

Church Doctrines Affirming the Sanctity of Human Life and Evil of Abortion

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The *Sanctity of Human Life* focus this month is on good church doctrines, resolutions, position papers, statements, or campaigns that are consistent with the Bible regarding the sanctity of human life in the womb, and the evil of abortion. These examples below are for the Anglican Church, Catholic Church, Church of God, Church of God in Christ, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, North American Lutheran Church, and Southern Baptist Convention. If you read these, you will gain a clear grasp of the church's position and the unity of positions among the various denominations that still respect the sacred gift of human life.

Anglican Church:

The Canons of The Anglican Catholic Church (2007 Edition) include this statement:

"CANON 15.1. THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE.

§15.1.01 Deliberate Abortion is Murder.

The defencelessness of the unborn entails a great responsibility on the part of every Christian, and especially on the part of each of his or her parents. The deliberate and wilful abortion, directly procured, of any unborn child at any time from the moment of conception, is always an act of grave sin not only by the person who procures the same, but also by such person or persons who effectuate the same or acquiesce therein."

(http://anglicancatholic.org/system/media_files/attachments/4/original/ACC%20Canons%20-%202007.pdf?1317846094)

Anglicans for Life: <https://anglicansforlife.org/2018/08/06/gafcon-church-sanctity-life-statements/>

Catholic Church:

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, which is a compilation of the doctrines of the Catholic Church produced by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, contains the following:

"108. *The fundamental message of Sacred Scripture proclaims that the human person is a creature of God (cf. Ps 139:14-18), and sees in his being in the image of God the element that characterizes and distinguishes him: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen 1:27). God places the human creature at the centre and summit of the created order. Man (in Hebrew, "adam") is formed from the earth ("adamah") and God blows into his nostrils the breath of life (cf. Gen 2:7). Therefore, "being in*

the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. . . ."[204].

"109. *The likeness with God shows that the essence and existence of man are constitutively related to God in the most profound manner.* [205] . . . The human being is a personal being created by God to be in relationship with him."

"112. *Man and woman are in relationship with others above all as those to whom the lives of others have been entrusted* [215]. "For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning, ... I will require it ... of man [and] of every man's brother" (*Gen 9:5*), God tells Noah after the flood. In this perspective, the relationship with God requires that *the life of man be considered sacred and inviolable* [216]. The fifth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (*Ex 20:13; Deut 5:17*), has validity because God alone is Lord of life and death [217]. The respect owed to the inviolability and integrity of physical life finds its climax in the positive commandment: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (*Lev 19:18*), by which Jesus enjoins the obligation to tend to the needs of one's neighbour (cf. *Mt 22:37-40; Mk 12:29-31; Lk 10:27-28*).

"155. . . . "the right to life, an integral part of which is the right of the child to develop in the mother's womb from the moment of conception; the right to *live in* a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality; the right to develop one's intelligence and *freedom* in seeking and knowing the *truth*; . . . and the right *freely to establish* a family, to have and to rear children through the responsible exercise of one's sexuality. In a certain sense, the source and synthesis of these rights is religious *freedom*, understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person"[317].

"The first right presented in this list is the right to life, from conception to its natural end,[318] which is the condition for the exercise of all other rights and, in particular, implies the illicitness of every form of procured abortion and of euthanasia."*[319]*

"233. *Concerning the "methods" for practising responsible procreation, the first to be rejected as morally illicit are sterilization and abortion* [521]. The latter in particular is a horrendous crime and constitutes a particularly serious moral disorder [522]; far from being a right, it is a sad phenomenon that contributes seriously to spreading a mentality against life, representing a dangerous threat to a just and democratic social coexistence" [523].

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html#Creatures%20in%20the%20image%20of%20God

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: <http://usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/index.cfm>.

Church of God

Here is the entire Abortion Resolution of the Church of God, approved in 1976:

"WHEREAS life originated in the creative work of Almighty God; and
WHEREAS man himself is created in the image and likeness of God; and

WHEREAS God assigned special value to human life; and
WHEREAS divine law forbids the indiscriminate taking of human life, exacting heavy penalties of those who violate this commandment; and
WHEREAS contemporary society demonstrates a low esteem for the sacredness of life; and
WHEREAS abortion-on-demand now receives serious consideration as a means of birth and population control; and
WHEREAS abortion is a vicious attack on the weakest and most helpless form of human life; and
WHEREAS the unborn are unable to speak in their own defense; and
WHEREAS intense pressure is being brought upon state and national legislative bodies to liberalize abortion laws; and
WHEREAS it is the duty of the church to raise an authoritative moral voice concerning this vital issue;
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, the General Assembly of the Church of God, reaffirm our historic commitment to the sacredness of human life; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we stand opposed to the use of abortion as a means of birth or population control; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge our entire constituency to actively oppose any liberalization of abortion laws by state legislatures and by the Congress of the United States; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that no individual should ever consider abortion as an option except in the gravest circumstances, after medical and religious consultation of the most serious nature (56th A., 1976, pp. 35, 36).” (<http://www.churchofgod.org/resolutions/abortion-1976>)

Church of God in Christ

In 2015, the Church of God in Christ launched the denomination-wide Family Life Campaign to promote high respect for human life, encourage adoption, and end abortions – especially among their own members (*AFA Journal*, July 2018). This is particularly significant in two ways: it is denomination wide; and they are focused on saving African American babies. The majority of members of COGIC churches are African American, and 34 percent of African American babies are aborted in the United States. The Mission Statement of this Campaign is:

“Save a life; to build a family; and change our world.”

“The established goals of COGIC Family Life Initiative are:

- Decrease the number of children being killed through abortion
- Reduce the number of children raised in the state’s foster care system
- Reduce the number of children experiencing reentry into state custody for children welfare or foster care by finding homes and appropriate foster and or adoptive parents
- Reaffirm one of the most powerful institutions....that being family... #familylife.”
<http://cogicworldmissions.org/missions/family-life/>

COGIC websites: <http://www.cogic.org> ; <http://cogicworldmissions.org>.

Evangelical Presbyterian Church

The position paper on Abortion of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church begins as follows:

“The Evangelical Presbyterian Church is convinced that the Bible strongly affirms the dignity and value of every human life based on what the Scriptures clearly teach:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5 NIV).

“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth” (Psalm 139:15 NIV).

“Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the Lord called me; from my mother’s womb he has spoken my name” (Isaiah 49:1 NIV).

“for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born” (Luke 1:15 NIV).

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41 NIV).

“To further differentiate mankind from any other living creature, we read: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27 NIV). Unlike any other created being, Scripture also teaches: “Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7 NIV).

“The Westminster Shorter Catechism, a confessional statement shared by most Reformed churches, forbids the taking of innocent life while demanding the preservation of life from the moment of conception through to natural death:

“The Sixth Commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.” (Question 68).

“The Sixth Commandment forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly...” (Question 69).

“Scripture teaches that we are not merely to avoid involvement in injustice. God’s people are called upon to speak for the oppressed and defenseless. The Scripture passages cited above are evidence that God accords human value and dignity to the unborn child.

“The Evangelical Presbyterian Church affirms that the Bible does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life. It attributes human personhood to the unborn child. This extends to the unborn child ex utero as no less a human being than the child in the mother’s womb.” (Adopted by the 6th General Assembly, June 1986; and amended by the 32nd during June 2012, and the 33rd during June 2013.) (<http://epcoga.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/Files/1-Who-We-Are/B-About-The-EPC/Position-Papers/PositionPaper-Abortion.pdf>)

North American Lutheran Church

On 14 December 2012, the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine of the North American Lutheran Church issued a statement on the sanctity of human life from conception, titled, “‘The Lord Is with You,’ A Word of Counsel to the Church (on) The Sanctity of Nascent Life.”

“In the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“The beginning of human existence, i.e., nascent life, carries in it the fullness of the genetic code, the complete chromosomal material of an individual. The strengths and characteristics given to us by God have not yet blossomed for all the world to see, yet they are fully present in the beauty of His love. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5) Luther’s Small Catechism proclaims, “I believe that God has created me and all that exists,” so in faith we continue to proclaim that our life, and every life, comes from God and belongs to God. In our earthly dependency upon the womb of our mothers for protection, nourishment, and love from the first moments of our lives, we see in the creation of each life the shape of faith. We will always be fully dependent upon God for life, for shelter, and for mercy—the God who uses men and women to bring forth every generation of His creation.

“. . . God himself has given us a pattern by which we know His love: the conception, gestation, and birth of our Lord Jesus. As we reflect upon when life begins and what life means, we look to what God has done in sending His Son to live among us from conception, to death, to resurrected life.

“In the Annunciation of the Good News given to Mary, the Mother of our Lord, we come to know the gift of every life in a new way, and we come to know the holiness of her womb as a sanctuary of mercy for all humankind. She who is our Mother in the faith shelters the One who is the Savior of the world with her very body, a model of love beyond all fear, of obedience beyond all personal security, of faith in the One who is yet unseen.

“In the self-emptying (kenotic) movement of God in the incarnation, He was never more vulnerable, more helpless than when He was *in utero*, swaddled in amniotic fluid. He was also never more intimately protected, swaddled in the myriad layers of a mother’s love. It is the vision of this love that is ever so needed in this day—a death defying love, an eternal love, a fierce love, a sacrificing love. It is this vision that we are called to bear for the sake of generations to come. For in the disordered loving of a fallen world that removes sexual intercourse from the fidelity, trust, and delight of the marriage bed, there will continue to be the littlest among us, made in the image and likeness of God, who without a holy love, will be unprotected from the lies that say they are neither human nor of any value. In a time in human history when the laws of many nations sanction the destruction of new lives simply because they are an inconvenience, the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE, and all who belong to the Body of Christ, are called to teach and preach the message that the Lord who created the heavens and the earth, the Lord, who in the power of the Holy Spirit grew in His mother’s womb, the Lord, who in obedience gave His life for all, The Lord is with you” (<https://thenalc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Word-of-Counsel-on-Sanctity-of-Nascent-Life.pdf>).

The NALC statement is excellent, except that later in the document the authors do not appear to view abortion for “therapeutic reasons” to be a sin, and thus would be unlikely to encourage a post-abortive woman in these circumstances to repent of her sin that her conscience may be cleansed and her soul healed.

Lutherans For Life (for all Lutherans): <https://www.lutheransforlife.org>.

Southern Baptist Convention:

The Southern Baptist Convention has several short Position Statements, including this on life:

“Sanctity of Life. Procreation is a gift from God, a precious trust reserved for marriage. At the moment of conception, a new being enters the universe, a human being, a being created in God's image. This human being deserves our protection, whatever the circumstances of conception.”
(<http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/positionstatements.asp>)

The SBC has also approved 52 Resolutions that pertain to abortion. Its 2015 resolution “On The Sanctity Of Human Life,” quoted fully here:

WHEREAS, Biblical revelation clearly and consistently affirms that human life is formed by God in His image and is therefore worthy of honor and dignity ([Genesis 1:27](#); [9:6](#)); and

WHEREAS, God alone is the Author of life and He alone numbers our days, from the moment of conception until natural death ([Job 14:5–7](#); [Psalm 39:4](#)); and

WHEREAS, The Bible commands us to honor our parents and the aged ([Exodus 20:12](#); [Leviticus 19:32](#); [Ephesians 6:2](#)); and

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith & Message (2000) affirms that “children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord” and calls us to “speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death”; and

WHEREAS, An estimated fifty-seven million unborn babies have been aborted since the legalization of abortion in 1973 (*Roe v. Wade*); and

WHEREAS, Legislation or court rulings have effectively legalized physician-assisted suicide in several states and additional states are considering similar action; and

WHEREAS, Recent federal directives seek to compel religious organizations to provide coverage for abortifacient technologies and services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Columbus, Ohio, June 16–17, 2015, affirm the dignity and sanctity of human life at all stages of development, from conception to natural death; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we reaffirm our repudiation of the genocide of legalized abortion in the United States and call on civil authorities to enact laws that defend the lives of the unborn; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we welcome and commend legislation that ensures that all mothers will be fully informed by medical providers of the life development of their unborn children; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call on our fellow citizens of good will to collaborate with us on behalf of justice, the protection of human life, and the cause of human flourishing; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage Southern Baptists to continue and to expand their local ministries that care for and protect the unborn, the vulnerable, and the aged; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call on Southern Baptist churches and entities to show the love of Christ through appropriate means to those women most vulnerable to the victimization of the abortion industry, and to show grace and mercy to those individuals who grieve with repentance over past abortions; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call on our churches and all believers to care for the elderly among us, to show them honor and dignity, and to prayerfully support and counsel those who are providing end-of-life care for the aged, the terminally ill, and the chronically infirmed; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we commend the efforts of our denominational entities, especially The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, in the defense and protection of human life at every stage; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we pray and work for the repeal of unjust laws and inhumane practices that degrade human life, all the while looking toward the day when our Lord will make all things new and “Death will no longer exist; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away” ([Revelation 21:4](#)).

(<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2256/on-the-sanctity-of-human-life>)

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (SBC):

<https://erlc.com/resource-library/video-explainers/the-sanctity-of-human-life>.

These are but a few of the church denomination doctrines, resolutions, statements and ministries upholding the sanctity of every human life as created in the image and likeness of God. If not included above, I encourage you to check if your church denomination or local church has its own statement, and if not, then encourage them to write and approve such a statement of truth. Finally, I encourage you to be a student of the Bible and church doctrine, and then to act upon those beliefs in defense of the sacred gift of human life.

SDG and for the sanctity of human life,

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“(T)he church of the living God (is) the pillar and support of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).