




Abortion in Indonesia under the 2023 new Criminal Code: A Theological Response

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 <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.2026>

Abstract

The new Indonesian Criminal Code, Law No. 1 of 2023, Article 463, permits abortion up to 14 weeks of pregnancy for women who are victims of rape or sexual violence. In contrast, the previous exemption under Article 75 of Law No. 36 of 2009 on Health was limited to pregnancies up to 6 weeks. This change introduces a further challenge to bioethics from a Christian theological perspective, particularly when compared to the Islamic one. The Christian perspective on abortion fundamentally hinges on the status of the foetus. This article explores whether the foetus is considered a person deserving of respect and protection from the moment of conception, including in cases of rape and sexual violence. The central question is whether the foetus is regarded as a human being made in the image of God. If so, abortion would be deemed morally wrong, as it involves the deliberate taking of human life. Employing a historical-theological method, the article analyses selected biblical passages, early Christian documents and teachings, and writings from the Early Church Fathers, all of whom consistently condemned abortion as equivalent to murder. Additionally, the research reviews decisions from early church councils and the papal encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. The findings highlight that the Christian tradition has historically viewed the foetus as a human being from conception, with an inherent right to life. The article concludes that, from a Christian ethical standpoint, abortion is impermissible, as it represents the wilful destruction of an innocent life. It also suggests that the Christian community should seek better, more constructive solutions in light of the new Indonesian Criminal Code. This research contributes to contemporary discussions on abortion by reaffirming the consistent Christian tradition against it and proposing a constructive Christian approach to addressing pregnancies resulting from rape and sexual violence.

Keywords: Abortion in Indonesia, Christian Bioethics, Personhood, New Criminal Law, Sanctity of Life

Introduction

Indonesia's new Criminal Code, Law No. 1 of 2023, which was approved on December 6, 2022, and will officially take effect on January 2, 2026, brings notable reforms in the legal treatment of abortion (ICLU, 2024). Before this, the law only permitted abortion in specific circumstances, such as pregnancies resulting from rape within a strict limit of six weeks or when a medical emergency was identified early in the pregnancy. However, the new law, as outlined in Article 463, paragraph (2), while maintaining provisions for medical emergencies, extends the gestational age limit for abortion to 14 weeks which includes victims not only of



rape but also of sexual violence. This revision represents a significant shift in Indonesia's legal framework regarding reproductive rights (World Health Organisation, 2022).

The recent push, from 2020 to 2022, for the decriminalization of abortion and expanding access to safe abortions up to 14 weeks, raises significant concerns from the standpoint of Christian bioethics. While its advocates argue for a stronger emphasis on reproductive rights, Christian moral teachings, grounded in both Scripture and Church tradition, present a different vision of the sanctity of human life, one that is fundamentally different from the idea of expanding reproductive rights. The language of right is a slippery slope that can quickly turn into 'abortion' right, a phrase that is very problematic in the context of a Christian moral deliberation.

The period of 14 weeks coincides substantially with WHO's recommendation for safe abortion. Unsafe abortions remain a major contributor to maternal deaths and morbidities, leading to both physical and mental health complications (Bearak et al., 2020; Ganatra et al., 2017; Giorgio et al., 2020; In Brief Abortion in Indonesia, n.d.; Philbin et al., 2020). These health risks affect the individual and place substantial social and financial burdens on families, communities, and health systems (World Health Organisation, 2022). A 14-week limit is primarily based on a legal and medical decision, reflecting foetal development and public policy concerns (WHO, 2023). By 14 weeks, the foetus begins to develop recognizable features, including early organ and neurological structures, though it remains far from being viable outside the womb. After this point, abortion procedures become more complex and carry increased medical risks (WHO, 2022). Countries such as Argentina, Portugal, Spain, France, and Indonesia have set this limit for legal abortions.

In the Indonesian context, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) issued a fatwa on October 28, 1983, declaring that abortion after *nafkh al-ruh*—the moment the soul is believed to enter the foetus—is forbidden, except for medical reasons. The term *nafkh al-ruh* in Islamic theology refers to the point at which God bestows the human spirit upon the foetus, a concept with varying interpretations regarding its precise timing. However, most scholars agree this occurs after approximately 120 days of pregnancy, or around three months (Iqbal et al., 2022). There are different interpretations of the precise date of *nafkh al-ruh*, but most interpretations agreed that it is after 3 months or at the age of 120 days of pregnancy (Fatmawati, 2016). As such, Indonesia's New Criminal Code aligns with these views, creating less ethical dilemmas for Indonesian Muslims regarding abortion in such cases, especially within the 120 days before *nafkh al-ruh*.

The Christian understanding of life in the womb is rooted in the belief in the sanctity of life, affirming that from the very start of human existence, a person is already viewed as a unique being in the eyes of God. However, discussions and debates about the exact moment when human life begins have evolved alongside scientific advancements, leading to varying interpretations within the Christian community. According to Christian bioethicist, Paul Ramsey, four possible moments could be considered the beginning of life: the formation of the genotype, the time of implantation, the period of segmentation, and the development of the foetus during the first 4 to 8 weeks (Finnis et al., 2014).

While opinions on abortion before this stage differ, most Islamic legal schools allow some degree of permissibility under certain circumstances, particularly within the first 120 days. Small groups of hardliners reject any suggestion of abortion beyond 40 days, however majority of Muslims in Indonesia accept the 120-day limit. This position is grounded in the belief that ensoulment occurs at 120 days, as derived from Hadith traditions. Suppose an abortion is performed after the soul (*nafkh al-ruh*) has been breathed into the foetus. In that case, all scholars (*fuqaha*) agree that abortion is prohibited (*haram*), unless there is a valid



excuse. Nevertheless, the MUI's Fatwa No. 4 of 2005 on abortion highlights key points, including the conditions under which abortion may be permitted. One crucial condition is that the abortion must be carried out before the foetus reaches 40 days of age. This limit is more in line with previous regulation under Law No. 36 of 2009 on Health, which set the limit within 6 weeks. This is also the moral position of the Indonesian Obstetrics and Gynaecology Association (PP POGI) in their response to Law No. 17 of 2023 on Health (UU Kesehatan No. 17 Tahun 2023).

The moral challenge is however different from the Indonesian Christians' viewpoint. Although some churches in the west, such as the General Synod of the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the Lutheran Church in America, have provided similar provision to allow abortion, which is more in line with Indonesian law, nevertheless, the majority world of Christianity in Africa, Latin America, and Asia hold on to a more traditional understanding, that is, life begins at conception (Macaulay, 2020). Historical studies of Christian positions do not necessarily consist of one symphony without dissenting opinions (Connery, 1977). The interpretation of when humanity begins is a nuanced discussion, typically centred around four key moments: the formation of the genotype (fertilization), implantation into the uterus, segmentation of cells, or foetal development during the early weeks (between 4-8 weeks). The point at which the foetus is considered fully human varies, reflecting diverse theological perspectives within Christianity on the sanctity and beginning of life.

In this research, I will contend that there is a compelling case to be made that biblical teachings, patristic theology, and ecclesiastical documents collectively offer a moral framework that human life begins at conception. This position will challenge a harmonious Christian moral response to the 2023 Criminal Law. At its core, Christian bioethics is shaped by a moral vision that is not merely concerned with eliminating suffering or expanding human choice but is fundamentally oriented toward protecting and flourishing human identity as created in the image of God. This vision is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which calls believers to protect and nurture life in all its stages. The Christian moral vision contends that human dignity is inviolable, beginning from the very earliest stages of life, such as in the case of the embryo (NCCS, 2024) In the following, I will begin my argument by presenting a reading of biblical teaching that provides a more profound vision of human flourishing and dignity.

Methodology

This research employs a historical-theological method to examine the Christian perspective on abortion in light of Indonesia's 2023 Criminal Code. The study begins with an analysis of biblical passages that discuss the sanctity of life and human personhood, followed by an exploration of early Christian writings, including the Didache, the Early Church Fathers, and decisions from early church councils, all of which have shaped Christian moral teachings on abortion. Additionally, the research engages with significant ecclesiastical documents such as papal encyclicals, particularly *Evangelium Vitae*, to trace the development of the Christian ethical stance on the issue.

A comparative approach is also utilized to contrast the Christian view with Islamic perspectives on foetal development and personhood, drawing from classical Islamic jurisprudence and contemporary fatwas, including those issued by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI). By integrating theological, historical, and ethical analysis, this study aims to provide a comprehensive moral framework for evaluating abortion laws within the Indonesian context.



Biblical Teachings on Human Dignity

The Holy Bible provides a foundational basis for understanding the sanctity of life. In Genesis 1:27, it is stated that humanity is made in the image of God, a theological truth that affirms the inherent dignity and value of every human being from conception. The psalmist in Psalm 139:13-16 speaks of God's intimate involvement in forming life within the womb: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." This recognition of the divine role in the creation of life implies a moral obligation to protect it from the very beginning, regardless of circumstances such as pregnancy from rape or foetal anomalies.

Moreover, the commandment "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13) further reinforces the protection of innocent life, and Christians have historically interpreted this commandment as extending to the unborn. The intentional ending of an innocent life, even under challenging circumstances, is therefore seen as a violation of God's law. Nevertheless, a direct command against abortion is not found in the Bible, though that practice of abortion was well known during the Old and New Testaments.

Our approach in this paper, nevertheless, is not to provide proof texts that show conclusively that abortion is wrong according to scripture. Some argue that the lack of explicit moral command against abortion is the sign of biblical neutrality (Maguire & Burtchaell, 1987). However, rather than quoting specific text to prove our point, this paper will look upon four themes that ground our argument into deeper Christian understanding and broader moral vision, namely the portrayal of God in Jesus Christ, the true humanity in bodily resurrection, the hospitality of Christian community and the taking side of God toward the weak, the victim and the powerless.

Christian moral response must begin with the ultimate revelation of the face of God in Jesus Christ. This point is ultimately distinctive to the Christian faith in which the centrality of Jesus Christ for theology and ethics differentiates it from other religions. Philippians 2:1-11 pictures the face of God in Jesus Christ, which is fundamental to Christian moral life, namely humility, service, and sacrifice.

2 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (King James Version – KJV)_

The ontological dimension of God is the One who true being is neither power nor glory, but the One who is truly God in the act of self-giving. God's true glory is fully displayed in this humiliation act of self-giving. The God who is free is pouring out His life absolutely in His loving freedom. Accordingly, the vision of Christian morality is shaped by this freedom to give one's life in love and service. It is this basic inner moral dynamic that is at odds with the trend to model the right for abortion as a protection of human freedom. Giving out an embryo to recover



one's freedom and authenticity is very different from the meaning of God's freedom in the act of self-giving. The freedom and love of God create a space for others rather than an enclosed God-self in God's existential freedom.

Secondly, the bodily resurrection of Christ is central to Christian faith, serving as the ultimate affirmation of His life, teachings, and mission. Beyond a historical event, the resurrection is a profound theological truth that highlights the inherent dignity and purpose of the human body. In Christian thought, the body is not merely a vessel for earthly life, but a sacred space for divine activity and redemption. This is reinforced in Romans 12:1-2, which calls believers to "offer [their] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God." Christ's resurrection also signifies the final victory over sin, evil, and death, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 15. The belief in the bodily resurrection shapes a moral framework that elevates the human body as the site of Christian virtue and piety. It rejects the idea that the body is a tool for personal autonomy, self-gratification, or existential freedom. Instead, the body is understood as the central locus of redemption, meant to be used in service to God and others. Practices that treat the body as a means of exercising individual freedom, such as sexual immorality or abortion, are seen as incompatible with the call to discipleship, which requires using the body to honour and glorify God.

Thirdly, the Gospel's core message is a universal invitation to become part of one family in Christ, marked by radical openness and hospitality that transcends cultural, social, and even biological distinctions (Romans 8). In Christ, both male and female are reconciled and brought under God's grace, breaking down traditional barriers of division. Jesus consistently welcomed those deemed religiously or socially unworthy into the community of faith, a practice that the early Christian church continued by extending hospitality and inclusion across cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries—even to the farthest reaches of the earth (Acts 1:8). In a cultural context where children, alongside the deaf, mute, and those considered mentally deficient, were marginalized, Christianity, following the teachings of Jesus, elevated them as fully human and worthy of dignity. The Christian community embraced those considered the least in society, including widows, orphans, and enslaved people, offering them a place of belonging. This inclusivity reflects the heart of the Gospel: to invite and uplift those on the margins, recognizing the intrinsic value of every person in the eyes of God. In the Christian community, the child's coming is a communal event. Initially, pregnancy news sparks celebrations, prayers, and family gatherings. As the child is recognized as an individual, the community provides support. Preparations for the child's arrival often include religious blessings or baby showers. After the birth, family bonding rituals and the giving of traditional gifts take place. Lastly, baptism ceremonies incorporate the child into the divine community, accompanied by feasts and communal celebrations.

Fourthly, this means that an essential aspect of the Christian calling is to stand with the weak, the vulnerable, and the powerless. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus consistently aligns Himself with sinners and the marginalized, offering them compassion, dignity, and the hope of redemption. His ministry was marked by an intentional outreach to those society rejected—sinners, the poor, the sick, and the oppressed—revealing the inclusive nature of God's kingdom (Luke 5:30-32). In the context of abortion, Christian ethics recognizes the need for a compassionate and balanced approach. On one hand, it calls for deep empathy and support for women who are victims of rape, sexual violence, or other traumatic circumstances, recognizing the profound physical, emotional, and psychological burdens they bear. Although rape is an assault on an individual, it affects far more than just the victim. It profoundly impacts the broader community—family, the church, and society. Consequently, the responsibility for addressing and dealing with the consequences of this violent act lies not only with the victim but with the entire community. On the other hand, it also affirms the sanctity of the unborn



child, who, though unable to survive outside the womb, is seen as a distinct life deserving of protection and care. This view should encourage Christians to seek solutions that neither dismiss the pain of the mother nor disregard the life of the unborn, aiming instead to provide a space where both are valued and supported by the Christian community.

The Early Church Fathers and Theologians

In light of the biblical moral vision, it is not a surprise that in the context of its cultural and social circumstance, the early church had a strong view against abortion. In early Jewish thought, particularly during the time of early Christianity, the legal framework around abortion was limited and somewhat ambiguous. The unborn child was frequently regarded as the father's property, reflecting the patriarchal structure of ancient Jewish society (Maguire & Burtchaell, 1987). Having said that, however, Jewish scriptural laws generally prohibit abortion, viewing it as murder, but with some exceptions for example, when the mother's life is in danger, then abortion is considered permissible or even required. Also, Roman law offered no legal protections against abortion or infanticide. Both practices were considered the prerogatives of the male head of the household, who had almost absolute authority over family members (Maguire & Burtchaell, 1987). Apart from the New Testament, one of our most ancient Christian documents is the Didache, also known as The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. Significantly, the Didache already includes the obligation to protect the unborn and infants, reflecting the early Christian commitment to the sanctity of life.

You shall not commit murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not prey upon boys; you shall not fornicate; you shall not deal in magic; you shall not practice sorcery; you shall not murder a child by abortion, or kill a newborn; you shall not covet your neighbour's goods . . . (*Didache* 2:2-3).

Around the turn of the second century, the Letter of Barnabas echoes The Didache's condemnation of abortion and infanticide, using almost identical language. In this early Christian text, the author repeats the call to avoid these practices, lamenting that they lead to the destruction of "small images of God" (*Barnabas* 19:5; 20:2). In the context of accusation against Christian that was accused of abortion, Athenagoras of Athens (c.133-c.190 AD) states,

We call it murder and say it will be accountable to God if women use instruments to procure abortion: how shall we be called murderers ourselves? The same person cannot regard that which a woman carries in her womb as a living creature, and therefore as an object of value to God, and then slay the creature that has come forth to the light of day. (*Embassy for the Christians*, 35)

Similar attitudes can be found in Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Hippolytus of Rome. This high view of the newborn and unborn was part of Christianity's broader extension of personhood to those whom the culture often deemed non-persons. Hippolytus for example explains how there are some women, who claim to be believers but resorted to aborting their own children. Hippolytus states:

Whence women, reputed believers, began to resort to drugs for producing sterility, and to gird themselves round, so to expel what was being conceived on account of their not wishing to have a child either by a slave or by any paltry fellow, for the sake of their family and excessive wealth. Behold, into how great impiety that lawless one has proceeded, by



inculcating adultery and murder at the same time! (Hippolytus, book IX, chapter 7, Refutations of All Heresies)

Thus, the unborn were part of a broader group whose moral and social status was affirmed by the Church, starkly contrasting the prevailing cultural norms. This inclusion was a hallmark of early Christian ethics. It consistently emphasized the value and personhood of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of society, affirming their full humanity and their place in the Christian community.

The Protestant Reformers maintained the traditional teaching of their time against abortion, though neither Martin Luther, nor John Calvin, dedicated specific works to addressing the issue in detail. However, both Reformers affirmed the full humanity of the foetus from its earliest stages of development. Martin Luther viewed the unborn as fully human, emphasizing that life begins at conception. He argued that God is active in creating each human life from conception, as expressed in Psalm 139:13-16, which speaks of God's intimate involvement in forming life in the womb (Maguire, 2011).

God wanted to teach and attest that the beginning of children is wonderfully pleasing to Him, in order that we might realize that He upholds and defends His Word when He says: Be fruitful. He is not hostile to children as we are. ... How great, therefore, the wickedness of human nature is! How many girls are there who prevent conception and kill and expel tender foetuses, although procreation is the work of God. (Martin Luther, *Lecture on Genesis*, Chapter Twenty-Five)

In similar fashion, John Calvin said,

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. If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a foetus in the womb before it has come to light. (John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses*, Vol. III)

In this passage, Calvin likened the womb to a home, a place of protection and safety. This contrasts sharply with modern views that often see the foetus as a separate individual utilizing the mother's womb. Calvin's metaphor emphasizes the vulnerability of the embryo and its natural belonging within the woman's body, highlighting the severity of destroying a foetus in what is essentially its home. This imagery underscores the ethical weight of the act, framing it within the sacredness of the maternal relationship.

The rejection of abortion in Christian history was not an isolated or obscure doctrine. Instead, it was embedded within a broader ethical obligation shared by all believers to protect groups considered especially vulnerable to the whims and power of others. Among these were the enslaved person, the enemy, the wife, and the infant—whether unborn or newborn—all of whom were seen as being at significant risk in the prevailing social structures of the time (Gorman, 1982). By integrating the unborn into its ethical framework, Christian faith highlighted the continuity between their faith, obedience and love in Jesus Christ and their broader obligation to uphold justice and mercy for all powerless, marginalized, or at risk in society. This holistic approach underscored the Church's commitment to safeguarding human life in all its forms, particularly those deemed the most defenceless. It is a Christians duty to care for the weak, the vulnerable, and all those without a voice, including the unborn and many see these as fundamental Christian ethics aspects. The rejection of abortion is not just a standalone



position, but part of a far larger narrative about the sanctity of life and the protection of those who are at risk of exploitation, harm, or injustice.

Church Councils and some Decisions

The earliest church council to prohibit abortion was the Council of Ancyra in A.D. 314, followed by the Council of Trullo in the 7th century. Canon 21 of the Council of Ancyra and Canon 91 of the Council of Trullo both declare that individuals who administer drugs to induce abortion, or who take substances to terminate a foetus, are to be regarded as guilty of murder and subject to the same penalties. These canons reflect the Orthodox Church's stance on abortion.

As mentioned above, both reformers, that is, Luther and Calvin agreed on rejecting abortion. Most of the protestant churches in Indonesia are rooted in the tradition that began with Luther and Calvin. Although the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) has not issued an official statement, in 2014, Reverend Andreas A. Yewangoe, then chairman of PGI, publicly opposed the government's decision to legalize abortion up to six weeks under the regulation of PP No. 61/2014. He emphasized the need for alternatives to abortion, reflecting the broader Protestant opposition to its legalization. He stated, "I think there must be other solutions besides legalizing abortion. A pregnancy should not be terminated because a child is a gift from God". He also suggested that the government should reconsider this regulation, as children conceived from rape have the right to be born. On the other hand, major protestant denominations have not produced any statement about the situation and remain vague in their position on abortion.

Within the Catholic Church, the attitude and decision on abortion are evident (Church & Paul, 1995). The most significant is the *Evangelium Vitae* (Latin for "The Gospel of Life"), a letter from Pope John Paul II, published on March 25, 1995, during the Feast of the Annunciation. The letter explains the Catholic Church's beliefs about the value of human life, covering issues like murder, abortion, euthanasia, and the death penalty. It reaffirms the Church's traditional teachings on these topics. On abortion, Pope John Paul II remarked,

Therefore, by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors, in communion with the bishops – who on various occasions have condemned abortion and who in the aforementioned consultation, albeit dispersed throughout the world, have shown unanimous agreement concerning this doctrine – I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written Word of God, is transmitted by the Church's Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium (*Evangelium Vitae* section 62).

In the development of the Catholic church's view on abortion, there is developed a distinction between direct and indirect abortion (Finnis et al., 2014). The remark above suggests that there might be times when abortion is allowed, but only in exceptional cases. It proposes a distinction between direct and indirect abortion to delineate permissible circumstances for the latter. In direct abortion, the primary intention is to terminate the pregnancy, rendering it ethically impermissible. Conversely, indirect abortion is justified when the primary goal is to preserve the life of the pregnant woman, and all other viable options have been exhausted. This distinction serves to constrain the scope of permissible abortions. It is only warranted in life-threatening situations where no alternative means of preserving the woman's life exist. Other considerations, such as personal convenience, mental health, or financial circumstances, do not constitute valid justifications. Indirect abortion underscores the complex reality that in some instances, the preservation of one life may necessitate the loss of another.



In conclusion, the Catholic Church, through documents like *Evangelium Vitae*, has consistently upheld the sanctity of life, emphasizing that abortion is a grave moral evil.

The Orthodox Church shares this view, with Church Councils such as the Council of Ancyra treating abortion as a grave sin. In essence, according to some of the Early Church Fathers, such as inter-alia, Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, and many others, each soul is created separately by God and joins with the body to coincide with the 40th day of the formation of the body. In the view of other teachers and fathers of the Church such as Tertullian, Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, and Saint Macarius of Egypt, both substances i.e. soul and body receive their beginning and are perfected simultaneously: The soul is created from the souls of the parents, just as the body is formed from the bodies of the father and mother. In this way, the parents take part with God in the creation of life. Conception is thus a sacred gift of God and anyone who violates this special gift, and destroys life, is violating God's law. The Orthodox Church has always condemned abortion, St. Basil the Great, in his 8th canon, called murderers those who by whatever means terminated the life of the foetus. We also find abortion prohibited in the 91st canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council. (see Mikirtichan, et al., 2021; Protopapas, 2016).

Even within the Protestant tradition, many denominations maintain a pro-life stance, recognizing abortion as incompatible with the Christian call to protect life. These ecclesiastical decisions, rooted in centuries of Christian moral reasoning, affirm that the life of the unborn must be defended and that abortion should only be considered in the rarest of circumstances, such as when the life of the mother is at serious risk.

Application to Rape and Sexual Violence Cases

Although Christian theological position on abortion has strong historical continuity, the ethical implications of abortion in cases of pregnancy resulting from rape present a complex moral dilemma. Denying a rape victim the option to terminate the pregnancy would impose an immense, undesired burden that is not a consequence of her actions. This burden is particularly significant for victims who are underage or mentally ill, as they may lack the capacity to fulfil the responsibilities of motherhood. How should a Christian bioethicist approach this issue? I want to propose several considerations from a contextual viewpoint to the issue.

Firstly, in the Indonesian context, we should emphasize the prompt medical intervention within 24 hours of the assault, such as flushing the reproductive tract or administering hormonal treatments, can significantly reduce the risk of fertilization.

Secondly, despite the low probability of pregnancy from rape, the ethical question of whether victims should have the right to terminate such pregnancies persists. Christian thought suggests that this issue should not be considered solely in the context of individual trauma but also within the broader framework of societal responsibility. Rape, as a crime against an individual, also has far-reaching implications for the community. The burden of caring for the victim and any resulting child should be shared by society through emotional, material, and physical support (Stallsworth et al., 1993). Proponents of abortion in these cases often argue that it is a pragmatic solution, especially if society is unwilling to shoulder its responsibilities. However, this pragmatic approach risks compromising the moral fabric of society by promoting excessive individualism. In contrast, a community-centred approach emphasizes the importance of collective responsibility and support as a means of addressing the consequences of rape without resorting to abortion.

Thirdly, the churches' commitment to addressing abortion as a community responsibility highlights that the issue is not merely a matter of law but a reflection of the kind of people the



Christians are called to be, the people of God, and as the community of love. This suggestion emphasizes that the response to abortion should focus on our identity and values within the faith community. This suggestion aligns with implementation regulation of PP No. 28/2024, which ensures the rights of children born from rape or sexual violence. Under Article 124, these children have the right to be cared for by their mother or family. If the mother or family cannot provide care, the child may be placed in a childcare institution or under state care, demonstrating a commitment to protecting the mother and child. This regulation offers both an opportunity and a calling for the church to fully engage in ministry within Indonesia, aligning its actions with the theology of human life. It encourages the church to remain steadfast in advocating for life and to respond to societal challenges like abortion with compassion and commitment, reflecting the Christian values of care, responsibility, and community. This involvement will reinforce the church's mission to uphold the sanctity of life in the Indonesian context.

Conclusion

From the Christian perspective, life begins at conception. Even at its earliest stage, the human embryo is a human person made in the image of God and possesses inherent dignity and value. The Christian tradition opposes any act that results in the destruction or manipulation of human embryos, whether through abortion or the selection of embryos based on perceived genetic desirability. This concern for safeguarding human life is central to the Christian bioethical response to abortion. While the Christian faith shares the goal of improving human life and reducing mortality and unsafe abortions, it insists on a moral framework that emphasizes human dignity, freedom, and responsibility. In bioethical decisions—such as those concerning abortion or genetic editing—the Christian perspective advocates that choices be made not based on convenience or societal trends, but in alignment with the understanding of life as a sacred gift from God. This approach calls for ethical discernment rooted in Christian values.

In conclusion, Christian bioethics provides a critical response to the secular agenda behind the lessening of the regulation of safe abortion in Indonesia. It calls for a deeper reflection on what it means to be human, urging society to prioritize human dignity over individual choice. The moral vision of Christian ethics seeks to protect life, not only from the beginning but through its entirety, standing as a firm witness to the sanctity of every person created in the image of God. The church's role is to ensure that the conversation about public bioethics does not forsake wisdom for the sake of knowledge and pragmatism.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: *The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.*



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