

Christian teaching on the value of life

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



Within Christianity, there are in fact many denominations; the viewpoints of two important denominations I shall take into consideration are the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England. In general, Christians will look for guidance in the Bible, and from the teachings of Jesus, but whereas Catholics also use the Papal letters (Pope's documents) for guidance, Protestants tend to look at difficult situations individually instead of following rules, so they use prayer for spiritual guidance from God with the difficult situations they may come across in life.

Even though Catholics and Protestants have different views, they do share the same beliefs about God, Jesus and the Holy Bible. All Christians believe that the value of life is sacred, but it is the way in which they interpret the meaning of the value of life that is different. 'We need to affirm the sacredness of all human life. Every person is somebody because he/she is a child of God', (Catholic Truth Society). Life for Christians is believed to be the greatest gift God gave mankind, and they believe every life is important no matter what the circumstance may be. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created them', (Genesis).

This quote from the Old Testament shows how Christians believe all humans should act towards one another because God, Himself, is in everyone through the Holy Spirit, so if God is in everyone, Christians wouldn't want to harm God. 'Don't you know that you, yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you? ' (Corinthians 3: 16). Surely, one of the greatest Christian teachings on the value of life is the sixth commandment, 'You shall not murder', (Exodus 20: 13).

Christians believe the commandments are laws that were given to Moses, directly from God, so taking a life which He has created is a wrong in the eyes of God. Therefore, a Christian wouldn't want to take a life that He has created because it would be disobeying God's Holy law. Although all Christians may share these beliefs, the issues of abortion, euthanasia, fertility treatment, animal testing and many other situations, not just those involving a life, has caused the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England to be in controversy.

Christians believe human life is sacred, and that it is set apart from other forms of life, as God says in the Genesis, 'Be masters over the fish and birds and all the animals. ' Fertility treatment is a major issue now days; within the society that we live in, as well as within the Church. The dictionary on the internet, defined fertility treatment as 'Any method or procedure used to enhance fertility or increase the likelihood of pregnancy. '

There are five types of fertility treatment, that can be used in the United Kingdom; AIH (Artificial Insemination by the Husband) - sperm from the husband is injected into the wife's ovum, AID (Artificial Insemination by a donor)-sperm from a sperm bank (anonymous donor) is used, IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation) - eggs are fertilised in a test tube and up to three are implanted in the mothers womb, Egg Donation- an egg from a different woman is used, and Surrogacy-a woman carrying a baby for another woman.

All Christians believe life is a gift from God, and see children as a blessing from God, and therefore allow some forms of fertility treatment. 'Be fruitful and increase in number... Fill the earth', (Genesis 1: 28). In 1990, the Pope

stated, 'Life is God's gift, and we do not have the right to children. ' Catholics firmly believe that just because science makes something possible it doesn't mean that it is right, but Protestants believe it is okay for science to assist childless couples to conceive. Pope Pius XII said, 'Using a donor is mechanical adultery.

Donating sperm to create a child, yet having no responsibility for that child isolates the sacred act of creating life from the marriage union, and is a violation of the marriage union. ' The seventh commandment is, 'Thou shall not commit adultery, (Exodus 20: 14). However, the Church of England believes that using donations of sperm and eggs are an acceptable way to help a couple fulfil their desire to have a child, but they believe that if a child is conceived in this manner, the child should have access to the information concerning the donor.

In Britain, any extra embryo's can legally be used in experiments until they are fourteen days old-at this time they must be destroyed. Catholics believe that life begins at conception; when an egg and sperm meet, a life is created that is independent of the mother and father. So, according to Catholicism, any techniques used to aid infertility must respect this fact. For this reason, Catholics cannot allow any fertility treatment where spare embryos are created, as they believe embryos, are not disposable commodities, although, the Church of England has a different view on the status of embryo's.

Lord Habgood, a former Archbishop of York, said, concerning embryos, 'At this earliest stage of their existence, embryos do not have the moral value of persons. They are to be treated with respect, but essentially they are no

different from the product of early miscarriages. ' The Church of England therefore teaches that it is fine to create spare embryos which are later destroyed or not needed. They also believe that it is acceptable to carry out research on embryos for up to fourteen days.

Some Christians, not dependent on their denomination, believe fertility treatment is a way of humans trying to 'play God'; attempting to do a job that only God can do. 'For You created my inmost being', (Psalm 139: 13). Christians believe that God makes each person individually and deliberately, so everyone has value; whether they are newly born or elderly, healthy or very ill, useful members of society or in need of a lot of care.

Capital punishment is another issue which Christians believe can fit into the same category as abortion and euthanasia, as it is taking away the life of a human being, so it is therefore immoral. Although, in Deuteronomy 19: 21, it says, 'And thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot', so according to this extract from the Bible, Capital punishment is right, but then again Jesus reinforced this teaching when he said 'You have heard that it was said, " Eye for an eye, and tooth for tooth. But I tell you do not resist an evil person. '

Christians believe that the story of Cain and Abel, in the Old Testament, is a clear example of the seriousness of the sixth commandment, 'Thou shall not murder', (Exodus 20: 13), and the issue of capital punishment. After Cain had murdered his brother Abel, God punished him, not by death, but by banishing him from the land whereby Cain became a wonderer. Although,

God, also went ahead to 'put a mark on him to prevent him from being killed by anyone who would meet him', (Genesis 4: 1-16).

By His own example, God denounces justice based on vengeance and violence. Pope John Paul II once said, 'The death penalty perpetuates the very evil it is trying to terminate. The practice and promotion of the death penalty is a reflection of the 'culture and death' of our times. The act of killing a person is intrinsically an evil, whether lawfully or unlawfully, by murder or by the state, it is just the reasons that make it appear different. We cannot teach that killing is wrong by killing.

A Bishop called David B Thomson said, 'Capital punishment feeds the cycle of violence in society by pandering to a lust for revenge. It brutalizes us and deadens our sensitivities to the precious nature of every single human life. ' All Christians would agree that life imprisonment would make more sense, that the death penalty, because the culprit could repent, and it says in Luke 18: 14, 'Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. '