

Abortion—Logic and the Bible

Introduction: What I rarely find is a combination of logic and the Bible used to make sense of the abortion issue. By far, the majority of Christians groups are against abortion, although some of their uses of Scripture are suspect. On the other side of the issue is R. B. Thieme, Jr., who teaches that abortion is an issue for the woman and her doctor. Siding with him is almost the entirety of the liberal political movement, even those who claim not to believe in God. However, as you will see, one can make an argument in favor of abortion on religious or philosophical grounds, but not upon biological grounds. So the left, which often rejects religion in favor of science, must abandon science entirely to take the position which they have taken. In any case, I hope to approach this subject using Bible doctrine, logic and a little biology.

Taken From **Psalm 51** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#))

I rarely disagree with the teaching of R. B. Thieme, Jr., but I do depart from it in this instance. He teaches that man becomes fully human at birth (at the first gulp of air, when God breathes into us life) and that abortion is a decision which ought to be left to the mother and the doctor (he supported the Supreme Court Decision Row v. Wade). This is covered in his book, *The Origin of the Human Life*.¹ I could not tell you if he supported the millions of fetuses (babies?) destroyed because of Row v. Wade. It is my understanding that he did not believe in that, although I do not have any supporting evidence one way or the other.

Let me add, I do not have a dog in this fight. I do not have a need to agree with everything that Bob Thieme taught, nor do I have a need to find doctrinal differences with him. Furthermore, I have not dealt intimately with the act of abortion with anyone I know. I am sure women I know have had abortions. Whether liberal or conservative, women do not tend to want to brag about having an abortion.

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1. The biological approach: biologically speaking, what begins at conception and continues until birth is completely and fully human. That which is in the womb has a fully human cell structure as well as a unique design different from that of the mother or the father.
2. You can make a philosophical or a religious argument which favors or allows for abortion, but you cannot make a biological argument which favors or allows for abortion. .
 - a. You can believe that ensoulment (when the soul enters the body) occurs when we are born, and therefore believe that which is in the womb is not fully human—but that is based upon a religious or philosophical belief.

¹ See <http://rbthieme.org/Publications/theoriginofhumanlife.html>

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- b. You can make the philosophical argument that, this fetus in the womb is going to be born into a bad life and therefore should be killed in the womb; but the same argument is valid for any child which is already born. A child can be born into poverty and you can similarly argue, that child's life will suck, so we ought to kill it. This particular argument is not based upon when a child is born or where the child is, with regards to the conception/birth process. This argument is based solely upon the environment the child is born into. One could take this exact same argument, and believe that it is most humane to go to parts of Africa and begin slaughtering children and forcing abortions upon the women there.
 - c. A person who comes at this problem from a scientific view—from a biological point of view—cannot make this argument that what is in the womb is not human. There is no biologist who can, on the basis of biology, argue that there is something other than a human being in the womb.
3. Similarly, a woman cannot argue that, it is her body and that she can do what she wants with it. She may argue this philosophically or she may argue this from a religious point of view, but she cannot make this argument from a scientific/biological point of view. Biologically, that which is in the womb is a human being who is different from the mother. It may be a different gender, and it have a different blood type or different eye color than the mother. No one can make the biological argument that what is in the womb is the mother, and therefore she can determine what ought to be done with it. What is in the womb is dependent upon the mother, just as a recently-born baby is dependent upon his mother; but biologically, this is a different human being than the mother.
4. One can certainly make the philosophical argument that, an abortion would be better for the mother, say, in the instance of rape. However, no one can really argue that this is better for the child, as the child has no say in this matter. The child is unable to express his opinion on this matter until he is at least 5 years old.
5. Although, it ought to be obvious that God has some part in the process of conception and the forming of the child in the womb, the Bible affirms this as well. Speaking of Jeremiah, God said, **“Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you came forth out of the womb I sanctified you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”** (Jer. 1:5). Job 31:15 is a similar approach. It seems reasonable and logical to me that we respect this process with which God has chosen to work.
6. God has chosen this entire process of being formed in the womb for the least and for the greatest. Our Lord's humanity was clearly developed in the womb.
7. Our bodies are made and fashioned in the womb of the mother. Job 31:15
8. God uses the womb of the mother to protect the child. Psalm 139:13b reads: **You have covered [and protected] me in my mother's womb.** The verb here is *çâkak^e* (çâk) [pronounced *saw-KAHK^e*], which means *to weave [together], to make [a fence, hedge]; to protect, to guard; to cover over.* Strong's #5526 BDB #692,

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- 696, 697. The sense of this verb seems to be more *to cover and protect* (Ex. 37:9 1Chron. 28:18 Psalm 140:7).
9. The Bible uses the same designation for a child in the womb as a child outside of the womb.
 - a. The Greek noun *brephos* (βρέφος) [pronounced *BREHF-oss*], which means, 1) an unborn child, embryo, a foetus; 2) a new-born child, an infant, a babe. Thayer definitions only. Strong's #1025. This is used in Luke 1:41, 44 for a child in the womb. It is used in Luke 2:12, 16 for a child in a manger. The emphasis seems to be upon not yet being grown or fully developed. 1Peter 2:2 2Tim. 3:15
 - b. The same is true of the Hebrew word *geber* (גִּבּוֹר) [pronounced *ge^b-VAIR*], which means *men*, as separate from women and children. Strong's #1397 #1399 BDB #149. This word is used of Job in the womb in Job 3:3, although this word is generally used of an adult male (Num. 24:3, 15).
 10. I would have a difficult time arguing for or against a fetus going to heaven as David's young infant child (2Sam. 12:15–23). However, logically and religiously, one could argue, *I know a baby will go to heaven, but I am not so certain about a fetus, so I will therefore give birth to the child and then kill it*. This is a perverse argument, I admit, and one that will result in a charge of premeditated murder; but there is a religious logic to it. This argument dovetails with the argument that, this child's life will suck, therefore, we ought to kill the child.
 11. However, it is clear from the Old Testament that God prefers life over death¹:
 - a. The concept of "life" was regarded as the highest good, while "death" was seen as the worst evil. Hence the challenge found in Deuteronomy 30:19 ["Today I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose Life, so that you and your children may live."](#)
 - b. Man is not a chance or a mere assemblage of cells, but created in the image of God. Hence, the shedding of innocent blood was strictly forbidden. Genesis 9:6 Exodus 23:7 Prov. 6:16-17
 - c. Children are never seen as "unwanted" or as a nuisance, but as a gift from God -- the highest possible blessing. Psalm 127:3-5 113:9 Gen. 17:6 33:5
 - d. In a sense, there is an immortality achieved through one's descendants. God's "promise" to Abraham to make of him a great nation is passed on to Isaac, Jacob, and to Jacob's sons. [Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him](#) (Psalm 127:3) See also Gen. 48:16
 - e. Sterility and barrenness are seen in the Bible as a curse, a source of great shame and sorrow. Hence, Peninnah's harsh ridicule of Hannah, the prophet Samuel's mother, because of the latter's initial barrenness. 1Samuel 1:6. Gen. 20:17-18 30:1, 22-23
 - f. God works in the womb fashioning the person there for His purposes. Psalm 139:13-16 Isa. 49:1,5 Jer. 1:5
 - g. In general, the people of the Old Testament saw life as the highest good

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and death the worst of evils; they saw man as being created in the image of God, and children as the highest possible blessing; they understood immortality as being achieved through one's descendants; they saw sterility and barrenness as a curse, and they believed that God is at work in the womb. It would be very difficult that this same people of God believed abortion to be the removal of meaningless cells from the woman's body.

12. Even though there is no clear prohibition of abortion in the Bible, the idea that the absence of a direct prohibition meant that women had a God-given right to kill their offspring would have been utterly foreign to the Hebrew culture of that day for the reasons cited above.²
13. Early Judaism condemned the practice of abortion³:
 - a. *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (written between 50 B.C. and A.D. 50) says, "A woman should not destroy the unborn babe in her belly, nor after its birth throw it before the dogs and vultures."
 - b. *Sibylline Oracles*: includes among the wicked those who "produce abortions and unlawfully cast their offspring away" as well as sorcerers who dispense abortifacients.
 - c. *1 Enoch* (first or second century B.C.) says that an evil angel taught humans how to "smash the embryo in the womb."
 - d. Philo of Alexandria (Jewish philosopher, 25 B.C. to A.D.41) rejected the notion that the fetus is merely part of the mother's body.
 - e. Josephus (first-century Jewish historian) wrote, "The law orders all the offspring be brought up, and forbids women either to cause abortion or to make away with the fetus." (A woman who did so was considered to have committed infanticide because she destroyed a "soul" and hence diminished the race.)
14. Early *Christian* writings also disapproved of abortion⁴:
 - a. *The Didache*: "You shall not murder a child by abortion nor shall you kill a newborn."
 - b. *The Epistle of Barnabas*: "You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not murder a child by abortion nor shall you kill a newborn."
 - c. *Apocalypse of Peter* [describing a vision of Hell]: "I saw women who produced children out of wedlock and who procured abortions."
 - d. Obviously, these texts are not the Bible, and therefore, they are not authoritative. However, these texts, writes Gorman, "bear witness to the general Jewish and Jewish-Christian attitude of the first and second centuries, thus confirming that the earliest Christians shared the anti-abortion position of their Jewish forebears."
 - e. Tertullian (circa 155 - 225 CE): "...we are not permitted, since murder has been prohibited to us once and for all, even to destroy ...the fetus in the womb. It makes no difference whether one destroys a life that has already been born or one that is in the process of birth." Tertullian, "Apology"

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(9:7-8)

- f. http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo_hist.htm lists a number of early Christians who specifically were opposed to abortion.
 - g. Although, it is clear that early Jewish and Christian tradition is not the basis of our faith, it also provides us with the thinking of those who are our spiritual heritage.
 - h. As an aside, there were some early saints who did not believe that abortion was a sin, including St. Augustine and St. Jerome. http://www.religioustolerance.org/abo_hist.htm It is rather ironic that the two earliest saints claimed by the Catholic church were in favor of abortion.
15. The verse often quoted by both sides of this controversy is Exodus 21:22-25: "And if men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage, yet there is no further injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him; and he shall pay as the judges decide. But if any harm [= *evil, mischief, hurt*] follows, then you must take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, and bruise for bruise. "
- a. It is clear that God is speaking of a miscarriage here.
 - b. There are several possible outcomes: the mother and child survive; the mother survives and the child does not; the child survives and the mother does not; neither the mother nor child survive.
 - c. The phrase *there is no further injury* logically suggests that mother and child survive; however, there is still a fine levied for this.
 - d. *If any harm follows* does not distinguish between the mother and child. Let's say, the child was born blind as a result; would there be no penalty?
 - e. Furthermore, the child would like take a breath as exiting the womb, so using this verse to argue for or against abortion based upon ensoulment (when we receive the human soul) is rather futile. The Bible does not distinguish here, either between the mother or the child or between the child taking a breath when born or not.
 - f. It is illogical to try to interpret in this text such distinctions where the text itself does not explicitly teach such distinctions.
 - g. S e e
<http://www.priestsforlife.org/speakersmanual/ch4theologicalcaseible.htm> for further commentary on this passage.
16. So, what about R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s approach that, when each child is born, God breathes into that child the breath of lives, which pattern was set for us with Adam in Gen. 2:7?
- a. Biologically, in the womb, our bodies function with the use of oxygen, although not by using our lungs.
 - b. As we have covered in our study of Psalm 51, the sin nature is a part of the genetic makeup of the child in the womb.
 - c. The Bible does not specifically distinguish between the life of the woman

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- and the child when a miscarriage is caused, treating the child's life as less important.
- d. There are several passages where the child in the womb is given specific identity.
 - e. So, even though there is a certain beauty to the logic that we receive our soul at birth, breathed into us by God, I have a difficult time reconciling that with women using abortion as a form of after-the-fact birth control.
 - f. Therefore, since God has allowed conception to take place, I would take the stand that we ought to respect the process which God has chosen for the development of a child in the womb, and to not interrupt that process.
 - g. If the life of the woman is actually in danger, I would choose the mother over the child; but this is far less than 1% of the abortions which are performed.
 - h. As callous as this may seem, I do not favor aborting children conceived by rape or by incest. Again, this is a very tiny percentage of the abortions which are performed. This is also based upon having seen a public speaker who thanked her birth mother for giving birth to her, even though her birth mother was impregnated by a rapist.
17. Since it is quite difficult for me to make a determination about what quality of life exists within the soul, I then look at those who favor abortions and those who are against them. We have those on the political left who support abortions. They say, *abortions ought to be safe, legal and rare*; however, their policies make abortions abundant and now, about 2 out of 5 women have an abortion. Furthermore, even though those on the left seem to think that knowledge of things sexual are absolutely necessary for all children, they do not believe that women seeking an abortion should know much about anything. They don't want them to have a sonogram; they don't want them to see a film of an abortion occurring for the time period they are thinking about; they don't want them to know about what exactly is in their bodies at the time that they want an abortion. Given that this is the side which supports abortion, I would rather be on the other side of this controversy.
- a. One of the pro-abortion sites that I visited (<http://www.elroy.net/ehr/abortion.html>) argued in favor of abortion with the verse: *Let the day perish in which I am born, And the night that hath said: 'A man-child hath been conceived.'* (Job 3:3). Their reasoning was, Job's life sucked so bad when he wrote those words that aborting him would have been a good thing. The lack of logic here is stunning. God chose Job to develop unique information about God and the Angelic Conflict; Job's life and suffering is integral to Biblical thinking—so how can anyone argue that, God is saying here that, abortion for Job would have been the way to go? Isn't this really expressing Job's personal sorrow rather than God's preference that Job had been aborted?
 - b. There was even a group which was trying to get women to wear a badge or a ribbon indicating that they are proud to have had an abortion. For

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- some reason, that never really caught on, even with liberals. Would anyone wear a badge saying, "I killed the fetus in my womb; yay me!"
18. Let me offer a logical and theological reason against abortion: we believers are made up of a soul, a spirit and a body. God does not view the body as unimportant. When we are raised from the dead, we will be raised in a resurrection body. There are offshoots of Christianity which teach Platonist concepts, such as the soul yearns to be free of the human body, so that it can be pure; but Bible does not teach that we will spend eternity separated from our bodies. God has specifically determined that our eternity will be spent in a resurrection body. Therefore, even if the cells being formed in the womb merely represents a body and a format soul, that is not reason enough to view aborting the fetus as a trivial and nonmoral choice. If God places us into resurrection bodies in eternity and human bodies in time, then we ought not to take His process of forming the body as an unimportant matter.
 19. The creation/making of the body is never presented as a trivial thing.
 - a. The body is made by God before He breathed the breath of lives into it. Gen. 2:7
 - b. God uses the womb of the mother to protect the child. Psalm 139:13b
 - c. God has clothed us with a human body, which protects the soul. Job 10:11
 - d. In eternity, we will have a resurrection body. 1Cor. 15
 - e. If God makes and protects the human body, ought we not to do the same?
 20. Based upon the explicit Bible verses above, as well as upon logic, I remain unconvinced that a cavalier attitude toward abortion is the right approach (between 1–1.5 million abortions performed each year in the United States is a pretty cavalier approach).
 21. Whereas, I am not completely decided when it comes to ensoulment (when our souls and bodies become one), I am convinced that abortion simply as a method of after-the-fact birth control is wrong. Whatever kind of life is in the womb is a process set up by God and ought not to be interfered with.
 22. Therefore, when faced with this controversy, I would rather stand on the side of life.

¹ From: <http://www.priestsforlife.org/speakersmanual/ch4theologicalcasebible.htm>

² From: <http://www.priestsforlife.org/speakersmanual/ch4theologicalcasebible.htm>

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These examples apparently were lifted from Michael Gorman's article "Why Is the New Testament Silent About Abortion?" (*Christianity Today*, Jan. 11, 1993).

⁴ As above.

Possibly a worthy book to pursue this topic further would be: Michael Gorman, *Abortion & the Early Church*, Intervarsity Press, 1982. Let me also suggest *Handbook on Abortion* which can be purchased for shipping costs alone.