

# Abortion in History

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The idea of the sanctity of life is nothing new. Abortion has been opposed for thousands of years.

It must be remembered that neither Greek, Jewish, or the culture of the early church accepted the practice of abortion. Yet, in only one generation this historic position has been overthrown by a massive rejection of God's authority.

### **Greek Culture**

Take Greek culture, for instance. Written 2500 years ago, the oath of Hippocrates prohibited abortion. Abortion has been illegal to the medical profession in the entire western world since the oath of Hippocrates. The influence of Greek culture regarding the sanctity of life has been substantially unchallenged until the last 50 years.

### **Jewish Culture**

Six thousand years of Jewish culture propounded the same position as is clear from several passages of Hebrew scripture including Psalm 139, Jeremiah 1 and Exodus 20.

### **The Early Church**

But what about the early Church? There is extensive evidence from many of the church fathers opposing abortion as you will see in the following quotations.

"You shall not kill an unborn child or murder a newborn infant." - Didache.

"You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not slay the child by abortion." - Barnabas [c. 70-138], Epistles.

"For us [Christians], murder is once and for all forbidden; so even the child in womb, while yet the Mother's blood is still being drawn on to form the human being, it is not lawful for us to destroy. To forbid birth is only quicker murder...He is a man, who is to be a man; the fruit is always present in the seed." - Tertullian, 197, Apologeticus.

"Those women who use drugs to bring about an abortion commit murder and will have to give an account to God for their abortion." - Athenagoras of Athens, letter to Marcus Aurelius in 177, Legatio pro Christianis [Supplication for the Christians].

"There are women who, by use of medicinal potions, destroy the unborn life in their wombs, and murder the child before they bring it forth. These practices undoubtedly are derived from a custom established by your gods; Saturn, though he did not expose his sons, certainly devoured them." - Minucius Felix, theologian [c. 200-225] Octavius.

"If we would not kill off the human race born and developing according to God's plan, then our whole lives would be lived according to nature. Women who make use of some sort of deadly abortion drug kill not only the embryo but, together with it, all human kindness." - Clement of Alexandria, priest and the "Father of Theologians" [c. 150-220]. Christ the educator.

"Sometimes this lustful cruelty or cruel lust goes so far as to seek to procure a baneful sterility, and if this fails the fetus conceived in the womb is in one way or another smothered or evacuated, in the desire to destroy the offspring before it has life, or if it already lives in the womb, to kill it before it is born." - St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo [354 to 430], De Nuptiis et Concupiscus [On Marriage and Concupiscence].

"Some virgins [unmarried women], when they learn they are with child through sin, practice abortion by the use of drugs, frequently they die themselves and are brought before the ruler of lower world guilty of three crimes: suicide, adultery against Christ, and murder of an unborn child." - St. Jerome [c. 340-420], Letter to Eustochium.

"The hairsplitting difference between formed and unformed makes no difference to us. Whoever deliberately commits abortion is subject to the penalty for homicide." - St. Basil the Great [329- 379], "First Canonical Letter," Three Canonical Letters.

"Those who give drugs for procuring abortion, and those who receive poisons to kill the fetus, are subjected to the penalty for murder." - Trullian Quinisext Council (692), Canons.

Yet, in the last generation, we have reversed this historic position and made the historically reprehensible practice of abortion perfectly legal-- socially acceptable.

Note: The source for the quotations from the church fathers has been lost. A friend sent them to me and I cannot locate the original source.