SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL TO THE OPEN LETTER

Appendices

On the Sanctity of Life, Abortifacient Contraception, and the Faithful Care of Christ's Flock

Supplementary material supporting the letter, for those who wish to study it further. The letter itself, with its numbered references, is a separate document.

APPENDIX A

The Biblical Case in Full

Everything in this series rests on a single claim, and if that claim is false the whole falls with it: that the child conceived is a human being whom God has made, whom God defends, and whom we may not destroy. This treatise sets out the scriptural case for that claim in full, and it is meant to stand on its own. We have tried to make it not merely a chain of proof-texts but an argument a thoughtful believer can weigh, test, and, if it be of God, rest upon.

We ask one thing of the reader at the outset. Weigh the claim we are actually making, not the one it is easy to argue against. We do not argue that Scripture answers every question modern medicine can pose. We argue something narrower and, we think, unbreakable: that the being who exists from conception is a living human, that God attaches His protection to human life as such, and that no line drawn later than conception can be found in the Bible.

One preliminary word about the ground we choose to stand on, because it decides everything that follows. There are two claims a Christian might defend: that the unborn child is a *person*, and that he is a *human being*. These are not the same kind of claim, and we deliberately build on the second. "Human being" is a claim about nature that biology can confirm and that Scripture assumes throughout. "Person" is a claim about status that philosophy and law have defined and redefined at will. We will show, in section 4, why humanity is the surer and older ground. But we say at once that personhood, rightly understood, does not stand over humanity as a higher hurdle to clear. It flows *from* our humanity. And Scripture, as we shall see, never treats the child in the womb as a mere human organism that has not yet become a someone; it treats him as a someone already. The two claims meet, but the foundation is humanity, and we keep it there on purpose.

1. God is the author and giver of life

The Bible does not begin its account of any human being with that person's achievements, faculties, or usefulness. It begins with God. He "formed my inward parts" and "knitted me together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13). His eyes "saw my unformed substance," and in His book were written all the days "that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them" (Psalm 139:16). Before the child is anything to us, he is already something to God: known, formed, and counted.

This is why the taking of innocent life is never, in Scripture, merely a wrong against a man. It is an offence against the God whose image the man bears and whose workmanship he is. The shedding of innocent blood is named among the things the LORD hates (Proverbs 6:16–17). It cries out to Him from the ground (Genesis 4:10). It pollutes the land in which it is shed, and no atonement can be made for the land except by the blood of the one who shed it (Numbers 35:33). These are not the terms Scripture uses for property or for tissue. They are the terms it reserves for the killing of persons made by God.

Children in particular are presented as God's gift and not merely nature's product. "The LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son" (Ruth 4:13). He opens the womb and He closes it (Genesis 29:31; 1 Samuel

1:5), so that Jacob could ask his wife, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" (Genesis 30:2). "Children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward" (Psalm 127:3). Every conceived child is summoned into being by God — His gift and His handiwork before ever he is ours.

2. Scripture names the conceived child a someone, never a something

The decisive question is not sentiment but identity. What, or who, is present in the womb? Scripture answers with a consistency that is difficult to evade once it is seen: it speaks of the unborn, and even of the just-conceived, as persons — with pronouns, histories, names, and moral standing.

David traces his very self, and his guilt, to the moment of conception: "in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). Guilt belongs to persons, not to tissue; David does not say sin attached to him at some later stage of development but that he, David, was there to be a sinner from conception. Job reaches back to "the night that said, 'A man is conceived'" (Job 3:3) — not a potential man, but a man. Of Jacob it is said that even in the womb "he took his brother by the heel" (Hosea 12:3), an act with a name and an agent. And of our Lord, Luke records that He was named "before he was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21): the name preceded the conception, and the person named was the same person conceived.

God speaks of knowing persons before they are formed. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). Mark the word order: God's knowing of Jeremiah is placed not merely before birth but before *forming*. His knowledge reaches behind our very form: "Your eyes saw my unformed substance" (Psalm 139:16). He deals with two children as they struggle in one womb, "though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad" (Romans 9:11; Genesis 25:23) — Paul's whole doctrinal argument turning on the fact that these were two individuals, with an election between them, before either was born.

Consider, further, one witness whose testimony a physician wrote down. Of John the Baptist the angel says he "will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15) — not from birth, not from some threshold of development, but from the womb. And Luke shows the fulfilment: when Mary's greeting reached Elizabeth, "the baby leaped in her womb," and Elizabeth interprets it herself, "the baby in my womb leaped for joy" (Luke 1:41, 44). The verb is the one Scripture uses for persons rejoicing. More telling still is Luke's vocabulary. The word he uses for the child in Elizabeth's womb, *brephos*, is the very word he uses for the newborn Jesus lying in the manger (Luke 2:12) and for the little children brought to Jesus to be blessed (Luke 18:15). The physician among the evangelists draws no line at birth; his own word for "baby" refuses one, reaching back across the birth canal and forward past it without a change of term. Scripture knows no human being in the womb who is not already a someone.

3. On the objection that this is poetry

The most serious objection to this reading is that much of it is poetry, and that poetry cannot bear the weight of doctrine. We grant the premise in part, and press no line beyond its strength. Where we cite the Psalms and the speeches of Job we grant that the form is poetic. But poetry does not therefore speak falsely, and David's inspired confession is no less true for being sung.

More to the point, much of the case is not poetry at all. Luke's record is narrative, written by a physician who tells us he investigated everything carefully (Luke 1:3). Hosea recalls recorded history from Genesis. Paul's argument from the twins not yet born is close doctrinal reasoning in an epistle (Romans 9:11). Genesis 9:6 is law, delivered in plain command. The poetry adorns and confirms what the history, the law, and the doctrine establish; it is not asked to carry the case alone. The burden lies with those who would draw a later line, and Scripture nowhere draws it for them.

4. Humanity, not personhood, is where God attaches His protection

We must be careful here, because the ground on which this is usually fought was chosen by the other side, and chosen badly. The modern debate asks when "personhood" begins, and offers a shifting list of qualifications — rationality, self-awareness, viability, independence, the capacity to suffer, being wanted. Every one of these has been proposed in earnest, and every one excludes somebody. That is not an accident of the debate; it is the function of the word "person," which is philosophical and legal, defined and redefined by whoever holds the power to define it.

It is worth pausing on how old and how deadly that function is, and worth stating the history accurately rather than for effect. Great crimes have repeatedly been carried out by men who granted that their victims were human and then withdrew their protection anyway, and they did not always do it in the same way. Sometimes a class of human beings was denied the standing of citizens. Sometimes they were kept unequal before the law, or classed as less than fully human, or as not worth protecting. And in some cases they were denied the status of a person altogether and reduced in law to property — chattels to be owned, valued, and disposed of. The Nuremberg Laws did not assert that Jews were not human beings; they stripped them of standing and rights under the law. The defenders of the Atlantic slave trade did not usually deny that Africans were human; they treated them as goods, and refused them the protection a person is owed. Chief Justice Taney, in *Dred Scott*, did not rule that the man before him was not a man; he ruled that he was not a citizen within the meaning of the Constitution, "with no rights which the white man was bound to respect." We do not equate these evils, each of which has its own weight and horror. We name them because the move beneath them is one move: concede the humanity, then make protection depend on some further, invisible qualification, then keep that qualification in the hand of the powerful. It is the abortion argument's own logic, worn in older clothes.

Scripture stands on different ground, and refuses the whole device:

> *"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."*
>
> GENESIS 9:6

The Hebrew is *ha'adam*: the man, the human being. God does not say whoever sheds the blood of the strong, the conscious, the viable, or the wanted. He says *man*, and gives as His entire reason that man bears His image. The protection therefore runs exactly as far as humanity runs, and not an inch less. No further qualification may be added by us — and every qualification men have added, they have added in order to justify killing somebody.

So the question is not "when does personhood begin," for that question has no fixed answer and was never meant to have one. The question is whether the child conceived is a living human being. That question does have an answer, and it is not only Scripture's. It is the plain finding of biology, given even by those with no religious motive to give it: when more than five thousand academic biologists were asked when a human's life begins, the great majority affirmed that it begins at fertilisation, and they did so from a sample that described itself overwhelmingly as pro-choice and non-religious.[2] They were answering a question of fact, and it is the answer their discipline requires. If the child conceived is a living human being — and he is — then Genesis 9:6 covers him, and no philosopher's definition can uncover him. Personhood, whatever it is, follows from that humanity; it does not sit in judgment over it.

5. The image of God is a nature we are, not a capacity we possess

Man alone bears the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and this is the ground of all human worth — not earned by strength or usefulness or by being wanted, but conferred by the Creator. Mark carefully to what that image is tied. Wherever Scripture speaks of the image of God in man, it is tied to our nature and to nothing else. Nowhere do we read that the image consists in a measure of intelligence, a depth of consciousness, a degree of development, or any capacity whatsoever. The qualification is never "man who can reason," nor "man who can feel," but simply *man*. Those capacities may flow from the image; they do not ground it.

And what was never grounded in a characteristic can never be lost with one. The child with Down's syndrome, the man broken in mind or body, the child newly conceived and hidden from every eye but God's — each bears the image whole and entire, for the image is not a trait we possess but a nature we are.

It passes to the child in the very act of begetting. As God made Adam in His likeness, so "Adam fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Genesis 5:1, 3). Moses sets these side by side on purpose: as God to Adam, so Adam to Seth. The image is inherited, not achieved — given in our begetting, not attained by our developing. Nor did the fall strip it away. After sin had corrupted every faculty of man, God still grounded the guard upon human blood in that same image (Genesis 9:6), and James forbids us to curse men for the same reason, that they are made in the likeness of God (James 3:9). What sin could not destroy, no disability, deformity, or weakness can diminish.

6. Where Scripture draws the line — and the passages raised against it

Let those who would begin our humanity at some later mark — implantation, a heartbeat, viability, the first breath — show us that line from Scripture. It is not there. The only threshold Scripture knows is conception. Two texts are brought forward more often than any others against this, and both deserve a straight answer, because neither says what is claimed for it.

Exodus 21:22–25, the woman struck in a brawl, is cited to prove that the death of an unborn child warranted only a fine. Look at the Hebrew. The verb is *yatsa*, "to come out" — the ordinary word for a live birth. Hebrew has perfectly good words for miscarriage, *shakol* and *nephel*, and uses them elsewhere (Exodus 23:26; Job 3:16; Ecclesiastes 6:3). Moses did not use them here. What the text describes is a premature delivery: the children come out, and the question that follows is whether harm resulted. Note also that the text does not say "harm to the mother." It says, without qualification, "if there is harm." So the law reads: if the child is delivered early and both survive, a fine; if either dies, life for life. Far from proving the unborn worth less, this is the one place in the law where the unborn are named explicitly, and the penalty assigned for the child's death is capital. Calvin read it exactly so, calling it "almost a monstrous crime" to rob the unborn child "of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy."[1]

Numbers 5:11–31, the water of bitterness, is now widely cited as a divinely commanded abortion. It is not. The Hebrew says the woman's "belly shall swell" and her "thigh shall fall away" (*naphal yarek*); the older English versions render it "thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot." There is in the entire passage no word for child, no word for foetus, no word for pregnancy, and no word for miscarriage. Every one of those must be imported by the translator. And the passage states the opposite outcome plainly: if the woman is innocent, "she shall be free and shall conceive seed" (Numbers 5:28). The blessing set against the curse is the ability to conceive — which tells you what the curse is: not the loss of an existing child, but barrenness. The abortifacient reading is recent, depends on a translator's supplement rather than the Hebrew, and the sufficient answer is to ask the person raising it to show you the word.

A related objection reaches back into church history and deserves a word here, since it is often produced as a trump card: did not the medieval church teach "delayed ensoulment," that the soul enters only after forty days? It did entertain such speculation, but the objection mistakes what that tradition was and where it came from. It entered Christian thought not from the Hebrew but from a Greek rendering of Exodus 21 shaped by the embryology of Aristotle, and even while the speculation ran, the church's practical verdict never moved: the destruction of the embryo was condemned at every stage (Basil: "with us there is no nice enquiry as to its being formed or unformed"). Whatever one thinks of the soul's timetable, it is God's secret, and it is beside the point.[3] Our ground is not the soul's paperwork but the living human creature, made in the image of God. Humanity is the ground; it always was.

7. God defends the weak because they are weak

Someone will still say: but what is such a life? It has barely begun. It owns nothing, can do nothing, knows nothing. Surely so small a thing is a small loss. This is the exact reasoning Scripture forbids, and forbids with a threat:

> *"Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, for the LORD will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them."*
>
> PROVERBS 22:22–23

Mark that *because*. The very weakness that tempts us to take is the thing that rouses God to defend. And who is poorer than a child in the womb, who cannot lift a hand, raise a voice, or summon an advocate to the

gate? "Precious is their blood in his sight" (Psalm 72:14). He counted it among the sins of the nations that they "ripped open pregnant women, that they might enlarge their border" (Amos 1:13).

And so we are not left as spectators. We are commanded to intervene: "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter" (Proverbs 24:11–12). "Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute" (Proverbs 31:8–9). The defence of the weak is not an optional ministry for those so inclined; it is laid on the whole people of God.

8. God Himself came by way of conception

Here is the last word, and it is not an argument but a Person. God came to save us by way of conception, and was Himself a child in the womb. He did not begin as a cluster of cells that would later become Christ; at conception He was already a living human embryo, and Scripture calls that embryo the Lord. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). He was not a potential Son of God awaiting some later threshold. He was the Son of God from the moment of His conception. When Mary came to Elizabeth — within days of that conception, while the Lord was at the earliest embryonic stage — the unborn John leaped, and Elizabeth cried out, "why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43–44). Days old, and already addressed as "my Lord." The Lord was in the womb, and He was there as an embryo.

To deny the humanity of the unborn, then, is not first an error concerning man but an error concerning Christ. Since that Lord "had to be made like his brothers in every respect" (Hebrews 2:17), and was one of us from His conception, so are we from ours. If there were a stage at which the embryo were not yet a human being, then there was a stage at which the eternal Son, having taken our nature, was present in Mary's womb as something less than one of us — and the whole logic of the Incarnation forbids the thought. Christian doctrine cannot survive a window of pre-human embryonic existence, because Christ passed through every stage we pass through and was Himself at every one of them.

And see how the taking of that life is the gospel turned backward. At the cross the strong One laid down His life for the weak, who could give Him nothing (John 15:13; Philippians 2:6–8). Abortion — and any act that knowingly ends the life of the conceived — is the strong taking the life of the weak for the sake of their own comfort. The one is the shape of Christ's love. The other is its undoing. And the same gospel that exposes the sin is the only sufficient answer to its guilt: there is cleansing in the blood of Christ for all who come, and no condemnation for those who are in Him (Romans 8:1; 1 John 1:7).

Scripture is quoted from the English Standard Version unless the sense of the Hebrew is under discussion, in which case the underlying Hebrew terms are given.

A note on this treatise. The exegetical arguments concerning Exodus 21:22 and Numbers 5:11–31 turn on the Hebrew text and can be checked by any reader with an interlinear Bible or a concordance; we have deliberately framed them so that the test is one the reader can run rather than a claim to be taken on trust. The biologists' survey is cited for the factual claim that a new human organism begins at fertilisation, not for

any moral conclusion, which the biologists were not asked to give. Where we have drawn on the Reformers, the quotations are traced to freely accessible primary editions. We would rather present a smaller case that holds under scrutiny than a larger one that does not.

References

1. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses* (*Harmony of the Law*), Vol. 3, on Exodus 21:22 (c. 1563; trans. C. W. Bingham, 1852–55).
   https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom05.ii.ii.v.ii.html

2. Steven Andrew Jacobs, "Biologists' Consensus on 'When Life Begins'," University of Chicago, SSRN working paper (2018). Of 5,577 biologists surveyed across 1,058 institutions, 96% affirmed that a human's life begins at fertilisation, from a sample that was 85% pro-choice, 89% liberal, and 63% non-religious.
   https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3211703

3. On the "delayed ensoulment" objection: for the early-church verdict see Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 188, Canon 2 (c. AD 374), ; on the Greek (Septuagint) rendering of Exodus 21:22 and its divergence from the Hebrew, see the discussion in the standard commentaries on Exodus 21.
   https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202188.htm

APPENDIX B

The Witness of the Church

We are often told that what this series argues is a Roman Catholic peculiarity, or a novelty got up by a few enthusiasts. It is neither. It is what the church taught, across East and West, Catholic and Protestant, until about a hundred years ago. This treatise sets out that record so that it can stand on its own, and be checked.

Where the witness is unbroken we say so plainly. Where it is more complicated we show you the complication, because a case that has to be tidied is a case not worth making.

Three claims are on trial here, and we ask you to weigh them separately: that the conceived child may not be killed; that children within marriage are a blessing to be sought, and their begetting one of the ends for which marriage exists; and that drugs taken to prevent a child arriving belonged, for most of Christian history, in the same moral category as drugs taken to end a pregnancy. The first of these is the load-bearing claim, and it is the one on which the witness is strongest. We keep the three apart on purpose, because they are not equally strong, and honesty requires that the strongest not borrow credit from the weakest.

1. On abortion the church has never wavered

Here there is nothing to qualify. From the earliest document we possess outside the New Testament to the middle of the twentieth century, the church condemned abortion as murder, and did so without regard to the stage of the child's development.

The *Didache*, written between roughly AD 70 and 120, places the prohibition in its opening summary of the way of life: "You shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is born" (2:2).[1] It sits among the plain commands, not argued for, because nobody in the churches disputed it.

Athenagoras, writing to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius around AD 177, was answering the rumour that Christians murdered and ate infants. His defence was to state what Christians actually held: that "those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder, and will have to give an account to God for the abortion," because the child in the womb is a created being and an object of God's care.[2] His argument only works because his readers knew this was the settled Christian position.

Tertullian, writing around AD 197, met the same charge the same way. Since murder is forbidden to Christians once and for all, we may not destroy even the child in the womb.

> *"To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to the birth. That is a man which is going to be one; you have the fruit already in the seed."*
>
> TERTULLIAN, APOLOGY, CH. 9 (C. AD 197)3

Basil of Caesarea, in AD 374, ruled that "the woman who purposely destroys her unborn child is guilty of murder," and added the sentence that settles the whole modern argument about developmental stages: "with

us there is no nice enquiry as to its being formed or unformed." Women who administer drugs to cause abortion, he continued, and women who take poisons to destroy unborn children, are murderesses alike.[4]

Jerome, in AD 384, described women who "take potions, that they may insure barrenness, and thus murder human beings almost before their conception."[5] His phrase deserves attention. He does not distinguish between preventing a life and ending one. He treats a drug taken at that point as homicide either way.

Chrysostom, preaching on Romans at Antioch around AD 391, went further than any of them and condemned both kinds of drug in one breath: those that induce abortion, and those that produce sterility. He asks why a man would "make the chamber of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter."[6] Whatever else is disputed about the fourth century, the pulpit of one of its greatest cities treated a sterilising drug and an abortifacient as one offence.

Calvin, commenting on the case law of Exodus 21, states the principle as clearly as any modern embryologist could wish.

> *"The foetus, though enclosed in the womb of its mother, is already a human being, and it is almost a monstrous crime to rob it of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy."*
>
> JOHN CALVIN, HARMONY OF THE LAW, ON EXODUS 21:22 (C. 1563)7

He then presses the point: if killing a man in his own house is worse than killing him in a field, because his house is his place of safety, how much more atrocious to destroy a child in the womb before he has come to the light.[7]

The Westminster divines wrote the same principle into their exposition of the sixth commandment. The Larger Catechism (1647) requires "all careful studies, and lawful endeavours, to preserve the life of ourselves and others," and forbids "whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any" (Q. 135 and 136).[8] Not the life of the born, or the strong, or the wanted. The life of any.

Spurgeon, preaching on Psalm 139, saw the same truth in the womb itself: of the psalmist "yet unborn, he was under the control and guardianship of God," hidden away "as a treasure until you should see fit to bring me to the light."[9]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing under the Third Reich, called the destruction of the embryo in the womb a violation of the right to live that God has given, and said that to ask whether we are dealing with a human being yet is merely to confuse the issue, since God intended to create a human being and that life has been deliberately taken. His verdict: "And that is nothing but murder."[10]

Francis Schaeffer stated the consequence a generation later: once the death of human life in babies born and unborn is accepted, "the door is opened to the arbitrary taking of any human life."[11]

Eleven witnesses across eighteen centuries, from Syria, Athens, North Africa, Cappadocia, Antioch, Geneva, London, Berlin and Pennsylvania. They do not agree with one another about baptism, church government, or the Lord's Supper. They agree about this.

2. The church has always received children as a blessing to be sought

The second strand is not about killing at all. It is about what a Christian marriage is for, and what a Christian couple should want. It is set out at greater length in the treatise on Marriage, Children, and the Calling of Parents; we give the outline here so that the historical shape is visible in one place.

It begins with a command, not a preference. God's first word to the first married couple was a blessing tied to fruitfulness: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). Every writer below is working from that verse.

Augustine grounded the good of marriage not in the passion of desire but in its honourable use, "appropriate to the propagation of children," calling the orderly renewal of the human race "the good of wedlock."[12]

Chrysostom assumed the same when he rebuked the wedding customs of his own city: "You are marrying your wife for the procreation of children and for moderation of life; what is the meaning of these drunken parties?"[13] The purpose was so uncontroversial that he could use it as the premise of a scolding.

Luther taught it as a matter of faith in God's plain word.

> *"Now the ones who recognize the estate of marriage are those who firmly believe that God himself instituted it, brought husband and wife together, and ordained that they should beget children and care for them. For this they have God's word, Genesis 1, and they can be certain that God does not lie."*
>
> MARTIN LUTHER, THE ESTATE OF MARRIAGE (1522)14

Calvin grounds it in the creation blessing itself. On Genesis 1:28 he writes that "Adam with his wife was formed for the production of offspring, in order that men might replenish the earth," and that "we are fruitful or barren in respect of offspring, as God imparts his power to some and withholds it from others."[15] Fruitfulness is not an accident of biology. It is a gift dispensed by God.

The Reformed confessions then state it as a matter of definition. The Westminster Confession (1646) says marriage was ordained "for the mutual help of husband and wife; for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with an holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness" (24.2).[16] The Baptists took that clause over almost word for word in the Second London Confession of 1689 (25.2).[17] This is not a marginal opinion buried in the confessions. It is their definition of the institution, and it is the definition our own Presbyterian and Baptist forebears in these islands subscribed.

William Gouge, a member of the Westminster Assembly, lists among the principal ends of marriage "increasing the world with a legitimate brood," alongside chastity and the binding together of the couple's affections (*Of Domesticall Duties*, 1622).[18]

Richard Baxter, in *A Christian Directory* (1673), calls it "no small mercy to be the parents of a godly seed; and this is the end of the institution of marriage," citing Malachi 2:15.[19] Asked in the same work whether the elderly and infertile may marry, Baxter answered yes without hesitation, because "there are other lawful ends of marriage, as mutual help and comfort."[20] We should hold both halves of him. The tradition holds that children are a blessing to be sought; it does not hold that a marriage without them is no marriage.

Jonathan Edwards pressed the family's purpose one step further: "Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules," with family

education among "the chief means of grace."[21] A household exists to raise worshippers, which presumes there are children in it to raise.

Cotton Mather, writing in 1710 a manual for a woman awaiting childbirth, opens not with encouragement but with a command: Paul's word that "the Younger Women, Marry, bear Children" (1 Timothy 5:14). He then tells her it would be "a very blameable Indecency and Indiscretion" to be dissatisfied with her pregnancy, and "too Unnatural" to complain of a state into which "the Laws of Nature established by God" have brought her.[22]

Matthew Henry, on Rachel's cry in Genesis 30, treats her childlessness as a real sorrow, and corrects her only for taking it to Jacob rather than to God, "forgetting that children are a heritage of the Lord."[23] Barrenness is everywhere in Scripture and in the pastoral tradition a grief, never a goal.

> *"Children stand out among all our possessions with a pre-eminence which cannot be questioned. To have many children is the next blessing to much grace."*
>
> C. H. SPURGEON, TREASURY OF DAVID, ON PSALM 127:3[24]

Andrew Murray opens his book on Christian parenthood with Genesis 1:28 and ties the bearing of children directly to inheriting the promise made to Abraham: "the fruit of our body is to be the heir of Your promise."-[25]

The point for our purposes is simple. A tradition that defines marriage partly by the increase of mankind, that calls children a heritage and barrenness a trial, and that tells a pregnant woman it would be unnatural to resent her condition, cannot be squared with treating fertility as a hazard to be neutralised for the whole of one's childbearing years.

3. On contraception the witness is strong, but it is not evidence of the same kind

Here we must be more careful than pro-life literature usually is, and we would rather lose an argument than gain one dishonestly.

The historic Protestant case against contraception rests very largely on one passage: God's judgement on Onan in Genesis 38. The Reformers and their heirs read that judgement as falling on the act of preventing conception, and they said so in the strongest terms available to them.

Calvin, on Genesis 38:10, calls the deliberate spilling of seed to avoid conception "horrible," and doubly so when done on purpose. Onan, he says, thereby "tried to destroy a part of the human race" so far as it lay in his power, and a woman who by any means drives the seed from her womb commits what he can only call "an unforgivable crime."[26]

Luther, lecturing on the same chapter in 1544, called Onan's act "a most disgraceful sin," worse than incest and adultery, precisely because "the order of nature established by God in procreation" was deliberately frustrated.[27]

Matthew Henry says such sins "dishonour the body and defile it," are "very displeasing to God and evidences of vile affections."[28] John Wesley writes in almost the same words in his *Explanatory Notes* on the same verse: sins that dishonour the body are "very displeasing to God, and the evidence of vile actions."[29] We should say that Wesley drew heavily on Henry throughout his Old Testament notes, so these are two men in one tradition rather than two independent verdicts.

Jerome, twelve centuries earlier, had already condemned potions taken to ensure barrenness,[5] which shows the objection is not a Protestant invention.

Nor was this only a matter of commentary. In 1873 the United States Congress passed the Comstock Act, driven by a campaign led by a Congregationalist layman, which made it a federal offence to send through the post any "article or thing designed or intended for the prevention of conception or procuring of abortion," or any advertisement telling a reader where such things might be obtained.[30] Whatever one thinks of Comstock, the statute shows what the Protestant conscience of the period took for granted: contraception and abortion belonged in the same sentence.

Now the honest qualifications, and there are two.

First, many careful readers today hold that Onan was judged for refusing his levirate duty to his brother rather than for the method he used, and the text gives that reading room. We do not think the Reformers can be dismissed as simply mistaken, but we do not need to settle it here.

Second, and more importantly, most of these writers were addressing methods that prevent a life from beginning, not methods that end one already begun. That is a different question from ours. The argument of this series does not rest on the Onan tradition. It rests on the post-fertilisation mechanism of certain contraceptives, and on the fact that a human being already exists when that mechanism operates.

The historic witness matters here for one reason. It shows that the modern Christian assumption — that this is a private matter of no theological weight on which the church has never had anything to say — is itself the novelty.

4. Where it broke, and who protested

The change is recent, it is datable, and it was contested at the time.

In 1920 the bishops of the Anglican Communion, assembled at Lambeth, issued "an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception, together with the grave dangers, physical, moral and religious, thereby incurred" (Resolution 68).[31] Ten years before the change, the very body that made the change was still condemning the thing.

In 1930 the same conference passed Resolution 15. It stated that where there is a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, "the primary and obvious method is complete abstinence," but that where there is also "a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence," other methods may be used.[32] The resolution carried by 193 votes to 67.

With that vote the Church of England became the first major Christian body to permit contraception in any circumstances. Sixty-seven bishops voted against, and the resolution is hedged about with conditions that no one now observes. That is what a first breach looks like: narrow, reluctant, and quickly forgotten.

One correction to our own case, which we would rather make ourselves. A peer-reviewed study in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (2023) records that the New York East Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church had sanctioned birth control before Lambeth, the only ecclesiastical body in Europe or North America to do so first.[33] Lambeth 1930 was the moment the dam broke, not quite the first crack in it. The substance stands: no Christian communion of any size permitted contraception before 1930, and it was the Church of England's reversal that opened the door for the rest.

The following March the Federal Council of Churches in America followed. Its Committee on Marriage and the Home approved "the careful and restrained use of contraceptives by married people" by 22 votes of 28, while conceding the risk of "serious evils." It made the front page of the *New York Times*.[34]

And it was resisted. *The Presbyterian* wrote in April 1931 that the Council's "recent pronouncement on birth control should be enough reason, if there were no other, to withdraw from support of that body."[35] Bishop Warren A. Chandler of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, said publicly that the deliverance "has no authorization from any churches representing it," that "it certainly does not represent the Methodist Church," and that he doubted it represented any other Protestant church.[36]

Within a generation the objections had faded and one communion after another let the old consent go. But it did go. It was not quietly laid down by a church that had thought better of it. It was voted through against substantial opposition, in living memory, and the arguments of the losing side were never answered. They were simply outlived.

5. Why the wall was unmanned

It is worth asking why the resistance, so fierce in 1930 and 1931, faded so completely within a generation. The answer lies partly outside this subject altogether, in a larger retreat that was overtaking the evangelical church in exactly these decades. The same years that produced the Lambeth reversal produced what historians have called "the Great Reversal": the swing of a once socially and politically engaged evangelicalism toward a privatised faith that treated public and personal ethics as no longer the pulpit's business (this is set out in the treatise, *Why This Sounds Foreign to Christian Ears*). The watchmen were already climbing down from the walls for other reasons. When the question of birth and life came to this particular gate, there was less and less of a confident public conscience left to defend it. The silence that now feels normal is not the considered verdict of a church that weighed the matter; it is the downstream result of a wider abdication.

What this treatise does and does not prove

Not one of these men knew about the post-fertilisation mechanism of modern hormonal contraceptives or intrauterine devices. It would be dishonest to conscript them as though they had.

What they establish is narrower, and more useful. The framework this series argues from is not a novelty and not a sectarian import. That the conceived child is a human being under the protection of the sixth

commandment; that children within marriage are a gift and one of the ends of marriage itself; that a drug taken to stop a child arriving was, for most of Christian history, a matter for the pastor and not merely for the chemist: all of this was ordinary Christian teaching within the memory of families still living.

The burden of proof does not lie with us. It lies with 1930.

Note on sources. Every quotation in this treatise has been traced to a freely accessible primary text or, where a modern translation is under copyright (refs 10, 11, 13, 27), to multiple independent sources reproducing it identically, with the primary edition cited. Several quotations that circulate widely in pro-life literature have been removed because we could not verify them; in particular, we do not attribute to Luther any statement on abortion that we could not source, and we have kept his verified words to the subjects on which they are secure. We ask the same standard of anyone who disputes what remains.

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APPENDIX C

Marriage, Children, and the Calling of Parents

The central concern of this series is the protection of the conceived child. But that concern does not stand alone in Scripture; it grows out of a fuller vision of what marriage is, what children are, and what parents are for. This treatise sets out that vision on its own terms, because it is the soil in which the whole argument grows, and because it has itself been so widely forgotten that the argument can sound strange without it.

We make one distinction at the outset and hold it throughout. To recover a high view of children and fruitfulness is not to lay a law upon consciences, nor to deny that many godly couples walk long and painful roads of infertility, delay, or loss. It is to recover a *posture* — one that receives children as God's good gift rather than treating fertility as a hazard to be neutralised. The tradition we set out below held both truths at once, and so must we. Nothing here should be read as a rule binding the timing or number of a couple's children upon their conscience; that is a matter for prayerful Christian freedom. What is at stake is the disposition of the heart toward the gift itself.

1. It begins with a blessing tied to fruitfulness

God's first recorded word to the first married couple was not a prohibition but a blessing, and the blessing was tied to fruitfulness: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Whatever else marriage is, it is the estate within which God chose to bring human life into the world and to raise it for Himself. Every writer quoted in this treatise is working, in the end, from that verse.

Calvin grounds the whole matter there. Commenting on Genesis 1:28, he writes that "Adam with his wife was formed for the production of offspring, in order that men might replenish the earth," and adds that "we are fruitful or barren in respect of offspring, as God imparts his power to some and withholds it from others."[1] Fruitfulness, on this reading, is not an accident of biology to be managed at will. It is a gift dispensed by God — which is exactly why its presence is called a blessing and its absence a trial, never the reverse.

Luther taught the same as a matter of plain faith in God's word:

> *"Now the ones who recognize the estate of marriage are those who firmly believe that God himself instituted it, brought husband and wife together, and ordained that they should beget children and care for them. For this they have God's word, Genesis 1, and they can be certain that God does not lie."*
>
> MARTIN LUTHER, THE ESTATE OF MARRIAGE (1522)2

2. The confessions make it a matter of definition

This was not a private opinion of a few strong-minded Reformers. The Reformed and Baptist confessions wrote the begetting of children into the very definition of marriage. The Westminster Confession of Faith

(1646) states that marriage was ordained "for the mutual help of husband and wife; for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the Church with an holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness" (24.2).[3] The Baptists of these islands took the clause over almost word for word in the Second London Confession of 1689 (25.2).[4]

Two things deserve notice. First, this is not a marginal remark buried in the confessions; it is their definition of the institution, subscribed by our own Presbyterian and Baptist forebears. Second, the increase of mankind stands *alongside* mutual help and the preventing of uncleanness, not above them. The confessions name three ends and rank none as the whole. A tradition that defines marriage partly by "the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue" cannot be squared with the modern assumption that childbearing is incidental to marriage, a private preference of no theological weight. But neither does it reduce marriage to childbearing alone.

William Gouge, a member of the Westminster Assembly, listed among the principal ends of marriage the "increasing the world with a legitimate brood," setting it beside chastity and the binding together of the couple's affections (*Of Domesticall Duties*, 1622).[5] Augustine, long before, had grounded the good of marriage not in "the passion of desire" but in its honourable use, "appropriate to the propagation of children," calling the orderly renewal of the human race "the good of wedlock."[6] Chrysostom could take the same purpose so entirely for granted that he used it to rebuke the wedding customs of his city: "You are marrying your wife for the procreation of children and for moderation of life; what is the meaning of these drunken parties?"[7] We should note, for fairness, that Chrysostom also held virginity and continence to be a higher calling than marriage; he named procreation as one true end of marriage, not as its only good.

3. Children are a heritage, and barrenness a grief — never a goal

Scripture never treats the child as an interruption to a couple's plans. It treats the child as a heritage, a reward, a crown:

> *"Children stand out among all our possessions with a pre-eminence which cannot be questioned. To have many children is the next blessing to much grace."*
>
> C. H. SPURGEON, THE TREASURY OF DAVID, ON PSALM 127:38

The counterpart of that blessing, all through the Bible, is grief at its absence — never contentment engineered by design. Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel longed for children. Hannah wept for one, and her barrenness was "a source of deep anguish" until God removed it (1 Samuel 1:5–8). When the Lord opened Elizabeth's womb she rejoiced that He had "taken away my reproach among people" (Luke 1:25). Matthew Henry, commenting on Rachel's cry in Genesis 30, treats her childlessness as a real sorrow and corrects her only for taking it to Jacob rather than to God, "forgetting that children are a heritage of the Lord."[9]

We must hold this carefully and pastorally. Barrenness is everywhere in Scripture a grief, and the couple who cannot conceive are objects of the Lord's tenderness, not of anyone's reproach. The point is not that a childless marriage is a lesser marriage — it plainly is not (see the following section) — but that Scripture's whole disposition toward children is to *want* them, to receive them as gift, and to lament their absence, never to treat their absence as an achievement or their arrival as a threat.

4. Yet a marriage without children is no less a marriage

Precisely because the tradition prized children so highly, it took care not to make them the whole of marriage, and neither must we. Richard Baxter, in *A Christian Directory* (1673), calls it "no small mercy to be the parents of a godly seed; and this is the end of the institution of marriage," citing Malachi 2:15.[10] Yet asked in the very same work whether the elderly and infertile may marry, he answered yes without hesitation, "because there are other lawful ends of marriage, as mutual help and comfort."[11]

Both halves of Baxter must be held together, and they guard against opposite errors. Against the modern reduction of marriage to companionship alone, he insists that the begetting of a godly seed is a true end of the institution. Against any harshness that would make procreation the measure of a marriage's worth, he insists that a union which cannot bear children is fully a marriage still, with mutual help and comfort as ends sufficient in themselves. The couple who cannot have children have lost nothing of the estate God gave them; the couple who *will* not, by treating fertility itself as the hazard, have quietly exchanged one of its goods for a fear. The distinction is not between the fertile and the infertile — one is no more holy than the other — but between a heart that receives the gift and a heart that has learned to fear it.

5. Parents are stewards of an eternal soul

The vision reaches its height not in the having of children but in the raising of them. Jonathan Edwards pressed the family's purpose one step further than mere fruitfulness: "Every Christian family ought to be as it were a little church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by his rules," with family education and order among "the chief means of grace."[12] A household exists to raise worshippers — which presumes there are children in it to raise, and that raising them for God is among the highest works a marriage performs.

Cotton Mather, writing in 1710 a manual for a woman awaiting childbirth, opened not with reassurance but with Paul's word that the younger women should "marry, bear children" (1 Timothy 5:14), and told her it would be "a very blameable Indecency and Indiscretion" to be dissatisfied with her pregnancy, and "too Unnatural" to complain of a state into which "the Laws of Nature established by God" had brought her.[13] Andrew Murray opened his book on Christian parenthood with Genesis 1:28 and tied the bearing of children directly to inheriting the promise made to Abraham: "the fruit of our body is to be the heir of Your promise."[14]

At conception God entrusts to a mother and father a human being who will outlive the stars. Parents do not own their children; they are stewards charged to receive them, protect them, provide for them, and raise them in the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4). That stewardship begins at conception, not at birth. To put the life of a newly conceived child at risk for the sake of comfort or convenience is therefore not a private choice within the parents' rights. It is a failure of the first and most basic duty God gives to parents — the duty to receive and to guard the very life He has entrusted to them.

6. A positive vision: openness, trust, and life-affirming planning

It is not enough to name what the modern posture gets wrong; the tradition offers something better in its place, and it is worth stating positively. The Christian home is meant to be marked by an openness to life that rests, at bottom, on trust in the sovereignty of a good God — the God who "opens the womb" and "closes the womb" (Genesis 29:31; 1 Samuel 1:5), who numbers our days and knows our children before they are formed (Psalm 139:16; Jeremiah 1:5). To receive children as He gives them is not recklessness; it is faith, the same faith that governs every other area of a Christian's life, applied here.

This does not mean that a couple may never, in wisdom and prayer, have reason to space the children God gives — through seasons of illness, hardship, or genuine need. Scripture does not lay down a rule of numbers, and this treatise lays down none. But there is a great difference between a couple who, trusting God, order their family prayerfully and by means that do not put a conceived life at risk, and a couple who have absorbed the surrounding creed that fertility is a problem to be switched off for twenty years and children a threat to a chosen life. The former is Christian freedom exercised in faith; the latter is the spirit of the age wearing the language of responsibility. Where there is real cause to wait, methods that work with the body God designed and that carry no risk to a conceived child are available, and they call a husband and wife to the patience, honesty, and self-control that are themselves fruits of the Spirit, not deprivations.

7. What this treatise asks

It asks for the recovery of a posture, not the imposition of a rule. A tradition that defines marriage partly by the increase of mankind, that calls children a heritage and barrenness a trial, that tells a pregnant woman it would be unnatural to resent her condition, and that charges parents with the stewardship of an eternal soul from the moment of conception — such a tradition cannot be squared with treating fertility as a hazard to be neutralised for the whole of one's childbearing years.

To move from that world to ours is not to grow more compassionate. It is to have quietly accepted a smaller vision of marriage, of children, and of ourselves. The plea of this series about the conceived child is, at bottom, a plea to recover this larger vision — to receive again, as gift, what our fathers in the faith received as gift, and to guard it as they did.

A note on sources. Every quotation above has been traced to a freely accessible primary text, or, where a modern translation is under copyright (ref. 7), to the primary edition cited alongside a public-domain translation. We have taken particular care to quote Baxter in full on both sides — that children are an end of marriage, and that a marriage without them is a marriage still — because a tradition quoted only on one side is a tradition misrepresented. We have likewise noted Chrysostom's higher valuation of continence, so that he is not made to say more than he said.

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APPENDIX D

Why This Sounds Foreign to Christian Ears

A fair-minded reader may accept much of what this series argues and still feel a persistent strangeness about the whole of it. The arguments seem sound, the quotations check out, and yet the conclusion feels alien — not the faith one grew up in, not what one hears from the pulpit, not what one's Christian friends believe. That feeling is worth taking seriously rather than suppressing, because it is itself a piece of evidence. This treatise asks a diagnostic question and tries to answer it in full: if the things argued here were ordinary Christian teaching within living memory, why do they now sound foreign to Christian ears?

We do not ask the question to score a point. We ask it because a conviction that feels strange is a conviction one cannot examine until one understands *why* it feels strange. Our answer, in short, is that the strangeness is not a sign that the teaching is wrong. It is a sign of how far the water we swim in has changed. We offer five reasons. The first three operate quietly, below the level of argument. The fourth is a matter of datable history, and it is the heart of this treatise. The fifth is the hardest to say and the hardest to hear, because it is about us.

1. Conformed rather than transformed

Paul warns the church at Rome, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2). The warning assumes what we would rather not admit: that the default direction of a Christian mind, left untended, is conformity — that we absorb the assumptions of our age as we absorb its air, without deciding to, and often without noticing.

The strangeness, then, may not be measuring this teaching against Scripture at all. It may be measuring it against a set of assumptions we have breathed in from the surrounding culture and mistaken for the faith itself. The test Paul gives is not "does this feel familiar?" but "does this survive the renewal of the mind by the Word?" A teaching can be entirely biblical and still feel foreign, if what it is foreign *to* is not Scripture but the spirit of the age. Whole generations of the faithful have assumed things their grandchildren rejected as sub-Christian, and been corrected by a return to the text. The question is never how a claim sits with the consensus of the moment, but how it sits with the Word that judges every moment. Familiarity is not a doctrine.

2. A flattened view of man

One assumption in particular has done quiet work. Over the last century the broadly evolutionary account of human origins has, far beyond the laboratory, reshaped the popular sense of what a human being *is* — eroding the old, sharp distinction between man and beast. If man is simply the most developed animal, differing from the others in degree rather than in kind, then his special dignity has no secure floor. It becomes a sentiment we extend, and a sentiment we may also withdraw.

The results are visible and strangely inverted. A culture that has lost the doctrine of the image of God will sometimes treat animals with near-human tenderness while treating some humans — the unborn, the senile,

the profoundly disabled — as mere matter, valued by their capacities rather than their nature. This is not because such a culture is crueller than Christians, but because it has no fixed place to stand. Worth that rests on capacities can always be revised downward as the capacities are found wanting. Only worth grounded where Scripture grounds it — in a nature we are, an image we bear, conferred by God and revisable by no one — can hold the line at the point where the weak most need it held.

We should be honest that this flattening has often entered the church not as open unbelief but as a mood. Few Christians would say aloud that the embryo's worth depends on his development. But many *feel* the loss of an early child as a smaller thing than the loss of a late one, and that feeling, unexamined, is the flattened picture doing its work beneath a still-orthodox creed. When a Christian finds the insistence on the full humanity of the embryo strange, it is worth asking whether the strangeness comes from Scripture or from this picture, absorbed so early and so thoroughly that it now feels like common sense.

3. The silence of the church

There is a third and simpler reason the teaching sounds foreign: for a generation and more, the church in these islands has largely not taught on it at all. It has, by and large, said little from the pulpit about the sanctity of life, little about the theology of family and fruitfulness, little about the duty of a mother and father toward their conceived children, and little about the church's calling to be salt and light in a nation shedding innocent blood. The subject has been treated as private, political, or simply awkward, and passed over.

But silence is never actually empty. Into a silence, something always moves. Where the church declines to teach a Christian mind on these questions, the surrounding culture teaches it instead, and teaches it a creed: that personal autonomy and the desires of the heart are the measure of right and wrong. This is not a new phenomenon but a very old one. It is the settled condition of a people among whom "there was no king," so that "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25). A church that will not speak has not thereby stayed neutral; it has ceded the ground, and the world has planted its own doctrine in it. If this teaching sounds like news, that is itself a measure of how complete the silence has been.

But that raises the sharper question. This silence is not the historic posture of the evangelical church. It is recent. It has to be explained, not assumed. Why did a movement that once led the nation's conscience fall quiet? The answer is the fourth reason, and it is the longest, because it is the one most people have never been told.

4. The Great Reversal: how a speaking church learned to be silent

There was nothing inevitable about evangelical silence on public sin. For most of its history the evangelical movement was the loudest voice in the land against national wickedness, and it did not regard "politics" and "personal life" as regions where the Word of God had no writ. The reverse was true. The gospel that saved a man was expected to reach his ballot, his business, his bedroom, and his nation's laws.

Consider what the fathers of the movement actually did. John Wesley's last surviving letter, written six days before his death in February 1791, was to a young Member of Parliament named William Wilberforce.

Wesley urged him not to grow weary in the fight against the slave trade, which he called "that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature," and bade him "go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it."[1] Seventeen years earlier Wesley had published *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774), a frontal assault on a legal, profitable, respectable national institution.[2] This was not a preacher confining himself to "spiritual" matters. This was the pulpit reaching directly into law, commerce, and empire, and naming a national sin by its name.

The Clapham Sect — Wilberforce and his circle of evangelical Anglicans — spent decades doing exactly what today's church is told is improper: mobilising Christians to change the law of the land on a moral question. They won. And the same century's greatest Baptist preacher was cut from the same cloth. Charles Spurgeon, the most popular preacher in Victorian London, was an outspoken abolitionist at real cost. American publishers who had eagerly reprinted his sermons began to burn them; booksellers in the South destroyed them publicly, and he received threats to his life — all because he would not soften his condemnation of slavery to keep his American market.[3] Spurgeon also refused the notion that a minister must keep silent on the great social and political questions of his day; he preached in the same London in which Karl Marx was then writing, and he warned his hearers against the materialist and socialist ideas rising around him.[4] (We should be careful here: the popular claim that Marx named Spurgeon "one of his greatest enemies" cannot be traced to any primary source, and even the writers who like the comparison concede the two men never met. We do not use it. Spurgeon's courage needs no embellishment; his burned sermons are evidence enough.)

The point is not nostalgia. The point is that a speaking, socially engaged, politically unafraid evangelicalism is the historic norm, not an aberration. The Christians who abolished the slave trade, built the hospitals and orphanages and ragged schools, drove factory reform and the raising of the age of consent, did not think they were stepping outside their lane. They thought they were doing the plain work of a faith that claims the whole of life for Christ.

Then, in the early twentieth century, something changed, and historians have a name for it. The sociologist David O. Moberg called it *The Great Reversal* — the title of his 1972 study of how evangelical Protestantism, which had led social reform through the nineteenth century, swung hard toward a privatised faith that treated evangelism and social or political engagement as rivals, and increasingly abandoned the latter.[5] The turn is usually dated to the years around and after the First World War. Several forces converged. The fundamentalist–modernist controversy taught conservatives to associate social engagement with the liberal "social gospel" they rightly distrusted, and so, in recoiling from a gospel *reduced* to social work, many recoiled from social work altogether — throwing out the obedience with the error. A newly pessimistic reading of the times persuaded many that the world was only going to get worse and that trying to reform society was, at best, polishing brass on a sinking ship. And the sheer disillusionment of the Great War drained the confident, world-improving energy of the previous century.

The result, within a generation, was a quiet but total inversion. The evangelical church that had once thundered against national sins learned to regard "politics" as worldly, "social action" as a distraction from soul-winning, and the private sphere — marriage, sexuality, the begetting and rearing of children — as precisely the place where the church had no business issuing commands. Faith was to be personal. And

"personal," it turned out, came to mean *cordoned off* — a private devotional interior with no authority over the very areas of life where men and women make their gravest moral decisions.

This is exactly backwards, and Scripture will not have it. The Word of God claims the whole of life. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). The lordship of Christ is not a Sunday jurisdiction. The idea that a Christian's convictions about the taking of innocent life are a "private matter" that must not "impose on" others, or a "political issue" from which the pulpit should abstain, would have been unintelligible to Wesley, to Wilberforce, to Spurgeon, to the Puritans, and to the apostles. It is not the old faith. It is the Great Reversal, dressed up as humility.

And here the two halves of this story meet. The very decades in which evangelicalism was learning to fall silent were the decades in which the questions of life and birth were being decided. When the Church of England became the first major Christian communion to permit contraception, at the Lambeth Conference of 1930 (see the treatise on the Witness of the Church), there was no longer a confident, publicly-engaged Protestant conscience to resist it as the whole church would have resisted it a century before. The watchman had already come down off the wall for other reasons; when the enemy came to this particular gate, the wall was unmanned. The silence on abortion and abortifacients that feels so normal to us is not the considered verdict of a church that weighed the matter and fell silent. It is the downstream result of a much larger retreat, decades earlier, from the conviction that God's Word has anything to command in public and personal life at all.

So when this teaching sounds strange, part of what you are hearing is the echo of that retreat. It sounds strange because we have inherited a truncated faith and mistaken it for the historic one.

5. Comfortable Christianity: whom we are willing to rebuke

There is a fifth reason, and it is the most uncomfortable, because it is not about ideas we absorbed but about a courage we lost. We have become a church that is willing to speak — but only where speaking is safe.

Watch what the modern church will and will not condemn. It is often quite willing to distance itself from unfashionable political figures, because to do so costs nothing and may even win applause; the surrounding culture nods along. But on the actual life-and-death legislative questions of our own day, the church has been very largely silent — and those questions implicate not one party but the whole political class. Successive Conservative and Labour governments alike maintained and extended the Abortion Act; it was under a Labour-backed amendment that abortion was decriminalised in England and Wales in 2026, removing the woman from the criminal law in relation to her own pregnancy even at late gestation (see the treatise on Abortion in the United Kingdom). Where were the pulpits? A church that can find its voice to condemn a politician whom it is fashionable to condemn, but cannot find it to speak against the largest ongoing destruction of human life in the nation's history, has not been exercising moral courage. It has been managing its reputation.

This is the pattern Jesus rebuked in the religious leaders of His own day: scrupulous about the safe, small, respectable things and silent on "the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23). We strain out gnats and swallow camels. We are careful to be seen on the right side of whatever the culture has already decided, and mute on the one issue where being faithful would actually cost

us something — because our neighbours, our families, and possibly we ourselves are implicated in it. That is not prophetic witness. It is comfortable Christianity, and the generations before us would be aghast at it. Wesley did not calculate whether opposing the slave trade would make him popular; it did not. Spurgeon did not weigh whether abolition would protect his book sales; it destroyed them across half a continent. They spoke because it was true and because souls and lives were at stake, and they let the cost fall where it would.

And silence has a body count. This is the sober lesson our fathers understood and we have forgotten: when the church stays quiet, someone else fills the silence, and the someone is rarely kind. The birth-control movement of the early twentieth century is the case study. Its two most celebrated pioneers built the institutions that would become the largest providers of abortion in the world. In America, Margaret Sanger founded the organisation that became Planned Parenthood, today the largest single abortion provider in the United States; her movement was openly entwined with eugenics, the belief that the "unfit" should be discouraged or prevented from reproducing.[6] In Britain, Marie Stopes opened the country's first birth-control clinic in 1921; the global abortion provider that still bore her name, Marie Stopes International, quietly renamed itself in 2020 precisely to distance itself from her enthusiastic support for eugenics.[7] Here is the historical irony that ought to sober us: it was contraception, marketed as the compassionate and liberating alternative, that built the organisations and the mindset from which mass abortion grew. The movement that promised to make abortion unnecessary became its largest machinery.

We do not say the pioneers of birth control were themselves the abortionists; the history is more tangled than that, and honesty requires the distinction. What we say is that the church's silence handed the definition of "reproductive freedom" to people with a frankly stated eugenic vision, and the institutions they founded now end hundreds of thousands of lives a year. Consider the counterfactual the previous century poses to us. Wesley and the abolitionists did not stay silent, and the slave trade fell. Spurgeon did not stay silent about the ideologies rising in the London of his day. What might have been spared had more of the church, at the dawn of the birth-control movement, spoken with the courage of a Wesley? We cannot know. But we know the cost of the silence that was chosen instead, because we are counting it still, in a ledger no earthly office will ever fully total.

6. The creed of autonomy, and the answer to it

Beneath all of this lies a single creed, and it is worth answering directly because it is the deepest root. It can be stated in four words, and often is: "my body, my choice." It sounds, to ears trained by the age, almost self-evidently true.

Scripture denies its premise at the root. "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). The believer's body is not an autonomous possession to be disposed of at will; it is a temple, blood-bought and Spirit-indwelt, held in stewardship under its Maker. Our motto cannot be "my body, my choice" but must be *His* temple, *His* choice. The self-ownership on which the whole modern edifice rests is precisely what the gospel takes away — and gives back transformed, as a life belonging to Another and glad to.

And even on its own terms the slogan fails at the decisive point, for the conceived child is in any case not the mother's body at all. He is a separate human being within her, with his own body, his own DNA, his own sex, and his own life. We have neither the right to destroy our own bodies, which are not our own, nor the bodies of the children conceived within them, which were never ours to begin with. The creed of autonomy collapses twice over: once because we do not own ourselves, and again because the one whose life is at stake is not ourselves.

Notice, too, that this creed is the precise engine of the Great Reversal described above. It is the doctrine that faith must stay "personal" and never "impose." But a faith that may not speak into the body, the marriage, and the law is not the Christian faith; it is a private hobby the world is glad to let us keep, so long as it changes nothing. The recovery this whole series pleads for is, at bottom, the recovery of the conviction that Christ is Lord of all of it.

7. Why the strangeness is not the verdict

None of this proves the argument of the series true; that case is made from Scripture, from the history of the church, and from the facts of what these methods do, in the other treatises. What this one establishes is narrower, and it is meant only to clear an obstacle. The feeling of strangeness that attends the whole subject is not a reliable guide to its truth. It is very largely the residue of a worldview absorbed rather than examined, of a historic retreat most Christians have never had explained to them, and of a comfortable silence we have mistaken for peace.

So we ask the reader to do the one thing the strangeness makes difficult: to set the feeling aside long enough to weigh the arguments on their merits. If, having weighed them, one finds them wanting, let them be rejected on that ground. But let them not be rejected merely because they are unfamiliar — for unfamiliarity, in a church so thoroughly conformed to its age and so long retreated from the field, is exactly what we should expect a recovered truth to feel like at first. The generations that abolished the slave trade would find our silence stranger than they would find this letter.

Scripture is quoted from the English Standard Version.

A note on this treatise. Sections 1–3 and 6–7 make an argument about culture and the church rather than a claim of external fact. Sections 4 and 5 make historical claims, and these are sourced above. We have deliberately declined to use the widely repeated claim that Karl Marx called Spurgeon one of his greatest enemies, because we could not trace it to any primary source and the very writers who favour the Marx–Spurgeon comparison concede the two never met; Spurgeon's documented abolitionism carries the point without it. On Sanger and Stopes we have kept to the verifiable: that they were pioneers of the birth-control movement whose founded institutions became the world's largest abortion providers, and that the movement was openly tied to eugenics — without asserting that either woman personally ran an abortion practice, which the record does not straightforwardly support. We would rather bring a smaller case that holds than a larger one that does not.

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4. On Spurgeon as a contemporary of Marx in London and his preaching against socialist and materialist ideas, see the discussion at Founders Ministries, "Karl Marx vs Charles Spurgeon" (which notes the two men never met and offers no primary-source Marx statement naming Spurgeon; the popular "greatest enemies" line is therefore not used here), https://founders.org/articles/karl-marx-vs-charles-spurgeon-an-epic-struggle-for-the-souls-of-men-in-19th-century-london/

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APPENDIX E

Abortion in the United Kingdom

The argument of this series is not abstract, and it is not about somewhere else. It concerns a thing being done, in very large numbers, in our own nation and within the memory of every reader. This treatise sets out the national situation plainly and with sourced figures, and then asks what the church's own posture before God ought to be in a land so circumstanced. We have kept to figures we can source to named, dated, official releases, and we have declined to reach for comparative claims we could not verify. A smaller case honestly stated is worth more than a larger one that will not hold.

1. The scale, stated from the official record

The most recent official statistics for England and Wales, published by the Department of Health and Social Care, record 277,970 abortions for residents in 2023.[1] This is the highest annual number since the Abortion Act came into force in 1967, and represents a rise of eleven per cent on the previous year and of more than a third over the preceding five years.[1] The year before, in 2022, the figure was 251,377 — itself a record at the time.[1] By these figures, close to three in every ten pregnancies in England and Wales now end in abortion, and more than seven in ten abortions are now early medical abortions completed at home.[1]

These are not campaign numbers or estimates from an interested party. They are the government's own accredited official statistics, drawn from the legally required notifications submitted for every procedure. Whatever one's convictions, this is the documented scale of the thing: not a rare tragedy at the margins of national life, but something approaching a routine feature of it, rising year on year.

It is worth pausing on what a number of that size resists. 277,970 is difficult to feel because it is difficult to picture. It is comfortably more than the population of a city the size of Plymouth or Newcastle, gathered and then gone, in a single year, in two of the four nations of the United Kingdom alone. And it is the reported total for one year among many.

2. The cumulative total, and the two losses that never reach the ledger

A single year, however large, still understates the thing, because the years accumulate. Taking the official annual totals since 1967 and carrying the most recent rate forward to fill in the months not yet reported, Right to Life UK estimated that by the Abortion Act's fifty-eighth anniversary, in April 2026, more than eleven million lives had been ended by abortion in Great Britain — a figure they put at 11,105,671.[2] We give this as what it is: an estimate, not an official count, because it projects the 2023 rate across the most recent period, for which final figures do not yet exist. But its order of magnitude is not in doubt, and it is worth holding in the mind. Eleven million is more people than live in London. It is the sum, one life at a time, of what the annual releases record.

To that counted total two further losses must be added that the ledger will never carry, and honesty requires that they be described as uncertain rather than dressed as data. The first is the growing number of abortions since the decriminalisation of April 2026 (section 3 below): at the current rate of more than twenty thousand

a month, tens of thousands of further lives have been ended that no annual report has yet totalled. The second is graver and wholly uncountable: if the post-fertilisation mechanism of certain contraceptives ends lives, as the manufacturers' own words allow (see the treatise on the third mechanism and the treatise on common objections), those lives are lost before any pregnancy is registered, leave no clinical trace, and are recorded nowhere. About one in three women of childbearing age in the United Kingdom use a hormonal method or an intrauterine device.[3] Across so many women, over so many years, even a small per-cycle probability would represent a great many children — a number we cannot produce, must not invent, and dare not therefore treat as zero. What we cannot count, God counts (Psalm 139:16).

We labour the point that these are lives and not line-items, because the mind defends itself against large numbers by making them abstract. Every figure in this treatise stands for a particular human being, made in the image of God, known to Him before he was formed and loved by Him: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5).

3. The direction of the law

The scale is not static, and neither is the legal framework around it. Two developments in particular have changed the landscape in recent years, and honesty requires that both be described accurately rather than dramatically.

First, at-home early medical abortion. Since 30 August 2022 it has been permanent policy in England and Wales that both pills for an early medical abortion, up to ten weeks' gestation, may be taken at home following a telephone or video consultation, without an in-person clinical visit.[4] What began as a temporary measure during the pandemic was made a settled part of the system. This is the arrangement commonly described as "pills by post."

Second, and more recently, the criminal law has moved. The Crime and Policing Act 2026, which received Royal Assent in late April 2026, removed women in England and Wales from criminal liability under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 in respect of ending their own pregnancies, and pardoned women previously investigated or convicted under those provisions.[5] The relevant amendment had passed the House of Commons on 17 June 2025 by 379 votes to 137, and was upheld by the House of Lords in March 2026.[5][6]

We should describe precisely what this last change does and does not do, because it is easy to overstate in either direction. It does not alter the wider abortion law, the existing time limits, or the circumstances in which abortion is lawfully available; those remain as before.[5] What it does is remove the woman herself from the reach of the criminal law in relation to her own pregnancy, at any gestation. The trajectory it marks is nonetheless real: the removal of protections and penalties that had stood, in some form, for over a century. As a nation we have step by step called evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20), and the law is now catching up to the culture.

There is a deeper legal current beneath the visible one, and it is set out fully in the treatise on common objections, but it belongs here in outline because it explains why so much of this loss goes uncounted. Since a 2002 ruling of the High Court (*R (Smeaton) v Secretary of State for Health*), the settled legal meaning of "miscarriage," and therefore of abortion, is the termination of an *established* pregnancy — and in law no

pregnancy is established until implantation.[7] A child lost before implantation is therefore not, in law, a lost pregnancy at all, which is why no statute requires that such losses be counted, recorded, or disclosed. The definitional line drawn by the courts is the reason the ledger in section 2 has the two gaps it has.

4. Who filled the silence

It is worth naming, in a British treatise, how we came to this pass, because the answer is not only that the law changed but that the church went quiet while it changed (this is set out at length in the treatise, *Why This Sounds Foreign to Christian Ears*). The pioneers of the birth-control movement in these islands were not neutral technicians. Marie Stopes, who opened Britain's first birth-control clinic in 1921, was an enthusiast for eugenics; the global abortion provider that long bore her name, Marie Stopes International, renamed itself in 2020 precisely to distance itself from her.[8] The movement that promised to make abortion unnecessary built, within two generations, the machinery that now ends hundreds of thousands of lives a year. That is what tends to fill a silence the church declines to fill: not something better, but something worse, and often something with a frankly stated contempt for the weak.

5. What such a land is before God

Set the figures beside the Scriptures and the diagnosis writes itself. A nation in which innocent blood is shed on this scale is a nation with blood on its hands, and the Bible does not treat that lightly:

> *"When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood."*
>
> ISAIAH 1:15

This is spoken not to pagans but to the covenant people, at the height of their religious activity. Their sacrifices, their feasts, their prayers — all were made unwelcome to God, not because they were insincere in worship but because their hands were unclean in the streets. It is a sobering word for a churchgoing nation. Religious observance does not cover for shed blood; it is silenced by it.

The point is not to induce despair, and still less to consign the nation to hopelessness. It is to locate the problem correctly. A land steeped in the blood of the innocent needs more than reform of its statutes; it needs cleansing, and cleansing of a kind that only God gives and that begins where He says it begins.

6. Judgment and revival begin at the house of God

Here the burden about the *church* meets the burden about the *nation*, and the two turn out to be one burden. Peter writes that "it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God" (1 Peter 4:17). If we long to see God heal our land, Scripture is insistent about the order in which He works: He begins with His own house.

The pattern is written across the history of Judah's reforms. When Hezekiah became king, his first act was not to reform the nation but to cleanse the temple — reopening its doors and purifying it — and only then to break down the idols throughout the land (2 Chronicles 29). Josiah followed the same order: finding the Book of the Law, he renewed the covenant and purged the house of God before extending that purge to the

high places of Judah (2 Kings 22–23). In both cases national reform began with the reform of God's own house. The king did not summon the people to repentance while the temple stood defiled; he cleansed the temple first, and the nation's healing followed.

The application is uncomfortable but plain. A church that has innocent blood on its own hands, or on the hands of its members — including, as this series argues, blood shed unknowingly through methods the church never examined — cannot be the clean instrument God uses to call a nation to repentance. The promise stands: "if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). But the order stands too. Revival and judgment both begin at the house of God. If we would see God heal our land, we must first let Him cleanse His church.

7. Why this treatise ends in hope, not weight

It would be possible to read these figures and this diagnosis as a counsel of despair, and that would be a misreading. The same God who names the blood also cleanses it. The same order that puts judgment at the house of God first also puts *revival* there first — and revivals are, by definition, God doing what men cannot. Hezekiah and Josiah were not left to reform a hopeless nation by policy; they were used by God, beginning with the temple, to turn a people back.

So this series does not present the nation's abortion figures as a wall but as a door. The scale is real, the legal direction is real, and the church's own complicity — largely in ignorance — is real. But the response Scripture presses is not resignation. It is that God's people humble themselves, let Him cleanse His own house first, and become the clean instrument through which He has always chosen to heal a land. That is not naïve optimism. It is the pattern of Scripture, and it is the only ground on which real hope for this nation can honestly stand.

A note on sources. All figures are taken from named, dated official releases or from mainstream reporting of them, and the reader is encouraged to check the most recent statistics release before quoting these numbers, since a newer annual figure may since have appeared. The cumulative and contraceptive-loss figures in section 2 are expressly identified as estimates or as uncountable, and should never be cited as official totals. We have deliberately declined to include the comparative claim, sometimes made, that the United Kingdom has "one of the highest abortion rates in Western Europe," because cross-national comparison depends heavily on how each country counts and we could not verify it to the standard we hold ourselves to here. The domestic record — a documented, rising, record-high national total — is sufficient to the point, and can be stood behind without qualification.

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6. House of Commons vote of 17 June 2025 (379–137) on the decriminalisation amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill; upheld by the House of Lords, March 2026. British Medical Association, "MPs back decriminalisation of abortion,"
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7. R (Smeaton) v Secretary of State for Health **[2002]** EWHC 610 (Admin), per Mr Justice Munby: "miscarriage today means the termination of an established pregnancy, and there is no established pregnancy prior to implantation." Discussed in full in the treatise on common objections.
https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2002/610.html

8. Marie Stopes International renamed itself "MSI Reproductive Choices" in 2020, citing its founder's support for eugenics. The Christian Post, "Abortion giant Marie Stopes International changes name over activist's support for eugenics,"
https://www.christianpost.com/news/marie-stopes-international-changes-name-over-activists-eugenics-support.html

APPENDIX F

The Responsibility of Shepherds

This series is addressed, first of all, to those who shepherd God's flock — pastors, elders, and church leaders. That is a deliberate choice, and it lays a particular weight on those who read it in that office. This treatise sets out, from Scripture, why the matter comes to shepherds first, and what Scripture says about the responsibility they carry. We write it as an appeal, and we are careful throughout to appeal not on the basis of what is *required* of you as though we stood over you, but on the basis of what is *fitting* to the calling you have received. We come to you with deep respect for the weight you already carry.

1. The watchman is answerable for the warning, not the outcome

The governing image is the watchman. To Ezekiel, God says: "If I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning… that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand" (Ezekiel 3:18). But if the watchman warns, "and they do not turn," then "you will have delivered your soul" (Ezekiel 3:19).

Two things stand out, and both are a mercy to the shepherd rightly understood. First, the watchman is not answerable for the outcome. He cannot make the city listen; he cannot compel a single heart to turn. What is required of him is not success but faithfulness — that the alarm be sounded, clearly and in time. Second, and more soberly, silence is not a neutral act before God. The watchman who says nothing has not thereby avoided responsibility; the blood is required at his hand precisely for the not-saying. There is no third option between warning and guilt. To see the danger and stay quiet is itself the failure the passage names.

This is why the matter comes to shepherds first. If the argument of this series is sound — if children may be dying quietly and the church has not been told — then the question for a shepherd is not in the first instance "am I persuaded of every detail?" but "have I even looked?" The watchman who has not troubled to look toward the horizon has already failed at the one thing his post exists for. It is possible to disagree with this series after examining it; that is a conclusion honestly reached. What the watchman's office does not permit is to decline to examine it because the subject is uncomfortable.

2. The whole counsel of God, held back at no point

Paul offers himself as the pattern of a watchman who did his duty. Taking leave of the Ephesian elders, he could say: "I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26–27).

Mark the ground of his innocence. Paul does not claim to be innocent of the Ephesians' blood because his ministry was fruitful, or because everyone he taught obeyed. He claims it on one basis only: that he held nothing back. He "did not shrink" — the word implies there were things it would have been easier to omit, teachings that would have cost him something to declare, and that he declared them anyway. His clean hands were the fruit of his complete message. A ministry that quietly edits out the hard, the unpopular, or the merely awkward has, by that editing, forfeited the very thing that made Paul's hands clean.

There is a searching application in this. It is possible to preach a great deal that is true, and to preach it faithfully, and yet to have shrunk — to have left one region of the counsel of God untouched because it was too costly, too divisive, or too intimate to raise. This series contends that the sanctity of the conceived life is, for much of the church, exactly such an untouched region. Paul's example does not permit a permanent silence there.

3. Teachers bear the stricter judgment

Scripture does not distribute this responsibility evenly. It falls most heavily on those who teach. "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). The office that carries the authority to instruct souls carries, by the same measure, a heavier account for how that instruction is used — and for what it omits.

The writer to the Hebrews presses the point in the language of accounting: leaders "are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account" (Hebrews 13:17). The shepherd's relation to his flock is not that of an employee to a task but of a steward to an owner, before whom the books will one day be opened. This is not said to terrify but to dignify. The reason the watchman's silence is so grave is precisely that his charge is so high: he keeps watch over *souls*, and he keeps watch as one who will answer for them.

We are aware that to press this is to press on a nerve. The weight of the pastoral office is already heavy, and we have no wish to add to it a burden God has not laid there. But we would be poor watchmen ourselves if, for fear of adding to your load, we withheld the very Scriptures that define your calling. The stricter judgment is not our invention; it is James's. We only ask that it be reckoned with here, where the stakes are the lives of the least.

4. The courage the office has lost, and can recover

It is worth naming plainly that the reluctance many faithful shepherds feel here is not, for the most part, a considered theological judgment. It is a mood the church has been breathing for a century — the assumption that questions of life, sexuality, and law are "political" or "private" and therefore off-limits to the pulpit. That assumption is itself a recent inheritance, the fruit of a long retreat from public engagement that overtook evangelicalism in the twentieth century (this is set out in the treatise, *Why This Sounds Foreign to Christian Ears*). It is not the posture of the shepherds who went before us.

Consider them. John Wesley's last letter urged Wilberforce on against the "execrable villainy" of the slave trade — a legal, profitable, national institution — and told him to "go on, in the name of God."[note] Charles Spurgeon preached against the slave trade at the cost of his American book sales, his sermons burned across

the South, and refused the notion that a minister must keep silent on the great questions of his day. These men did not regard the naming of a national sin as a departure from their office. They regarded it as the office. The recovery this treatise asks for is not an innovation but a return: to the plain conviction that the man charged with the whole counsel of God does not get to excuse himself from the parts the age has declared out of bounds.

5. The order of care: prepare before you warn

None of this counsels harshness, and Scripture guards carefully against it. The same apostolic tradition that makes the shepherd a watchman also makes him a nurse and a father to the flock (1 Thessalonians 2:7–11), and the sounding of a hard truth is to be governed throughout by love (Ephesians 4:15). This series therefore asks shepherds to do a particular thing in a particular order: to prepare gentle, confidential, gospel-centred care *before* the matter is taught from the pulpit, and not after.

The reason is pastoral and plain. Some who hear this teaching will conclude that they have done, in ignorance, a thing they would have died to prevent. A shepherd who raises the subject without having first made ready to catch those who fall under it has sounded an alarm with no refuge prepared. The watchman's duty is to warn, but the shepherd's duty is also to feed and to bind up (Ezekiel 34:4, 16), and these are not in competition. Truth told tenderly, by a man who has arranged in advance to walk with those it wounds, is a very different thing from truth flung from a distance. Only the former deserves the name of shepherding.

This is also the answer to the objection a faithful pastor feels most keenly: "I will devastate the women in my church." That fear does him credit, and it must shape *how* and *when* he speaks; it cannot license *never* speaking. The alternative to a warning prepared with care is not safety for the wounded but abandonment of them — left to continue unknowing, or to learn one day from someone far less gentle, with no shepherd beside them when it lands. The truth reaches them either from a man who loves them and has made ready to walk with them, or from a stranger who has not. Only the former comes with Christ attached.

6. A word of assurance to the shepherd who walks through hard things

We do not close this treatise with a demand but with an assurance, because that is what the office most needs to hear. God upholds the shepherd who walks faithfully through hard things. The One who appointed the watchman does not then abandon him to the city's response. Paul, who did not shrink, was also the one who could say that the Lord stood by him and strengthened him when all had deserted him (2 Timothy 4:16–17). The Chief Shepherd, who Himself laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11), has promised to the under-shepherd who tends the flock willingly "the unfading crown of glory" when He appears (1 Peter 5:2–4).

So we say this not to burden you with fear but to honour the gravity of your calling, and to assure you that the God who calls the watchman to his post keeps him at it. To take up this matter faithfully will cost something; we will not pretend otherwise. But it is the very shape of the office you already hold, and the grace that has carried you through every other hard thing is sufficient for this one too.

References and note

Scripture is quoted from the English Standard Version.

The historical references in section 4 (Wesley's 1791 letter to Wilberforce; Spurgeon's abolitionism and the burning of his sermons in the American South) are documented in full in the treatise, *Why This Sounds Foreign to Christian Ears*, with their primary sources.

A note on this treatise. This is chiefly an exposition of Scripture applied to the pastoral office rather than a documentary argument, and it therefore carries few external citations beyond the biblical texts named in the body, each of which the reader can weigh in its own context. Where it presses the responsibility of teachers, it does so from the plain sense of the passages cited (Ezekiel 3 and 34; Acts 20; James 3; Hebrews 13; 1 Peter 5), and we have taken care to set the watchman's accountability always alongside the shepherd's tenderness, since Scripture never divides the two.

APPENDIX G

The Case Concerning IVF

This series is chiefly concerned with abortifacient contraception, but the same failure of conscience runs through the church's largely unquestioned acceptance of *in vitro* fertilisation, and the same principle that governs the one governs the other. If the conceived child is a living human being under the protection of God (the ground established in the treatise on the biblical case), then that is true of the child conceived in a laboratory no less than the child conceived in a marriage bed. This treatise makes the case concerning IVF in full, and it does so with a particular care, because more than any other subject in this correspondence it touches directly upon a grief many faithful Christians carry. We ask to be read as writing tenderly, because we mean to.

1. Selection presupposes rejection

The moral difficulty with IVF is not incidental to the technique; it is built into how the technique works. Standard practice creates more embryos than the parents intend to carry, precisely so that the "best" may be selected for transfer and the remainder held in reserve. Those not selected are discarded, frozen indefinitely, donated to research, or eventually allowed to perish. This is not an unfortunate side effect that better practice might one day eliminate. Selection *presupposes* rejection: to choose among embryos for the ones most likely to succeed is, in the same act, to set aside the ones not chosen. And rejection here does not mean setting aside a sample of tissue. It means the destruction, freezing, or abandonment of living human beings, each of whom — by the argument this whole series rests upon — is a distinct human made in the image of God.

The embryos so set aside are valuable for one reason, and it is the same reason that grounds the value of every human life in this correspondence: not their size, their stage of development, their wantedness, or their usefulness, but that each is a distinct living human bearing God's image. The very qualifications the world uses to discount them — they are small, they are early, they were not the ones chosen — are exactly the qualifications Scripture refuses to accept as grounds for withdrawing protection.

We should add, with care, that some Christian couples pursue IVF with the sincere resolve to create only as many embryos as they will carry, and to abandon none. That resolve is a real moral difference, and we honour it. Even there, the process carries risks to the embryos created that the couple should understand, and the clinics' default practices press hard against such restraint. But our sharpest words in this treatise are for the industry's ordinary practice and for the church's incuriosity about it, not for the grieving couple seeking to act rightly within it.

2. The scale, from the official record

This is not a marginal or hypothetical concern. It operates at scale, and the scale is documented in the United Kingdom's own official figures.

Fertility treatment in the UK is regulated by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), and the volume of treatment is large and rising: around 77,000 IVF cycles were carried out in 2022, up

from roughly 69,000 in 2019.[1] Behind those cycles lies a far larger number of embryos created. Official figures provided to Parliament during the passage of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill show that between 1991 and 2005 more than two million embryos (2,137,924) were created in the UK, of which some 1.2 million were never used.[2] Further HFEA-derived figures, given in a later parliamentary answer, indicate that by the end of 2012 more than 3.5 million embryos had been created since 1991, with only a small fraction resulting in a birth.[3]

We state these carefully. They are cumulative totals over long periods, drawn from official sources, and the true present-day figures are necessarily higher still, since treatment has only increased since. However one reckons them, the conclusion is unavoidable: in the United Kingdom alone, well over a million human embryos have been created and then discarded or left in indefinite storage under the HFEA's regime — and, as things stand, no one will name them for what they are.

3. The practices the church has treated as respectable medicine

Beyond the fate of the surplus embryos, the church has been strangely incurious about how these clinics actually operate, and some of it will not bear the scrutiny.

IVF ordinarily requires the husband to produce a sample by masturbation, and clinics commonly keep rooms stocked with pornography on their own premises to assist him in doing so. A practice sold to Christian couples as the road to a longed-for child therefore routinely begins with a man committing, in his heart, the adultery of which our Lord spoke — "everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28) — in a building that arranged it for him, and no one thinks to warn him. That the industry treats this as unremarkable does not make it so.

More serious still is the trade in donor sperm and eggs, which inserts a third party into what God joined to one man and one wife (Hebrews 13:4; Matthew 19:5–6). Donor conception deliberately manufactures children severed from a biological mother or father before they are ever conceived, and sells the gametes to do it as though they were stock. The child so conceived bears no guilt in this and is no less an image-bearer than any other — we say that plainly, lest anyone conceived by these means read a word of self-reproach into this page where none is intended. But the industry that arranged it should be named for what it is, rather than received as ordinary medicine simply because it wears a white coat and a longed-for outcome.

4. The same movement, the same mind

It is worth seeing that IVF did not arrive from nowhere. It is the technological flower of the same root examined elsewhere in this series: a view of procreation as a process to be managed, optimised, and controlled by human choice rather than received as the gift of God. The birth-control movement taught the twentieth century to sever the marriage act from the giving of children; the fertility industry now completes the severance from the other side, manufacturing children apart from the marriage act altogether, and grading them for quality before deciding which may live. Both rest on the same assumption — that the coming of a child is ours to command — and both, followed far enough, arrive at the same place: the small and the unchosen are discarded. A church that never examined the first was never going to examine the second.

5. A tender word to those walking the long road of infertility

We are acutely conscious of who feels these paragraphs most keenly. They are felt most by couples who have wanted a child for years, who have wept and prayed and hoped, and who have been told — often by kind and well-meaning people — that IVF is the compassionate option, while the fate of the surplus children is passed over in silence. To them we want to speak not one word of reproach but a great deal of tenderness.

Scripture treats the ache of childlessness as a real and serious grief, never a small thing (consider Hannah, 1 Samuel 1:5–8, and see the treatise on Marriage, Children, and the Calling of Parents). It is God alone who opens and closes the womb (1 Samuel 1:5–6; Genesis 30:2), and He is not deaf to the cry of His people; "the righteous cry for help, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles" (Psalm 34:17). Sometimes He grants the longed-for child. Sometimes, in His wisdom, He withholds one — and even then His grace is declared sufficient, His power "made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The couple who never conceive have lost something genuinely precious, and they have lost nothing of their standing before God or of the fullness of their marriage.

Our plea, then, is not that grieving members simply resign themselves. It is that the church not send them into an industry that profits from their sorrow while hiding its cost, but rather back to the God who alone gives life, and to one another for support. And let the church press *adoption* upon its members not as a second-best consolation but as a positive obedience and a gospel-shaped joy — for we ourselves were taken in by adoption, "predestined for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 1:5), and pure religion is in part "to visit orphans and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). To receive a child who already exists and needs a home is not a lesser way of building a family. It is one of the most Christ-shaped ways there is.

6. The conclusion the series cannot avoid

The logic is finally very simple, and it is the logic of the whole series turned toward one more room. If we will speak against the killing of the pre-born child in the abortion clinic, we cannot in consistency stay silent about the destruction and abandonment of the pre-born child in the fertility clinic. The God who commands us to defend those who cannot speak for themselves (Proverbs 31:8–9) makes no exception for those conceived in a laboratory. The location of a child's conception changes nothing about the child.

We raise this not to heap one more burden on the church, and least of all on those already bearing the burden of infertility, but because a case that pleaded for the conceived child while averting its eyes from this would not be honest. The conceived child in the fertility clinic is the same conceived child the rest of this series is about. Consistency, and compassion for the smallest, require that he be named too.

A note on sources. The embryo figures above are cumulative totals over stated periods (1991–2005 and 1991–2012), drawn from official statistics presented to Parliament and to the HFEA; the present-day totals are higher, and any reader quoting these numbers should cite the period they cover and, where possible, check the HFEA's latest published data. We have deliberately given the figures conservatively and with

their date ranges attached, rather than reaching for a single dramatic total, because the case does not need exaggeration and would be weakened by it. For those wishing to read further from a pro-life perspective, Abolitionists Rising (https://abolitionistsrising.com/ivf/) and the Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform UK (https://www.cbruk.org/ivf) treat the subject at length; we note that these are advocacy organisations and cite them as further reading rather than as neutral authorities.

References

1. Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, key facts and statistics: around 77,000 IVF cycles in 2022 (up from ~69,000 in 2019).
   https://www.hfea.gov.uk/about-us/media-centre/key-facts-and-statistics/

2. Official figures cited in Parliament during the passage of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill 2007–08: between 1991 and 2005, 2,137,924 embryos created in the UK, of which approximately 1.2 million were not used. Reported via Progress Educational Trust (a fertility-sector charity),
   https://www.progress.org.uk/uk-parliament-alarmed-by-1-2-million-leftover-ivf-embryos/

3. HFEA-derived figures given in a parliamentary answer (Lord Howe), indicating more than 3.5 million embryos created in the UK since August 1991 through the end of 2012, with only a small proportion resulting in a birth. Reported figures summarised at the Center for Genetics and Society,
   https://www.geneticsandsociety.org/article/17-million-human-embryos-created-ivf-thrown-away

APPENDIX H

Answers to Common Objections

Faithful brothers and sisters will raise honest questions about what this series argues, and they deserve honest answers rather than slogans. This treatise gathers the objections we have most often heard and answers each in turn. We offer them not to win arguments but to remove obstacles, so that the truth might be received where it is true and tested where it is doubted.

A word on how to read what follows. We have tried to state each objection in its strongest and most sympathetic form, as a thoughtful believer would actually put it, and not as a straw man. Several of these objections are not errors at all but half-truths — things rightly felt that have been drawn to a wrong conclusion — and where that is so we say it plainly. An objection met fairly is worth more to a searching conscience than ten met cheaply.

Objections about the teaching itself

1. "Is this not just Roman Catholic teaching?"

No. It was the unbroken teaching of the whole church, East and West, for nineteen centuries, and the Reformers held it as firmly as anyone. Calvin, and the Westminster divines, applied the sixth commandment to the child in the womb, and the confessions our own Presbyterian and Baptist forebears subscribed defined marriage partly by "the increase of mankind" (see the treatises on the Witness of the Church and on Marriage). The first major Christian communion to permit contraception in any circumstance was the Church of England, at the Lambeth Conference of 1930, and even then the resolution passed against the votes of a substantial number of its own bishops. What is novel here is not the position set out in this series. It is the position most of us inherited without noticing.

2. "This isn't a gospel issue."

You are right that the sanctity of life is not the gospel itself. The gospel is the good news that Christ died for our sins and rose again, and that we are saved by grace through faith alone, not by our record on any moral question. We would resist anyone who made this a fourth mark of a true church or a test of saving faith.

But the gospel calls men to repent and believe (Mark 1:15), and repentance means turning from sin as the Spirit reveals it. If the taking of innocent life is sin — and it is, a violation of the sixth commandment — then it falls squarely within what the gospel calls us to turn from. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and the Great Commission is to make disciples, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded" (Matthew 28:20). How can people repent of what they have never been told is sin? How can the church be a place of healing if it never names the wound? To call this "not a gospel issue" as a reason for silence is to confuse the gospel's foundation with its fruit, and to deny our members the very cleansing Christ died to give.

3. "We don't want to offend people or put them off the gospel."

The instinct behind this is a good one — a genuine care for souls and a fear of raising needless barriers. But consider whether Jesus modelled it. When the rich young ruler turned away sorrowful, Jesus did not chase him or soften the demand (Mark 10:21–22). When many disciples found His teaching hard and left, He did not backtrack but turned to the twelve: "Do you want to go away as well?" (John 6:60–67). At Pentecost Peter told the crowd plainly, "this Jesus, whom you crucified" (Acts 2:23, 36) — and that hard word, far from driving them off, "cut to the heart" and three thousand were saved. The gospel is itself an offence to the natural man (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23). Our calling is to speak the truth in love and to trust the Spirit with the result, for God is sovereign over the harvest. Faithfulness is the standard, not comfort, and not numbers.

4. "Babies who die go to heaven anyway, don't they?"

Many evangelicals hold the hope that infants who die are received into God's mercy, often citing David's confidence that he would go to his dead child (2 Samuel 12:23) and Christ's welcome of the little ones (Matthew 19:14). We share that hope and would not take it from any grieving parent. But notice what this objection quietly does: it turns a comfort into a permission. By the same reasoning, no one should ever have stopped any murderer of children, since the children "are in heaven now." Stated so baldly the thought is abhorrent — and yet it is exactly the reasoning used to excuse silence here. A hoped-for mercy toward the victim can never license the act that made him a victim. Christ warned that it would be better to be drowned with a millstone than to cause one little one to stumble (Matthew 18:6); what then of taking a little one's life? We dare not build a permission on the back of God's mercy.

Objections about the hard cases

5. "What about rape, or a threat to the mother's life?"

These are the cases that weigh most heavily on a tender conscience, and they deserve a careful answer rather than a dismissive one.

On the life of the mother: there is no condition that requires the direct, intentional killing of an unborn child to save his mother. The most cited example, ectopic pregnancy, actually illustrates the distinction. An ectopic pregnancy is one implanted in an abnormal location, usually the fallopian tube; by the time it is found the child has very often already died, and the danger is that a rupturing tube will kill the mother. Removing an ectopic pregnancy to save the mother's life is not an abortion in the moral sense: it is the removal of an already-deceased child, or, in the rarer case of one still living, care that seeks to preserve life as long as possible before the tube fails. The intent is never to kill but to save the life that can be saved. This is morally distinct from an act designed and intended to end a living child's life — as treatment that unintentionally harms a child (say, chemotherapy for a pregnant mother) differs from a procedure whose very aim is the child's death.

On rape: we must first name the evil plainly. Rape is a monstrous violation, and it deserves our strongest condemnation and the full weight of justice against the perpetrator. But the child conceived is an innocent party, and Scripture is clear that "children shall not be put to death because of their fathers" (Deuteronomy

24:16). Abortion cannot un-rape a woman or heal her trauma, and the evidence is that it more often compounds her suffering than relieves it. She needs love, protection, justice, and lasting care — not a second act of violence against the one wholly innocent person in the account. Such cases are, in any event, a tiny fraction of abortions, and we must not let rare tragedies be made the lever by which the vast majority, done for other reasons, are justified. The answer to profound suffering is never the killing of the innocent.

Objections about probability and risk

6. "We accept small risks to life all the time — speed limits, cars, everyday dangers. Why is this different?"

Because driving is a system built to protect life, not merely one that tolerates risk. Speed limits fall near schools. Drivers are licensed, tested, and insured; cars are inspected and built with safety systems; and at every moment a conscious person is at the wheel, able to brake or swerve. When something goes wrong it is investigated and someone is answerable — dangerous driving, causing death by negligence, and so on. The whole structure rests on the premise that a lost life demands an answer.

The contraceptive mechanism at issue has none of this. Once the pill is taken or the device fitted, no one is "at the wheel." If the post-fertilisation mechanism ends a life there is no test, no investigation, no record, no accountability, and no justice — because there is no way even to know it happened. This is exactly where Deuteronomy 22:8 speaks: God commanded a parapet on every roof, "that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it" — not because a fatal fall was likely, but because it was possible and would be fatal. Driving already has its parapet, in licensing, limits, and accountability. This does not, and worse, once the method is in use no safeguard can be added afterward to protect the child. The only parapet available is not to use a method that carries the mechanism at all.

7. "But the odds are so small as to be meaningless."

Two answers, and the second matters more than the first.

First, on the scale: estimates that a single woman would need decades of use before her personal odds became significant answer a question about *one* woman. They say nothing about how often the event occurs across a population. Consider the population at issue. In the United Kingdom, about one in three women of childbearing age — on the order of several million at any given time — currently use a hormonal method or an intrauterine device.[1][2] As an illustration of scale only, if one applies to a population of that kind even a very small per-cycle probability, the resulting annual number of lost embryos is not small but large. We offer that as illustration, not as a measured statistic, since the true per-cycle rate is unknown and, as this series argues, unmeasurable. But the direction of it is sound: a "tiny" per-woman risk, spread across millions of women and many years, is not a tiny number of lives.

Second, and decisively: rarity settles frequency, not morality. A mechanism that ends a life only occasionally still ends a life every time it operates. We do not reason this way about any other life. We would not defend an action that killed an innocent person "only rarely." The infrequency of a death is no part of the question whether we may knowingly risk causing it.

8. "I used contraceptives for years and never saw a baby expelled."

At the stage when an abortifacient mechanism would prevent implantation — roughly six to twelve days after fertilisation — the embryo is around a tenth of a millimetre in size, no larger than a full stop on this page, and invisible to the naked eye. When such an embryo fails to implant because the womb lining has been thinned, it is lost in what appears to be an ordinary period, entirely indistinguishable from normal bleeding. The absence of anything to see is exactly what the mechanism, if it operates, would predict; it is not evidence that nothing happened. "Your eyes saw my unformed substance" (Psalm 139:16): God sees what is invisible to us. Cain thought Abel's murder unseen, yet the blood cried out from the ground (Genesis 4:10). The point is not to accuse but to explain why "I never saw anything" cannot function as the reassurance it feels like.

Objections about authority and expertise

9. "Surely my doctor would have told me."

Your doctor almost certainly is not deceiving you. He is telling you the truth as his profession has defined it. But the definition itself has a history most prescribers have never examined, and once it is seen, the reason nothing reaches you across the counter becomes clear — and the fault is not the man behind it.

The history is documented. In America, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists redefined the terms. Its 1965 terminology bulletin stated, "Conception is the implantation of a fertilized ovum," and its 1972 update, "Conception is the implantation of the blastocyst. It is not synonymous with fertilization."[3] No new embryological discovery drove the change; a later peer-reviewed survey found the obstetric profession itself still divided, with only a minority personally holding that pregnancy begins at implantation.[3] The candid account of *why* is on the record. At a 1959 Planned Parenthood and Population Council symposium, Dr Bent Boving observed that whether a method was regarded as *preventing conception* or as *destroying an established pregnancy* might turn on "something so simple as a prudent habit of speech."[4] A habit of speech, not a finding.

In the United Kingdom the same line was drawn, not by Parliament but by the courts, and this is the decisive point for a British reader. No UK statute has ever defined "pregnancy" or "conception." In 2000 the Government confirmed in Parliament that "emergency contraception pills work before implantation and so before a pregnancy has been established," recalling that the Attorney-General had advised in 1983 that doctors would not be prosecuted for preventing implantation by the morning-after pill or an IUD.[5] In 2002 the High Court settled the legal meaning: "miscarriage today means the termination of an established pregnancy, and there is no established pregnancy prior to implantation. There is no miscarriage if a fertilised egg is lost prior to implantation."[6] The House of Commons Library states it plainly: abortion means "the termination of an established pregnancy," where "established" is "taken to mean that the embryo has implanted in the uterus."[7]

Follow the consequence. In UK law a child lost before implantation is not a lost pregnancy, so it is not an abortion, and so it is legally the loss of nothing that must be counted or disclosed. This even reaches the duty of consent. Since *Montgomery v Lanarkshire* (2015), a doctor must disclose the "material risks" a reasonable

patient would want to know — but because a pre-implantation loss is not, in law, the loss of a pregnancy at all, there is no "risk to a pregnancy" for the clinician to disclose, and the professional counselling guidance does not list one.[8] So a fact stated openly in the manufacturer's own licensing documents can nonetheless never reach you across the counter. The definition is the problem, not the man behind it. Everyone in the chain is, in good conscience, describing something that has been defined so as not to count.

10. "Aren't the doctors and health bodies the experts here? Who are we to second-guess them?"

We should respect genuine expertise, and we do. But we should also notice where the experts have a stake. The bodies most often cited to reassure us that these methods are "not abortifacient" are frequently the same institutions that manufacture, sell, provide, or advocate for these products, and for abortion itself. Their data on how the drugs affect sperm or ovulation may be perfectly sound; their conclusion about what to *call* the residual effect is not coming from a neutral source.

That is not speculation about motive; their own leadership has said as much. In 1981, testifying to a United States Senate committee against a bill that would have defined life as beginning at fertilisation, the then-President of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists acknowledged that under such a definition the IUD and low-dose oral contraceptive pill "could be considered as abortifacients and therefore declared illegal."[10] He was resisting the definition, but he conceded exactly what turns on it. And credentialed physicians do dissent: pro-life obstetricians and gynaecologists decline to prescribe certain methods on exactly these grounds.[9] This is not a case of laypeople versus experts. It is a case of experts disagreeing — and the question worth asking is which of them has something riding on the answer.

It is worth adding that the promise made for wider contraceptive access, that it would reduce abortion, has not held. In England and Wales contraception is free at the point of use, yet abortion numbers have risen to record highs (see the treatise on Abortion in the United Kingdom), and research from the Guttmacher Institute — an organisation founded by a former president of Planned Parenthood, and no enemy of contraception — found that about half of abortion patients had used a contraceptive method in the very month they conceived.[11] Whatever contraception has achieved, it has not been the thing it was promised to achieve. Indeed, the leading figures of the birth-control movement founded the very organisations — Planned Parenthood in America, Marie Stopes International (now MSI Reproductive Choices) in Britain — that became the world's largest providers of abortion.[12] The "expert" institutions reassuring us are, in several cases, the direct heirs of that movement.

Objections about calling and cost

11. "Each of us has our own calling. You're called to this, but not everyone is."

God does give different gifts and callings (1 Corinthians 12:4–7), and not every member will make this a public ministry. But some commands bind every Christian, whatever their particular calling: "seek justice, correct oppression" (Isaiah 1:17); "Open your mouth for the mute… defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:8–9); "rescue those who are being taken away to death" (Proverbs 24:11); "love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31). The question is not whether every Christian is called to care about the sanctity of

life — all are — but how each fulfils that calling in his own sphere. The abolition of the slave trade needed Wilberforce in Parliament, Wesley and Newton in the pulpit, More in publishing, and countless ordinary Christians in prayer and boycott. Here too: parents can raise children who love life, pastors can equip their churches, members can support mothers under pressure, and all can pray and speak where they are. This is not a specialised ministry for a few. It is basic Christian faithfulness, distributed across many hands.

12. "What if people complain, or I lose my job?"

This is the most understandable fear of all, because it touches our families and our livelihoods, and we will not pretend the cost is imaginary. Yet Jesus said, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39). Paul did not count his life dear to himself if only he might finish his ministry (Acts 20:24). We remember the Hebrew midwives, who feared God more than Pharaoh, refused to kill the baby boys, and were blessed by God for it (Exodus 1:17–21). We remember, too, that Wesley opposed a legal and profitable slave trade at no advantage to himself, and that Spurgeon let his sermons be burned across the American South rather than soften his witness — the cost was real and they paid it. God knows how to preserve those who are in trial; He may deliver us from the cost or sustain us through it, but He will not abandon us, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). The searching question is the one we will one day answer: will we stand before Christ and explain that we kept silent about the killing of the innocent for fear of a complaint or the loss of a post — or will we hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant"?

13. "I will devastate the women in my church."

This fear does you credit, and it must not be brushed aside — it should shape *how* and *when* you speak, which is why this series asks you to prepare gentle, confidential care before ever raising the matter from the pulpit (see the treatise on the Responsibility of Shepherds). Some will indeed grieve, and they must be met with the gospel and not with a lecture. But weigh the alternative honestly. If you say nothing, they continue unknowing. Or they learn one day from someone far less careful and far less kind than you, with no shepherd beside them when it lands. Truth told tenderly, by a man who loves them and has made ready to walk with them, is not the same thing as condemnation — and it is the only version of this news that comes with Christ attached, offering not only the weight of what may have been done in ignorance but the full and free cleansing of one who "acted ignorantly in unbelief" and yet "received mercy" (1 Timothy 1:13, 16). To withhold the truth in order to spare them is, in the end, to leave them alone with it later. Love does not do that.

An objection about the state of the evidence

14. "Haven't recent studies shown these methods don't prevent implantation after all?"

This is the most important objection to answer honestly, because our whole credibility rests on not claiming more than the evidence allows, and here the evidence has genuinely moved in one place.

For the levonorgestrel morning-after pill specifically, it has moved *against* part of the popular pro-life case. The manufacturer of Plan B petitioned to remove the implantation language from its label, and in December

2022 the American regulator agreed; the current position of the FDA and of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) is that levonorgestrel emergency contraception works mainly by delaying ovulation and is not shown to prevent implantation.[14] An honest advocate must say so, and we do. We therefore do not rest the argument on the morning-after pill, and anyone who does is building on sand a critic can rightly wash away.

But two things have *not* moved, and they are enough. First, the copper intrauterine device. Its post-fertilisation action is not disputed and has not been withdrawn: the NHS states it works in part by "stopping a fertilised egg from implanting,"[12] and the FSRH clinical guideline licenses it as emergency contraception up to five days after intercourse — a window in which fertilisation may already have occurred — stating that "if fertilisation does occur, the local endometrial inflammatory reaction resulting from the presence of the Cu-IUD prevents implantation." So in that use, preventing implantation is not a rare side effect but part of the basis of the product's effectiveness. Second, the product information for other hormonal methods. The official summaries for combined pills and for the hormonal intrauterine system continue to list, among the ways they work, changes to the lining of the womb that reduce the likelihood of implantation.[13] So the post-fertilisation mechanism is not a pro-life inference that the science has overtaken; for the copper coil and for these labelled methods it remains the makers' own stated account. The morning-after pill was never the strongest ground, and we have let it go without weakening the case, because the case never needed it.

A closing word

Not every reader will be persuaded by every answer above, and we do not ask for that. We ask only that each objection be weighed on its merits rather than used as a door quietly closed. Where we have answered rightly, receive it; where you think we have answered poorly, test it against Scripture and tell us so, for we would rather be corrected than be wrong. What we cannot recommend is the one course none of these objections finally justifies: to look away. The children in question cannot raise these objections, or any others, on their own behalf. That is precisely why the rest of us must not hide behind them.

Scripture is quoted from the English Standard Version.

A note on sources. Where an objection turns on a matter of fact we have given a source; where it turns on Scripture we have given the text; and where a figure is illustrative rather than measured — as with the population arithmetic under objection 7 — we have said so rather than dress an illustration as a statistic. The Guttmacher figure under objection 10 is United States data, cited because it is the most careful study of its kind; we have not assumed it transfers unchanged to the United Kingdom. Objection 14 is included precisely because our discipline requires us to state where the evidence has moved against part of the popular case, and to rest the argument only on what remains admitted and unchanged.

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8. Montgomery v Lanarkshire Health Board **[2015]** UKSC 11, establishing the "material risks" standard of informed consent. Because pre-implantation loss is not legally the loss of an established pregnancy, it does not arise as a "risk to a pregnancy" requiring disclosure under this test.
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9. American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists (AAPLOG), committee opinions on hormonal contraception and intrauterine devices — representing licensed OB-GYNs who decline to prescribe certain methods on post-fertilisation grounds.
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10. Testimony of the President of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (George Ryan) to the US Senate "Human Life Bill" hearings, 1981, acknowledging that the IUD and low-dose oral contraceptive pill "could be considered as abortifacients and therefore declared illegal" if life were defined in law from fertilisation; recorded in the Guttmacher Institute's own account.
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