

**Abortion****Humanity**

The essence of being human is something that is far more mysterious than the body. The human body, albeit wonderfully fashioned, is not beyond understanding. We can see it, touch it, disassemble it, and examine its functions in great detail. Yet, the body is not self-animating and, alone, is not what makes us *human*. So, what does it mean to be *human*?

Mankind is a being consisting of three parts. He is comprised of *body*, *soul*, and *spirit* [1Thes.5:23]. Okay, the body part is pretty easy, but what of the other two? While many poets use the terms soul or spirit interchangeably, that is not what Scripture teaches. It says that the *soul* and *spirit* are distinct from one another [Heb.4:12].

We also know that animals have a soul, but no spirit [Gen.1:24]. The Old Testament word for *soul* is (*nephesh*) means ‘breathing creature’ or ‘vitality.’ As used in the creation account, animals also possess this ‘vitality.’ It is those properties that we share with animals that may be attributed to the soul. The soul animates the flesh and makes us ‘alive.’ The soul is the seat of our instinct, affections, will, and emotions.

The human spirit is the part of us that ‘knows’ [1Cor.2:11] and is what God has given to mankind to separate him from the rest of creation [Ge.1:26]. It is the human spirit that produces wickedness on one hand and kindness on the other, hatred and compassion, a longing for God and a hardened heart. These are the things that make us uniquely human.

**Fetal development**

Fetal development is the work of God [Ps.119:73; 139:13-16] and it is clear from the Scriptures that God has a vested interest in this development. We know that fetal development includes a *body* [Ps.139:15 - ‘substance’] and *soul* [Lu.1:44 - ‘joy’], but no reference to a human *spirit*. Without the human spirit the fetus is alive, but is animal—not human. The human spirit is present after birth, but not before. Yet, it is this *spirit* that defines human life after birth [James 2:26].

**The example of Nicodemus**

*Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

[John 3:4-6]

The first is the story of Nicodemus. In John 3:4-6 Christ told Nicodemus that to qualify for the Kingdom of God he first had to be “born of water” [Jn.3:4-6]. This is a reference to amniotic fluid and is referred to as the birth of the flesh in verse 6. Because of the use of the term ‘born again,’ the phrase ‘born of water’ cannot refer to salvation through the influence of the Word of God. If it did, it would require ‘born of water’ and ‘born of the spirit’ to refer to the same event (since Spirit baptism occurs at the point of salvation). Christ taught that you must be physically born to qualify for His kingdom. That is, Nicodemus had to be ‘born twice’ or ‘born *again*.’

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### The example of the annunciation

The second Scriptural evidence is the story of the annunciation [Lu.1:26-38]. Of particular interest is how the angel Gabriel referred to the fetus in his discussion of the upcoming event with Mary. In Luke 1:26-38 the following phrase is used:

<i>“therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall”</i>	[KJV]
<i>“διο και το γεννωμενον αγιον”</i>	[Steven’s TR 1550]
<i>“διο και το γεννωμενον αγιον”</i>	[West-Hort NT]
<i>“therefore also the-thing abiding-procreation holy”</i>	[Literal English of Nestles]
<i>“therefore also the holy-begotten thing”</i>	[Young’s Literal Translation]

What is significant about this verse is that it refers to the fetus (procreation, begotten) while it is still in the womb (abiding). The fetus is referred to by Gabriel using a singular, neuter, accusative, definite article (“το” or “the-thing”). God’s message to Mary clearly states that the fetus now inside her is *not* male (Greek article ‘ο’) and not female (Greek article ‘ε’). The use of the word “thing” rather than ‘one’ is based on the selection by the angel of the word γεννωμενον (gennomenon—a clinical term). Gabriel, basically, refers to this Godly procreation as fetal material.

Elsewhere, the fetus is referred to as ‘brephos’ (infant). This change from a clinical term to a word that implies life-like (albeit, not uniquely human) qualities like movement and emotion—as in Luke 1:41—appears to come with the age of the baby.

### The example of Mosaic Law

The third Scriptural evidence is the different treatments afforded to the born versus unborn in Mosaic Law [compare Gen.9:5,6 and Exod.21:22 with Exod.21:12-16] where the penalty for murdering a fetus is not the same as for murdering someone who is born. Yet we know that killing a fetus is still a sin because a punishment is indicated [Ex.21:22<sup>1</sup>; cp. Pr.12:10]. Since it is a sin to murder a fetus regardless of whether it is human or not, then the argument for when human life begins is an academic one. However, let’s look at the text anyway.

In Exodus 21:12-27 we are given the punishments for inflicted injuries up to and including death.

- Premeditated murder is punished by death [12, 14, 20].
- Second-degree murder (homicide) and third-degree murder (negligent homicide, manslaughter) is life in ‘prison’<sup>2</sup> [13, 20].
- Self-defense is not mentioned and is generally not punishable [John 7:51].
- Personal injury cases are dealt with by full restitution of lost wages and expenses [18-19]. If the victim was a servant, then they were, at the very least, provided their freedom [26-27].

Of particular interest is the punishment for causing a miscarriage. The KJV reads as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> If you are using a Ryrie Study Bible you will find a misleading footnote on Ex.21:22. Although the text is correct, the footnote will indicate that the miscarried fetus is born alive. It will then imply that vs. 23 covers the case for a stillbirth. A careful analysis of the text will reveal that note to be in error.

<sup>2</sup> Since no prisons existed, God provided a ‘city of refuge.’ If the guilty party ever left the city of refuge they could be killed. [Numbers 35:11-]

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*“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. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”*

[Ex.21:22]

Notice here that if a pregnant woman suffers a miscarriage the guilty parties are punished, but not put to death or banished to a city of refuge, as would be the case for homicide. Rather, they are fined. Clearly, the death of the fetus is not considered homicide, but like property damage or personal injury.

### The example of God

The last Scriptural evidence I shall use is that of Hosea 9:11,14. When God performs an abortion it is by miscarriage. In these verses we can see that God can and has done this in the past. Since God never sins, we can know that abortion is not always a sin. The issue is the *reason* abortion is performed—not the *fact* that it is performed.

### Application

We have already seen that:

- The fetus is not human.
- Abortion is not murder. Since the fetus is not human, murder is not possible.
- The reason for performing an abortion may still render it a sin, but self-defense is okay. This raises the issue of whether the life or health of the mother is ‘threatened.’ Unfortunately, both sides of this debate do not agree on what constitutes being threatened. If a rabid street dog threatened your pregnant wife (or child, etc.) and escape was not an option, then you would certainly be justified in killing the dog. While the dog may not have been a threat under normal circumstances—and may even have been docile—it presents a real danger regardless of its intent, demeanor, etc. Since the fetus is not human (with only a body and soul it is no different than a dog), then if its continued presence presented a similar threat to the mother, one could justify an abortion. However, it has been argued that the emotional distress of an unwanted child threatens the *mental* health of the mother and is, therefore, sufficient grounds for terminating a pregnancy. Using this logic, nearly any ‘*inconvenience*’ argument would be acceptable grounds for termination. I’m sorry, but you don’t drown puppies because they are an ‘inconvenience’ and you don’t abort due to ‘inconvenience.’ That is not, in my view, a self-defense argument.

Ultimately, the church may be held responsible for teaching the correct abortion doctrine, but the decision to apply the doctrine in individual cases (whether it is a sin or not in a particular case) is, ultimately, a decision to be made by individuals. The unwed pregnant mother answers to God for her decisions—as do the legislators, doctors, nurses, etc. Our job is to ensure believers know what scripture says so that they can make an informed decision.

For the case where an unjustified abortion has already taken place, we should focus our attention on counseling.

- Is there guilt?

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[God does not hold us accountable for sins done in ignorance.]

- Was it done despite full knowledge?  
The cross covers that also [Tit.2:14], but prepare to reap the result in fellowship.