

ABORTION AND OTHER CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

Exodus 21:22

By Raymond White

Of all moral issues, this one, abortion, is the most divisive. People and politics are so polarized that it's hard to imagine how there can be a meeting of the minds to even discuss the issue civilly. I certainly cannot settle the dispute to everyone's satisfaction, no one can, but what I can do and intend to do is to document what the Bible says about the subject so that the Bible's argument becomes compelling.

[1] THE LAW AND KILLING

The Ten Commandments are the foundation of the Torah, much like the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are the foundation of America's legal system.

A particularly important commandment is commandment number 6.

Exodus 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

The commandment seems clear enough, but it invites us to ask, thou shalt not kill *what*? Don't kill animals? No. The Torah demands lots of animal sacrifices. Don't kill murderers? No. The Torah demands executing murderers and other criminals. Don't wage war? No. The Torah is filled with Israel's wars against Amorites and other nations that offended God.

Then what does "Thou shalt not kill" mean? The Hebrew verb which the King James Bible translates to kill really means murder. The commandment is "Thou shalt not murder" which is how it appears in many other versions as for example the NIV and NASB.

The next question is: what is murder? The Torah helps us answer that by prescribing the death penalty for a list of crimes. Much of that discussion immediately follows in the very next chapter, *Exodus 21*. Here is a for instance —

Exodus 21:28 If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. :29 But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death.

In other words, if your animal kills someone, that might be a capital crime or it might not. If you knew your animal was dangerous, and you did not restrain it, and it kills someone, like maybe your pit bull, then that's a capital crime and you must die. But if the animal's violence is as much a surprise to you as the victim, then it is not a capital crime and only the animal must die. And so God distinguishes between what is and is not a capital crime,

[2] THE LAW AND THE UNBORN

Also in that chapter that immediately follows the Ten Commandments is the critical verse which answers our critical question: What does God think about abortion?

We might first ask ourselves, can the Bible even answer such a question? Since there was no abortion in those days, could the Bible authors have even conceived of the question in order to answer it? Actually, yes, sort of. The question the Torah answers for us is not “What does God think about abortion?” but rather “What does God think about life in the womb, and does God’s law protect it?” That question, the Bible answers precisely. Here is the text.

***Exodus 21:22** 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. **:23** And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life.*

So, how important is the life of an unborn child? It is as important as anyone else’s. Important enough so that killing an unborn child is a capital crime, punishable by death.

Here is what the verse is about. Two men have a brawl and a pregnant women gets drug into it somehow. As a result, she delivers early because of stress or injury.

Now, if the mother and the baby are okay, then it’s not a big deal. The father can sue the combatants and collect costs, but that’s as far as it goes.

But if “any mischief follows” then this is a very big deal. A capital crime has occurred and someone is going to pay with his life.

The word “any” is plural. Therefore this can only mean if *either* the mother *or* the baby dies. In other words, the unborn baby is a human being whose life requires protecting by full police powers just the same as anyone else’s. That is one of the law’s many duties, to protect the lives of unborn babies. In the American Constitution, Amendment 14 calls this equal protection.

To be thorough, there is a counter argument against this meaning which hinges on the Hebrew verb *yasa* which is translated here as “fruit depart” or “so that her fruit depart from her.” The New American Standard Bible (NASB) translates it as “so that she has a miscarriage.” If that is correct, that would be a very big deal because the English word miscarriage implies born dead. And if that is true, then a dead baby is not a capital crime; only a dead mother.

But that’s not what *yasa* means and the NASB is wrong. *Yasa* occurs 1,061 times throughout the Old Testament and it does not mean miscarry. Here’s a small sampling.

***Genesis 15:4** This man shall not be your heir, but one who shall **come forth from** your own body.*

***Genesis 25:25** Now the first **came forth** red, all over like a hairy garment, and they named him Esau. **:26** And afterwards his brother **came forth** with his hand holding on to Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob.*

***1 Kings 8:19** Nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be **born** to you, he shall build the house for my name.*

***Jeremiah 1:5** Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were **born** I consecrated you, I have appointed you a prophet to the nation.*

Since *yasa* does not mean miscarriage, it must mean “born” and the King James “fruit depart” conveys that correct meaning. The context means “born early” or “premature”. Therefore the Hebrew *yasa* does not disclose whether the baby is born alive or dead. For that, we must read the rest of the verse. The words “no mischief” or “any mischief” means “harm.” If there is no harm to the baby or the mother, the father can levy a fine against the combatants and that’s all. But if there is harm to either the baby or the mother, then the penalty is “life for a life”; that is, if either the baby or the mother dies, then a capital crime has occurred and some combatant will pay with his life. That is the value of an unborn life. It has equal protection under the law.

Now role the calendar forward a few thousand years. In America we kill over a million babies a year in abortion clinics. And our laws do nothing to protect them. In fact, our laws demand that the genocide be permitted. It’s on a par with ancient Roman law that permitted throwing Christians to lions or Rome’s “*patria potestas*” laws which allowed a father to kill his children. But abortion is worse because babies are completely helpless and completely innocent.

So now answer the question yourself: What does God think of abortion? Well, if God’s law kills people who kill unborn babies, then you have your answer.

[3] THE UNBORN IN GENERAL

For any moral question dealing with life and death, here is the best answer —

Deuteronomy 30:15 See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. **:19** I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.

This is excellent advice for anyone considering abortion, or euthanasia, or suicide, or looking for any justification for death. This verse gives excellent philosophy. Choose life, and live. L ‘chayim! To Life! We ought not to be surprised that the God of the Bible is pro-life.

How does the Bible view life in the womb? Here’s King David’s opinion.

Psalms 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. **:15** My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made I secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. **:16** 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.

David is saying that before God had finished making me in my mother’s womb, it was me! In other words, you are you from conception. How then can anyone imagine an unborn baby to be just a “blob of protoplasm” worthy of nothing more than to be flushed down a sink?

So, is life in the womb a baby or not? Not to trivialize it but, if it acts like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it’s a duck. Apply that logic to pre-borns and you’ll have the right idea. If she acts like a baby, sucks her thumb like a baby (fetuses do), cries like a baby (fetuses do), and screams in agony when she is cut to pieces (fetuses do that too), then it’s a baby, and killing her is murder.

[4] VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Now, about babies in general. Since a baby in the womb is a baby, the broader question is this: Do babies, all babies, deserve to be protected by law? Or are babies non-contributing and therefore non-essential, and therefore dispensable, and therefore disposable?

I want God's opinion. And he has declared his opinion on that issue loud and clear.

Ancient Israel was guilty of many sins which the Bible carefully documents. The number one sin at the top of that list was their failure to protect babies. Here then is my list of verses that deal with violence against children and God's insistence that we not turn a blind eye to it. Note that the idiom "innocent blood" or "blood of innocents" refers to children.

***2 Kings 24:3** Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did. **:4** And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the Lord would not pardon.*

***Psalms 106:36** And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. **:37** Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils. **:38** And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.*

***Psalms 94:6** They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. That is, they kill orphans.*

***Proverbs 21:3** To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. Your justice system is more important than your religion.*

***Proverbs 24:11** If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death and those that are ready to be slain, **:12** If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works? "I don't want to get involved" is no excuse. God sees that you are ignoring injustice.*

***Proverbs 31:8** Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Speak out. We pro-lifers could use your help.*

***Isaiah 1:15** ...when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. **:21** How is the faithful city become an harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.*

***Isaiah 26:21** For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

Isaiah 33:14 *The sinners in Zion are afraid...:15 He that...stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.*

Isaiah 57:4 *...are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood, :5 Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?*

Isaiah 59:3 *For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity... :4 None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth... :6 ...the act of violence is in their hands. :7 they make haste to shed innocent blood ...*

Jeremiah 2:34 *Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these. In other words, you're not even concerned enough to hide your guilt, the blood of innocents is all over your clothes.*

Jeremiah 7:6 *If ye...shed not innocent blood in this place... :7 Then will I cause you to dwell in this place.*

Jeremiah 7:31 *And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.*

Jeremiah 1 *And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee. :3 ...Behold, I will bring evil upon this place... :4 Because they have...filled this place with the blood of innocents :5 They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind. The Hebrew word "Hinnom" became the Greek word "Gehenna" and finally the English word "hell." A fitting etymology for a place where such evil things were done.*

Jeremiah 22:3 *...do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. "Innocent blood" can only mean babies because it is other than the stranger, fatherless (orphans), and widows.*

Jeremiah 32:35 *And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

Ezekiel 7:23 *Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.*

Ezekiel 8:17 *...Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence...*

Ezekiel 9:9 ...the land is full of blood, and...they say...the LORD seeth not.

Ezekiel 11:6 Ye have multiplied your slain in the city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain.

Ezekiel 13:19 And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?

Ezekiel 16:20 Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter :**21** That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them.

Ezekiel 16:38 And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged. Women who have babies they don't want (out of marriage) kill them.

Ezekiel 20:26 And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb... They killed all their firstborn with fire.

Ezekiel 20:31 For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols...

Ezekiel 22:2 ...wilt thou judge the bloody city?... :**3** ...The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it ... :**4** Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed ...

Ezekiel 23:37 ...and have caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them. :**39** For when they had slain their children to their idols... :**45** ...after the manner of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands. The way to get rid of unwanted children is to kill them.

Ezekiel 33:5 ...Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?

Hosea 6:8 Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity and is polluted with blood. :**9** ...so the company of priests murder in the way by consent...

By the consent of priests, by their silence, the innocent are murdered. Here is a latin phrase for you to ponder: Qui tacet consentire. It means: "Silence implies consent."

Priests, you think your silence makes you innocent? That your church shouldn't get involved with politics? And you think that excuses your silence, and that your silence will be your defense at judgment? It is your silence that will condemn you.

Joel 3:19 Egypt shall be a desolation...because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

Amos 5:15 *Hate the evil, and love good, and establish judgment [it's the justice system in view here] :18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! To what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. :21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. [What good is religion?] :24 But let judgment run down as waters [It is a just justice system that I want from you, not religion] :26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun... [Moloch is the god that caused babies to be burned alive. That is why I reject your useless religion.] :27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus ... [Your religion is done].*

Micah 3:10 *They built up Zion with blood... Churches, are you still ignoring abortion?*

Micah 5:14 *And I will pluck up thy groves... The groves is where they killed their babies.*

Micah 6:7 *...shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Babies pay the ultimate price for the sins of their parents.*

My point in all this is that infanticide (murdering children) is not a peripheral moral issue. It is not just one more sin in a long list of sins that angered God. Infanticide was *the* sin that so angered God that he finally had no choice but to destroy them as a nation and remove them from the land. We see from the repetition that infanticide is *the* core issue — God complains about it over and over. Since it is central to God's grievance, it ought also to be central to ours. But, alas, we focus our moral indignation on so many other issues that violence against children, particularly abortion, gets lost in the shuffle. Too many of us think that drinking coffee is a greater sin than abortion. How can that be?

[5] HELL: A FITTING ETYMOLOGY

Let's revisit one verse and do some etymology; some word study to see how much mischief can get tangled up with a single word.

Jeremiah 19:2 *...go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom...they have...filled this place with the blood of innocents :5 They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal...*

Where did most of this horrible stuff, this burning children alive, happen? It probably happened all over, but there was one place that history makes special note of, and that place is the Hinnom Valley, which was just outside Jerusalem's wall.

Hinnom was a family name from very ancient times.

Joshua 15:8 *And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward.*

It was just a place, like your local park, until one Jewish king used the place for monstrous evil.

2 Chronicles 28:3 *Moreover he [King Ahaz] burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abomination of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.*

And that evil continued until King Josiah ended it.

2 Kings 23:10 *And he [Josiah] defiled Topeth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.*

But the practice picked up again after Josiah, and for God, that was the last straw.

Jeremiah 19:6 *Therefore, behold the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Topeth, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter.*

Judah had three more kings after Josiah, all bad, so the Babylonians swept in and removed the Jews from the land, and thus began their 70 years of captivity, the Diaspora.

When they returned, they had learned their lesson. From that time, the time of Ezra, no Jew would ever again even think of sacrificing a child or any person. It was a lesson bitterly learned.

So, what happened to Hinnom? It was still there — you can't throw away a valley. So, what did they do with the place?

Well, the Hinnom Valley had such an evil history that they did the only thing that seemed fitting: they used it as land fill, it was their dump site. Over the following centuries, the trash of Jerusalem was hauled out of the city to Hinnom and burned. Since it was a 24/7 operation, on any given night, the people of Jerusalem, if they looked in that direction they could see the burning fires of Hinnom.

Then, one day, came a Rabbi of Nazareth named Jesus who preached a sermon on a mountain side. He called them to perfection and gave them some stern warnings. And in that sermon, he drew an image from those constantly burning fires of the Hinnom trash dump. In the Bible, the Hebrew Hinnom became the Greek Gehenna which finally became the English Hell.

Matthew 5:22 *whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.* [Gr: Gehenna; Heb: Hinnom]

Now you know what the word “hell” means and how it came to mean what it means: that place of continual burning where children once died by the hands of their own parents. So if you care to imagine a people most fit for “hell,” how about people who kill children? It is because of them that the notion of hell exists at all.

Now, there is another word for hell, hades, which has a different meaning. But let's leave that alone and stick with Gehenna.

Jesus continued to use this word, Gehenna —

Matthew 5:29 ...whole body should be cast into hell.
Matthew 10:28 ...destroy both soul and body in hell.
Matthew 18:9 ...rather than ... be cast into hell fire.
Matthew 23:15 ye make him twofold more the child of hell.
Matthew 23:33 how can ye escape the damnation of hell?
(Also: *Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6*)

I'm not making a case for either a literal or a figurative hell — that another subject. My point here is that however evil were the sins that drew Jesus' ire and caused him to threaten them with such a fiery image, the worst sin has to be the one that created the image in the first place. And that sin was, and is: killing babies.

So, for the baby killers out there — yes, pro-choicers, that's you — you're worse than merely *going* to hell, you *created* hell. How will you escape that fate which you yourselves have made?

[6] CHURCH AND STATE

Many believe that religion has no business interfering with law. "Separation of church and state" is the mantra that pro-choicers chant. But let's ask this question: What is the purpose of law? If we dissolved our entire legal system and started over with only one single law, what would that law be? What is the point of law?

I claim (and I hope you will agree) that the first duty of law (God's law, American law, whatever law), and its only duty if it has no other, is to protect innocent people from violent thugs. Surely you must agree with that. Law's first duty then is to enforce "Thou Shalt Not Kill." And that is why our Declaration of Independence insists that among our unalienable rights is our right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," the first being "life."

Question: Who should we not kill? Answer: all innocent people, including and especially the most defenseless among us; namely, children, babies, and those not yet born who are as sentient and subject to the horrors of tortuous pain as any of the rest of us.

That is the primary duty of civil law. Should abortion then be illegal? Of course!
Are Christian churches then responsible to oppose abortion? Let's review this verse:

Proverbs 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

This verse is saying that God pays more attention to your justice than to your religion. Too many Christians think it's the other way around, that we should just focus on getting to heaven and let God worry about less spiritual things like injustice.

God is greatly concerned with genocide, and mostly concerned with the genocide of children. I am particularly stressed by churches that are silent about abortion. The pulpit often has much to say about tattoos and dress codes and R-rated movies but little to say about abortion. I applaud Catholics (and I am not a Catholic) and their brave struggle against this butchery. If your church is not part of the fray, you should wonder why and think about Jesus saying:

Matthew 23:24 Ye blind guide, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

Also, consider this:

1 Peter 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God...*

Do you think you will escape God's judgment because you are in the right church or in the right religion? That is the point that John the Baptist made to the Pharisees and Sadducees —

Matthew 3:9 *...think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*

In other words, "Think not to say within yourselves, 'I am a Christian so God will spare me.'" You may learn the hard way that you are wrong. God can make Christians (even your kind of Christians) out of rocks, so how special do you think you are? That's John's point. Whatever your religion, holding the truth may be as much to your condemnation as to your salvation.

My advice to you is this: You really ought to do something meaningful towards saving the lives of our innocent babies. They are being sacrificed daily on today's altars of Molech, the gurneys of Planned Parenthood. What will you do about that? Anything? Or nothing?

As for myself? My starting place is this: I vote straight pro-life. That means that in the voting booth, I ignore all other issues and vote only for those candidates who will defend, as best they can, the lives of the unborn. That's little enough to do, but it's a start. And why would you vote for an abortion advocate anyway? What other issues do you think are more important?

Still don't want to get involved? Just remember that God hears your silence. To review:

Proverbs 24:12 *If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?*

Proverbs 31:8 *Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.*

Now, one final warning to pro-choice Christians who still don't get it:

Matthew 18:2 *And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, :3 And he said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. :6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

Who is Jesus talking about? He's talking about new Christians because they are like children in the gospel.

But is he also talking about actual children? Well, who is *most* like children? The obvious, tautological answer is children. Children are most like children. A is equal to A. Whoever else is like children, Jesus' parable works only if his words apply first to actual children, the most deserving of heaven and the most protected by God's love. Jesus brought a

child into their midst, and said, “To get to heaven, be like her.” Surely that child herself, the object of the parable, must qualify for heaven.

What’s the penalty for “offending” a child? Something worse than being drowned in the sea. I would not want to be on that side of God’s judgment.

What is “offending” a child? There are lots of ways to offend a child: beat a child, starve a child, tease a child to tears, sexually abuse a child; basically, harm a child in any way. But in my opinion — and I have shown that God agrees — the number one answer is to kill a child. So, for pro-choice Christians who stand with baby killers, remember that God’s gun-sights are on you, and one day you will have to explain why you allied yourself against his most precious.

[7] MORMON ADDENDUM

While most Mormons are pro-life, a substantial minority are pro-choice. I have no statistics, but I do know some pro-choice Mormons, which I think odd in a church that teaches that we are pre-existent.

When my two sons returned home from B.Y.U. (decades ago), they both said that a major problem with dating there is that many of the girls are pro-choice, and my boys, heeding their father’s instruction, would have nothing to do with them.

The Mormon church is pro-life (I wish a bit more loudly) and the large majority of its members are pro-life. I do not know what the Bishop’s Handbook says, and if I did I wouldn’t quote it to you anyway. But my difficulty is that abortion is so rarely discussed that perhaps pro-choice Mormons think it’s no big deal. That is troubling to me and to many pro-life Mormons.

Be that as it may, since the church is big on free agency and free speech, I will presume on both (free agency and free speech) and move beyond the Biblical argument to Christians generally and will now target a pro-life argument to pro-choice Mormons specifically.

The standard pro-choice argument goes like this: Life in the womb is not life at all but just a blob of protoplasm waiting to become life, and thus it is always open season on fetuses.

Mormons know better, or should, believing as they do that spirits are pre-existent. Since that little fetal body is inhabited by a pre-existent spirit, any talk of a blob of protoplasm is nonsensical. But for pro-choice Mormons who insist that “but maybe the spirit isn’t in the fetus yet” and are therefore willing to take that risk with someone else’s life, I offer this verse —

Doctrine & Covenants 59:6 ...Thou shalt not...kill, nor do anything like unto it.

So if you’re on the fence about whether life in the womb is really a baby or is not, “anything like unto it” should cover that ambiguity and move you off the fence.

What is this verse saying? It is saying that (I’m about to repeat myself, please forgive) if it acts like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it’s a duck. That’s what “like unto” means.

Now, “The Proclamation”: On September 23, 1995, the church published “The Family: A Proclamation to the World”. What does it say regarding abortion? Is it pro-life? I argue that it is.

:11 We affirm the sanctity of life...

How can life be sanctified and disposable at the same time? Is life in the womb life or is it not life? Well, look at the sonograms — dang it! You have eyes. You see the baby that’s in

there. You see the thumb sucking and the squirming and the kicking. One would have to be blind or in denial to see that baby and say that's not a baby. If it's not a baby then what is it? For sure it is living. But a living what? A living duck!? No. It is a living person and killing it is murder.

:13 Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness...

You can't rear a child in love and righteousness if you don't rear the child. Do you see any other possibility? That means that every baby has the right to be born.

:17 Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony...

If a child is entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, then she must first be entitled to birth. Do you see any other possibility?

:24 We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring...

I've already written that there are many ways to abuse a child, and the number one worst way is to kill a child. And the word here is "offspring" which necessarily includes pre-borns. One might argue that a pre-born is not a child until birth, but for sure a pre-born is offspring.

:26 We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

If a thing is evil (meaning that it harms people, I am not talking about victimless crimes), do we have the right to outlaw it? Like for instance, slavery. This final verse claims that we do have the right to pass laws to prohibit evil. Abortion kills babies. That is evil by any standard, and promoting measures to prohibit abortion is within the scope of this verse.

I do wish that there were stronger, unarguable pro-life wording in the Declaration. For instance *:11* could say, *We affirm the sanctity of life from conception...* That would be bold indeed. Perhaps the church will amend the Declaration with more stern wording, or maybe not. In any case, the verses I've quoted are pro-life enough, at least as I read them.

One might argue that the Declaration is not scripture, at least not yet. I'll respond to that with this verse which is scripture —

Doctrine and Covenants 134:2 *We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life. :7 We believe that rulers, states, and governments have the right and are bound to enact laws for the protection of all citizens ...*

Of course we will haggle over the meaning of life that government ought to protect. My point is that the verse does not quibble over this life or that life, but protects life in general, and that necessarily includes life in the womb, I do believe.

For the record, the church did recently make a pro-life statement at General Conference. You will find it in the Ensign, November 2012, page 43. Apostle Dallin H. Oaks said this:

“One cause of the diminishing birthrate is the practice of abortion. Worldwide, there are estimated to be more than 40 million abortions per year. Many laws permit or even promote abortion, but to us this is a great evil.”

Maybe now pro-choice Mormons will rethink their position on this “great evil.”

What impact will Elder Oaks’ statement have on the church as a whole? That remains to be seen. It depends how bravely church members quote him and how often church leaders will repeat his message. For individual members, there is no excuse to believe anything different: abortion is indeed “a great evil,” and I think, *the* great evil of our times.

And finally, what then is the Church’s (the organization) and the church’s (the rank and file) obligation to make clear to the world and to its own members that abortion is evil and that our position is firm against it? I’ll offer this verse, then I’m done.

Doctrine and Covenants 84:87 Behold, I send you out to reprove the world of all their unrighteous deeds, and to teach them of a judgment which is to come.