

C. Abortion, Euthanasia, and Other Issues Related to the Value of the Sacredness of Human Life and the Norm of the Obligation to Preserve It

Principles that concern the obligation to preserve human life have far-ranging application. They bear on such issues as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, the maintenance by means of machines of certain functions in brain-dead persons, self-defense, suicide, the use of deadly force in arresting or preventing the escape of criminals, and warfare. Therefore, they must be carefully formulated and, wherever possible, scripturally grounded and tested by logic, history, and present experience.

As a preliminary treatment of this area, let us consider eleven such principles:

1. Human life is created and sustained by God. As such, it belongs to God, is dependent on Him for its existence, and is to be used according to His will.

Ezekiel 18:4 -- "Behold, all lives are mine; the life of the father as well as the life of the son is mine." Here we are told that all human life belongs to God.

Psalm 24:1 -- "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." Here we learn that those who live on the earth belong to the Lord by virtue of their creation and preservation by God.

Revelation 4:11 -- "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." This tells us that human life was created by God and exists by God's will.

In one sense human life is a gift from God. It is freely given by God's sovereign good pleasure, for God's glory and mankind's benefit.

Yet in another sense human life belongs to God. It is communicated and sustained by God, and can be withdrawn at His will.

In still another sense, human life is given purposively. God did not give us life so that we would experience merely a bare existence, but so that we would find genuine meaning, purpose, and significance in living.

2. Human embryos, from the first moment of their fertilization, are individual instances of human life. As such, they are potential human beings, which means that they are on the way to becoming human beings.

Psalm 51:5 -- "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." David says that he was sinful at his birth and sinful at his conception. Only human beings can be characterized as