Abortion

Is the Christian objection to abortion justified?

Public policy is not the same as Church policy

- Does it serve a secular purpose?
- Does it tie the state to one religious sect?
- Does it properly respect human freedom?

Sexual promiscuity  Slavery  Monogamy  Divorce  Sabbath rules  Abortion  Heretical Gospel

- Does it reflect orthodox faith and practice?
- Does it reflect Kingdom values?
- Does it contribute to spiritual development?

Public policy

- Should public policy and law in a secular state reflect Christian doctrine?
- Is it possible and reasonable to be pro-life personally and pro-choice politically?
- Do the arguments in the abortion issue parallel those used in the slavery debates of the 1800s?
- Do Christians make a mistake when:
  1. They try to impose special revelation on the state.
  2. They fail to apply general revelation to the state.

General information

- Roe v. Wade (1973) was passed (under the pressure of intentionally misleading information about the number of abortions performed and the dangers involved) giving the woman's right to privacy priority over the state's right to control abortions.
- In subsequent decisions the Supreme Court favors pro-choice in the early stages and pro-life in the latter stages of pregnancy.
- Twenty-two percent of all pregnancies (excluding miscarriages) end in abortion in the USA.

The number of abortions in the U.S.A. is declining.

Abortion per 1,000 women aged 15-44 by year in USA

Guttmacher Institute July 2008
Abortion is a response to a problem - an unwanted pregnancy.

**Three critical questions.**

- When does a human life become a person with full constitutional rights?
- What is the extent of a woman’s right to choose to abort the fetus?
- What is the role of the state in legislating abortion issues and funding abortions?

**Why do women have abortions?**

- Contraception
- Health of mother
- Rape & incest

**When do women have abortions?**

- 89% occur in the first 12 weeks
- 1% occur in the last 3 months of pregnancy

**Worldwide statistics**

- 42,000,000 abortions
- Worldwide abortion rate is 50% higher than USA (35/1000 vs. 23/1000)

**Weak arguments for Pro-Choice**

- Murder must have a malicious motive.
- There are too many unwanted children in the world.
- The world’s population is exploding too rapidly.
- Private religious values should not dictate public policy.
- A woman’s body is her own business; it should not be a political issue.
Mistletoe is dependent on a host plant but is not identified with the host.

Exodus 21
“22 If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman’s husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide. 23 But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life,”

Both are alive and share the same DNA but no one thinks of a pine cone as a pine tree.

Stronger arguments for Pro-Choice
• Science is not equipped to make a decision as to when “personhood” begins.
  Some people make a distinction between “biological life” and “biographical life” (the sum of one’s aspirations, decisions, activities, projects, and human relationships).
  Twinning occurs between the 10th and 14th day after fertilization.
• Scripture is unclear with respect to the onset of personhood and abortion. Pre-birth references are not meant to be descriptive of human biology.
  Jeremiah 1:5
  “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Many leading religious authorities do not regard the fetus as a person.
Conservative Judaism
Reformed Judaism
Most main-line Protestant denominations.
• Abortion is not singled out as a moral issue in the Bible although widely practiced at the time.
• Common sense suggests that the fetus is not a full person.
  ✓ Our age is marked by our “birthday” not “conception.”
  ✓ A mother is not considered a mother until after the birth.
  ✓ About 50% of pregnancies are spontaneously miscarried yet there are no memorial services.

Arguments for Pro-Life
• We may not be certain when personhood begins but when in doubt don’t kill a human life.
• The social implications of a liberal abortion policy may be hard to live with.
• The Christian tradition has been consistently pro-life until the modern era.
• Public policy and law in a secular state should reflect the common good and the sanctity of life and need not defer to special revelation (the Bible).
• Scripture is not as unclear as many would like to believe.
Psalm 139:13-16
“For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.”

Exodus 21
“22 If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman’s husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide. 23 But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life,”

- The Hebrew word translated “miscarriage” when used alone (as it is here) refers to “live birth.”

“...When men strive together and they hurt unintentionally a woman with child, and her children come forth but no mischief happens - that is, the woman and the children do not die - the one who hurts her shall surely be punished by a fine. But if any mischief happens, that is, if the woman dies or the children die, then you shall give life for life.”

Three positions
1. Abortion-on-demand for any reason. (pro-choice)
2. Abortion permitted in restricted circumstances. Abortion is a very serious issue. Abortion is not necessarily murder. Abortion may be justified (by the state) in some situations. Abortion should never be justified in the following situations.
   - after viability (with very few exceptions)
   - as a means of birth control (after the fact)
   - for population control
   - for anticipated deformities
3. Abortion is permitted only when the physical life of the mother is at risk. (pro-life)

Pro-Choice applies at several levels
1. The decision to have sexual intercourse.
2. The decision to respond to the challenge of an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy.
3. The decision to take responsibility for unexpected burdens and hardships in life.
4. The decision to place the sanctity of another’s life ahead of personal comfort and convenience.

Advice to pro-life militants
- Support the sanctity of all human life (not just the unborn).
- Give thoughtful attention to the original problem.
- Respect the possibility of differing opinions.
- Avoid emotionally manipulative arguments.
- Avoid Ad Hominem attacks on those who disagree.
- Face the delicate, difficult, and real issues.
- For public policy use common sense arguments.
- Don’t outdistance popular support for your point.

Advice to pro-choice militants
- Don’t dodge the central point of “personhood”.
- Avoid smoke screens - woman’s rights, ch./state.
- Face the consequences of a pro-choice culture.
- Avoid emotionally manipulative arguments.
- Avoid Ad Hominem attacks on those who disagree.
- Address the widespread abuse of pro-choice law.
- Don’t marginalize the emotional trauma of abortion.
- Respect the possibility of differing opinions.