

The Right to Life and Abortion – a Christian Ethical Perspective

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Etici in Suid-Afrika voer tans debat oor die grondwetlike hof se interpretasie van die abortiewe reg, op so 'n wyse dat dit aborsie op aanvraag wettig. Sedert die uitvaardiging van wetgewing het duisende aborsies reeds plaasgevind en Christelike gesondheidswerkers in staatsbeheerde klinieke en hospitale is verplig om aan hierdie praktyke deel te neem, ongeag gewetensbeswaar. Hierdie navorsing fokus op die interpretasie van die reg op lewe, met verwysing na die lewe van die fetus vanuit 'n Christelik-etiese oogpunt. Die sentraal-teoretiese argument van hierdie studie is dat die begrip 'lewe', en die roeping van mense om lewe te bewaar, ontvou en beskerm 'n kernbeginsel in die Bybelse openbaring is. Hierdie beginsel spreek uit die drievoudige wyse waarop lewe in die Skrif bespreek word, naamlik in 'n skeppings-, 'n herskeppings- en 'n eskatologiese perspektief. Verder word aangedui dat die etiese beginsels, wat uit die Bybelse openbaring afgelei word, toon dat aborsie op aanvraag immoreel is en dat Christene die interpretasie van die grondwetlike hof ten opsigte van die reg moet teenstaan.

1. Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in article 3 states:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person
(United Nations, 1995:153).

Through this declaration, the United Nations exercised and still exercises a dynamic influence on the post-war political systems. This concise formulation can be found in virtually all the charters of fundamental rights in constitutional democracies today. There is wide consensus that the right to life is a fundamental right and that it is part of the duty of governments to protect it. The emphasis on the right to life is congruent with the Biblical view on the holiness of life and the calling of man to protect, preserve and expand life. Life comes from God and should as such be protected as a valuable gift (Wüstenburg, 1998:124). From this point of view it can even be stated that life is a privilege and thus an important right, for God ordains life (Lategan, 1991:15).

This article will focus on the practical application of the right to life as a fundamental right. From the outset it must be said that peculiar contradictions are posed by the recognition of the right to life and the way in which politics deals with the concept of life. Although many governments constitutionally protect the right to life, they are increasingly legalising abortion on request, as well as euthanasia, while several countries still apply capital punishment. The USA is a striking example of this. It seems as if the right to life is increasingly reduced in spite of its general recognition.

The central theoretical argument in this article is that the Biblical emphasis of life as God's gift and the constitutional recognition of the right to life should not leave room for the legalisation of abortion on request. The Christian should deal with the problems surrounding pregnancies in a different manner and should honour the right to life. In the explication of this argument, the Biblical perspectives and Christian ethical perspectives on the right to life and abortion will receive attention.

In an attempt to unfold the central argument, the theory of 'life' as a contemporary theory for ethical behaviour, will first be examined. This concept, as it will be argued in the following explanation, must however not be confused with Bonhoeffer's thesis that life replaces religion (See Wüstenberg, 1998: 159). It rather concerns the relation of life and Christian religion. This concept is also not presented as a replacement of what has already been endorsed in the history of Christian ethics, for example the principles of love, peace and justice. It should rather be seen as another complementary theory in the meta theory of Christian ethics developed within the reformed paradigm. This approach will therefore not push aside love as fulfilment of the law, but will entail that love will be argued as characteristic of Christian ethical behaviour within the specific perspective of the concept of "life".

In the Biblical revelation life is discussed in various ways. God speaks of biotic life as it is created in the creation and which is holy in His eyes. Furthermore life is explained as the new life in Christ which is spiritual in nature and which is a gift of God's particular grace. In the third place Scripture promises the eternal life to the children of God which they will inherit and possess in the renewed creation after the second coming of Christ. In the subsequent discussion life in creational perspective, life in re-creational perspective and life in eschatological perspective will be discussed.

2. The concept life as a paradigm in Christian ethics

2.1 Life in creational perspective

God's creational act finds its focal point in the creation of life. He brought life to a universe that was 'uninhabitable' (*tohu wabohu*) (Gn 1:2). On the

grounds of the words ‘tohu’ and ‘bohu’ in the rest of the Old Testament, Du Toit shows that this expression indicates a desert (Du Toit, 1974:60). The characteristic of a desert is its lack of life. In a state of chaotic uninhabitability, God brought life. He prepared everything as a dwelling for living beings (Von Rad, 1961:54). Life became the deepest essence of order after the age of chaos. After the creation of man God commended the cultural mandate: Gn 1:28 reads as follows:

God blessed them and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’

This mandate is aimed at the perseverance and development of life. The cultural mandate is thus closely connected to man’s imaging of God. Von Rad (1961:58) makes the next comment on man’s imaging of God and the consequent cultural mandate:

Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear, so man is placed on earth in God’s image as God’s sovereign emblem. He is really only God’s representative, summoned to maintain and enforce God’s claim to dominion over the earth.

Man’s imaging of God and the cultural mandate has direct ethical implications. It is man’s task to nurture and conserve the life that God has created. Man may not destroy life in God’s creation. What he does must promote the quality of life. The ethical question which arises from this is: How does man handle the life that God gave – the life of nature, the life of animals and the life of human beings? Life as God’s creation must indeed be protected and unfurled. Man is commended to this by God’s command (Velema, 1990:38). The creational perspective on life did not come into its full right in the history of ethics. This fact appears from the enormous damage to nature due to man’s drive for technological growth. Only in the last decades did ecological problems start to appear on the ethics agenda. An ethic of life will develop sensitivity towards conservation of nature, the responsible utilisation of natural resources and the life-threatening effect of pollution in the contemporary culture.

Modern medical ethics can also be approached from an ethic of life which tends to be very fruitful, because issues such as capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, selective procreation and the prevention and treatment of Aids deals with the meaning and quality of life. It touches the demand for the unfurling of life intensely.

2.2 Life in re-creational perspective

Through the re-creational work of Christ man is brought in a new relationship with God as a result of the justification, reconciliation and adoption as child of God. An important utterance that summarises the fruit of the re-creation is found in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Ridderbos (1973:223) says that this statement deals with the fact that the saved in Christ belongs to a new creation. This new creation brings a new life for the redeemed person. It implies new relations not only with God, but also with fellow human beings and in social structures. The essence of the new life is to serve God, and this service includes the whole of life and all the relationships of man. In the words of Bonhoeffer

faith is an act of life ... Jesus calls us not to a new religion, but to life (Wüstenberg, 1998:100).

In accordance to the reformed paradigm, it must be said that the glory of God is the ultimate goal of every ethical action. To be able to fulfil this command the damnable sinner must be reborn as a new person with a new view on life. His conscience is then reversed from self-centredness to service-centredness. The new person also receives the Spirit of God to assist him in his service. Life in re-creational perspective means that the Christian has a fixed motivation for life, which is to live according to the law of God to the glory of God. Throughout the history of Christian ethics, theologians emphasised the importance of the law for ethical behaviour and also the fact that love is the fulfilment of the law. Life in re-creational perspective emphasises Christian love as guideline for ethical behaviour. Motivated by the glory of God, respect for life and love, the Christian must relate to his neighbour, the world and nature and must be instated to preserve and unfurl life. In this sense one can agree with Rasmussen's view when he says that whatever else theology of life might mean, it roots in the strong Biblical sense of moral responsibility before God, who is the power in and of creation and the transcending power who beckons the redeeming transformation of creation in the steady direction of compassion and justice (Rasmussen, 1995:116).

This principle is of particular interest for the current global human rights debate. After a century of widespread oppression, genocide, ethnic cleansing and the gross exploitation of people by way of social structures and political policies, the human rights debate became more potent. But what is a human right other than the ability of the individual to unfurl his life without the intolerance of others or violations by social structures? It

is all about the unfurling of his life as a result of his worthiness as a human being created in the image of God. Life in re-creational perspective casts new light on the human rights debate within the reformed paradigm.

2.3 Life in eschatological perspective

The re-creational work of Christ is completed with the fullness of time when the new heaven and earth will commence. Everything is moving towards this point. This broken reality, which man can only make partly habitable, will not be able to completely realise the good under human hands (Van Wyk, 1986:225). Ethical behaviour is therefore a submitted lack of full insight in this dispensation, to inherent tensions and often to a choice between the lesser of two evils. However, God's creation is on its way to the fullness of time where the brokenness will finally be lifted. Humankind can always hope for that.

This hope is especially important for ethics in the broken dispensation in which man now lives. Hope brings a life of expectation that God will not leave injustice and pain as it is. He brings movement and change, and humankind can hope for change in its suffering (see Moltmann, 1967). Ethical behaviour must keep this hope alive. Like love is a commandment to the new person, the giving of hope as an ethical act is also a cardinal commandment in the Christian ethics. Ethical decision-making and behaviour must, in a seemingly hopeless situation or in a spirit of hopelessness, be the key to hope in the working hand of God. In this way hope must be kept alive for the poor, the suppressed and the wronged. Christian ethical behaviour must bring hope for people in despair.

The life that God created, and as it is renewed in Christ, overflows into eternal life. Life moves from the imperfect to the perfect. There is indeed a discontinuity. Therefore a Christian should sometimes continue with a comprehension of the incompleteness of this dispensation to do good with the realisation that he does not have all the answers and that he must time and again seek a new answer in a new situation with the light that he has. The perfect only begins in the eternal life. Ethics will therefore never be able to offer a list of crystal clear and everlasting answers. Nor will it be able to provide the recipe for a perfect world without injustice and intolerance. Time and again Christian ethics will have to struggle to explore the principles to deal with the issues of the day. The philosopher, Ortega y Gasset, was indeed correct in his assertion:

Life is a task (Wüstenberg, 1998:103).

Yet there is also continuity. That which man has established is not destroyed. The consequences of man's life-unfurling ethical action, no

matter how broken, will continue existing and be renewed. Between Coming and Second Coming, between fulfilment and fullness of time there is an essential link and an essential continuity and therefore man and human creativity has totally been assimilated – and not eliminated – in the unfurling of the realised and realising Kingdom (Van Wyk, 1986:226-227). On the one hand the eschatological perspective of discontinuity gives comprehension for the temporariness of ethical decisions and motivation for the investigation and re-investigation of answers. On the other hand, the eschatological perspective on the continuity of human deeds gives motivation and inspiration to stay ethically active in the broken world.

Life in creational perspective, re-creational perspective and eschatological perspective provides the ethical sphere within which the issue of abortion on request and subsequent matters such as the “legal personhood of the foetus”, the obligations of the Christian health-worker and the principles of counselling in this regard can be explained. This explanation will be done in the following section.

3. Abortion argued from the paradigm of life

In legal terms abortion is defined as:

the expulsion of an embryo or foetus before it is viable (Gross, 2000:247).

During a period when the right to life was fore-grounded in the human rights debate, the arguments in favour of abortion on request flooded the scene. More emphasis falls on the right of the woman to choose whether she wants to continue with the pregnancy than on the “right” of the unborn child or the right of the father or the extended family. Liberal democracies are increasingly legalising abortion on request. Beckwith indicates that the current argumentation of the legality of abortion departs from the point of view that arguments should be cleansed of “metaphysical” elements and that the debate should be argued in a realistic positivistic manner (Beckwith, 2001:21). In this argumentation religion should be kept out of the debate. One advocate of this view is Simmons (2000:69). Arguments in favour of abortion on request based on this point of departure, can be divided into the following categories (Douma, 1996:219):

- The medical argument. According to this argument abortion can be administered when the life of the mother or the child is in danger. In general abortion under such circumstances is viewed as justified.
- The psychological argument. This argument is offered when there is a conviction that the continuation of the pregnancy can damage the woman psychologically. The question remains of whether

abortion in such a case is justified. There is a difference of opinion about this scenario.

- The eugenic argument. This argument becomes relevant when the suspicion exists that the child may be born with serious physiological or psychological defects. In some cases abortion is seen as the natural solution in this regard.
- The juridical argument. This argument comes into play when the pregnancy is the consequence of rape, and in general abortion under these circumstances is seen as justified.
- The social argument. This argument pleads that there will be no future for the child born into poverty or other poor social circumstances. Abortion would be the best choice for the mother and the child because their future would have been hopeless.
- The pragmatic argument. This argument can be formulated as follows: So many illegal “backstreet abortions” take place in poor communities anyway and many times they cause the death of both the mother and the child. It is better to legalise it so that it can be done under controlled medical circumstances.
- Thus far the arguments posed by Douma. Another argument can be added which is currently the popular argument in the South African abortion debate. This argument can be called the “human rights” argument. The “human rights” argument holds that in any case the mother has the right to choose irrespective of all the abovementioned arguments because she has total control over her body. Her choice is a private affair.

These arguments surface in the debate surrounding the increasing legalisation of abortion on request. Two questions can be asked at this stage of the appeal: Are the arguments really “cleansed of metaphysical elements”? Are we not dealing with ideological presuppositions about concepts such as human being, child, life, suffering and social context? Beckwith (2001:25) argues on solid grounds that this is the case. The second question is: Does this not infringe on the right to life of the unborn child? Lawyers would argue that this question is irrelevant because the foetus is not a juristic person and does not have the right to life. What is the status of the unborn child in the eyes of God?

These questions and others will be dealt with in the following paragraphs. The point of departure is that, as Beckwith (2001:25) states it, the issue cannot be approached in any other way than from a “metaphysical angle.” All arguments in this debate flow indeed from a certain life and worldview. This life and worldview can be religious, philosophical or

ideological. To the author's mind, post-modernism exposed the flaws of the positivistic argument of ethical neutrality adequately. Therefore the point of departure of the following evaluation will be a Christian ethical perspective. This perspective will be developed from Biblical data from which ethical principles and norms will be derived.

3.1 Biblical perspectives

An ethical evaluation of abortion should depart from the question of how the embryo and foetus are viewed in the eyes of God (Rheeder, 1999:324). Is the embryo or foetus human? Can one ascribe any value to the embryo and foetus in the sense that they are worthy of protection? Should the foetus have legal personhood? Based on a comparative study of different sources, Rheeder indicates that there are mainly two views concerning the beginning of life. For one group life starts with conception, which means that as from the moment of conception life stands under the protection of the sixth commandment. The other group sees the beginning of life at a later stage. According to this view the sixth commandment becomes applicable at the time when life begins (Rheeder, 1999:325). The consequences of these views are that there will also be two views on the legal status of the embryo or foetus.

Direct indications from Scripture are rare. The scholar should take into account that the Bible is not a biological textbook concerned with the physiological and psychological development of humans, but rather the specific revelation of God's redeeming grace in Christ. Scripture contains the redemption story in a revelation-historical manner. In spite of this, Rheeder (1999:345) indicates that there are indeed texts that can serve as a Scriptural appeal for the view that the embryo or foetus is fully human. In short, the following two Biblical texts can be referred to:¹

- Jb 3:3: "May the day perish on which I was born, and the night in which it was said: 'A male child is conceived'".

The word 'born' is actually better translated as 'impregnated'. Hermeneuts such as Driver and Gray (1921:31-32); Van Selms (1982:39-

1 Conclusions based on other parts of Scripture are often drawn by Christian ethicists. They stress the commandment of love, the acceptance of suffering and of a child as a gift from God's hand. (See Rheeder 1999:354 ff). These arguments are indeed important in a broad evaluation of abortion, but it will not be dealt with in this discussion. What is important in the human rights debate about abortion is the question of whether the foetus or embryo can be regarded as a juristic person or not, and that is the reason why the above-mentioned passages of Scripture are mentioned.

40) and Hartley (1988:92) agree with this grammatical exegesis. Kress (1999:37) also postulates, based on Is 45:18, that the Lord forms everything (also the child) from nothing. Everything that takes place from conception onwards is part of God's formation of a human being. For this reason, Ex. 22:21 prescribes a punishment for the one who harms a pregnant woman to such an extent that she has a miscarriage. Based on this Scriptural evidence, one can conclude that the human being enters the world with conception following intercourse, and not with birth.

- Ps. 139:13-16: "For You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed."

These verses indicate God's involvement with man from the time of pregnancy. This involvement attributes value to the embryo or foetus. The idea that the embryo is human from the outset can also be found in Ps 51:7. This psalm describes the damnability of man from his own inception. The embryo or foetus is therefore both an object of God's involvement and damnable in the original sin.

Besides the few direct pieces of Scriptural evidence, other arguments can be offered from the whole of the Biblical perspective in a revelation-historical sense. The first argument deals with the soul-body dilemma. Departing from the point of view that a human being only becomes human once the soul is added to the body, the question remains of at which stage during the prenatal development the soul is added to the body. If it is at a later stage of the development of the embryo or foetus, the embryo or foetus cannot be seen as human before the soul has been added to the body. However, Rheeder (1999:328) indicates justifiably that this line of arguing departs from a dualistic view of man according to which body and soul is seen as two entities. The Biblical view of man typifies man as a being of unity. There is no stage in the development of a human being from the time of conception where it is without a soul. The argument that the embryo or foetus is of lesser value because it doesn't have a soul, cannot be founded along the line of Christian ethics.

Banner (1998:26ff) illuminates the matter of abortion from another Biblical perspective, namely that of the Christian hope. Based on the Biblical view, that Christ is the first and the last and that His divine rule includes all things, man receives the consolation that there is no need to fear. Christ is the foundation and inspiration of Christian hope. The believer should experience, live and spread this hope. Both abortion and

euthanasia are deeds driven by a lack of hope, and for this reason it is against the essence of the hope that Christ offers to a broken world. Banner's thematic approach is of value and can be applied in the Christian evaluation of the right to life.

One argument used in Christian circles to defend the legalisation of abortion on request, calls on Gn 2:7. Based on this part of Scripture, it is claimed that the foetus only becomes human when it can breathe by itself. Fletcher is one exponent of this view. He says:

Therefore, Jewish and Biblical tradition defined a human being with the word 'nephesh' – the breathing one (Beckwith, 2001:25).

In view of this passage he concludes that only when the child can breathe independently it can be regarded as a human being with the normal rights of human beings. However, this argument is not valid in this sense, since 'nephesh' indicates life, and not breathing in a biological sense. God has made the human being, that He has created, a living human being.

3.2 Ethical perspectives

Although these passages shed some light on the issue of the status and humanity of the foetus, Christian ethics can also draw on Biblical themes in the revelation-history. In the author's opinion Christian ethics should primarily take part in the abortion debate from the premise of Christian anthropology and especially the doctrine of *imago dei* (the image of God). The Christian view of man is based upon man's likeness to God. Man is the image of God, and therefore his life may not be taken. This principle grants the embryo and foetus intrinsic value. Based on this argument, the intrinsic value of the embryo and foetus can be argued along the lines suggested by Lee (1996:24). He argues as follows:

- The foetus is identical with – that is, one and the same entity as – the being that is later rational and self-conscious.
- The being that is later rational and self-conscious is, at that later time, intrinsically valuable.
- If a thing is intrinsically valuable, then it is intrinsically valuable from the moment it exists.
- So, the being that is later rational and self-conscious is intrinsically valuable from the moment that it exists (From the second and third argument).
- Therefore, the foetus is intrinsically valuable from the moment that it exists (From the first and the fourth argument) (See also Stretton, 2000:239).

According to this argument, it can be inferred that the embryo or foetus has “a future of value”, as is claimed in bio-ethics (Brown, 2000:103). As such, the embryo and foetus are *human* and therefore it is according to the Christian anthropology also an image bearer of God. Destruction of the embryo or foetus is therefore equal to taking a life and is a transgression of the sixth commandment. Stated differently: the conclusion is that the embryo or foetus, as human beings, also has the right to life.

Wendler (1999:33) follows another line of arguing from the bio-ethical point of view. His objection against abortion does not rest in the argument that the embryo or foetus is a person, or in the intrinsic value of the embryo or foetus, but in the “moral status of the process of foetal development.” His argument is as follows:

- The deliberate interruption of an instance of a natural process which, as a kind of process, helps define the fundamental structure of our lives is *prima facie* seriously immoral.
- Foetal development, as a kind of natural process, helps define the fundamental structure of our lives.
- Abortion constitutes a deliberate interruption of an instance of foetal development.
- Therefore, abortion is *prima facie* seriously immoral.” (Wendler, 1999:38;44 & 50).

Wendler maintains that his argument does not have to replace the argument of the personhood of the embryo or foetus. The two arguments can supplement each other in the rejection of abortion on request.

In addition to the fact that abortion ends the life of another human being, it is also a self-destructive act. After psychological and sociological case studies, Avalos (1999:51) comes to the following conclusion:

Years following the procedure, some women are quite satisfied with their abortion decisions while others articulate primary emotions of loss or grief rather than relief.

After a similar study Jeffrey (1999:29) indicates that the following symptoms often appear in women who have had an abortion: feelings of guilt, depression, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, feelings of shame, anxiety, back flashes of the abortion, pre-occupation with death, lack of sexual intimacy, bulimia, anorexia, a tendency of quick successive pregnancy as a replacement of the previous child, obsessions with other children, nightmares, avoidance of children, self-destructive behaviour, suicidal

thoughts, anger and numbness. In Buddhist Japanese communities there is the so-called *mizuko kuyō*, a religious ritual which women who have had an abortion undergo, in order to cleanse them from their feelings of guilt (LaFleur 1999:797). The fact that such a ritual exists, is proof of the fact that women who undergo abortions, act self-destructively. This self-destruction is in itself also a transgression of the sixth commandment.

An additional argument is that the right to abortion on request rests on an individualistic view of man and society. The right of the father is not recognised. The Biblical link between the covenant family and the broader covenantal community is also lost. The believer's filiations also mean the additional communion with fellow believers, thus the ending of life without the say of fellow believers is against the grain of the Christian view of society. Jeffrey (1999:29) points to the fact that women, who suffer from the above-mentioned symptoms, find relief when they admit their guilt to the "people around them" and specifically the father of the child.

The Biblical and ethical information on abortion indicates that the legalisation of abortion on request is in contradiction with the government's task to protect the right to life. The right of the mother to choose is absolutised. In a Christian theory of human rights, one right can never become absolute, because then the delicate balance between different rights and the relation between right and obligation is lopsided. In this modern time especially where human rights, and with that the right to life, is highly esteemed, the legalisation of abortion on request brings an incomprehensible contradiction. (Beckwith 2001:19). It seems that pure pragmatism overshadows founded ethical thinking.

However, the rejection of abortion on request cannot apply absolutely either. The inevitable matter of the clash between obligations where there is sometimes only a choice between the lesser of two evils, also applies in this case (De Bruyn, 1998:127). In some case abortion should be allowed. In this regard one can refer to a situation where the mother, or the child, or both are in danger. The *medical argument* favouring abortion on request can be accepted on the basis of the ethical theory of conflict of obligations where a person has to choose between bad and worse. A choice has to be made between the life of the mother and the life of the child. Due to the mother's duties and indispensability for the rest of the family, abortion is seen as the only solution. In the case of pregnancy after rape, abortion also seems to be permissible because a continued pregnancy might cause great psychosocial conflict within the mother. This *juridical argument* seems to be acceptable. In both these cases the pregnancy could not be avoided – in the first case because the pregnancy was planned *bone fide*,

and in the last case because the pregnancy was brought on forcibly. In the case of rape the mother had no choice beforehand. In all other cases of pregnancy she had a prior choice.

However, a clash of obligation should only be offered as an argument in extreme cases. Moral conflicts are relevant only in well defined emergency situations. The four other reasons that are usually offered are: possible retardation in the child, poverty, the unmarried woman and the fact that the woman chooses not to have any more children (Sullins, 1999:354). In these cases the pregnancy could be avoided through planning. Arguments in favour of abortion in these cases rest purely on pragmatics. Such arguments can be interpreted so widely that almost any abortion on request would be possible. This pragmatic approach endangers the Biblical view of the importance of life and consequently the effective protection of the child's right to life is limited.

4. Conclusion

In the light of the ethical perspectives, the Christian should act proactively through family planning, moral values concerning sexuality and through actively promoting the idea of the holiness of life. People should be made aware of their task in the conservation and deployment of life and the harmful consequences that abortion has for a community. They should also testify towards the government in this regard.

Christians have the divine calling to witness against abortion on request. The calling of Christians to be the voice and the conscience of people who are oppressed, exploited, or ill treated, is also applicable in this instance. Christians should act on behalf of the unborn child just as they should act on behalf of any down-trodden human being. The choice to abort can never be the choice of the mother alone just as it can not be the individual choice of any person to dehumanise or kill any other human person. Churches and Christians will be disobedient to God if they condone abortion by request by either supporting it or with an attitude of quietism.

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