

world. And because of transgression a probationary estate of trial and testing will begin.

Gardens of Gethsemane and the empty tomb

Then in Gethsemane we will see the Son of God ransom man from the temporal and spiritual death that came to us because of the Fall.

And finally, before an empty tomb, we will come to know that Christ our Lord has burst the bands of death and stands forever triumphant over the grave.

Thus, Creation is father to the Fall; and by the Fall came mortality and death; and by Christ came immortality and eternal life.

If there had been no fall of Adam, by which cometh death, there could have been no atonement of Christ, by which cometh life.

Salvation through his atoning blood

And now, as pertaining to this perfect atonement, wrought by the shedding of the blood of God—I testify that it took place in Gethsemane and at Golgotha, and as pertaining to Jesus Christ, I testify that he is the Son of the Living God and was crucified for the sins of the world. He is our Lord, our God, and our King. This I know of myself independent of any other person.

I am one of his witnesses, and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and shall wet his feet with my tears.

But I shall not know any better than I know now that he is God's Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer, and that salvation comes in and through his atoning blood and in no other way.

God grant that all of us may walk in the light as God our Father is in the light so that, according to the promises, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son will cleanse us from all sin.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us. Thank you, Brother McConkie, for your eloquent and moving testimony given under difficult circumstances.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel, our only delight," following which we shall hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Russell M. Nelson spoke without further announcement.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Unitedly we thank the Almighty for the wondrous prolongation of the life of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, enabling him to preach that powerful sermon. Our gratitude is profound!

Reverence for life

I pray for the Spirit of the Lord to help me communicate his mind and will

on a very vital and sensitive subject. I apologize for the use of words repugnant to me and ill-suited to this hallowed pulpit. I do so only for clarity of communication regarding reverence for human life.

As sons and daughters of God, we cherish life as a gift from him.

A heavy toll on life is included among the evils of war. Data from all

nations are appalling. For the United States of America, one hundred thousand were killed in World War I; over four hundred thousand died in World War II. In the first two hundred years as a nation, the lives of over one million Americans were lost due to war.

Abortion—war on unborn

Regrettable as is the loss of loved ones from war, these figures are dwarfed by the toll of a new war that *annually* claims more casualties than the total number of fatalities from all the wars of this nation.

It is a war on the defenseless—and the voiceless. It is a war on the unborn.

This war, labeled "abortion," is of epidemic proportion and is waged globally. Over 55 million abortions were reported worldwide in the year 1974 alone.¹ Sixty-four percent of the world's population now live in countries that legally sanction this practice.² In the United States of America, over 1.5 million abortions are performed annually.³ About 25 to 30 percent of all pregnancies now end in abortion.⁴ In some metropolitan areas, there are more abortions performed than live births.⁵ Comparable data also come from other nations.

War on life

Yet society professes reverence for human life. We weep for those who die, pray and work for those whose lives are in jeopardy. For years I have labored with other doctors here and abroad, struggling to prolong life. It is impossible to describe the grief a physician feels when the life of a patient is lost. Can anyone imagine how we feel when life is destroyed at its roots, as though it were a thing of naught?

What sense of inconsistency can allow people to grieve for their dead, yet be calloused to this baleful war being waged on life at the time of its silent development? What logic would encourage efforts to preserve the life of a critically ill twelve-week-old infant,

but countenance the termination of another life twelve weeks after inception? More attention is seemingly focused on the fate of a life at some penitentiary's death row than on the millions totally deprived of life's opportunity through such odious carnage before birth.

Twisted reasoning

The Lord has repeatedly declared this divine imperative: "Thou shalt not kill."⁶ Recently he added, "Nor do anything like unto it" (D&C 59:6). Even before the fulness of the gospel was restored, the enlightened understood the sanctity of life. John Calvin, the sixteenth-century reformer, wrote: "If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a *fetus* in the womb before it has come to light."⁷

But what impropriety could now legalize that which has been forbidden by the laws of God from the dawn of time? What twisted reasoning has transformed mythical concepts into contorted slogans assenting to a practice which is consummately wrong?

Proper concern or convenience?

These slogans begin with proper concern for the health of the mother. Infrequently, instances may occur in which the continuation of pregnancy could be life-threatening to the mother. When deemed by competent medical authorities that the life of one must be terminated in order to save the life of the other, many agree that it is better to spare the mother. But these circumstances are rare, particularly where modern medical care is available.

Another sympathetic concern applies to pregnancies resulting from rape or incest. The tragedy of this despoilment is compounded because, in such relationships, freedom of choice is denied the woman who is innocently involved.

But less than 3 percent of all abortions are performed for these two reasons.⁸ The other 97 percent are performed for what may be termed "reasons of convenience."

Some argue for abortion because a malformed child may result. The harmful effects of certain infectious or toxic agents in the first trimester of pregnancy are real.

Trusting in the Lord

The experience of a couple whom I shall identify as Brother and Sister Brown (fictitious names) is instructive. Sister Brown was only twenty-one years old at the time, a beautiful woman and a devoted wife. In her first trimester, she contracted the dreaded German measles.

Abortion was advised because the developing baby would almost surely be damaged. Some members of her family, out of loving concern, applied additional pressure for an abortion. "Don't burden yourself financially with a handicapped child," they argued. "You are too young and too poor."

Devotedly Brother and Sister Brown consulted their bishop. He referred them to their stake president, who listened to their serious concern and counseled them not to terminate the life of this baby, even though the child might have a problem. He quoted this scripture:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

They chose to follow that counsel and permit their child to be born—a beautiful little girl, normal in every respect, except for a hearing loss, that became evident later. After an evaluation at a school for the deaf, Brother and Sister Brown were advised that this child had the intellect of a genius. Now, some twenty years later, she attends a major university on a scholarship.

When recently asked how they felt about their once-weighty decision, the mother quickly responded, "She is one

of the great joys of my life! She is such a choice spirit! Though she lost the sense of hearing, she has compensated with augmented ability otherwise. Her eyes are alive with constant attention. She excels in dancing, even though she perceives the sounds of music from vibrations. She has served as an officer in school. But most significant is her guileless spirit, her unconditional love. She has taught us to serve and to share. Her spiritual insights have helped us to know God and his purposes. My husband and I are so grateful that she is one of our children."

Consider another individual weighing the consequences of her pregnancy. She was beyond the normal age for bearing children. She announced to her doctor that her husband was an alcoholic with a syphilitic infection. One of her children had been born dead. Another child was blind. Another had tuberculosis. Her family had a history of deafness. Finally she confessed that she was living in abject poverty. If this true historical situation were posed today, many would recommend abortion. The child born from that pregnancy became the renowned composer Ludwig van Beethoven.

But the principle involved extends beyond those who may become great. If one is to be deprived of life because of potential for developing physical problems, consistency would dictate that those who already have such deficiencies should likewise be terminated. Continuing, then, those who are either infirm, incompetent, or inconvenient should be eliminated by those in power. Such irreverence for life is unthinkable!

Free but not from consequences

Another contention raised is that a woman is free to choose what she does with her own body. To a certain extent this is true for all of us. We are free to think. We are free to plan. And then we are free to do. But once an action has been taken, we are never free from its consequences. Those considering abortion have already exercised certain choices.

To clarify this concept, we can learn from the astronaut. Any time during the selection process, planning, and preparation, he is free to withdraw. But once the powerful rocket fuel is ignited, he is no longer free to choose. Now he is bound by the consequences of his choice. Even if difficulties develop and he might wish otherwise, the choice made was sealed by action.

So it is with those who would tamper with the God-given power of procreation. They are free to think and plan otherwise, but their choice is sealed by action.

Two separate lives involved

The woman's choice for her own body does not validate choice for the body of another. The expression "terminate the pregnancy" applies literally only to the woman. The consequence of terminating the fetus therein involves the body and very life of another. These two individuals have separate brains, separate hearts, and separate circulatory systems. To pretend that there is no child and no life there is to deny reality.

It is not a question of when "meaningful life" begins or when the spirit "quicken" the body. In the biological sciences, it is known that life begins when two germ cells unite to become one cell, bringing together twenty-three chromosomes from both the father and from the mother. These chromosomes contain thousands of genes. In a marvelous process involving a combination of genetic coding by which all the basic human characteristics of the unborn person are established, a new DNA complex is formed. A continuum of growth results in a new human being. The onset of life is not a debatable issue, but a fact of science.

Approximately twenty-two days after the two cells have united, a little heart begins to beat. At twenty-six days the circulation of blood begins.⁹

Scripture declares that the "life of the flesh is in the blood"

(Leviticus 17:11). Abortion sheds that innocent blood.

Faith and obedience

Another excuse some use to justify abortion relates to population control. Many in developing nations unknowingly ascribe their lack of prosperity to overpopulation. While they grovel in ignorance of God and his commandments, they may worship objects of their own creation (or nothing at all), while unsuccessfully attempting to limit their population by the rampant practice of abortion. They live in squalor, oblivious to the divine teaching—stated in the scriptures not once, but thirty-four times—that people will prosper in the land only if they obey the commandments of God.¹⁰

How can God fulfill his promise to prosper his children in obedience if they worship idols or destroy life created by him—destined to be in his very image?

They will prosper only when their education includes faith in and obedience to the God of this world, who said, "I, the Lord, . . . built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide. . . . *But it must needs be done in mine own way.* . . . For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare" (D&C 104:14-17; italics added).

Warnings

Now, as a servant of the Lord, I dutifully warn those who advocate and practice abortion that they incur the wrath of Almighty God, who declared, "If men . . . hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, . . . he shall be surely punished" (Exodus 21:22).

Of those who shed innocent blood, a prophet declared: "The judgments which [God] shall exercise . . . in his wrath [shall] be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry

mightily against them at the last day" (Alma 14:11).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has consistently opposed the practice of abortion. One hundred years ago the First Presidency wrote: "And we again take this opportunity of warning the Latter-day Saints against those . . . practices of foeticide and infanticide."¹

Early in his presidency, our beloved President Spencer W. Kimball said, "We decry abortions and ask our people to refrain from this serious transgression."²

Why destroy a life that could bring such joy to others?

Hope for those who have so sinned?

Now, is there hope for those who have so sinned without full understanding, who now suffer heartbreak? Yes. So far as is known, the Lord does not regard this transgression as murder. And "as far as has been revealed, a person may repent and be forgiven for the sin of abortion."³ Gratefully, we know the Lord will help all who are truly repentant.

Life—gift from God

Yes, life is precious! No one can cuddle a cherished newborn baby, look into those beautiful eyes, feel the little fingers, and caress that miraculous creation without deepening reverence for life and for our Creator.

Life comes from life. It is a gift from our Heavenly Father. It is eternal, as he is eternal. Innocent life is not sent by him to be destroyed! This doctrine is not of me, but is that of the living God and of his divine Son, which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

References

¹ Christopher Tietze, *Induced Abortion: A World Review*, 4th ed. (New York: Population Council, 1981), p. 19.

² Tietze, *Induced Abortion*, pp. 7, 19–37.

³ See Stanley K. Henshaw, Jacqueline Darroch Forrest, Ellen Sullivan, and Christopher Tietze, "Abortion Services in the United States, 1979 and 1980," *Family Planning Perspective*, Jan./Feb. 1982, pp. 1, 7.

⁴ Henshaw, et al, "Abortion Services," *Family Planning Perspective*, p. 6.

⁵ See Center for Disease Control, *Annual Summary: Abortion Surveillance, 1979–80*, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, p. 130.

⁶ See Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17, Matthew 5:21, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20, Romans 13:9, James 2:11, Mosiah 13:21, 3 Nephi 12:21, D&C 42:18–19, D&C 132:36.

⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, 24 vols., trans. Charles William Bingham (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), 3:42 (Exodus 21:22).

⁸ See U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *The Human Life Bill: Hearings on S. 158*, 97th Congress, First Session, 1981.

⁹ See J. Willis Hurst, R. Bruce Logue, Robert C. Schlant, and Nanette Kass Wenger, *The Heart*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), p. 7.

¹⁰ See Leviticus 26:3–15; Joshua 1:7–8; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 18:7; 2 Chronicles 24:20, 26:5, 31:21; Ezra 6:14; Job 36:11; 1 Nephi 2:20, 4:14; 2 Nephi 1:9, 20, 31; 4:4; 5:10–11; Jarom 1:9; Omni 1:6; Mosiah 1:7; 2:22, 31; Alma 9:13; 36:1, 30; 37:13; 38:1; 45:6–8; 48:15, 25; 50:20; Helaman 3:20; 3 Nephi 5:22; D&C 9:13.

¹¹ In James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 3:11.

¹² *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, p. 6

¹³ *General Handbook of Instructions*, 1983, p. 78.