THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE

Abortion

March 2020

The **truth** about abortion

Nearly **ONE** in **FOUR** babies in Great Britain were aborted in 2018[1]

98% of abortions in GB are carried out for social reasons[2]

98% of abortions in GB are paid for by taxpayers[3]

Over **9 MILLION** babies aborted in GB since 1968[4]

CAMPAIGNERS PUSHING FOR DECRIMINALISATION

Despite our already liberal abortion law, and the 200,000 abortions carried out in Britain every year, campaigners are strongly pushing for abortion on demand across the UK.

This unrelenting agenda has seen human rights organisations, doctors' groups and the Royal College of Midwives supporting the complete decriminalisation of abortion.

Yet premature babies are surviving at ever-younger ages outside of the womb. And the evidence shows that abortion harms women. It is not just a 'medical procedure'.

The Abortion Act 1967, which applies in England, Wales and Scotland, sets out the criteria under which an abortion may be carried out. But how they are applied in practice is far removed from the letter of the law. The intended safeguards are now so weak that abortions can already be carried out for almost any reason. But enshrining this in law would still be worse.

The Bible is clear that abortion amounts to the taking of a life. But in 21st century Britain, abortion is deceptively framed as a women's rights issue. The rights of the child are not considered.

This agenda is taking hold. In February 2015, MPs even rejected an amendment to clarify that abortion on the grounds of sex alone is illegal in Britian.

And in October 2018, MPs voted in favour of Diana Johnson's Ten Minute Rule Bill to remove all criminal laws relating to abortion in England and Wales. This did not change the law, but illustrated where Parliament stood at that time on the principle. Since 2016, abortion has been devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

Pro-abortion activists will not give up. There is a real danger that new attempts will be made to liberalise the law in the near future. Christians must keep on speaking against the evil of abortion, and pray for laws to protect the unborn and pregnant women.

Diana Johnson MP

BABIES SURVIVING YOUNGER

Nicola Madoc-Jones was told her daughter Edie's chances of survival were "close to zero" as she went into labour at 23 weeks. After birth, Edie was immediately placed in intensive care, where she stayed for several weeks, but was eventually discharged from hospital and is now healthy and happy.[5] There is increasing evidence that many babies born before 24 weeks can survive. The British Association of Perinatal Medicine (BAPM) issued new guidance in October 2019 stating that four out of ten babies born at 23 weeks now survive when cared for in neonatal units. Similar guidance issued by BAPM in 2008 indicated that the figure was around two in ten. The 2019 figures showed that 30 per cent of babies born at 22 weeks survive.[6]

At the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle upon Tyne, doctors saw survival rates for 23 weeks' gestation rise from 25 per cent in 2006 to between 60 and 70 per cent in 2017.[7] This shows what can be done by investing in care for premature babies.

BABIES MAY FEEL PAIN AT 12 WEEKS

One of the biggest abortion providers in the UK, the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, argues that babies in the womb cannot feel pain before 28 weeks.[8] Other groups say 24 weeks.[9] But both scientific research and medical practice utterly contradict the claim that unborn babies don't feel pain before these gestations.

Dr Stuart Derbyshire

A recent paper from a pro-abortion scientist says that the evidence points towards babies being able to feel pain at around twelve weeks.[10] Dr Stuart Derbyshire has worked for US abortion giant Planned Parenthood and the Pro-Choice Forum.[11] He previously wrote that "foetuses cannot experience pain",[12] but now acknowledges there is "good evidence" that they can.

The paper, published in the Journal of Medical Ethics, did not make a case for lowering the abortion limit, but said it is "reasonable" that medical staff should consider providing pain relief for the baby.

In February 2018, the Government admitted that in-womb surgery – routinely available on the NHS – includes pain relief for the baby. Responding to a parliamentary question on spina bifida surgery, a health minister said: "Pain relief for the unborn baby will be delivered intra-operatively." She added: "The surgery takes place between 20 and 26 weeks of gestation."[13] So even in Parliament the need for pain relief is recognised from 20 weeks.

SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE MOTHER

Scientific evidence continues to show that abortion carries significant physiological and psychological risks.

Subsequent premature births

In 2013 a review of induced abortion and early preterm birth found "...a significant increase in the risk of preterm delivery in women with a history of previous induced abortion". Women who had one prior abortion were 45 per cent more likely to have premature births by 32 weeks, 71 per cent more likely by 28 weeks, and more than twice as likely to have premature births by 26 weeks.[14]

> ***'...a significant increase in the risk of preterm delivery in women with a history of previous induced abortion'.***

Increased likelihood of breast cancer

It is widely recognised that carrying a first pregnancy to birth is protective against breast cancer.[15]

However recent studies have also shown that abortion is significantly associated with an increased risk of breast cancer – by as much as 44 per cent after one abortion and even higher as the number increases.[16]

Serious complications

Surgical abortions carry a similar risk of complications to other invasive procedures, but medical abortions are also harmful for women. One large study found that one in five women who had medical abortions (taking a combination of two pills) suffered complications.[17]

In fact, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) reported that women are more likely to require medical help for bleeding and haemorrhaging after medical abortion than after surgical abortion.[18]

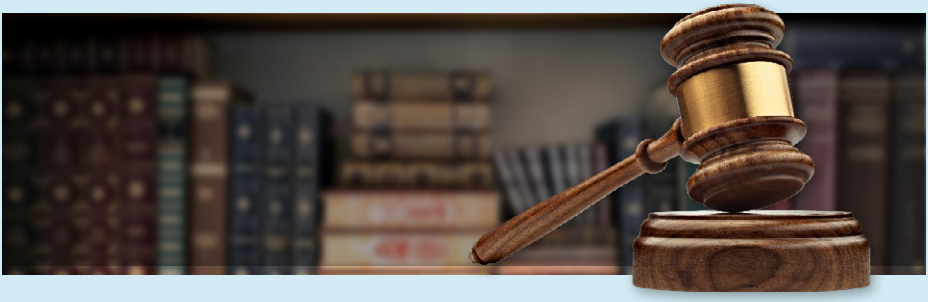
RCOG now wants mothers to be able to take both abortion pills at home.[19] But not being under medical supervision will increase the likelihood of the drugs being incorrectly administered, with potentially serious medical implications for the mother.

Damage to mental health

98%

Over 98 per cent of abortions for residents of England and Wales in 2018 were carried out on the grounds that 'continuing with the pregnancy would involve a greater risk to the woman's physical or mental health than having an abortion'.[20] Yet one study found women who have had an abortion experience an 81 per cent higher risk of mental health problems when compared with women who have not had an abortion.[21]

Pro-abortion professor David Fergusson says abortion does not lower the risk of mental health problems for women, and concludes that there is currently "no evidence" that supports authorising abortions on mental health grounds.[22]



MAKING A BAD LAW WORSE

Recent changes and developments to abortion law and practice include:

- Department of Health guidance on abortion released in May 2014 says there is "no legal requirement" for doctors to see women seeking an abortion before approving it.[23] The guidance also suggests that doctors can reach an opinion by talking to the patient over the phone or via a webcam, or merely by looking at the woman's paperwork. It suggests that nurses could see the patient instead.

- Women across Great Britain are now permitted to take the second of two medical abortion drugs at home. Since October 2017, Scottish women have been able to take the abortion drug misoprostol without oversight from doctors after a change in policy hurried through by Scotland's Chief Medical Officer. The change was enacted in 2018 in England and Wales separately. These moves came without public or parliamentary scrutiny. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) is now pushing for women to be allowed to take both medical abortion pills at home.

- A 2019 report from RCOG says it will teach and assess "abortion skills" as part of its core curriculum. However, the report does not mention any provision for conscientious objection. RCOG says the General Medical Council (GMC) should "review the Undergraduate medical curriculum to include the importance of abortion care to students".[24]

  Currently all doctors in the UK must be registered with the GMC. RCOG membership is necessary to progress in a career specialising in obstetrics and gynaecology.

THE CREATION OF LIFE

Conception
A sperm penetrates the egg's cell membrane. The nuclei of sperm and egg fuse to create a single cell with a unique genetic code. Human life has begun.

Week 1
The embryo reaches the uterus, which has already prepared a special lining. The delicate process of implantation takes place.

Week 5
Already the baby's heart is pumping blood. Major organs have begun to grow and limb buds have sprouted. Some facial features are evident. Brain signals have been recorded from about 40 days.

NORTHERN IRELAND

In July 2019 MPs at Westminster voted to liberalise abortion law in Northern Ireland, if the Stormont institutions were not restored by 21 October 2019. From the day after, abortion became legal in the Province for any reason, unless the baby is capable of being born alive.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is under a duty to create a new abortion framework, before 31 March 2020. At the time of writing this was not in place. Until it is, abortions will not be available on the NHS in Northern Ireland, but the UK Government is paying for women to travel to England for the procedure.

A consultation on a proposed new legal framework was completed in December 2019. The Government proposed to allow unrestricted abortion up to 12 or 14 weeks – no reason would be needed. Abortions would also be permissible for social reasons up to 22 or 24 weeks. There was nothing in the proposed law banning sex-selective abortion. Included in the consultation were plans for 'buffer zones' around abortion clinics, as well as allowing abortions in locations other than medical centres.

Stormont

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Over the last few years several US states have introduced

'heartbeat Bills', aimed at stopping most abortions from taking place once a heartbeat can be detected – which is at about five or six weeks. However, many of these Bills have become the target of legal action by pro-abortion groups, and none have yet been implemented. Abortion has recently been decriminalised in a number of countries, including the Republic of Ireland after a

national referendum. Abortion on demand is now available across the whole of Australia, except South Australia. In September 2019, New South Wales passed a Bill legalising abortion on demand up to 22 weeks, and requiring the consent of two doctors thereafter.[25]

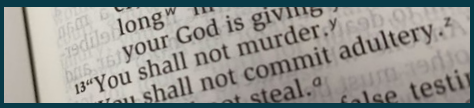
THE CREATION OF LIFE

Week 9
The baby has begun to move. All organs, muscles and nerves are beginning to function. Limbs, digits, joints and even fingerprints are evident.

Week 16
The sex is apparent. The baby has hair, nails and a cartilage skeleton, and can pull faces.

Week 20
Growing rapidly, the baby can turn somersaults and suck his or her thumb.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ABORTION

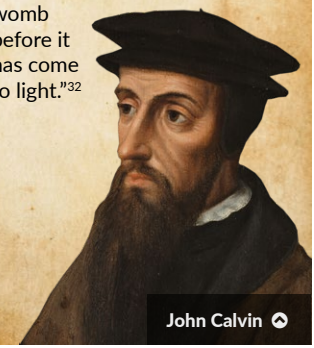


The biblical argument against abortion is simply the application of the Sixth Commandment: "You shall not murder". The Bible clearly teaches that the intentional taking of innocent human life is evil because it is the destruction of that which is made in the image of God.[26] The specific question in relation to abortion is whether the foetus is a human being in the image of God. The testimony of Scripture is that it is. The Psalmist famously praises God because he "created my inmost being… knit me together in my mother's womb". God saw his "unformed body", that is God saw the Psalmist as an embryo. In Psalm 51:5 David recognises that his need for a Saviour began at the very point of his conception. The Gospel of Luke states that the birth of Jesus was preceded by the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary and the power of the Most High overshadowing her.[27] In Matthew 1:20 Joseph is assured by an angel of the Lord that "what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit". Hebrews 2:17 makes clear that Christ was made human in every way that we are human. If Christ's human life began at his conception, this must mark the point at which all human life begins. The Bible clearly teaches the sanctity of every human life from conception. Abortion at any stage of gestation is the taking of human life.

A HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN OPPOSITION

Christian opposition to abortion is not a novelty of modern theology; the Church has stood opposed to it for 2,000 years. The early Church "with unwavering consistency and with the strongest emphasis denounced the practice [of abortion]… not simply as inhuman, but as definitely murder".[28] The Didache (a First or early Second Century church teaching manual) condemns abortion and the taking of life after birth: "Thou shalt not procure abortion, nor commit infanticide".[29]

The practice was roundly condemned in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose, Jerome, John Chrysostom, and Augustine.[30] David Braine concluded "for the whole of Christian history until appreciably after 1900… there was virtually complete unanimity amongst Christians" that abortion is wrong.[31] Influential 16th Century Reformer John Calvin commented: "…the foetus, though enclosed in the womb of its mother, is already a human being… If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a foetus in the womb before it has come to light."[32]


John Calvin

REFERENCES

christian.org.uk/abortionbrief-ref

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