

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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There is much confusion both without and within the visible Christian church concerning God's Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13 KJV), as is evident particularly in regards to abortion and capital punishment. Some people and churches condone abortion as they think it's a woman's right to terminate an unwanted pregnancy since they think a fetus is not a person; and yet, most of the very same people believe that capital punishment is a murderous practice and that even the worst of criminals have a right to live. Other people and churches believe that both abortion and capital punishment are murderous practices because they hold that every life is sacred, while others hold the opposite position and believe that both abortion and capital punishment are permissible. Finally, the remaining people and churches believe that abortion is murder of human beings, and that capital punishment is not murder but is rather justice rendered by the civil government which rightly executes criminals who have committed capital crimes.

Therefore, in this month's ILC Topical Bulletin the following question will be addressed: ***What does God's Word – the Holy Bible – teach regarding abortion and capital punishment?***

First, let's look closely at God's commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." (Exodus 20:13 KJV) The Hebrew word **רָצַח** ratsach {raw-tsakh'} translated into English as "kill" refers to HUMAN life and NOT animal life, for the BDB Hebrew/English lexicon mentions "manslayer" as a defining term. Furthermore, in the New Testament, Jesus quotes the commandment thus: "Thou shalt do no murder." (Matthew 19:18 KJV) The English word "murder" is a translation of the Greek root word **φονεῖω** phoneuo {fon-yoo'-o} which the abridged Thayer's Greek/English lexicon defines as: 1) to kill, slay, murder 2) to commit murder.

Hence, it is NOT murder when animals are killed, despite modern society's attempts to equate animal life and human life. The truth is that animals have NO SOUL, while human beings do have a SOUL, for it is written: "the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof." (Genesis 2:7, 19 KJV) Note well the distinction between human beings and animals from the very moment of their creation by God. Hence, the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" refers especially to the unlawful taking of human life.

It's also true that we are not to murder another human being in our thoughts or words, nor are we to embitter our neighbor's life even if our neighbor has wronged us, for the Holy Bible declares: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (Romans 12:19-21; 1 John 3:15 KJV) And, Jesus says: "I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man." (Matthew 5:22; 15:19-20 KJV) Thus, we are not to murder a human being in thoughts, words, or deeds.

Now, as mentioned earlier, the question to be specifically answered in this topical bulletin is: *What does God's Word – the Holy Bible – teach regarding abortion and capital punishment?*

The American Heritage Dictionary 2nd College Edition supplies us with the following definitions for the key terms involved—

ABORTION: *n. Induced termination of pregnancy before the fetus is capable of survival as an individual.*

FETUS: *n. In humans, the unborn young from the end of the eighth week to the moment of birth as distinguished from the earlier embryo.*

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT: *n. The infliction of the death penalty for the commission of certain crimes.*

Consider what the Holy Bible tells us about the *unborn young* that modern language commonly labels a *fetus*. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, writes by inspiration of God, "thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them." (Psalm 139:13-16 KJV)

Comment: Note that David by his repeated use of the personal pronouns "me" and "I" wrote about the Lord knowing him as a person while he was being formed in his mother's womb; yes, while David was an embryo and then a fetus he was already known as a person to God while God fashioned – formed – him. Thus, the unborn young are children— REAL PEOPLE, HUMAN BEINGS!

"As thou knowest not what *is* the way of the spirit, *nor* how the bones *do* grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all." (Ecclesiastes 11:5 KJV)

Comment: Observe that the words "with child" indicate that an embryo or fetus is not merely a mass of tissue but is rather a real person. Interestingly, the phrase "with child" is used over two dozen times in the Holy Scriptures. Thus, the unborn young are children— REAL PEOPLE, HUMAN BEINGS!

"And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." (Luke 1:39-44 KJV)

Comment: John the Baptist, while in his mother's womb, leaped for joy; and, note well that John is called a "babe" – a baby – and not merely an embryo or fetus. Hence, John was already a person before his birth had taken place. Thus, the unborn young are children— REAL PEOPLE, HUMAN BEINGS!

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.” (Matthew 1:18-19 KJV)

Comment: The Virgin Mary was “with child of the Holy Ghost”; so, Jesus Christ was certainly a real person before He was born in the flesh. In fact, Christ Jesus is He, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8 KJV) So, I repeat: Jesus Christ was certainly a real person before He was born in the flesh!

Accordingly, the Holy Bible makes it quite clear that from the moment of human conception a real person is living and present. That being the case, ABORTION IS MURDER!

“If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart *from her*, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges *determine*.” (Exodus 21:22 KJV) “Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.” (Amos 1:13 KJV) “And Hazeel said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.” (2 Kings 8:12 KJV)

Comment: Observe that the harming and killing of women, children, and unborn children are all evils and transgressions deserving punishment. That being the case, ABORTION IS MURDER!

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5 KJV)

Comment: The fact that mothers willingly abort their babies with total lack of love for their unborn children indicates they are without natural affection, which is a clear sign that we are in the last days, as is the fact that not a few so-called Christian churches condone such heinous sinful behavior.

It is grossly sinful and disgraceful that the murderous practice of abortion takes place in the United States and elsewhere throughout the world. Millions of babies have had their lives snuffed out because wicked people are ignorant or have wilfully rejected the true God and His true Word. “Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward.” (Psalm 127:3 KJV) Thus, real repentance is required!

Now, consider what the Holy Bible teaches concerning capital punishment. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” (Romans 13:1-5 KJV)

Comment: Note that civil authorities are ordained of God and are ministers of God who bear the sword as revengers to execute wrath upon the evildoers. Thus, the government has the right and the duty to inflict the death penalty.

God says: “surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” (Genesis 9:5-6 KJV) Furthermore, Jesus – who is true God and true man – says: “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” (Matthew 26:52 KJV)

Comment: No individual has the right as an individual to take the life of another human being. However, God has given man in the form of civil government the right and the duty to inflict capital punishment upon murderers.

Accordingly, CAPITAL PUNISHMENT is NOT murder, but is rather a God ordained just means of punishing murderers and other capital offenders so that order can be maintained and promoted in society.

Let us all regularly pray for widespread repentance in our sin-sick world which has for the most part abandoned Biblical principals including those concerning abortion and capital punishment. Millions of unborn children have lost their lives even though they've committed no crime, while murderers and other violent criminals are permitted to live comfortably. Nevertheless, God's Word says: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 5:20-24 KJV)

God grant that we all cling to Jesus Christ in heart-deep faith, and that we continue to hold fast to His Holy Word as the only source and norm of faith and practice, for “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:9-10 KJV) “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16 KJV)

m.e.l.