



A Christian Perspective on Abortion



Produced by Intercessors for Britain

Preface

This booklet has been produced to provide a Christian perspective on abortion. With the 50th anniversary of the passing of the Abortion Act on 27 October 2017, and the act coming into force on 27 April the following year, this booklet seeks to examine the issue of abortion and how the Church should respond to it. For some readers, you may already be passionate about this issue and want to pass it on to other believers; for others, I hope this booklet challenges and inspires you to consider this matter further.

The first thing to say on this issue is to recognise that for some people this is a very emotive and painful personal issue, whether they have experienced an abortion themselves or feel a real sense of loss over someone else's abortion. It will also bring up issues that may be upsetting to those who have fertility issues or have suffered a miscarriage. I will attempt to examine this issue with grace and compassion, whilst also sharing something of what I believe is God's heart for the unborn child. I acknowledge abortion is something I am very passionate about. I pray for God's grace for you as the reader, whatever your thoughts or experiences on this issue, that God may comfort the broken-hearted, heal the hurting, but also give us His heart for those who cannot speak up for themselves.

Terms: For the purpose of this booklet, I will use the term "pro-life" for those opposed to abortion and "pro-choice" for those who would say women should have the right to choose abortion if they wish. I may not like the term "pro-choice", but I know how much I dislike it when pro-choice groups use the term "anti-choice" for those who are pro-life. So out of grace to the other side of the discussion I will use the term "pro-choice". I will mainly use the term "baby" rather than "fetus" (or foetus) as fetus simply means offspring in Latin anyway and pregnant mothers would generally talk about a baby. Fetus can also be used in an attempt to dehumanise what is scientifically human. I will use the term "embryo" where appropriate.

I also want to defend my right to speak on this issue as a man. Men are often told by the pro-choice side that they don't have a right to speak about this issue, although when speaking up for the pro-choice argument that doesn't seem to be a problem. I am human. This is a human rights issue. I love my children. I have feared for my wife's life during child birth. I have feared for my children's lives in the womb. I have watched my wife with huge admiration from the early nausea to the pain of child birth. I have seen and heard, in a pastoral role, the effects of having a baby on the life of single mothers, as well as the effects of an abortion. I've also seen up close those who have brought up disabled children, and the challenges as well as the joys they bring. There are hard circumstances, hard decisions, painful consequences of both choosing to keep the baby and having an abortion. During this booklet I will in no way diminish how hard these decisions are. I am well aware others could write and indeed have written on this issue better than me, and others

can and have written out of their own experiences. Yet sometimes we have to speak up, where we are, in our sphere of influence and make a stand - particularly when those we are speaking up for cannot speak up for themselves.

Introduction

What is abortion?

According to the NHS website: "An abortion is the medical process of ending a pregnancy so it doesn't result in the birth of a baby. The pregnancy is ended either by taking medications or having a minor surgical procedure." This is a deliberate action, rather than a miscarriage. We can see in the definition that they use the phrase "ending a pregnancy". There is a clear and deliberate attempt to define abortion in a way that avoids any reference to the child.

What does it involve?

There are three types of abortion in this country, one medical and two surgical. Again according to the NHS: "A medical abortion involves taking medication to end the pregnancy. It doesn't require surgery or an anaesthetic, and can be used at any stage of pregnancy. It involves the following steps: you first take a medicine called mifepristone... usually 24 to 48 hours later, you have another appointment where you take a second medicine called misoprostol. The first surgical method is a vacuum or suction aspiration, which can be used up to 15 weeks of pregnancy. It involves inserting a tube through the entrance to the womb (the cervix) and into the womb. The pregnancy is then removed using suction." The other method is a dilatation and evacuation (D&E) which is used from around 15 weeks of pregnancy. It involves inserting special instruments called forceps through the cervix and into the womb to remove the pregnancy.

Here we see the language used ("pregnancy") is neither accurate nor scientific, yet this is the NHS's own information on abortion. It's one thing to be sensitive with women who may be seeking an abortion; it's entirely something else to use terms that deceive or deliberately hide the reality of the situation - and none more so than when medical procedures are involved. What is a pregnancy? An embryo is not a pregnancy; the small developing baby is not a pregnancy. A pregnancy is the condition belonging to the mother - the mother is pregnant. What's growing inside her is definitely not a pregnancy. The use of this term is unscientific, as is talk of continuing or not continuing with the pregnancy because it ignores the nature and purpose of a pregnancy, which is to grow and develop a baby. So what is growing inside the mother and how are we to understand it?

Personhood and the stages of pregnancy

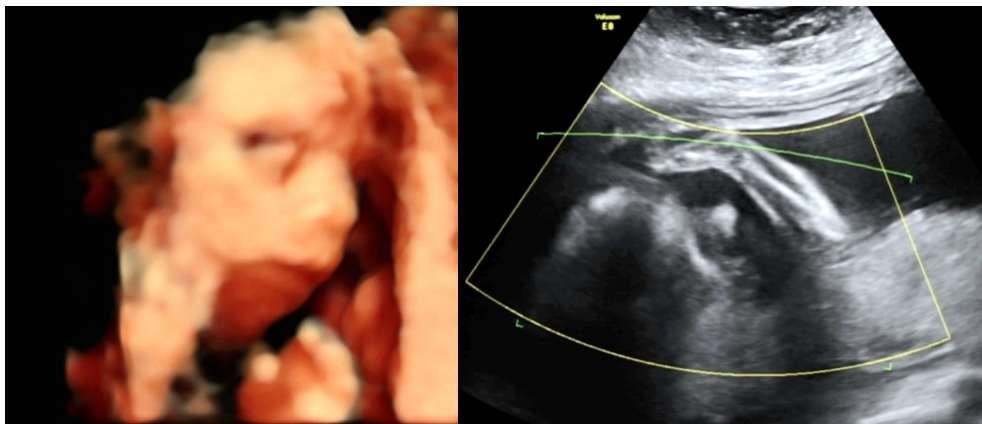
Well, let's work our way backwards. My new baby boy Caleb, currently 27 days old at the time of writing, is, I believe, accepted by all to be a baby. If we failed to provide for his needs as his parents, we would be prosecuted. We have seen that happen with the case of Nicola Glover, who was prosecuted

and convicted after abandoning her newborn baby in a toilet in 2015; fortunately the baby survived. A newborn baby is completely dependent on their mother or subsequent caregiver. Unless a baby is fed, clothed and kept warm it will not survive. The parents are held responsible to provide for the new baby, and the state has a responsibility to ensure those needs are being met. Working backwards, if during the delivery of a baby, a health professional - through negligence - caused the death of a baby, they would be held responsible for the life of that child, even if it hadn't taken a breath. So at which point does the baby become a person rather than a "pregnancy"? At which point does it gain its personhood and worth?

We will consider what the law is currently in the UK and the justification given for that later on, but let's consider the developmental stages of the child in the womb, so that we can find the point at which the baby is really a baby. The youngest babies to have survived having been born prematurely were 21 weeks and 5 days. The UK's youngest is 23 weeks; unfortunately we generally don't medically intervene with babies born younger than 23 weeks in this country. Clearly some babies are not only surviving at less than 24 weeks in the womb (the current legal abortion limit for healthy babies), but also flourishing. With our first son Nathan we spent some time in the neonatal unit and saw firsthand these tiny precious babies; we saw the amazing care they were provided with; we saw the joys and sorrows of the parents. These were babies, precious children; of that there could be no doubt. In Figure 1 below and also the front cover is our first son Nathan. He is 23 weeks at this scan. At this point mothers can feel movement; some may have been feeling movement for a few weeks; the baby can hear more distant sounds like a dog barking and respond to music. During this particular scan Nathan responded to the sonographer's pressure by pushing back against the transducer (seen here in figure 2 - below). All this at 23 weeks in the womb - we would look at these images and say that is a baby.

Figure 1

Figure 2



Working our way backwards, mothers will have a 20 week scan. During this scan the sonographer looks for any issues with the baby's development and a number of conditions would be visible at this stage. At this scan the baby's sex is normally noted, and parents informed if they wish, although some NHS trusts choose not to inform parents owing to the high instances of sex-selective abortions. The sonographer will announce it's a little boy or a little girl, generally with the caution "I think" or "it looks like". At this point names will be considered or even used. No longer is this just a baby; the baby is now known as a boy or a girl. Surely again this is a person who should be protected. It's generally understood that little girls need to be protected from circumstances where they may be aborted simply for being a girl (an idea most find repulsive and a choice too far). So at 20 weeks we and even some from the pro-choice community see baby girls need and deserve some protection.

Moving to earlier stages of development, mothers are offered a dating scan and according to the NHS: "It's used to see how far along in your pregnancy you are and check your baby's development." Here we see in these circumstances the NHS make a distinction between the mother's pregnancy and the baby. The NHS are happy for us to understand on this page about scans, that between 8-14 weeks we are talking about a baby. Sadly at this scan, the new Down Syndrome test (NIPT test) takes place, if parental consent has been given. (Currently over 90% of babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome are aborted.) This is normally the first chance the parents get to see their baby; a very exciting and moving moment. When looking on we see a tiny baby. At this stage most of the baby's critical development will tail off and will now be more about growing larger.

When Caleb, our second boy, was just 5 weeks in the womb, my wife had some bleeding; obviously worried, we went and had a scan. Thankfully everything was ok, but it gave us not only the chance to see our tiny little baby, but it was amazing to see his heart beating strongly in his chest too. When you want to know if your baby is alive, you want to see that heart beating. Of course at the end of our lives, if the heart is no longer beating that becomes the point we say this person has died; their life is recorded as concluded, maybe subject to some efforts to get the heart going again. The baby's heart begins to beat in the third week after conception - it's that early. Sometimes you will read that it is week 5, but that is since the mother's last period rather than conception. Most pregnancy tests will not detect the mother is pregnant until at the earliest 2 weeks after conception. The reality of these facts means that all abortions, other than the morning after pill, will take place after the baby's heart has started beating.

But should we consider the embryo, even before it has a heartbeat, a person - one that should be afforded rights and protections just like we expect for an older baby? How do we draw the line? At which point is it reasonable to

say, "That, there, that is a person deserving of such rights and protections?" To consider that that should only happen when a baby could survive outside of the womb is obviously problematic of itself. (Of course even those protections and rights are instantly reduced if the baby has the misfortune of not being "perfect" according to our standards and definitions. There we allow abortions right up to birth, and only after birth do we afford such rights and protections.)

As we considered earlier, a baby inside or outside of the womb is dependent on its mother or another caregiver. Inside the womb, if they are left where they are, they have a very good chance of survival. The mother has to take care of herself and that takes care of the baby. Outside the womb, the work of caring for the baby becomes much more intensive, much more intrusive, yet no-one would allow the baby's life to be ended at this point. Why, inside the womb, are the baby's rights and protections no longer sacrosanct?

In the UK, even in the secular state we are in, we have a simple moral understanding that you can do whatever you like as long as you don't hurt anyone else. Obviously as Christians we have additional moral ideas added to that, but nearly everyone in this country subscribes to that idea. The pro-choice movement's favourite slogan is "my body, my choice." (Some would argue that men and women choose to use their bodies in a way that they know might result in a baby being produced, but let's just park that issue for now.) Where is the line drawn between your body and somebody else? It certainly happens way before 24 weeks in the womb.

Individual personhood

The sperm from the man, holds *23 individual chromosomes*, unlike the rest of the cells in the man which have *23 pairs of chromosomes*. Those 23 chromosomes belong to the man and him alone. It's the same with the egg - only 23 individual chromosomes rather than 23 pairs of chromosomes; they contain information only from the mother. At this point it would be fair to say the egg belongs to the mother, wherever it is and the sperm belongs to the father wherever it is. But at the moment of conception, when the sperm fertilises the egg, those separate 23 chromosomes come together. They are no longer the father's material and the mother's material. They have become an individual of themselves, now distinct and different from both the mother and the father.

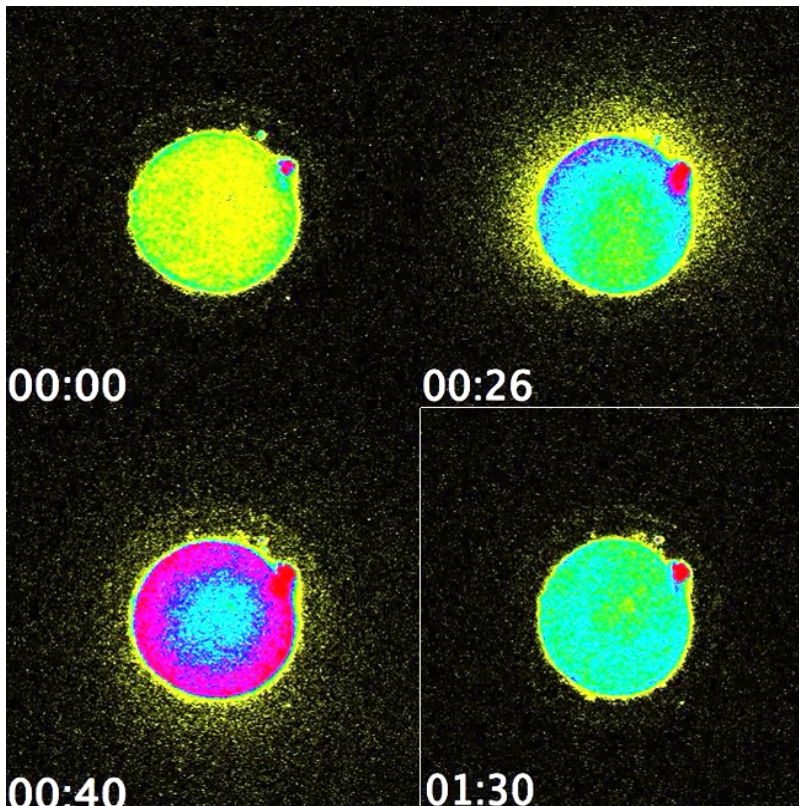
The conceived embryo is genetically different from the mother and the father. Life has begun, and not just any life form, but a new child is growing - all the information is there that makes that child who they are. Their eye colour, hair colour, whether they will be a boy or girl, what illnesses or disabilities they may have, their unique fingerprints. They are a unique human person from the moment of conception as those cells divide, at which point could you possibly say this is now a human worthy of rights and protections. Scientifically

and genetically, the embryo you were in your mother's womb was as much you as the person you are today reading this booklet. What is amazing is what we see in Figure 3 below. Scientists from Northwestern University in Chicago - who generously gave us permission to use these amazing images - found that human life begins in a flash of light, as an explosion of tiny sparks erupts from the egg at the exact moment of conception. The study, published in scientific reports, found that as the zinc is released from the egg, it binds to small molecule probes, which emit light in fluorescence microscopy experiments. The rapid zinc release can be followed as a flash of light that appears as a spark.

Something amazing happens at conception, and now scientists have seen it too. These amazing images should remind us that human life is amazing and miraculous, that God who spoke light into the universe also speaks life into the very tiniest version of you and me.

Sadly, the reality in our nation is that babies in the womb only have value, personhood and rights if they are wanted. If you do not want your baby, the

Figure 3



NHS describes it just as a pregnancy. If you do want your baby, it's a baby every visit and contact antenatally. Is this an acceptable way to decide an individual's rights? Is it moral? Is it just?

We rightly understand the physical abuse of a child as morally abhorrent, regardless of the parent's desire to have had that child. As a society, we have been horrified by cases like "Baby P" and Victoria Climbe. The fact that we see their faces; we imagine their pain; it breaks our hearts. The problem with the unborn is that they are hidden. Their voices cannot be heard and their faces are not always seen.

Abortion methods

In 2014, 49% of abortions in England and Wales were performed by surgical methods. That was over 90,000 babies whose lives were ended by surgical methods. The following descriptions are graphic and harrowing. I felt it right to describe the procedures and their results, without showing the shocking pictures that are available on many pro-life websites. My intention in describing these procedures is not to upset, terrorise or shock, but purely so that we know exactly what we are considering in this question of what abortion is. I also want to say, I don't criticise those who do use graphic images to show the reality of abortion. We all have different approaches.

During a vacuum or suction aspiration abortion, a speculum is placed in the vagina, a tenaculum is clamped to the lip of the cervix and a cannula is inserted into the uterus. The amniotic fluid, placenta and young baby are suctioned through the cannula into a collection jar. The young baby and placenta are torn apart into pieces in the process. The uterine cavity is scraped with a curette to determine whether any significant amounts of tissue remain. Owing to the pressure and narrowness of the cannula, the baby's limbs are often torn away from its body and head crushed, all while the baby is conscious and their heart is beating. No effort is made to reduce the impact and effect on the baby. Pictures showing the results of this type of abortion often show the tiny dead baby in pieces.

A dilatation and evacuation (D&E) abortion takes place when the baby is 15 weeks or older. In 2014 this accounted for around 7,500 babies in England & Wales, who were at least 15 weeks old. Once the woman's cervix has been dilated, forceps are inserted through the enlarged cervix into the uterus. The baby's body parts are grasped at random with a large, long-toothed grasping clamp. With the large grasping clamp, the abortionist twists the limbs from the unborn baby, tearing them from the baby; and pulls the body parts out of the vaginal canal. The remaining body parts, with the exception of the head, are grasped and pulled out. The head is then crushed into pieces in order to remove it through the vaginal canal. The placenta and remaining contents are then suctioned from the uterus. The body parts must be reassembled outside of the mother's body to be sure all was removed from

the womb. If some body parts are missing, then the abortionist must continue to search for the missing body parts and retrieve them. An anaesthetic injection is administered to numb the cervix, which makes the procedure less painful for the woman, but no anaesthetic is administered to the unborn child. This is the procedure most commonly used for babies who are 15-23 weeks old. In 2015, 1,054 babies were aborted at 22 - 23 weeks old. As we considered earlier, a number of babies would have survived if the mother had given birth at that stage. Figure 4 and 5 below are pictures of Bella Davison, born at 23 weeks in the womb. Just before she was born, she was at an age where she could have experienced death via this gruesome procedure.

A history of abortion

Sadly, the idea of abortion didn't begin in 1967. It has been taking place since ancient times around the world. Some early philosophers argued that a baby did not become formed and begin to live until at least 40 days after conception for a male, and around 80 days for a female. Aristotle wrote: 'when couples have children in excess, let abortion be procured before sense and life have begun' Aristotle, (Politics 7.16). The ancient Greeks used the herb silphium to cause a miscarriage.

In ancient Rome, although abortion was accepted, attitudes changed with the spread of Christianity and around 211 AD emperors Septimius Severus and Caracalla banned abortion. An early Christian work called the Didache (c. 50 AD) says: "Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a new-born infant.". We can see from this, even in the earliest days of Christianity, abortion was seen as wrong. Some early Christian figures had different views.

Figure 4



Figure 5

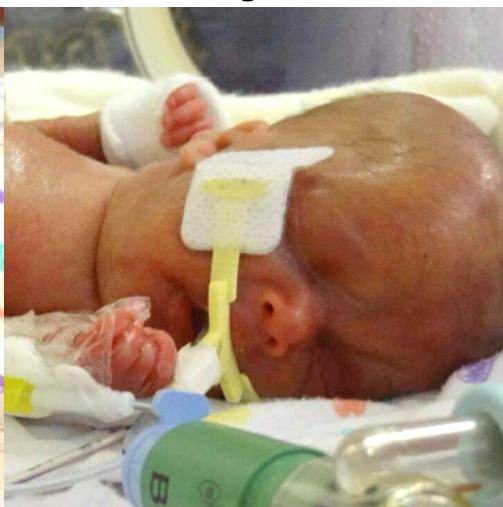




Figure 6 (left), is from a 13th-century manuscript featuring a herbalist preparing a concoction containing pennyroyal for a woman to cause a miscarriage. - Image from Wikimedia Commons.

Child abandonment and infanticide were also common in the ancient world. Parents were known to dispose of their children, whether by means of infanticide (deliberately causing the death of an infant child), exposure (leaving a child where they may or may not be found by others), or donation to apprenticeship or to convents and monasteries. In Greece a child was not regarded as a person until after a special ceremony was held and the child became part of the family at five days old. Parents were entitled, by law, to abandon newborn babies to die of exposure. Sometimes strangers would adopt abandoned babies. The exposure of newborns was widely practiced in ancient Greece; it was even advocated by Aristotle in the case of congenital deformity — "As to the exposure of children, let there be a law that no deformed child shall live."

The practice of infanticide has taken many forms in history. Anthropologist Laila Williamson notes that "Infanticide has been practiced on every continent and by people on every level of cultural complexity, from hunter gatherers to high civilisations, including our own ancestors. Rather than being an exception then, it has been the rule." ("Infanticide And The Value of Life", 1978)

According to William L. Langer, exposure in the Middle Ages "was practiced on gigantic scale with absolute impunity, noticed by writers with most frigid indifference". ("Infanticide: A Historical Survey", 1974) "At the end of the 12th century", notes Richard Trexler, "Roman women threw their newborns into the Tiber river in daylight." In India it was not uncommon that parents threw a child to the sharks in the Ganges River as a sacrificial offering. The British colonists were unable to outlaw the custom until the beginnings of the 19th century.

More recently in the West, we see abortion was not initially considered criminal if it was carried out before 'quickening' - when the baby begins to be felt

moving in the womb at between 18 and 20 weeks into the pregnancy. In 1803 English Statute Law made abortion after quickening a crime that earned the death penalty. In the 19th-century with advances in medicine, social attitudes towards abortion shifted. During the Victorian era with its emphasis on morality, abortion (especially in the English-speaking world) was made illegal. The Offences Against The Person Act 1837 stated:

"Every woman, being with child, who, with intent to procure her own miscarriage, shall unlawfully administer to herself any poison or other noxious thing, or shall unlawfully use any instrument or other means whatsoever with the like intent ... shall be guilty of felony, and being convicted thereof shall be liable ...to be kept in penal servitude for life..."

This statute was incorporated into the 1861 act, of the same name, which still stands today. It now made illegal the ending of a baby's life in the womb. It seemed right to the society of the day that abortion should be outlawed.

In 1938, a London gynaecologist, Aleck Bourne, performed an abortion on a 14-year-old girl who had been raped. Dr Bourne was a supporter of the Abortion Law Reform Association. He was charged with an illegal abortion, but pleaded not guilty on the basis that the girl's mental health would have been adversely affected by giving birth. Dr Bourne was acquitted after the judge invited the jury to decide whether in acting to preserve the girl's mental health, as he saw it, the doctor's action had amounted to saving her life. The effect of the Bourne case was to give legal sanction for abortions to prevent damage to a woman's physical or mental health, a test which became interpreted more and more liberally.

Eventually the demands became louder and louder, and the then Labour Government backed David Steel's private member's bill that became the Abortion Act 1967. Steel was a member of the Scottish Liberal party, a son of a Church of Scotland Minister and worked for the BBC before being elected. The Abortion Act states that abortion can be carried out by a registered medical practitioner when:

"(a) the pregnancy has not exceeded its twenty-fourth week and that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family; or

(b) the termination is necessary to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman; or

(c) the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated; or

(d) there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped."

Two registered doctors must give their consent to an abortion, believing in "good faith" that it is necessary for the reasons outlined above. The act is not in effect in Northern Ireland, although there is great pressure to change that!

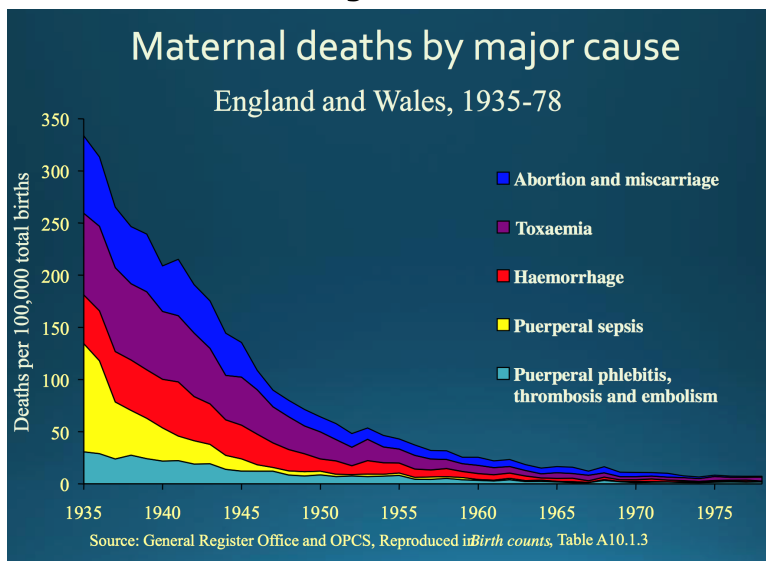
It is often claimed that “thousands of women” have been saved since 1967 by not having backstreet abortions. However, the number of women dying from backstreet abortions had dropped dramatically before the Abortion Act was passed - see Figure 7 below. Indeed when it became legal, a number of women still died having legal abortions (as they still do today, although fortunately many less). However the argument that women are dying doing something that was illegal, therefore we should legalise it knowing it will kill many more babies who are not doing anything illegal, just doesn't stack up. In the years just before the act came into force there were less than 30 deaths from illegal abortions (all certainly tragic), but in the years following the legislation there were still around 30 deaths per year due to abortion, with half of those deaths through legal abortions. When we consider these numbers in the light of the nearly 200,000 babies that are aborted each year in this country (nearly 9 million babies since the Abortion Act), how do we say which lives have more value? If we held a minute's silence consecutively for every baby's life that has been lost since the Abortion Act, we would be silent for 16 years!

The Politics of Abortion

A recent ComRes Poll on abortion showed politicians and the current law are out of step with the British public. I have summarised some of the questions and responses below: (You can see the full poll data at <http://www.comresglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Where-Do-They-Stand-Abortion-Survey-Data-Tables.pdf>)

- 65% believed parental consent should be required for under 16 year olds, with only 21% disagreeing and 14% didn't know.

Figure 7



- On the question of upper time limits for abortion only 1% supported abortion up to birth, only 20% supported the current abortion limit, with 60% believing it should be reduced and 33% of those believing it should be reduced to 12 weeks or lower.
- There was support for keeping freedoms of conscience for Doctors and Pharmacists.
- Only 20% supported UK taxpayers' money funding abortions abroad, 15% said they didn't know and 65% were opposed to it.
- Only 9% disagreed there should be a waiting period similar to the Netherlands, with 79% supporting the idea. Others didn't know.
- 89% of people agreed women should have a legal right to independent advice from groups without a financial interest. Only 4% disagreed.
- 89% agreed aborting babies because of their gender should be explicitly banned.
- On bringing the time limit for the abortion of babies with disability down to 24 weeks; 43% supported a change in law, 30% opposed it, and 26% didn't know.

In spite of this, our politicians seem terrified to make any reduction or limiting of abortion in this country. Indeed, 2016 saw efforts to legalise abortion under any circumstance with the Reproductive Health (Access to Terminations) Bill. Many MPs voted in support of it, and it only fell because the Government didn't make time for it. 2016 also saw Lord Shinkwin's Bill defeated, that sought to end the discrimination against disabled babies in the abortion time limits. In 2015, a bill to make clear that sex-selective abortions were illegal was defeated. Publicly funded groups seem to be determined to push abortion, despite the public unease there is around the issue.

The Abortion Industry

Successive governments continue to fund and give deference to those groups who gain financially from abortion. These groups seem to hold so much sway; indeed the push to bring legislation forward to allow abortion up to birth seemed to come from a campaign from the big abortion providers in this country. What is frustrating is that they are using income they have received from the state to campaign and influence public opinion and the government. We, the taxpayers, have also given Marie Stopes International £163 million over the last 5 years from the foreign aid budget to fund their "services" abroad. (This in spite of the CQC suspending some of their services in the UK because of "serious concerns".) We also fund abortion providers to campaign for abortion in other parts of the world, where abortion is not legalised. The British Pregnancy Advisory Service has also led campaigns calling for big changes in the law; again this group is heavily funded by the public purse.

The Bible and Abortion

In this section we will examine what the Bible has to say on abortion, and whether there are any principles in the Bible that may apply to abortion. Are there instances where children are sacrificed and God's response is shown, so we can see, as a nation, how God feels about what we are doing? I will include and challenge the real reasons abortions take place. This is not to condemn women who have had or are thinking of having an abortion, but to challenge the justification and the way abortion is presented to mothers, by the industry and sometimes the government. I have put it in strong terms to encourage us to really think about why abortion exists today, how we seek to justify it, and how that relates to what we see in the Bible.

Firstly we must remember that every man, woman and child has been made in the image of God. God ascribes to each of us value and worth because we are made in His image. No matter how young we are, or how disabled we are, we are still made in God's image. The Bible tells us in Psalm 127v3, "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward." But does the Bible have any principles or situations we should consider with regard to abortion, and the ending of a baby's life?

In Ezekiel 16v20&21 God says this to his people - "Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter? 21 You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire."

"You slaughtered MY children" - this is how God saw it. God's wrath now burned furiously against the nation for this, and He handed them over to their enemies to be scattered among the nations. The sad reality is, we do almost exactly the same as they did. In 21st Century Britain we don't worship idols so much (not the indigenous people); we worship our new gods of wealth, pleasure and self. We think that wealth has delivered us and saved us from our problems. We offer up our children to these gods, we sacrifice our children that God has given us on the altar of wealth, pleasure and self first.

What are the reasons for abortion today?

The biggest reason of abortion is the god of pleasure, as sex outside of marriage is the biggest cause of abortion. The majority of abortions are carried out on unmarried mothers. Who is responsible for that? The responsibility lies with both the father and mother for their actions (besides the responsibility of the state for allowing abortions to take place). The main reason for abortion is our sin in having sex outside of marriage. We stepped outside of God's boundaries and worshipped on the altar of pleasure and instant self-gratification, not thinking about the consequences; "Live for today, live in the moment" are the mantras of our idolatry today. So when a baby is produced, it comes into conflict with our worship. The gods of wealth cry out "Look how this will affect you financially; your dream house; your dream car; your

career." So we sacrifice our children on the altar of wealth. If it's not on the altar of wealth, it's on the altar of pleasure and self first. "How will this baby affect our relationship? We won't be able to go out, or travel, or do everything we want to."

Very few abortions take place for the reasons for which they are granted. The talk is of the emotional effect (that the mother wouldn't cope), but when you break down the genuine reasons for abortions, it's so often a lie. It's about wealth and pleasure. The emotional effect of having an abortion, however, is huge. There are two victims of state-sanctioned abortion: the baby who dies, and the mother who lives with the anguish of that decision. We should protect women who are so vulnerable at this time, by not presenting them with a choice that often causes further distress and even depression further down the line, for a quick fix. The emotional effect on the mother having a baby is also huge, but it's hugely positive, not negative. There may be hormonal issues that cause postnatal depression, but that has nothing to do with having a baby in itself; it's hormones and chemicals in the brain. The normal effect of having a baby is just huge joy, with hearts full to overflowing; there certainly are challenges as it's hard and you get tired, but how many would change it and choose to go back? We are selling a lie: abortion is so often about wealth, pleasures and self first, yet we present it to mothers as something very different. But God sees it for what it is. It's offering the children He has given us - His children - to our gods. There may be occasional cases that truly aren't about those things - issues of rape which are without doubt hard - but we still shouldn't punish the child for what the father did. We should punish the criminal to the full extent of the law and help and support the mother.

In Isaiah 59 v6&7, it says "Their works are works of iniquity, and an act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they hasten to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, devastation and destruction are in their highways."

But what about us? The same could be said of us as a society; perhaps in different ways, but consider those words in the light of what we do. Our works are works of iniquity; our feet do run to evil; we do what God has forbidden. We hasten to shed innocent blood, and there is no more innocent blood than the blood of the unborn child. We rush it - "Quick before she changes her mind!" the abortion industry says. That's exactly what we have seen with Marie Stopes; they didn't bother to get proper consent. They think "Get her in, get it done, before she gets chance to consider the enormity of what she is doing. And let's tell the world this is a good thing; let's campaign to bring abortion to lands that (rightly) see it as wrong."

Psalms 106 v37-40 says "They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was

polluted with the blood. Thus they became unclean in their practices, and played the harlot in their deeds. Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against His people and He abhorred His inheritance."

Ezekiel 23v37-39 says "For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. Thus they have committed adultery with their idols and even caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through the fire to them as food. Again, they have done this to Me: they have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and have profaned My sabbaths. For when they had slaughtered their children for their idols, they entered My sanctuary on the same day to profane it; and lo, thus they did within My house."

Jeremiah 7v30&31 says "For the sons of Judah have done that which is evil in My sight," declares the Lord, "they have set their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind."

As you can see, Israel and Judah are repeatedly condemned and later judged as a people for sacrificing the children God had given them. It's not clear how old the children are, but historically we know that it was often young babies that were sacrificed to idols. While it may not be exactly the same, should we draw a distinction between a newborn baby and a baby in the womb? How does God see the baby in the womb?

In Psalm 139, David writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit exactly how God sees it. "For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skilfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them."

God sees and is involved in it all. He wove us together in our mother's wombs. That is an amazing description, since that is exactly what the cells are like: a weave. Of course David couldn't have known that, but the Holy Spirit did. God saw our unformed substance - when we were "just" embryos; just a few cells; God saw us. If God looks on, then how we can do what we do? How can we ever give our support to a practice that ends the life of these babies? God is watching!

The effect of bloodshed

In Hosea 4v2 God speaks to the people of the land in a powerful way, firstly about bloodshed - "There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and

adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.” God takes the shedding of blood very seriously, and we see that in other passages:

Numbers 35v33 “So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.”

Genesis 4v10 “He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground.”

Back in Hosea 4v3&4, we see bloodshed has an effect on the creation - “Therefore the land mourns, And everyone who lives in it languishes, along with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky, and also the fish of the sea disappear. 4 Yet let no one find fault, and let none offer reproof; for your people are like those who contend with the priest.”

Verse 4 is maybe the most challenging, and brings me to what I believe is equally offensive to God.

Silence in the Church

The Church in the main is silent on the issue of abortion. It would rather not talk about it or get involved. To me, it’s similar to what is being said in Hosea’s day: no one offers reproof. The most awful circumstances and terrible human rights abuses are allowed to continue, because of the inaction of those who should speak up.

In Isaiah 59, a passage we looked at earlier, verse 3 says “For your hands are defiled with blood”. The term “blood on their hands” is one we use today. We use it often of someone who may not have actually killed someone, but that people died either because of their actions or even their inaction. They stood by and did nothing to prevent the death of others. Friends, we have blood on our hands as a nation and a church; our hands are defiled with blood. We as a nation have legislated for abortion; we have continued to relax the rules and regulations around abortion; we have made it easier for people to end the lives of disabled babies; we have brought about an abortion on-demand culture; we have even chosen to look the other way when girls are being aborted just for being girls. (Not just as a society but in the powers that be, who made sure doctors were not prosecuted for their part in it. We saw this with the cases of Dr Sivaraman and Dr Rajmohan.)

So few voices have been raised. We talk with horror at how so few spoke out as the Germans systematically murdered 6 million Jews, with disabled people and others; we look back and think “Why did no one do anything?” Well, in England and Wales, the state has legalised, encouraged and provided for the systematic murder of more than 8 million babies, yet so few have raised their voices. At least the German people could argue that they were under a repressive regime where speaking out against it could even cost them their lives. Our society tries to shout down anyone who speaks out against abortion,

but that's the worst that happens. We have blood on our hands, from government to society to the Church. It creates a separation from our God, and God cannot fully bless our nation. We could go right back to the root of it and see that as we threw away the idea that we were created by God, in His image; and replaced it with the idea that declares we are all products of chance, there has been a clear affect on society. Life has become cheap, and we have cheapened it.

There is a silence in the Church on the biggest evil we have perpetrated since the slave trade ended. We are slaughtering our children in the womb, and the church is silent on it in the main. When was the last time you heard it spoken of in your church, or heard the leaders of denominations speak about it?

We need more Daniels and his 3 friends today. They took their stand in the midst of a pagan culture; they stood with the courage of their convictions. Today we live in a secular humanist culture. It may seem like a wonderfully liberating thing, but look at the results: death and destruction, pain and misery. But of course it is presented as liberty and choice; the freedom to do whatever we want - that is the goal that must be pursued at all costs. It's all about the individual. That's why in abortion the only person to consider is the mother; we don't have concern for the child because in secular humanism there is only room for one person's happiness: the individual. Anything that stands in the way of an individual's freedom to do whatever they want and whatever they believe will make them happy must be removed. It doesn't matter what it is, or how it may impact on society or on other people. It is the individual's perceived happiness that must be pursued at all costs. We are still seeing further efforts to liberalise the law, to create more choice; more personal freedom for the individual to pursue their idea of happiness. Therefore the call is to remove abortion from any legislative framework altogether. Women must be completely free to do whatever they want, right up to the birth of the child, according to groups like the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (and even some going so far as to say even beyond that to after the birth). Friends, abortion continues to exist because of the power of secular humanism.

Call to prayer

As we come to the 50th anniversary of the Abortion Act being passed and it coming into force, I ask you to join me and others in taking a stand. I ask you also to pray. We, as the state, are giving permission to abortionists to carry out abortion. The curse is upon us as a nation. As individuals if we have sinned in this area (and that can be men as much as women) then we need to put that right. Praise God there is forgiveness and freedom from the guilt, pain and hurt. If that is you, I would really encourage you to get help, not to remain held and hurting under the weight of guilt but to seek out that help and find freedom and forgiveness in Christ. We as a nation, however, need

to put this right and end (or at least drive back) this practice. Look at what is happening in America, if there, why not here? They are seeing abortion clinics closing at an astonishing rate. Their laws are being changed to protect life - there is hope for us too!

Consider the following verses:

Psalm 106v23 "Therefore He said that He would destroy them, Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him, To turn away His wrath from destroying them."

Isaiah 59v16 "And He saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede."

God is looking for those who will cry out to Him on behalf of our nation. That's what our day of prayer on 21 October is all about. I hope you can join with us as we "stand in the gap" for our land. Hopefully in April 2018 we will also be able to do that with other organisations.

Joel 2v15-17 Says "Blow a trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room and the bride out of her bridal chamber. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, and do not make Your inheritance a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'where is their God?'"

We need to blow a trumpet to gather the people; to call even the ministers to weep and cry out to God in repentance; to confess the sins of 50 years of state sponsored and state encouraged abortion. We will consecrate a fast, we will proclaim a solemn assembly. How we need to see the Lord's ministers and the Lord's people come and weep and cry out: "Spare us your people, O God; Your inheritance in us has already been reproached."

I just want to close with this thought. Imagine there was an accident where 500 children died; imagine the coverage that would get! It would be wall to wall news for weeks. Well, that happened today: over 500 babies were aborted today just in England and Wales! Over 500 babies will die again tomorrow. There will be no coverage, no mass funerals. But God will see them all. May He give us His heart for these precious young lives.

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About IFB

This booklet was written by Dave Borlase, Director of Intercessors for Britain. Intercessors for Britain is a non-denominational organisation that encourages people to pray regularly for our nation. We help encourage prayer with our bi-monthly prayer bulletin, weekly news updates on our website, and through Prayer and Bible days around the country. If you would like to know more about IFB or would like to join us, you can do so free of charge. Please see the contact details at the bottom of the page.

50th Anniversary of the passing of the Abortion Act Special Day of Prayer in London

Saturday 21 October 2017

10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Regent Hall (Salvation Army)
275 Oxford St, London W1C 2DJ

Speakers will include Dave Borlase,
Director of Intercessors for Britain
And other special guests, to be announced!
(See our website event page for details)

Please bring a packed lunch

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