/33429/printable/print>

²⁴ Genesis 4:29 criminalizes the activity irrespective of the method of bloodshed. See also Ex. 21:12, Lev. 24:17.

Principle 8. In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) May Violate the Sixth Commandment. As normally practiced, IVF causes the loss of lives of multiple persons.

Biblical Basis:	<p>Since life begins at fertilization, all fertilized eggs are living persons. Multiple-egg IVF consistently results in the ending or indefinitely imprisoning multiple lives.</p> <p>Freezing embryos is unbiblical because it creates orphans, put God's creatures into bondage, and encourages use of people for medical research.</p>
Considerations:	<p>On average, ten oocytes (egg cells) are removed from the ovaries and fertilized in vitro.^{25,26} Seven out of these ten are fertilized. Cells begin dividing. Life has begun in vitro. Of these seven embryos, about three are discharged. These living persons are discarded as bio-waste.</p> <p>The remaining embryos are re-inserted into the uterus. Of these eggs, typically only one implants and survives.</p> <p>Sometimes, two or more embryos implant. This can lead to "Selective Reduction" where the mother has multifetal pregnancy and is given the choice to "reduce" some of the embryos in order to allow a selected one to survive.²⁷</p> <p>This multi-egg procedures varies greatly from the natural procedure. In the natural procedure, usually only one egg is released during ovulation.²⁸</p> <p>Sometimes, fertilized eggs are frozen (cryopreservation). As of 2023, there are upwards of 1.5 million fertilized eggs today.²⁹ No one knows what to do with them. We are creating a huge ethical problem for our children.</p>
Recommendation:	<p><i>Draft and approve legislation to restrict IVF to elective single-embryo transfer (eSET) with no option for cryopreservation.</i></p>

²⁵ The average number of oocytes (eggs) from the ovaries was 10. <https://healthitanalytics.com/news/model-predicts-optimal-number-of-embryos-needed-for-ivf-arts> Almost half of these fertilized eggs are thrown away.

<https://healthitanalytics.com/news/model-predicts-optimal-number-of-embryos-needed-for-ivf-arts>

²⁶ About 70 percent of mature eggs are successfully fertilized during IVF. Cleveland Clinic.

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/22457-ivf>

²⁷ Women with multifetal pregnancy may "reduce" to a "singleton" by ending the life of some of the fetuses and they may do this "for medical reasons or non-medical reasons such as financial, social, or emotional concern."

Multifetal Pregnancy Reduction. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. No. 719. September 2017.

<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2017/09/multifetal-pregnancy-reduction>

²⁸ Normally, only one egg matures enough to ovulate. IVF "stimulates" the ovaries so multiple eggs are capable of being fertilized.

²⁹ Gerard Letterie, "In Re: The Disposition of Frozen Embryos: 2022." Elsevier. Fertility and Sterility. Vol. 117.

Issue 2, March 2022. Page 477-480. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0015028222000012>

Principle 9. Intrauterine devices (IUDs) or the “Plan B” Pill May Violate the Sixth

Commandment. The American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology estimated that a woman using an IUD will have 0.2 to 1.0 “postfertilization losses per year.”³⁰ This is a preventable loss of innocent life.

Biblical Basis: The Israelites were required to build a parapet around a roof’s edge to prevent people from falling off (Deut. 22:8). The Bible would have us to protect against possible harm and therefore love our neighbor (Matt. 22:39,40).

Considerations: Sometimes, the IUD prevents the implantation of a new life in a fertilized egg. If it does this, it is effectively an abortifacient.³¹

Using an IUD^{32,33} or a Plan B may indeed cause the death of a newly-fertilized egg. However, it is practically impossible to determine if this has occurred. Since we don’t know if a death has occurred, the doctor, pharmacist, or mother should not be charged with wrongful death.³⁴

IUDs can cause tubal (ectopic) pregnancies in which the baby dies. With hormonal IUDs, this can be as high as 25%.^{35,36}

Plan B (levonorgestrel, LNG-EC) is now known to cause post-fertilization loss of life.³⁷

At this time, it is not possible to clinically prove pregnancy without a doubt in the early weeks. It is not possible to prove if a new life has been killed. Therefore, the mother or doctor cannot be held culpable of murder.

Recommendation: *Draft and approve legislation requiring physicians and pharmacists who prescribe IUDs or the Plan B pill to explain to their patients that it may cause loss of life of a new person post-fertilization.*

³⁰ Joseph B. Stanford, Rafael Mikolajczyk, “Mechanisms of action of intrauterine devices: Update and Estimation of Postfertilization Effects,” American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology (January 2003): 1704. Accessed January 3, 2023. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/10974531_Mechanisms_of_action_of_intrauterine_devices_Update_and_estimation_of_postfertilization_effects.

³¹ Planned Parenthood writes this, “Yes! The Paragard (copper) IUD works super well as emergency contraception. If you get it put in within 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected sex, it’s more than 99.9% effective. It’s actually the most effective way to prevent pregnancy after sex.”³¹ <https://www.paragard.com/how-paragard-works/>.

³² Cooper IUDs (marketed as Paragard) are capable of preventing a fertilized egg from implanting. Paragard, the manufacturer of the cooper IUD, says that the IUD “may also prevent implantation.” <https://www.paragard.com/how-paragard-works/>.

³³ The hormonal IUD made by Mirena is equally bad, if not worse. One of the ways it works is by thickening the lining of the uterus, making it less likely for an egg (which may be fertilized and therefore an actual life) to attach. Mirena admits it’s uncertainty: “It is not known exactly how these actions work together to prevent pregnancy.” <https://www.mirena-us.com/about-mirena/how-does-mirena-work>.

³⁴ The death penalty only applies to deaths confirmed by two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6).

³⁵ Stanford and Mikolajczk, 1702.

³⁶ According to the Mayo Clinic, “If you do conceive while using ParaGard, [IUD] you’re at high risk of an ectopic pregnancy — when the fertilized egg implants outside the uterus, usually in a fallopian tube.” And the Cleveland Clinic says this, “Unfortunately, an ectopic pregnancy is fatal for the fetus.” <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9687-ectopic-pregnancy>.

³⁷ Post-fertilization mechanism of action (MOA) plays a “possibly dominant role” in the perceived prevention of pregnancy when in fact, it is causing death post-fertilization. Rebecca Peck, Walter Rella, Julio Tudela, Justo Aznar, Bruno Mozzanega, “Does levonorgestrel emergency contraceptive have a post-fertilization effect? A Review of Its Mechanism of Action” <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5102184/>.

SIGNATORIES

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The unborn child is human, and at all periods differs in degree and not in kind from the infant and the adult. Therefore, we must regard it as a human being with an inalienable right to life, and that its destruction is homicide.³⁸

– *American Medical Association, late 1800s*

³⁸ James Macaulay, *Current Heroes: Examples of Faith of our Time* (New York: American Tract Society, 1879), 56-57. Quoted in George Grant, *Third Time Around: A History of the Pro-Life Movement From the First Century to the Present*. Vol. ed. (Legacy Communications, 1991), 96.

ABORTION, THE CHURCH, & THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT: A FASCINATING HISTORY YOU MAY NOT KNOW

Abortion has been around for a very long time. Even abortifacients were used thousands of years ago. It is amazing the amount of writing from the early church on the topic. And there were two reasons for this vast amount of writing. First, when Christianity came to the Western world, it brought a clash of cultures. The old culture had a low view of children, and the new one loved children and saw them as created *Imago Dei*, in the image of God. Second, early Christians saw the Bible and Jesus' reign as a reality to be lived out. To not have cultural norms based on the Bible made no sense to them.

Our survey will start with Basil of Caesarea in the fourth century AD.³⁹ A man of recognized scholarship, he began his career in law but transferred to the ministry of the gospel. When he traveled to the Cappadocian region, it was clear they had not been affected by the gospel. Abortion was practiced prominently. When he approached the community leaders about this grotesque practice, he was shocked to learn the practice was completely legal. And there was no shame.

Basil was moved to action. He preached a series on the sanctity of human life. He mobilized the members of his church to help care for families and women who were facing crisis pregnancies. From the start, Basil took a simple approach from the Bible. He wrote:

She who has deliberately destroyed a fetus must bear the penalty for murder. Moreover, those who aid her, who give her abortifacients for the destruction of a child conceived in the womb are murderers themselves.⁴⁰

Basil was going to take abortion head-on. The town had a shrine to celebrate infanticide, and he and several deacons from his church destroyed it. Word began to spread. Emperor Valentine heard of Basil's strong biblical arguments against abortion and took appropriate action: "All parents must support their children conceived; those who brutalize or abandon them should be subject to the full penalty prescribed by law."⁴¹

And this was how abortion was dealt with. The teaching of the Bible brought a brilliant clash with the pagan cultures that celebrated death. The church preached several things. She preached that abortion was against God's will as creator of life. She preached it as murder and that it should be handled legally as such. Reading the quotes by the early church and political leaders, it almost seems unreal. It seems too

³⁹ George Grant, *Third Time Around: A History of the Pro-Life Movement From the First Century to the Present*, (Legacy Communications, 1991).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 20. *Cannons*, 188.2.

⁴¹ Ibid., 21. *Code of Justinian*, 8.52.2.

strong, too simple. What about exceptions? What about certain fetal development? What about consent requirements and federal funding and all the rest?

None of that was there because abortion was seen for what it is. And the Bible was seen as simply binding on all people.

The Apostolic Church

The quotes below are from early church history on abortion and show a simple approach. You will notice a remarkable consistency. Here is one from the *Didache*, a Christian treatise that appeared around the close of the first century:

There are two ways: the way of life and the way of death, and the difference between these two ways is great. Therefore, do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant.⁴²

Soon after the *Didache*, in the second century, the *Epistle of Barnabas* was written. Clearly the author was not one for pulling punches. He lays out the Christian perspective in clear absolutes:

You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not slay a child by abortion. You shall not kill that which has already been generated.⁴³

The respected third-century writer Tertullian would later assert in his works that:

Our faith declares life out of death. Therefore, murder is forbidden once and for all. We may not destroy even the fetus in the womb. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man killing. Thus it does not matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to the birth. In both instances, destruction is murder.⁴⁴

Around the same time the theologian Clement of Alexandria would teach:

Our whole life can proceed according to God's perfect plan only if we gain dominion over our desires, practicing over our desires, practicing continence from the beginning instead of destroying through perverse and pernicious art human offspring, who are given birth by Divine Providence. Those who use abortifacient medicines to hide their fornication cause not only the outright murder of the fetus but of the whole human race as well.⁴⁵

Jerome, the Latin scholar renowned the world over, wrote this:

They who drink poisons to ensure sterility are guilty of rebuffing God's own blessings. Some when they learn that the portions have failed and thus are with child through sin, practice abortion by use of still other potions. They are guilty of three crimes: self-mutilation, adultery, and the murder of an unborn child.⁴⁶

⁴² Grant, 24. *Didache*, 1.1: 2.2.

⁴³ Ibid., 24. *Epistle of Barnabas*, 19.5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 25. *Apology*, 8.6: 9.4.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 24. *Paedagogus*, 2.10.96.

⁴⁶ Grant, 25. *Letter to Eustochium*, 22.13.

Augustine, a man that God used to show us the riches of God's grace, said this,

They provoke women to such extravagant methods as to use poisonous drugs to secure barrenness; or else, if unsuccessful in this, to murder the unborn child.⁴⁷

The Medieval Church

This period is sometimes referred to in a derogatory way as the "dark ages." This idea comes from those who love the latter period called The Enlightenment when human reason became so highly thought of. But the Middle Ages were not dark. They saw much progress, such as the founding of the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge. This is the period of Michelangelo and Leonardo de Vinci.

And during this time, we see the church and the civil magistrate agreeing on abortion. In the late 6th century, we have the Byzantine Emperor Justinian making this decree:

Those who expose children, possibly hoping they would die, and those who use the potions of the abortionists, are subject to the full penalty of the law—both civil and ecclesiastical—for murder.⁴⁸

There were multiple church councils that met in the 9th and 10th centuries. A council that met in Vaison said that children are the greatest heritage of all.

Therefore any and all means must be effected to safeguard their well-being—from their quickening in the womb to their assumption of powers.⁴⁹

In sum, the Middle Ages saw a continuation of the early Christian civilization's war against abortion. Abortion was still prevalent in some areas of the West. However, with the penetrating growth of Christian influence, abortion was seen more and more as a grotesque perversion. It was seen that way because the church in the Middle Ages had a message consistent with the Bible and the early church.

The Renaissance and Enlightenment

During the Renaissance and Enlightenment, we have what George Grant calls the "Renaissance relapse." There was a trend back toward the acceptance of pre-Christian, pagan culture. As the Bible began to lose its place as the top book for life, academic study, and philosophy, abortion started to become acceptable again. Societal leaders became imbued with ancient philosophies. Plato's *Republic* was common reading, and this is the book where Plato said the state owns children and it is perfectly acceptable to set children out to die outside without food (the practice of exposure).⁵⁰ Another popular philosopher

⁴⁷ Ibid., 25. *On Marriage*, 1.17.15.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 38. *Code of Justinian*, 18.51-52.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 39. *Concilia Galliae*, 7.884.

⁵⁰ John Llewelyn Davies and David James Vaughn, translators, *The Republic of Plato* (New York: Macmillan, 1945), V, 461; p 170 f. Quoted in Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* Vol. 1., Vol. ed. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973), 264, 265.

of the day, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, bragged about abandoning all six of his illegitimate children.⁵¹

All of this indicates a shift towards humanist thinking. Europe began to put man's reason above the Bible. By the middle of this period, as many as one out of three children were killed or left for dead by their mothers.⁵²

Abortion in America

Fast forward to America in the late 1800s. Surprisingly, there was a prominent subculture of abortion in New York. In 1871, The New York Times dispatched a reporter name Augustine St. Claire and an undercover female to investigate. St. Claire and his assistant discovered that there were abortion clinics all across New York, and they were surprisingly up-kept and professional-looking.

After completing his investigation, St. Claire wrote a hard-hitting three-column article in the Times titled "The Evils of this Age." He wrote:

Thousands of human beings are thus murdered before they have seen the light of this world, and thousands of adults are irremediably robbed in constitution, health, and happiness.⁵³

The article exposed the practice of abortion to a wide audience in America. Our country's conscience was pricked. The American Medical Association denounced the "perverted views of morality" underlying abortion. They wrote:

The unborn child is human, and at all periods differs in degree and not in kind from the infant and the adult. Therefore, we must regard it as a human being with an inalienable right to life, and that its destruction is homicide.⁵⁴

Suzanne B. Anthony, a feminist, also wrote about abortion. You wouldn't expect a feminist to be against abortion. But her quote shows the widespread understanding that America once had:

I deplore the horrible crime of child murder...No matter what the motive, love of ease, or a desire to save from suffering the unborn innocent, the woman is awfully guilty who commits the deed, but oh, thrice guilty is he who drove her to the desperation which impelled her to the crime.⁵⁵

So the American understanding, before the late 1800s was the same as the early church and the Medieval period. It would take a significant influence to change this culture so unified against abortion.

⁵¹ Kevin Swanson, *Apostate: The Men Who Destroyed the Christian West*, Vol. ed. Generations with Vision, 2013), 65.

⁵² Grant, 55.

⁵³ Ibid., 92. Quoted in Marvin Olasky, *The Press and Abortion 1838-1988*. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1988), 26.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 96. James Macaulay, *Current Heroes: Examples of Faith of our Time* (New York: American Tract Society, 1879), 56-57.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 100. *The Revolution*, July 8, 1869.

Modernism

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Modernity came on the scene and was a gentle (but deliberate) backslide into pre-Christian thought. Basically, Western society, after almost 2000 years of uniformly being against abortion, now started to legalize it.

Theodore Roosevelt saw the danger of this thought culture in America. He was seeing the material and economic progress we were making, but he was concerned about our culture and ethics. He writes,

I believe that the next half century will determine if we will advance the cause of Christian civilization or revert to the horrors of brutal paganism.⁵⁶

We have given many quotes of people who have directly opposed abortion and did not shirk from calling it murder. But was this based on an old order, an old ethic that for the American embracing modernity, no longer applied? President Roosevelt challenged that idea:

There are those who believe that a new modernity demands a new morality. What they fail to consider is the harsh reality that there is no such thing as a new morality. There is only one morality. All else is immorality. There is only true Christian ethics over against which stands the whole of paganism. If we are to fulfill our great destiny as a people, then we must return to the old morality, the sole morality.⁵⁷

President Roosevelt's concerns came true. So-called Progressivism took hold. Thomas Malthus, a professor of political economy, wrote an article in 1798 titled, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. His calculations showed that populations increase exponentially and agriculture production only arithmetically.⁵⁸ He advocated that we should limit the number of children we have to keep the population "to a desired level."⁵⁹ Some of his methods were: stop recommending cleanliness to the poor, make the streets narrow and crowd more people into houses to encourage the plague.

Hitler, Stalin, and our own Margaret Sanger embraced Malthusian thinking. Sanger was, of course, the founder of Planned Parenthood in the US. She believed in "inferior races" and believed that "human weeds" were a menace to civilization.⁶⁰ She also encouraged promiscuous sex. These are the people who were influential in bringing abortion into to our culture, making it like the culture before Christianity.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 118. Quoted in Noah Brooks, **Men of Achievement: Statesmen** (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), 317.

⁵⁷ Grant, 119. Quoted in David L. Johnson, **Theodore Roosevelt: American Monarch** (Philadelphia: American History Sources, 1981), 44.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 121.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 121. Cited in Alan Chase, **The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Costs of the New Scientific Racism.** (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1977), 7.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 123. Margaret Sanger, **The Pivot of Civilization** (New York: Brentano's, 1922), 23.

The Road to Abortion in the United States

The following timeline shows how pagan-era abortion has come back into our culture. Starting with socialist countries, it swept Europe and landed in the US.⁶¹

- In 1925, abortion is legalized in the Soviet Union.
- In 1931, Hitler also legalized abortion and launches his eugenics plan for Germany and Eastern Europe.
- In 1938, Sweden becomes the first free nation in Christendom to revert to pre-Christian abortion legislation.
- Between 1949 and 1956, abortion is legalized in eleven other European nations.
- In 1954, Planned Parenthood holds an international conference on abortion and calls for “reform” of restrictive legislation.
- In 1962, the American Law Institute proposes that abortion be decriminalized.
- In 1966, the National Organization of Women is established with the liberalization of abortion laws as a major goal.
- In 1967, the American Medical Association reverses its century-old commitment to the lives of the unborn and also begins calling for the decriminalization of abortion.
- During that same year, three states—Colorado, California, and North Carolina—loosen restrictions on certain child-killing procedures.
- In 1968, the United Kingdom legalizes abortion.
- In 1970, four more states—Hawaii, Alaska, Washington, and New York—enact abortion-on-demand legislation.
- By the end of 1971, nearly half a million legal abortions are being performed in the U.S. each year.
- Then in 1973, the Supreme Court issues its momentous *Roe v. Wade* decree that changes the abortion laws in all fifty states by sheer judicial fiat.

What About Today?

Today a remarkable thing is happening. We are seeing what looks to be an almost exact parallel to the condition of the early years of Christianity. There are two elements that make up this parallel.

First, our cultural situation today resembles what it was when Christianity first met paganism. Western civilization today has, at least on the issue of abortion, turned the clock back to pre-Christian times. The Progressives have succeeded, and they celebrate where we are today in *post-Christian times*. Continuing in the philosophy of Marx and Hegel and the other secularists that came out of the Enlightenment, they have been successful at

⁶¹ This list is taken from Grant, 128-129.

pushing back biblical thinking to an almost impotent level when it comes to the civil code on abortion.

This first item is not encouraging. To say that all of the good brought by Christianity in protecting the unborn has vaporized is a lamentable condition. It is one that brings us sadness for our future generations, and it is one that puts our land under blood-guilt before God.

But the second parallel to the first century is tremendously encouraging. Today's fight against abortion is returning to the simple, straightforward position of the Bible. For the last fifty years since *Roe*, the organizations in America fighting for the unborn have taken different strategies than the early church. We have seen these strategies up close: incrementalism, politicization, exception clauses, heartbeat bills, different laws based on which trimester, and criminal laws that leave the mother (and father) and the doctor guiltless before society.

But in the last decade, we've seen something new. New organizations such as Abolish Abortion, End Abortion Now, and Personhood have emerged. Interestingly, they have returned to the simple position of the first century. They are unified in that they are basing their position on the Bible: life begins at conception, abortion is murder, and the person in the womb is entitled to equal protection under the law, which means parent(s) and doctor are guilty of murder in the civil criminal code. And with the remarkable reversal of *Roe*, we are at a decisive time when the states are once again able to make their own laws on abortion.

The Lord seems to be lining up things to completely outlaw abortion.

ONE-PAGE SUMMARY FROM THE CHURCH IN IOWA

Principle 1. Life—and therefore Personhood—Begins at Fertilization. Conception and new life occur at fertilization (Ps. 51:5).

- Recommendation: *Draft and approve legislation that affirms that life begins at fertilization and that the new life is a person.*

Principle 2. Persons in the Womb are Entitled to Equal Protection. It is the civil magistrate's God-given role to protect this helpless life (Ex. 22:22-24)

- Recommendation: *Draft and approve legislation that affirms all life in the womb must be afforded equal protection under the law.*

Principle 3. Exception Clauses are Immoral and Self-Contradictory. The Bible requires we treat all life on an equally valuable basis. Allowing for certain abortions undermines the Biblical ethic.

- Recommendation: *Do not include any exceptions for rape or incest. Do not pass any legislation that legalizes—and therefore enables—abortion up to a certain date (i.e. Heartbeat Bill).*

Principle 4. Public Repentance is Required for the Healing of Our State. God holds the whole state, and particularly the civil magistrate, responsible for allowing abortions to date.

- Recommendation: *Proclaim a day of fasting, repentance, and prayer like President Lincoln did.*

Principle 5. Abortion is a Violation of the Sixth Commandment and Therefore Murder (Ex. 20:13). Since begins at fertilization, any willful termination of this life can be nothing other than murder and is a capital offense according to God (Exodus 21:22-25).

- Recommendation: *Recategorize surgical abortion as Murder in the First Degree as a class "A" felony (move abortion to §707.2). The criminal code must be non-retroactive.*
- Recommendation: *Remove the exception for the mother. Insert verbiage to delineate parents as complicit who consent to the unborn child's death.*

Principle 6. Both Parent(s) and Doctor are Culpable in an Intentional Abortion. The Bible requires equal punishment for equal crimes. If either or both parents voluntarily have an abortion performed on the unborn child, he/she/they are complicit in the crime. The distinction between murder and manslaughter should be according to the normal civil code and judicial procedures. As such, in order for abortion to be murder, it requires knowledge and intent.

- Recommendation: *Rewrite §707.7 Feticide. Change to class "A" felony. Include verbiage to say those who are guilty of violating this statute include those who authorize the abortion and those who perform it.*

Principle 7. Chemical Abortifacients Violate the Sixth Commandment. The majority of abortions today are chemical abortions.

- Recommendation: *Draft and approve legislation to outlaw and criminalize abortions induced by chemical drugs in Iowa. Examples: Mifepristone (Mifeprex) and Misoprostol (Cytotec).*

Principle 8. In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) May Violate the Sixth Commandment. IVF normally causes the loss of lives of multiple persons.

- Recommendation: *Draft and approve legislation to restrict IVF to single-embryo transfer (eSET) with no option for cryopreservation.*

Principle 9. Intrauterine devices (IUDs) or the "Plan B" Pill May Violate the Sixth Commandment. The American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology estimated that a woman using an IUD will have 0.2 to 1.0 "postfertilization losses per year." This is a preventable loss of innocent life.

- Recommendation: *Draft and approve legislation requiring physicians and pharmacists who prescribe IUDs or the Plan B pill to explain to their patients that it may cause the loss of life of a new person post-fertilization.*

Table 1. Summary of Prevention and Punishments.

Note: No Preventative Measures or Punitive Measures would be retroactive.

		Preventative Measure	Punitive Measure	Considerations
Immediate	Surgical Abortion	Declare equal protection at fertilization. ⁶² Outlaw all surgical abortion.	Criminal Code (Murder First Degree. Class A Felony) parent and performing doctor if they have knowledge and intent. ⁶³	Exceptions not allowed by Bible. ⁶⁴ Life starts at fertilization. ⁶⁵ Equal protection required. ⁶⁶
	Abortion by Abortifacient (i.e.. Medical or Chemical)	Outlaw all sale and use of abortifacients.	Effective use of abortifacient. Criminal Code (Murder First Degree, Class A Felony) for consenting parent and performing doctor, but only if pregnancy is clinically proven. Sell of illegal chemical abortion drug: Class C Felony. Sell of illegal chemical abortion drug: Class C Felony.	Drugs: mifepristone, misoprostol. Medical science is not clinically able to determine (without a doubt) pregnancy using blood or urine tests to measure hormones. Since the Bible requires two to three witness to establish guilt, no guilt can only be established after clinical proof of pregnancy by audible or visual observation. ⁶⁷ Abortifacients can be used up to 11 weeks. Pregnancy can be clinically determined at approximately four weeks after conception. At that point, murder by abortifacient can be proven.
As Soon As Possible	In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)	Restrict IVF to elective single-embryo transfer (eSET) with no option for cryopreservation.	Criminal Code for violation of eSET restriction. Level to be determined.	Also prohibit “selective reduction.”
	IUD as Normal Contraception	None, other than Doctor required to explain it might cause loss of life.	None.	Medical science is not clinically able to determine without a doubt if woman was pregnant in the early stages. ⁶⁸
	IUD as Emergency Contraception.	None, other than Doctor required to explain it might cause loss of life.	None.	Medical science is not clinically able to determine without a doubt if woman was pregnant in the early stages. ⁶
	Plan B (Morning After Pill)	None, other than Doctor required to explain it might cause loss of life.	None.	Drug: levonorgestrel. To be taken within 3 days after sex. Medical science is not clinically able to determine without a doubt if woman was pregnant in the early stages. ⁷

⁶² Recommend Chapter 702, Definitions.

⁶³ Recommend reference this paragraph for doctors who perform abortions. “**703.1 Aiding and abetting.** All persons concerned in the commission of a public offense, whether they directly commit the act constituting the offense or aid and abet its commission, shall be charged, tried and punished as principals.”

⁶⁴ “For there is no respect of persons with God.” (Romans 2:11);

⁶⁵ “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5)

⁶⁶ “Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.” (Exodus 22:22–24) “Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good.” (Proverbs 20:23).

⁶⁷ Bible requires proof from two to three witnesses to establish guilt. “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.” (Deuteronomy 19:15)

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