

# RE, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE) –

## Closure work for Year 10 and 11

You will be continuing with structured revision and Exam question practice this week.

### Tasks

1. Read the knowledge, below, and summarise it in your books
2. Write and respond to this Exam-style question: **Describe why some Christians may be against abortion. (5-Marks).**
3. Write and respond to this Exam-style question: **Explain Christian attitudes towards abortion. (8-Marks).**

#### What exactly does a 5-Mark question require?

- For these questions, you will be asked to **describe** something that religious people do, or believe in.
- In other words, this question is asking you to **give facts about** something that religious people do, or believe in.
- It is **not necessary** to give any form of **explanation or evaluation**.
- You need to give at least **five** pieces of relevant information. You should also include **key terms** and **sources of wisdom**.



#### What exactly does an 8-Mark question require?

- You will be asked to **explain** religious beliefs or why something is important to religious people.
- You need to remember **linking words** in response to this question, such as: In addition...Moreover... Furthermore... Consequently... In contrast... However...
- **You cannot use Humanism as a view in C questions.**
- **You need to give an answer and then back it up with 3 sources of wisdom.**
- On the **themes papers** you need to give a view from **two different religions or denominations**.



# Human life

For Christians, human life is sacred and is a gift from God which is to be respected and protected. This teaching is called the sanctity of life.

The Bible teaches that human beings are created in the image of God. It also teaches that murder is forbidden.

Jesus reminded his followers that each person is precious to God, so much so that God has counted every hair on their head.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.**Genesis 1:31**

Christians also believe that only God should choose when life begins and ends. This means that many Christians such as Catholics do not agree with the use of contraception or in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment.

It also has an impact on beliefs about issues such as abortion and euthanasia.

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.**Jeremiah 1:5**

**There are many examples of Jesus expressing the value of human life in the Bible, such as in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and the way he tended to a leper.**

## Abortion

### What is an abortion?

An abortion is when a pregnancy is ended by the deliberate removal of the foetus from the womb so that it does not result in the birth of a child.

### What does the law say about abortion?

The Abortion Act 1967, as amended by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, allows termination of a pregnancy by a registered medical practitioner, subject to certain conditions. This applies to England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Under the Act an abortion must be carried out in a hospital or specially licensed clinic. Before a legally induced abortion can take place, two doctors must agree that:

- the woman is less than 24 weeks pregnant, and
- it is necessary to prevent grave damage to the woman's physical or mental health, or any of her existing children

Abortion is always legal, even after 24 weeks, if:

- there is a serious threat to the woman's health or life, or
- there is substantial risk that the child will be born with physical or mental abnormalities and be seriously disabled

In cases of medical emergency, a second doctor's agreement does not need to be sought.

**The law outlined above does not apply to Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland.**

# Arguments for and against abortion

There are many powerful arguments for and against abortion.

**People with different beliefs may agree with many of these arguments.**

Many religious believers are likely to have great sympathy with the arguments that a person should be able to decide what happens to their own body, but for them the idea that life is sacred may outweigh other arguments, however good.

## Arguments for abortion

- A woman has the right to choose whether or not she wants to have the baby. It is her body.
- In the case of rape, it would be lacking in compassion to deny a woman the right to an abortion.
- The woman might be too young, or have work or family commitments which make bringing up a child difficult or impossible for her.
- The pregnant woman's health and welfare are more important than that of the embryo or foetus.
- The pregnant woman's life is more important than that of the embryo or foetus.
- The embryo or foetus does not have the same rights as the mother.
- The quality of life of the unborn child or the woman's existing children could be adversely affected by the birth.
- Stopping legal abortions would mean a return to 'back street' abortions, causing a great deal of suffering to the health and wellbeing of the woman. Abortion could therefore be the lesser of two evils.

## Arguments against abortion

- Catholics believe that life begins at conception and therefore abortion is morally wrong. Most Protestant churches in Britain also view abortion as a moral wrong, but concede that there are some limited conditions when it can be allowed.
- Every human being, including an embryo or foetus, has the right to live and to reach their potential.
- There are alternatives to abortion, eg adoption, when an individual or a couple become a child's legal parent(s) after its birth, and the child's birth parents no longer have any rights or responsibilities towards the child.
- The unborn child is denied choice.
- Abortion destroys human life and makes life appear cheap and disposable. This affects the quality and value of life.
- People born with disabilities can live full and happy lives.

# Abortion - diverse Christian attitudes

Views on abortion can differ between the different Christian denominations.

## Catholic Church

- The Catholic Church states that abortion is **always wrong**, because life begins at conception and is God-given.
- This means that in the eyes of the Catholic Church abortion is classed as **murder** and goes against the commandment, Thou shalt not kill (Exodus 20:13). This commandment is reiterated by Jesus in Matthew 19:18.
- The Church also disagrees with abortion as it goes against natural law, which is an act that goes against what nature intended. The Church takes an **absolutist** stance on this and believes that abortion is wrong in all situations.
- The Catholic Church is pro-life. They argue that all life starts out in the same way, so all life should have the chance to develop and survive.
- The Catholic Church argues that all life has value, and that to take life away is a sin. The Catholic Church would argue on behalf of the unborn child that it should be cared for and looked after.

If a woman has lifesaving treatment whilst pregnant, and a side effect is the ending of a pregnancy, then the Catholic Church will accept abortion in this instance. This is known as the law of 'double effect.' This does not include having an abortion to save the life of the mother. It is only a non-direct treatment.

## Anglican Church

The views on abortion held by the Anglican Church can be mixed between believers.

- The general view shared is that abortion is **wrong**.
- However, abortion may be accepted in some, **strictly limited circumstances** if it is considered to be the most preferable option. In these circumstances, they will look at the **quality of life factor**, meaning:
  - if the mother's life is at risk, or if she has been raped, then abortion would be allowed
  - if it was for a social issue, then abortion would not be allowed
- The Anglican Church also believes that all life is precious and a gift from God, so should therefore be protected.

## Methodist Church

- The Methodist Church tends to have an **anti-abortion view**.
- However, they will allow abortion in **extreme circumstances**.
- They offer help and support to mothers in order to try and avoid abortion.