

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO ABORTION AND ITS ETHICAL
CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

The research topic is 'A Christian Response to Abortion, and its Ethical Challenge to the Church.' It aimed at investigating the frequent carnage and destructions of lives by means of abortion and its ethical challenge to the Church; which most times assaults one's convictions regarding the meaning of life created in the image of God. In view of this, the study intended to provide readers with ethical facts, issues and values which should be part of any discussion in response to abortion. This will of course facilitate competent ethical Christian thinking and response against abortion, one of the most pressing moral issues of our time. Consequently, findings from the study has provided useful Christian ethical defense against the wanton destruction of lives of innocent from the womb. In arriving at the findings, the researcher embarked on descriptive method of research by reviewing related literatures from both secondary and tertiary sources within the confines of the Library and Internet sources from the website. The findings were thereafter analyzed in paragraphs.

The findings of the study reveal that abortion is gradually gaining acceptance in the Church as a result of ignorance, poverty and secularism. It further shows that abortion is an attack on the image of God which has negative implications on people who do it; which is challenge to the Church as the custodian of God's purpose for creating life. While the findings discouraged abortion, it also admits that abortion may be administered on a woman if the aim is to

save her life. Save for this reason, the research findings is against any other reason for abortion. In addition, that the Scripture provides foundational principles that can be applied to moral and social issues such as abortion is in true sense ethical. The researcher recommends that awareness and orientation by learned Christians on the negative implications of abortion by means of writing literatures and sound biblical doctrinal teachings. While those contemplating abortion or are guilty of it should be corrected in love, properly counseled, and supported rather than stigmatizing or condemning them. The Church is really in the best position to combat abortion through its teachings along side active participation in government policies and decision process, by opposing enactment of laws which are inimical to Christian beliefs and practice.

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5.2 Conclusion

A Christian response to abortion must be firmly grounded in biblical principles such as sanctity of human life created in God's image and likeness. Deliberate shedding of man's blood in whatever form is a heinous offense for the very reason that an attack on the bodily integrity of man is an assault on the dignity and honour of the one who created life. The sanctity of human life is expressly guarded by the Decalogue's prohibition of murder (Exodus 20:13, Deut. 5:17). This does not only rule out illicit acts and attitudes, but also mandate positive actions intended for the neighbour's welfare.

The prohibition of murder also forbids the outward act of violence, along with the hateful and malicious intentions of the heart that give rise to the act. This therefore, form an integral part of the life affirming ethos found through out the Bible. Abortion on demand, the deliberate killing of innocent prenatal human life, is clearly incompatible with that life - affirming ethos. Jesus makes explicit the profound ethnical implications of the Decalogue in his Sermon on the Mount. The Sixth commandment prohibits not only the outward destruction of a neighbor's life, but even the attitude of contempt, which demeans his personal worth (Math. 5:21-22).

Christ's attitude toward children cuts at the very root of the contemporary abortion practices, while His disciples felt that the children and infants brought to Him were not important enough, to

demand His time and attention. Jesus' actions proved them wrong. The disciples apparently did not regard them as persons in the whole sense. Christ words and actions pose a sharp challenge to conventional ways of assessing human worth which Christians ought to consider in evaluating the personhood of fetus. God's standard of personhood is in a striking contrast to the contemporary criteria for measuring the worth of the unborn child.

In God's sight, no human being is completely worth having a mastery over his own life or the independent capacity to overcome the dominion and guilt of sin; and yet it is in human weakness that the power of God is made perfect, therefore, even the disabled or deformed fetus should not be aborted. God does not judge human worth on the basis of age, size, physical appearance, or viability. In God's sovereign grace, He can demonstrate His glory, even in the unwanted infants with defects such as blindness, deafness and other physical challenges. God does chose; the foolish things of this world to shame the wise, the weak things of the world to shame the strong, the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him (I Cor. 1:27-29). In view of this, Abortion should not be heard of or mentioned among Christians, talk less of practicing it, safe for a situation where it is necessary to safe the life of the mother.

Those found guilty of abortion should be corrected in love by Christians. Others in the community should be taught of the physical and eternal consequences of abortion.

The good that people often claim to be the cause of abortion is often hardly enough to justify it. Whatever may be said of abortion turning into good is always later on regretted by those who did it. That is the reason why most people today move from one hospital to another looking for a child after aborting to achieve all they wanted to achieve, forgetting that they had sacrificed their children at the alter of abortion because of their selfish ambitions. The truth is that, God cannot be mocked, what ever a man sows, that shall he reap (Gal 6:7).

5.3 Recommendations

In the light of the findings the researcher recommend Christian scholars with sound biblical and theological training be encouraged to write books on abortion to educate the lay people in order to save them from the hands of heretic writers and teachings. The Church, through Pastors and Christian educators should devote more time to teach people about the physical and eternal consequences of abortion in Bible studies, Sunday schools and special Church programs.

The Church also has the responsibility of directing those contemplating abortion by praying with them, sensitively exposing them to the biblical perspective of abortion carefully and sensitively explaining the effects of abortion to the person(s) and finally guiding the person(s) to carefully consider the available alternatives to abortion such as adoption, marriage or single parenthood.

In the case of those that have done abortion, the Church has to guide them (and whoever involved) to the stage of repentance by encouraging them to cry to God to give them a broken heart, to

depend on Him for healing and restoration. The Church should give special attention to help them deal with psychological guilt which is likely to recall even after their moral guilt have been erased. Commit their contribution to strategies that will help remind them of God's forgiveness.

The Church will need to establish new ways of supporting the outcasts by creating social centers and orphanages. Though very costly in terms of emotional involvement and financial commitment, but it is an essential response if the Christian Community is to defend the unborn child as the image of God. Doing these things can help the affected persons overcome the spiritual, physical, emotional and social consequences.

In the case of rape and incest, the Church should not allow for abortion. Biblical example shows that even Jesus Christ has a genealogy of a parent conceived as a result of incest (Gen. 38:1-30). The love of Christ accommodates them too. Therefore, people should allow them to live.

As for the women with serious medical implications which must require abortion (evacuation on medical grounds) may be allowed, but only if there is every reason to believe that the life of the woman is at risk. Abortion in this case ought to be an option of last resort.

The Church is in the best position to combat abortion through its sound discipleship program, organizing workshops and symposiums for youths, and newly married couples including those who have stopped having children to educate them on sex. Preaching

and teaching from the pulpit will also help in many ways. The Church must not shy away from its responsibility for it is the hope of the future generation. The Church has been silent over the issue of abortion and biotechnological advancement, the result, which has made many people to accept what science and the world have offered as the truth. The Church and Christian scholars need to rise up to these challenges in order to oppose the norm that abortion is not a sin. The way out is for the Church to return to sound biblically based teaching through all media of communication in different tribes and languages along, side holistic mission to educate Christian folk.

Furthermore, one of the ways Christians can combat abortion is by establishing social Gospel Ministries to specialize on counseling the affected person(s), particularly the single mothers who kept their pregnancies to delivery on how to cater for the babies and also provide them with assistance to feed the children. These services will prevent them from going wayward in catering for the babies. They could be led to Christ Jesus in the process. In this way, Christians will become vehicles for the Holy Spirit to do His work among the fatherless, the single mothers, the unwanted children, a group whom Jesus showed specific compassion.

Finally, fighting abortion by the Church alone may not yield quick result, but governments should be involved. The Church should be committed in electing Christians who will represent the interest of the Church to oppose policies that are inimical to Christian faith. The Church also has the responsibility to preach against corruption which

is causing poverty to the people thereby finding it difficult to have basic needs of life facing the poor to commit abortion as a strategy for added burden.