

# **A Biblical Look at Unborn Children**

The Sanctity of Life

Outside the Heavenly City:  
Abortion in Rome and  
The Early Church's Response

Dr. Steven Waterhouse

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## Preface

This pamphlet includes two works concerning abortion.

The first, “**The Sanctity of Life**” is a sermon delivered by Dr. Waterhouse, which proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that abortion is wrong, whether it be from a medical, philosophical, scientific, or theological viewpoint.

The second, “**Outside the Heavenly City**” speaks to the activity of abortion in New Testament times and the response to it by the early church. Most theological studies about the unborn neglect the only New Testament texts that might be considered references to abortion. In this pamphlet, Dr. Waterhouse establishes that drug-induced (Greek, *pharmakia*) abortions were practiced in the Greco-Roman world and that the New Testament forbids such illicit use of drugs. Therefore, it follows that the New Testament condemns the practice of abortion. This scholarly work gives further implications – here supported by New Testament Scripture - of the evil of abortion in today’s world.



**THE SANCTITY  
OF  
LIFE**

A Sermon on the Right-to-Life

A study of the Bible texts mentioning the unborn based upon  
the original Hebrew and Greek languages



## **THE SANCTITY OF LIFE** (Young and Old)

*On Monday, they sang, Holy, Holy, Holy.*

Following a past presidential inauguration, the nation watched the entire federal government go to the National Cathedral on Monday and sing “Holy, Holy, Holy.” It is the same song we sing. They used the same great evangelical Christian words that we sing blessing the Trinity. The Executive, Judicial, House, and Senate all sang praise to God on Monday. Then the rest of that week many of the same officials spoke against the Sanctity of Life as they opposed the annual march that laments the tragic Roe vs. Wade decision. We do, from time to time, give the Biblical reasons for the preservation of life. It worries me that we have a whole generation that has grown up under a system where abortion is legal and where euthanasia may someday be legal. We now have adults born after 1973. They may not know the Biblical reasons why evangelicals oppose abortion. I want to start out by giving them to you. For many of you, this will be a review. For some of you, it may be the first time you have heard the case for the right to life using the Bible.

### **THE BIBLICAL VIEW**

The first thing we’re going to see is God is *interested and involved* in the development of the unborn from their very beginning. Please turn in your Bibles to two passages that support this fact, Job Chapter 10 and Psalm 139. Psalm 139:13-16 is the more important passage, but to be inclusive, we will also read a text dealing with the unborn which comes from Job 10, beginning at verse eight. We’ll begin with the Job passage and spend more time in the Psalm 139 passage. I will begin reading in Job 10, verse eight, “*thy hands fashioned and made me altogether, and wouldst thou destroy me?*”

*Thy Hands Fashioned me.*

Job is talking about his sickness. He says, “*Remember now that thou hast made me as clay; would you turn me into dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with*

*skin and flesh, knit me together with bones and sinews? Thou hast granted me life and loving kindness; and thy care has preserved my spirit.*” The Hebrew word for “fashioned” in this verse is used many times in the Hebrew Bible as the word “pain.” It is really odd. Fashioned equals pain. Why? Have you ever heard the phrase someone took “great pains” to do something? It means they were very intimately involved in it. They worked very, very hard at something. They were intensely interested in it. It was a top priority. That is why the Hebrew word for pain goes along with the Hebrew word for fashioned here. It means very intense involvement. When we take great pains to do something correctly, it is something we care about. Job is saying when I was unborn, when I was being developed, when the bones and sinews and skin and the organs, when it was all coming together, God took great pains in my development. That ought to prove the first point of our thesis: God is intimately involved in the development of the unborn.

*God Is Involved.*

We also see this truth in Psalm 139, beginning at verse 13. I am going to read this text and give a lesson on the significant Hebrew words contained in it, Psalm 139 beginning in verse 13. We are going to have different translations in all of these texts. Again, I have read all of the Hebrew words, and we will be studying from the original Hebrew. Verse 13, “*For thou didst form my inward parts, (the margin might say kidneys), Thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are thy works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.*” That is poetry; it just means a secret place no one can see. Verse 16: “*Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance.*”

Then the writer talks about the life span that God would have willed: “*and in thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet, there was not one of them.*” Verse 13 says: “*Thou didst form my inward parts.*” If you are reading out of the King James Version, it will say, “*Thou hast possessed my (inward parts).*” This is the correct translation of the Hebrew text. The Hebrew word is *kah-nah*. If you follow this word in the eighty-four times it is used in the Old Testament, you will find very often it means to acquire,



to buy something, to own something. It is used of Ruth, in the book of Ruth, when relatives were going to redeem or purchase a field. Why do I push this? I push it because actually what he is saying is, “God, you **possessed** me, and you **owned** me when I was unborn. You fashioned me, but more than that you **owned** me.”

*God Owns the Unborn.*

So often in the abortion argument, the mother says, “I can do whatever I want with this baby, I own it.” **No, you don’t.** *God owns the children.* The unborn belong to Him. That is why I am going back and insisting in this particular case that the King James translation is correct. The Hebrew word means you **owned** me. Unless you leave it as it stands, with the word “possess” or “own”, you miss the application. God **owns** the unborn.

The text also says, “*He formed their inward parts.*” The Hebrew word for “inward parts” is kidneys. You may have that in your margin. There are twelve times in the Hebrew Old Testament that the word kidney is used of humans. It never means the physical organ when it is used of humans. It does not mean the physical organ that cleanses blood that we generally associate with the kidneys. The Old Testament authors are thinking of kidney here in the same way we use the word “heart.” They are thinking of the place where the innermost person resides, the place of thinking, the place of emotions, and the place of the soul. I do not know what the translators do with that. If they translate literally, and say kidney, we are never going to catch the meaning. To a Hebrew, a kidney was what the heart would be to a modern mindset. You are talking about a soul. You are talking about the non-material part of man. Verse 13 is saying God, you owned me, and you developed my soul when I was within my mother. You will see the immediate significance of that point. Some part, at least, of man’s non-material nature or some part of the soul is present from the beginning. Some part of that which was created in the image of God and is holy is present from the very beginning, and God owns it.

*The Unborn are God’s Work.*

Now, in verse 14, there is one phrase I would like to pick out. It is the third phrase: “*Wonderful are Thy works.*” The unborn child is a

work of God. He claims every child. So, when we destroy that work of God or oppose that work, we are opposing what He wants to do. We are opposing God. All these truths should establish the main point. **God is interested and involved in the development of the unborn.** They have spiritual natures and He owns them; it is His work and His business, and those that oppose that work are opposing God.

Now we will look at the second point in the argument, and it is that **God sees the unborn as individuals.** He sees their whole future ahead of them. He does not look at them as we would. He sees their whole human potential. A couple of texts that would show this would be Jeremiah 1 and Psalm 51. Please find those chapters. While you are turning there, I will convey my feelings to you.

*There is cleansing and forgiveness.*

Whenever I talk about a topic like this, I am concerned there probably are ladies here who have had abortions. That may surprise you, but it does not surprise me a bit. It is hard to talk about a topic that conveys the fact that abortion is a great wickedness, and yet in the same message, convey God's grace. So, I do not want to leave that out. I do want you to know there is cleansing, and there is forgiveness. First, faith in the cross settles our relationship before God. **Trusting what Christ has done on the cross makes us clean and whole again.** I do not want you to lose that.

The goal of today's message is to show that abortion is a great evil. So, it will not all be gracious in tone, but do not leave out the truth that there is cleansing, and there is forgiveness for all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are looking at how God knows the unborn as individuals with a complete destiny.

*God knew me before I was born.*

Jeremiah 1:5 is a wonderful passage to see that fact. We will read that one next. *Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.* Obviously, God is involved again. He knew the unborn Jeremiah as an individual, which is our second point. He sees unborn children as individuals with a separate identity and an entire destiny. *"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I*

*consecrated you: I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.*” When Jeremiah was not yet born, God could view him and look at his whole life span. Understand that God knows the entire future. He knows the entire lost potential if the future should be cut off. He looked at the unborn and knew his name would be Jeremiah. He looked at the unborn Jeremiah and knew he would deliver His message. He knew everything that would ever happen to him. When God looks at an unborn baby today, He sees the same thing. He does not just see tissue, bones, cartilage, and organs. He does not see, as some do, just the physical remains of an infant being aborted. God knows what name that child would have had. Would it have been Mary or Charles? He knows the entire life span: what skills the child would have developed, what difficulties the child would have had, where there would have been successes, where there would have been failures. He knows the infant’s whole future. So while some people can put on blinders and rationalize that this unborn baby can go out in the trash with the medical wastes, God does not look at the child as just tissue. God sees the entire human potential and knows everything about each person before he or she was ever born. As Christians God’s view should be our view. The unborn baby has life and has a whole potential ahead of him. He or she has great value.

*The soul from conception*

The passage in Psalm 51:5 will also look at the individual identity of each unborn baby and say something about the soul, the immaterial being. Psalm 51:5: *“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”* At first you would not think this contributes much to the argument for the right to life, but what David is saying is that from the very beginning of conception he had a sin nature. Now, I do not know for certain whether the soul was present in full form from the very beginning or that in a mysterious, unknown way, each soul grows and develops. I do think souls are passed on from parents to children. It could be that they develop right along with the body. That is for another sermon. It is called Traducianism, but we cannot go into that now.

*Abortion is evil. It may be murder.*

To say that from conception there is part of the sin nature present means that part of the soul has to be present from conception. The sin nature is not a biological part, is not an appendage, nor is it an organ. The sin nature is part of a person's soul. To say that the sin nature begins at conception is to say that the soul, at least in germ form, has to begin at conception. To destroy the unborn child destroys part or all of a human soul. While I would accept a range of conclusions here, the very least you can say is abortion is a great wickedness; or you could conclude that it is murder. At the very least, you are destroying some element of a human soul. This is because the sin nature is present from conception. That is what David is saying in Psalm 51. We are all conceived in sin.

Another verse that helps is Luke 1:44. Luke 1:44 is the Christmas passage where John the Baptist is inside of his mother, Elizabeth, and Mary comes to visit her cousin. The unborn John the Baptist leaps for joy in his mother's womb. What is joy if it is not an emotion? What is an emotion if it is not a part of the human soul? John the Baptist, somehow, was an unborn child experiencing the joy of emotion being in the presence of the unborn Messiah. Theologians look at this and say here is a display of emotion in the unborn. This, too, is part of a person's soul.

Point number one: **God is interested and involved in the development of the unborn.** Point number two: **He views them as individuals with a complete destiny (having souls).**

*According to the Law of Moses*

Now, we are going to look at a passage in Exodus to see that **God considers abortion a great iniquity.** I am going to read it from the New International Version, but if you would like to turn to Exodus 21; I will pause a second for you to find that chapter. The translators do not all agree on the translation. Rather than give you all the technicalities, I hope you will just trust me on this one. I have spent many, many hours studying this in Hebrew and the New International Version is the correct translation here. What it is going to say is that an accidental abortion, according to the Law of Moses, required the death penalty. It says even an accidental abortion was deemed to be a very severe iniquity under the Law of Moses. This is Exodus 21 beginning

at verse 22: *“If men, who are fighting, hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely; but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the husband demands and the court allows.”* I will stop right there. In this first situation, two men are involved in a fight and a pregnant woman tries to intervene, apparently to protect her husband. If she is injured to the point of going into labor, but she survives and the baby survives, the Law of Moses required a financial penalty. The husband wants to be compensated, and if the court agrees, there is a financial fine.

*Mother and child equal in value*

The next phrase continues, *“But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life.”* Then it goes on, *“eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot”*, etc. That is a common phrase: *“eye for eye, tooth for tooth.”* If there is serious injury, if either the mother or the unborn baby dies in the scuffle, they are to execute, as capital punishment, the person who caused the miscarriage. Trust me on this one. This is the correct translation. This is a very key passage because other translations translate it differently with different conclusions. The NIV is right. Under the Law of Moses, even if there were an accidental abortion, it was considered a great iniquity, and you were to inflict capital punishment because of the death of that baby. A second conclusion here is that the baby is equal in value to the mother.

*How does God see deliberate abortion?*

Reason with me on this. If an accidental abortion would be grounds for capital punishment under the Law of Moses, how do you think God views an abortion performed on purpose? If an accidental abortion was a capital offense (because the baby’s life was equal to the mother) **the Law of Moses clearly would have imposed a death penalty for deliberate abortion.** Exodus 21 is not an accidental miscarriage or a natural one. This is a fight, a lady is injured. It would be like a car wreck today. Consider a case where the driver was under the influence, and the unborn baby died accidentally. The Law of Moses would demand capital punishment. This is far more severe than we would do today. What must God think of the deliberate destruction of the unborn?

*God is patient, but He has limits.*

I do not know why God puts up with America. We deserve judgment. Chastisement would probably be good for us. He is very patient with us. He has to be filled with wrath over the destruction of a million and a half children a year, and these are not accidents. Have you ever thought about how many a million and a half individuals are? I will give you a weird illustration. A million and a half are about how many cars the Ford Motor Company produces a year. Do you see many Fords while you are driving around? They are everywhere, are they not? So are abortions. They are just hidden. Yet they are everywhere. Now, the Biblical evidence alone is sufficient for me to settle the argument over abortion.

We have used the Bible first because it is the primary authority. For those who respect the Bible, that ought to be the end of the debate. It is enough for me. I know the answer on this one. I know what to teach my children, and I know how to pray for the way they will live. The matter of abortion is already settled. This tells me that in addition to whatever else God wants me to do, He would want me to care about Crisis Pregnancy Centers. He would want me to teach my children and the youth of our church and anybody I can reach about the value of life. He wants me to pray and give toward that end. The Bible alone is the final authority for me.

Now, I would like to add medical, legal, and philosophical arguments, because when we discuss this topic with people, many of them have no interest in what the Bible says about abortion or any other subject.

## THE MEDICAL VIEW

*It is a child, not a raccoon.*

Let us look first at a little medicine or a little biology. From the moment of conception is the child living or dead? It is living. It is going to grow. Is it a carrot? Is it a raccoon? Is it a daisy? No. The child has 46 chromosomes. It is not going to be a carrot, a raccoon, or a daisy. **It is alive, by the definition of life, and it is not any of these other things.** If you want to know the truth, the developing child is

different from the mother. The child is part father and part mother, so it is distinct. It is alive, it has 46 chromosomes, it is not raccoon, daisy, blueberry, or anything other than human, and it is distinct from the mother. I am not a geneticist, but I am told that if you could take a gene map of the mother's genes, and a gene map of the beginning life and just look at the maps, just the structure, and ask experts which one is the mother and which one is the new conception, they cannot tell the difference. Both have all the human information. Obviously, if you look at the individuals, you can tell a difference between mother and unborn child. But if you look at the map of the information, if you look at the map of the gene codes, you cannot tell a difference. You would have to look at pictures of the unborn baby and pictures of the mother to tell which is which because both have equal genetic information for humanity. The child is *alive*. It is not dead. It is not a carrot; it has 46 chromosomes.

### *The child is living!*

Let us look at this from a little different angle. I loved going to the seminary in Washington, D.C. because I was able to observe the congressional committee hearings, listen to the debates, and go down and watch the Congress. I went to hearings on abortion. Senator East from North Carolina was presiding. He was disabled and could not walk. He was questioning a medical professor from Harvard, and he was really mad. "You mean you can go to the moon and you can go to the bottom of the ocean and you cannot tell me whether something is alive or dead?" What else is a developing child but alive? Take the common medical definitions for death and reverse them. Choose whichever definition for death you want. Take the definition and reverse it. If we say the absence of a heartbeat is death, then life begins at 18 days, and abortion causes death. If we say the absence of a brain wave is death, life begins at 43 days. *Nearly all abortions take place after that.* The statistics I have indicate that all abortions do. I am no expert, so I do not know whether I can say *all*, but the chart I have says all abortions take place after 43 days. So, if the definition of death would be the absence of the brain wave, or the cessation of the heartbeat, then abortion causes death. Take definitions of death and reverse them, and the unborn have life whether it is the heartbeat or brain wave. Whether looking at it genetically or looking at it medically, the developing children are alive. They are not going to be carrots.

Children are *humans*. Abortion stops the heartbeat. Abortion stops the brainwave. Abortion causes pain. What else is abortion but the destruction of life?

### THE PHILOSOPHICAL VIEW

Let me apply some logic. Philosophy. The first argument was medical, this one is philosophical. I remember one congressional committee meeting in Washington where there were people with signs reading, “AAA.” I wondered what they were doing there. Travelers? Cars? No, they were “Atheists Against Abortion.” I did not know what this organization was. They were in the committee meeting with big signs. They were able to reason from logic alone that abortion is evil.

To examine a philosophical idea, it should be taken to its logical outcome. When we do this, abortion is irrational. Every argument for abortion is the same argument for death for those that are already born. Therefore, there is something wrong with pro-abortion logic. Every argument for abortion is an equal argument for killing those already born. Let me show you.

*By this logic, those who are poor should not live.*

The abortionist says, “well, these are going to be born into poverty. They ought not to live. Poverty is terrible.” However, would this not be the same argument for killing the majority in Africa, South America, and Asia? Again, we are told they are poor. If poor people should not live, then why not rid ourselves of all poor people. Every argument for abortion is an equal argument for murder, for infanticide, and for even killing adults. So something is wrong with such reasoning. Look how much poverty there is all over the world. Abortion logic could be the same argument for killing those already born.

Another assertion is that the unborn might not have high intelligence. First of all, who defines intelligence? This really worries me about how some define intelligence. I have read liberal material that compares religious believers to wild animals that may have to be caged. The same material argues that parents should be prevented from informing their children about the flaws of evolution. Apparently, I am ignorant because I am a conservative. Who is going to define



intelligence anyway? We say this unborn baby may not be intelligent. That is an equal argument for killing all kinds of people pro-abortionists do not think possess intelligence. Something is wrong with such logic. Take it to its conclusion. It ends in irrationality. **Every argument for abortion is an argument for death of people that are already born**, from infants to old people.

*Ten ounces and alive!*

What about logic and the concept of viability? Viability is where the child is able to live on its own. The child is far enough along in its development that it could live on its own and would not need to be within the mother for any more nurture and development. The period of viability keeps getting shorter and shorter. Doctors keep saving smaller and smaller babies. I saved an article about a baby which doctors saved weighing only ten ounces at birth. I don't know if the record has been lowered since then or not. *They saved a baby that weighed ten ounces!* Fifteen years later a newspaper article revealed that the child was progressing well in high school, excelling in music. How much smaller viability can go I do not know, but it is very poor logic to say that babies need not have the right-to-life unless there is viability. Viability keeps getting shorter and shorter and shorter. By such logic, human life keeps being redefined. Also, you have this madness (talk about twisted logic) where **babies who are smaller, and more immature, weighing less than a pound are being saved in one end of the hospital, and babies weighing several times more are being aborted at the other end of the hospital**. I am not using the Bible here. I am just talking about simple logic. *This is madness!* They are saving the little premies who are smaller and aborting the infants more developed!

I have pictures in my office. You ought to see them. You ought to see an aborted child at nineteen weeks. I will let you look right into their eyes. This is a saline solution so they are not all carved up. *This is a child*. No one could argue with it. If any of you would like to see an aborted child, I have pictures in my office. So, how logical are the reasonings of pro-abortion advocates? When you are saving children who are smaller than the ones you are killing, what sense is that?

## THE LEGAL VIEW

So far, we have considered the Bible, which, to you and me, is the most important authority. We have talked about medicine and logic. Next I would like to talk about law.

Once I went to a lecture at the Supreme Court. Harry Blackmun came out in his robes, and the clerk of the court cried, “all rise.” Everyone stood up. I was in the front row. I was sitting very close to Harry Blackmun. He wrote the Roe vs. Wade decision. C. Everett Koop, former Surgeon General, has summarized Blackmun’s view this way: “We need not resolve the question of when life begins.”<sup>1</sup> *Why not?* Because a court says so? We need not decide when life begins? We do not have to think about it? If one feels the unborn cannot absolutely be proven to be human, then it is acceptable to destroy them? Okay, for the sake of argument, let me agree for a few minutes. Let us just say we do not know whether the unborn are living or dead. I do not agree with that, but let us go along with such reasonings. We do not know for certain whether they are human, so we can legally destroy them. I would like to evaluate that statement for its logic. They might be alive or they might be dead. They might be human, they might not be human. We do not know, and we do not have to think about it. We do not have to think about whether the child is alive or dead.

Let us apply that to other areas of life. Let us say I am hunting. I am deer hunting. I see movement over there in the woods. Am I not responsible for knowing whether it is human before I shoot? And if it even *might* be human, do you not think I ought to give the benefit of the doubt and refrain from shooting? Even if I do not know for certain, even if there is a *slight possibility* (and they will all concede it is a possibility that the unborn are human), I should not shoot. Even if it is only *possible* that a human is over there in the woods, then I better not kill it. **I should give the benefit of the doubt to the preservation of life simply because the target *might* be human.** There were a couple teachers in my high school. They were deer hunting, and one of them

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<sup>1</sup> C. Everett Koop, *The Right to Live; The Right to Die* (Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1976), page 39.

killed the other. One saw movement in the bushes, and he was not sure if it was human or not, but it was moving so he shot. He killed the other teacher. You and I would be responsible for knowing for certain that a target for death is positively not human. It is not enough to say, “well, I do not know whether it is or not, I will kill it anyway.” Suppose that an ambulance comes up to an accident scene and the EMT asks the question, “Are the people in this car alive or dead?” “We do not know”, the bystanders say. Based on that reply, should the ambulance leave without knowing with certainty the condition of the injured? The very possibility that they may be alive means we must protect and help them. The false argument easily goes from “maybe they are alive, maybe they are not” to “we do not know and we do not care.” If the unborn *might* be human, then we have to take action on the side of life.

Whether you look at abortion through the Bible, medicine, philosophy or law, abortion is crazy. It does not matter which angle you come from. And you know what? We don’t hear these arguments every day. They somehow get set aside because those who believe them are labeled right-wing nuts. The truth is set aside. It is a very hard thing to know how to respond when you have the government singing, “Holy, Holy, Holy”, and then spending the rest of the week allowing the destruction of millions of children.

### EUTHANASIA

I’d like to say a word or two about euthanasia. I think we’re going to have it. I don’t know that for certain, but I think it’s going to come to America. Turn with me in your Bible to Genesis Chapter 9 and Exodus Chapter 20. I have to do this quickly. We can study this more thoroughly some other time. However, I don’t want to leave this parallel subject of the sanctity of life entirely out of this message. Genesis 9:6 is the first prohibition against murder in the Bible. Noah’s family was coming off the Ark, and in Genesis 9:6 God tells Noah, “Whosoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed.” Then the reason given for the prohibition of murder is the sacredness of all human life created in the image of God. “*For in the image of God, He made man.*” Exodus 20 verse 13 is the place in the Bible where you find the commandment that we all know, “*Thou shalt not kill*” or “*thou shalt not murder.*” To be very brief, I understand that given a perfect world, with perfect families, perfect doctors, perfect government, and

perfect diagnosis of illnesses, we might know when a person is going to die. I do not think that euthanasia would have to be as morally wicked as homicide, but it is in the same category. If it is not to the same degree as wrong, it is the same direction. It is like saying I can steal anything because I am poor and in need. Therefore, I can break the commandment against stealing because I have special needs that other people don't have. Breaking God's clear moral law would be a disaster on a societal level.

*Doctors make mistakes.*

Here are some brief thoughts of the dangers of euthanasia. Number one. Doctors make mistakes. No doctor is infallible. Marilyn Waterhouse's uncle was diagnosed as terminally ill. He was still alive twenty years later. "So, old man, you're done. It's over with." Then he lives decades longer! God is God. Physicians aren't. If euthanasia is practiced, many premature deaths will occur.

The second thing I'd like to say is, "The love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). God help us when it becomes profitable to put people out of the way because it will save the government money, it will save the hospital money, it will save the insurance company money, and it will save the family money. God help us.

Thirdly, who decides? We can't trust any of the options. Who decides? Dr. Kevorkian said that doctors ought to decide, not the government. In Holland, where euthanasia is permitted, families can go to the emergency room and find their loved one is already put under. The doctors don't always feel obligated to ask the family. Shall we trust the government to decide cases in which it is financially beneficial for it to cause death? By the way, do you trust all the red tape coming out of the government to be correct? Even if there is integrity, much bungling takes place. People would die from administrative errors. We can't trust the government to make the right decision on life or death. Next, we could let family members decide life or death for an ill relative. Every relative in the world would choose with wisdom or morality, right? We all know many families would dispatch a relative to cut costs or obtain an inheritance.

*Whom do you trust?*

Perhaps the patient alone ought to decide. Maybe the patient is the right one. That seems to be the best of the alternatives, but decisions are not made very well when we're in the pit of depression or pain or fear. Decisions are not made well when we're going through the proverbial knothole. All kinds of people, if they have two weeks of excruciating pain, would love to end it all; but if they were able to recover after two weeks, they'd have the rest of their lives. Now, if we give them the option of death in the middle of suffering, many will choose to die needlessly. I'm arguing philosophically here, but in truth no one can be trusted with the decision to end life. At the most, we could withdraw medical treatment and allow death, but actively causing death will cause many avoidable deaths. I still think the Bible alone answers the debate. We are going to have a terrible time if the Supreme Court rules the wrong way on euthanasia. We are going to have moral madness.

*Choose you this day whom you will serve.*

We have to decide whether we are going to trust God with our lives or whether we're going to be autonomous. Authority over life is the underlying issue. In the case of abortion, will I run my sexuality my own way? Or will I submit my life to God? In the case of euthanasia, will I decide how I will end my life, or will I trust God when I am severely sick? It comes down to an issue of authority whether the master is the individual or God. God is very clear in what He says about the sanctity of life whether in youth or old age.

Let us pray together please. Father, we are saddened by our times. We feel powerless to reverse it. Lord, make us content with what we can do. Make us committed to do what we are able to do in terms of governing our own lives, in terms of influencing families and neighbors, co-workers, and people within the church. We pray for Your mercy in the tough situations, and we pray that all of us will decide to trust Your authority and in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our own personal Savior from sin. Bless us as we go our separate ways and may we all feel that we have served You and not have any guilt about being negligent. Thank You, in Jesus Name, Amen.



## **Outside the Heavenly City:**

Abortion in Rome  
and  
the Early Church's Response





## Outside the Heavenly City: Abortion in Rome and the Early Church's Response

The Old Testament contains the bulk of scriptural material relative to the unborn and the abortion issue. Nevertheless, the New Testament contains several passages that merit consideration. Some evidence exists to indicate that the Greek word *pharmakia* can be used of abortion-causing drugs. Therefore, the five New Testament occurrences of the *pharmakia* word group will be addressed.

### A Study of *pharmakia*

Most theological studies about the unborn neglect the only Bible texts that might be references to deliberate abortion, namely those texts that include the word *pharmakia* or one of its cognates. It is common knowledge that drugs are presently used to induce abortions. If it can be established that drug-induced abortions were also practiced in the Greco-Roman world and that the New Testament forbids such illicit usage of drugs, then the New Testament indirectly condemns the practice of abortion. In order to evaluate such a possibility, it will be necessary to establish that abortion, including abortion caused by drugs, was a common practice in the ancient world and that *pharmakia* can refer to abortifacient drugs, i.e. drugs that are used to induce abortion.

### Abortion in the Ancient World

It is not difficult to demonstrate that abortion is an ancient custom. It was practiced in both Greece and Rome and was universally condemned by early Christians.

Abortion: a practice among the Greeks.

One of the most famous physicians in history, Hippocrates (460-359 B.C.), writes in his Hippocratic Oath: "Neither will I administer a poison (sic) to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course. Similarly, I will not give to a woman a pessary to cause

abortion.”<sup>2</sup> Hippocrates was against abortion. However, the two great philosophical giants of the Greek world maintained that abortion was a necessary and proper means of eugenics and population control.

But when, I take it, the men and the women have passed the age of lawful procreation, we shall leave the men free to form such relations with whomever they may please...first admonishing them preferably not even to bring to light anything whatever is thus conceived, but if they are unable to prevent a birth to dispose of it (Plato 427-347 B.C.).<sup>3</sup>

There must be a limit fixed to the procreation of offspring, and if any people have a child as a result of intercourse in contravention of these regulations, abortion must be practiced on it before it has developed sensation and life (Aristotle 384-322 B.C.).<sup>4</sup>

Apparently, the views of Plato and Aristotle were shared by the majority of ancient Greeks. Durant writes, “The voluntary limitation of the family was the order of the day, whether by contraception, by abortion, or by infanticide,” and Bates mentions a French article in which the author lists twelve pages of abortifacient drugs used by the ancient Greeks.<sup>5</sup> The evidence points to a widespread practice of abortion (often involving drugs) in Greece, a practice which like so much of Hellenistic culture was absorbed by the Roman Empire.

#### Abortion: A practice in the Roman Empire

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<sup>2</sup> Hippocrates *Oath*, in Vol. 1 of 4 vols., *Loeb Classical Library*, p. 299 (*Oath* lines 18-20).

<sup>3</sup> Plato *The Republic*, Vol. 1 of 2 vols., *Loeb Classical Library*, p. 467 (*The Republic* 5:461).

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle *Politics*, in *Loeb Classical Library*, pp. 623-24 (*Politics* 7:14:10).

<sup>5</sup> Will Durant, *The Life of Greece*, in *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1939), p. 468; Jerome Bates and Edward S. Zawadzki, *Criminal Abortion* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1964), p. 16; the French material is in Marcel Moissilles, “Contribution a l’Etude de l’Avortement dans l’Antiquite Grecque,” *Janus*, 26 (1922): 129-145.

During the period in which Rome was both at the height of her military strength and the depth of her moral depravity, abortions became frequent. Notable families used abortion as a means of birth control, and physicians wrote manuals on abortion which “were popular among great ladies and prostitutes.”<sup>6</sup>

Hermann Strack says that one of the reasons Jews believed entering a gentile house would make them impure was that the gentiles practiced abortion and threw their aborted babies into the drains:

The dwelling of gentiles (in the land of Israel) are (levitically) unclean (because they are accustomed to bury their abortions therein)...The house is reputed as defiled by a corpse and renders, according to... the Israelite who enters there unclean for seven days.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Bates teaches that abortion in the empire was common and was practiced among all social classes:

During the time of the Roman consuls abortion was a rarity....In the halcyon days of Imperial Rome, however, the practice burgeoned without restraint among all classes....Roman ladies as well as public women were to be found patronizing the abortionists, many of whom were Greek slaves. These slaves had brought their art with them into captivity and were often to be seen as attendant freed-women to Roman ladies of rank.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, in *The Story of Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), pp. 313 and 364.

<sup>7</sup> Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament* (Munich: C. H. Becksche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), 1:838-39. This is the interpretation of the German word *fehlgeburtem*, abortion or miscarriage, given by K. Marquart in “Killing with Kindness,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 41 (January, 1977): 48. (John 18:28-29 illustrates Jewish views.)

<sup>8</sup> Jerome Bates, *Criminal Abortion*, p. 17.

The Romans themselves testify to the presence of abortion and abortifacient drugs in their society.<sup>9</sup> The Cornelian Law (c. 81 B.C.) was enacted against abortifacient drugs which threatened the life of the mother.<sup>10</sup> It is interesting that several great Roman moralists stood firm in their belief that abortion was wrong:

If vicious ways like this had found favor with mothers of olden time, the race of mortal men would have perished from the earth...Why cheat the full vine of the growing cluster, and pluck with ruthless hand the fruit yet in the green? What is ripe will fall of itself - let grow what has once become quick; a life is no slight reward for a short delay. Ah, woman, why will you thrust and pierce with the instrument, and give dire poisons (sic) to your children yet unborn? (Ovid 43 B.C. - A.D. 17).<sup>11</sup>

Never have you in the manner of other women whose only recommendation lies in their beauty, tried to conceal your pregnancy as if an unseemly burden, nor have you ever crushed the hope of children that were being nurtured in your body (Seneca 4 B.C. - A.D. 65).<sup>12</sup>

So great is the skill so powerful the drugs of the abortionist, paid to murder mankind within the womb (Juvenal A.D. 60-140).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Two Greek authors, Soranus and Plutarch, who write during the Roman period are treated in a following section, (pp. 31-33).

<sup>10</sup> See Richard Hawks, "Abortion in History and the Bible," M. Div. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1979, pp. 23; and Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christians*, in *Ancient Christian Writers*, trans. by Joseph H. Crehan, edited by J. Quasten and Joseph Plumpe, 40 vols. (New York: Newman Press, 1955) p. 167 n. 305.

<sup>11</sup> Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, Vol. 1 of 6 vols., *Loeb Classical Library*, p. 425 (Amores 2:14:9-10 and 23-28).

<sup>12</sup> Seneca *Moral Essays*, Vol. 2 of 3 vols., *Loeb Classical Library*, pp. 471 and 473 (*To Helvia on Consolation* 16:3).

<sup>13</sup> Juvenal and Persius, *Loeb Classical Library*, p. 133 (*Satire* 6:592-97).

These writers are direct testimony to the fact that women of the Roman Empire frequently resorted to abortion in order to resolve an unwanted pregnancy and that abortion was often induced by drugs. Like these pagan moralists, early Christians lived in a society that aborted its unwanted children. Also like them, the early Christians had much to say regarding the moral issues of their day.

Abortion: The response from the early Church.

The number of references to abortion among the writings of the early church fathers is astounding. Judging from the frequency of their comments, abortion continued to be a common practice. Not only is the quantity of references to abortion remarkable, but also the unanimity of the church's condemnation of abortion and abortion-causing drugs is striking. These references provide additional evidence to demonstrate that abortion was an important moral issue in ancient times, and they lead one to wonder whether the early church's unanimous and uncertain condemnation of abortion lies in what she felt to be a scriptural basis. The following quotations give the early church's position on abortion.<sup>14</sup>

Thou shalt not procure abortion, nor shalt thou kill that which is begotten (*Didache* A.D. 100-120).<sup>15</sup>

And when we say that those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder, and will have to give an account to

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14 Other church fathers who mention abortion include: *The Epistle of Barnabas* 19:5, Tertullian in *Apology* 9:8, Cyprian in *Epistle* 58, *Constitutions* 7:3:2, Basil in *Letters* 188:2 and 8, *Diognetus* 5:6, Augustine in *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 1:15-17, and *The Apocalypse of Peter* 8 (26 in Akhmim). There are also possible references in *Methodius Concerning Chastity* 2:6, *Christian Sibyllines* 2:280-290, and *The Apocalypse of Paul* 784.

15 "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, reprint ed., 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 7:377 (*Didache* 2:2).

God for the abortion, on what principle should we commit murder? (Athenagoras A.D. 175).<sup>16</sup>

If we should but control our lusts at the start and if we would not kill off the human race born and developing according to divine plan, then our whole lives would be lived according to nature. But women who resort to some sort of deadly abortion drug kill not only the embryo but, along with it, all human kindness (Clement of Alexandria A.D. 200-215).<sup>17</sup>

There are some women who, by drinking medical preparations, extinguish the source of the future man in their very bowels, and thus commit parricide before they bring forth (Minucius Felix A.D. 210).<sup>18</sup>

Some, when they find themselves with child through their sin, use drugs to procure abortion, and when (as often happens) they die with their offspring, they enter the lower world laden with the guilt not only of adultery against Christ but also of suicide and child murder (Jerome A.D. 384).<sup>19</sup>

You see how drunkenness leads to whoredom, whoredom to adultery, adultery to murder; or rather to a something even worse than murder. For I have no name to give it, since it does not take off the thing born, but prevent its being born. Why then dost thou abuse the gift of God .... and make the chamber of procreation a chamber for murder? .... For sorceries (or drugs) are applied not to the womb that is prostituted, but to the injured wife, and there

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<sup>16</sup> Athenagoras, "A Plea for Christians", in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:147 (*A Plea for Christians* 35).

<sup>17</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, in *The Fathers of the Church*, ed. by Ludwig Schopp (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1954) pp. 173-74.

<sup>18</sup> Minucius Felix, "The Octavius of Minucius Felix," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:191-92 (*Octavius* 30).

<sup>19</sup> Jerome, "Letters," in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, 6:27 (Letter 22, *To Eustochium* 22:13).

are plottings, without number, and invocations of devils, and necromancies, and daily wars, and truceless fightings, and home-cherished jealousies (Chrysostom A.D. 380-400).<sup>20</sup>

These patristic sources and the classical sources that were cited earlier provide more than ample proof that abortion, including abortion by means of drugs, was a means of eliminating an unwanted pregnancy during the apostolic period. However, a question remains as to whether the ancients used the word *pharmakia* in reference to drugs that induce abortion.

#### Classical uses of *pharmakia*

The *pharmakia* word group has the dual meaning of “medicine” and “sorcery.” Ancient physicians were often a combination of physician and sorcerer similar to the “witchdoctor” of Africa or the “medicine man” of the American Indian. Noonan discusses this connection between medicine and sorcery and then adds a brief but important observation that pertains to abortion:

Writing in the second part of the 1st century, Plutarch said that Romulus in his original laws for Rome had enacted “a severe law” permitting a husband to divorce his wife, not only for adultery, but for “medicine in regard to children”.... In both the tradition preserved by Plutarch and in Garius the key word is “medicine” - in Greek *pharmakia*: in Latin *veneficium*. In both languages the term means use of “magic drugs.” The ambiguity of the term, which is preserved in each language, although different roots form the words, is deliberate, and reflects the attitude of the Greco-Roman culture. Drugs are intimately associated by this culture with magic; the users of Greek or Latin see no need to have two words to differentiate magic and the drugs. A univocal translation suppresses one of the two

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<sup>20</sup> John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Acts and Romans,” in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, 11:520 (*The Epistle to the Romans* 24:4).

meanings suggested by the word in most contexts .... The term “medicine” in respect to children designates abortifacients.<sup>21</sup>

Noonan’s comment that *pharmakia* can designate abortifacients is supported by Liddell and Scott, the standard lexicon for classical Greek literature.<sup>22</sup> Even more important than this, it is demonstrated by the word’s usage in several classical and patristic references.

In classical literature the clearest reference of *pharmakia* referring to abortion-causing drugs is located in the *Gynecology* of Soranus. Soranus was a renowned Ephesian physician of the first century after Christ. In two passages he uses a member of the *pharmakia* word family to describe abortifacient drugs.

Natural waters which have relatively pungent qualities differ in no way from drugs (*pharmakon*) inserted for abortion.

And an “expulsive,” some people say is synonymous with an abortive; others, however, say that there is a difference because an expulsive does not mean drugs (*pharmakois*) but shaking and leaping.<sup>23</sup>

In the same paragraph Soranus discusses Hippocrates. He states that many in his day interpreted Hippocrates as saying he would not perform a drug-induced abortion but that he would allow a mother to

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21 John T. Noonan, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by Catholic Theologians and Canonists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 25.

22 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Revised by Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie, with a supplement edited by E. A. Barber (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 1917.

23 Owsei Temkin, trans., *Soranus’ Gynecology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1956), pp. 57 and 62-63. (*Gynecology* 1:56 and 60.) The Greek interpolations are from *Soranai Gynaeciorum vetus translatio latina nunc primum edita cum additis graeci textus reliquiss a Deitzio repertis atque ad ipsum codicem parisiensem, nunc recognitis, a Valentio Rose*, (Lipsiae: In aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1882), pp. 223 and 229.



“leap with the heels to the buttocks” in order to expel a child.<sup>24</sup> The passage in Hippocrates is not as clear as the two quotations above, but the word *homoios* (similarly) indicates that Hippocrates may be discussing two methods of abortion, one of them involving *pharmakon*, “drugs.”

Neither will I administer a poison (sic) (*pharmakon*) to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course. Similarly (*homoios*), I will not give to a woman a pessary to cause abortion.<sup>25</sup>

Plutarch provides an additional classical reference where *pharmakia* seems to be used of abortifacients. In *Plutarch's Lives* he writes:

He (Romulus) also enacted certain laws and among them one of severity, which forbids a wife to leave her husband, but permits a husband to put away his wife for using poisons (sic) (*pharmakia*), for substituting children, and for adultery.<sup>26</sup>

Noonan's comment on this reference, which is given above, is logical.<sup>27</sup> The list of offenses, which are grounds for divorce, includes two offenses which are related to sexuality and reproduction. In all probability the usage of poison is meant as a parallel offense and refers to the wife aborting a child without her husband's consent. Cicero mentions a woman who had an abortion so she could retain a large share of her husband's property.<sup>28</sup> It is not difficult to understand how a case like this could give rise to legislation to make secret abortion a ground for divorce.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Hippocrates, *Loeb Classical Library*, p. 299 (*Oath* 18-20).

<sup>26</sup> Plutarch *Plutarch's Lives*, Vol. 1 of 11 vols., *Loeb Classical Library*, pp. 161-163 (*Romulus* 22:3).

<sup>27</sup> See pages 31-32.

<sup>28</sup> Bates and Zawadzki, *Criminal Abortion*, p. 18.

### Patristic uses of *Pharmakia*

Patristic writings also yield several clear examples of the *pharmakia* word group referring to abortifacient drugs. In *Paedagogus* Clement of Alexandria says, “But women who resort to some sort of deadly abortion drug (*pharmakois*) ...kill not only the embryo but, along with it all human kindness.”<sup>29</sup> Likewise, the great preacher John Chrysostom uses *pharmakeai* to mean abortifacient drugs in his *Homilies on Romans*. His comments show that medicine and witchcraft were closely related in the ancient world and that the immorality that often leads to an abortion can also lead to idolatry.

Wherefore, I beseech you flee fornication, and the mother of it, drunkenness....You see how drunkenness leads to whoredom, whoredom to adultery, adultery to murder....For with a view to drawing more money by being agreeable and an object of longing to her lovers, even this (abortion) she is not backward to do, so heaping upon thy head a great pile of fire....Hence too come idolatries, since many, with a view to become acceptable, devise incantations, and libations, and love-potions, and countless other plans. Yet, still after such great unseemliness, after slaughters, after idolatries, the thing seems to many to belong to things indifferent, aye, and to many that have wives too....For sorceries (*pharmakeai*) are applied not to the womb that is prostituted, but to the injured wife, and there are plottings without number, and invocations of devils, and necromancies, and daily wars, and truceless fightings, and home-cherished jealousies.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Christ the Educator*, pp. 173-74; the Greek interpolation is from Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrepticus and Paedagogus*, ed. by Otto Stahlin (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs' sche Buchhandlung, 1905), p. 215 (*Paedagogus* 2:10:96:5).

<sup>30</sup> John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Acts and Romans,” in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, 11:520 (*The Epistle to the Romans*, homily 24). The Greek interpolation is from Joannis Chrysostomi, *Opera Omnia Quae Exstant*, in *Bibliothecae Cleri Universae*, 18 volumina, editorem J. P. Migne (Parisiorum: Opera Et Studion D. Bern, De Montaucon, Monachi Benedictini E. Congr. S. Mauri, 1862), 9:627-28.

Finally, the author of the *Didache* implies that performing abortions, doing magic and *pharmakeo* are closely related. The verb does not appear to be restricted to the use of abortifacients. However, this passage seems to reinforce the idea that the progression from illicit drug use to abortion was natural to the ancient mind.

“Thou shall not use witchcraft; thou shalt not practice sorcery (*pharmakeuseis*), thou shalt not procure abortion, nor shalt thou kill the newborn child.”<sup>31</sup>

Classical and patristic references leave no doubt that *pharmakia* can refer to drugs that induce abortion, but does it have this meaning in the New Testament?

#### The New Testament usage of *pharmakia*

The preceding discussion has established that abortion, including drug-induced abortion, was common to the cultural setting of the New Testament writings. It has also presented evidence to indicate that the early readers of the New Testament could have connected *pharmakia* with abortifacient drugs if the context in which the word was found suggested such a meaning. The following sections examine the contexts of the five biblical usages of the *pharmakia* group.

#### Paul’s usage of *pharmakia*

Paul uses *pharmakia* only once. In Gal. 5:19-21a it is listed in a series of vices:

But the works of the flesh are evident which are fornication, uncleanness, sensuality, idolatry, use of magical drugs (*pharmakia*), enmity, strife, envy, anger, disputes, disagreements, dissensions, jealousies, drunkenness, carousings, and the such ... <sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *The Teaching of the Twelve in the Original with Translations and Discussions of Post-Apostolic Teaching, Baptism, Worship and Discipline*, Trans. by Philip Schaff, 3rd ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Publishers, 1890), pp. 168-69 (*Didache* 2:2).

<sup>32</sup> The author’s translation.

The word *pharmakia* follows three words that indicate illicit sexual activity, *pornea* (fornication), *akatharsia* (uncleanness), and *aselgia* (sensuality), and one word that means idolatry, *idololatria*. Idolatrous worship during the New Testament period often included sexual impurity, and if Chrysostom is correct, harlots, as well as married women, used love-potions and invoked spirits in order to attract their men.<sup>33</sup> The sins in the middle of the list could possibly be expressions of the attitudes and actions of those offended by their unfaithful partners or of those lusting for the same mate. The list of evils concludes with drunken orgies.

How would the original readers have understood this reference to *pharmakia*? Paul appears to be condemning sexual impurity and illicit drug use that is somehow associated with it. Knowing that drug-induced abortion was a common practice of the period in which the epistle was written and that *pharmakia* can refer to abortifacient drugs, it is not unreasonable to believe that Paul intended to include abortifacient drugs in this denunciation of drug abuse as it is associated with sexual immorality.

John's usage of the *pharmakia* group

In the Book of The Revelation, John uses *pharmakia* and its cognates four times. As in Galatians, most of these references involve a list of sins.

And they did not repent of their murders, neither of their magical drugs (*pharmakon*), nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts [Rev. 9:21].

Because by your sorcery (*pharmakia*) all the nations were deceived [Rev. 18:23].

But for the cowardly, and the unbelievers, and the abominable, and the murderers, and the fornicators, and the medicine men

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<sup>33</sup> See the quotation on pages 30-31.

(*pharmakois*), and the idolaters, and for all deceivers their part is in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8).

But outside are the dogs, and the medicine men (*pharmakoi*), and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters and everyone who loves and who practices falsehood (Rev. 22:15).<sup>34</sup>

In Rev. 18:23 sorcery best fits the context. However, in Rev. 9:21 *pharmakon* is placed between the sin of murder and the sin of fornication. In Rev. 21:8 *pharmakois* follows murderers and fornicators and precedes idolaters. Likewise, in Rev. 22:15 *pharmakoi* is followed by fornicators, murderers, and idolaters. If there is any one practice that would be related to these three sins and would involve drugs, it is abortion.

It is not necessary to argue that the drug abuse of which John speaks must be limited to abortion, or to maintain that the “medicine men” did not commit additional evils with their potions. Yet, the cultural practice of drug-induced abortion, the evidence that the *pharmakia* group can be related to drugs used in abortion, and the contexts of these three passages in Revelation should alert Bible students that early readers would have understood John to be including abortifacient drugs in his condemnations. The above quotations from the early church establish that it understood the biblical condemnation of sorcery to include the practice of abortion.<sup>35</sup> Hawks’ statement on the subject deserves consideration:

It would be unfair to insist that every New Testament use of *pharmakeia* is specifically to be translated “abortion.” The word is broad and comprehensive, including all illegitimate uses of drugs for sinful ends, of which abortion was a major practice. Abortion is one specific act of the general sin of *pharmakeia*.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> The author’s translations.

<sup>35</sup> See pp. 29-31; 34-35.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Hawks, *Abortion in History and the Bible*, p. 47.

### Conclusion to the study of *pharmakia*

Abortions were relatively frequent during the time in which the New Testament was written, and drugs were used as a means of inducing them. In several ancient writings the word *pharmakia*, or one of its cognates, is used of abortifacient drugs, and such a meaning would fit well in most of the New Testament passages that use the word. Based upon the cultural background of New Testament literature and the range of meanings for *pharmakia*, it is reasonable to conclude that the New Testament condemns abortion by its teachings on *pharmakia* and related terms. The New Testament warns that those who refuse to repent of their sorceries (including abortion) will be outside the heavenly city (cf. Rev. 9:21 with 22:15). Nevertheless, the statement immediately before this stern warning promises, “Blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14). Immediately after follows an invitation to “come” in faith to Christ as Savior. By the power of His death and resurrection He offers grace and mercy for all sins, including past abortions.

The Spirit and the bride [the Church] say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come, and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” [Rev. 22:17].