



GCSE Revision

Religious Attitudes to Abortion

[Key Questions]

- When does life begin?
- Does the baby have rights? If so, are they more/less important than the woman's right to choose?
- Is it ever right to take life?

[Definition]

- Abortion – the premature termination of a pregnancy
- When this happens naturally this is called a miscarriage
- The word ‘abortion’ normally refers to an operation used to purposely end the pregnancy

[The Law]

- Illegal in some countries (e.g. Ireland and some states in the US)
- Encouraged and used to control the population numbers in others (e.g. China)
- Legal in England, Scotland and Wales under certain conditions

[Human Fertilization and Embryology Act 1990]

A woman may have an abortion up to 24 weeks of pregnancy if two doctors agree that continuing the pregnancy may:

- put her life at risk
- put her physical/mental health at risk
- put any existing children at risk

The abortion may take place right up until birth in the case of severe disability.

[Key Beliefs - Christianity]

- God is the creator and destroyer of life
- Human life is sacred, created in God's image
- The Bible teaches that God knows us and loves us before we are even in the womb
- Love and compassion must be shown to all

[Abortion – Roman Catholics]

- Against abortion in all cases, no matter what the circumstances
- The child has an absolute right to life
- Life begins at conception
- No-one has the right to take the child's life

[Abortion – Other Denominations]

- Against abortion in general, especially for social reasons
- Accept that in certain circumstances (e.g. rape, the mother's life at risk etc.) abortion may be the preferred choice

[Key Beliefs – Islam (the Qur'an)]

- All life is sacred and cannot be destroyed except for a Just cause (e.g. War)
- It is a serious sin to take the life of a child (is the foetus a child?)
- On judgement day children will demand to know why they were killed (does this include the unborn?)
- Ensoulment takes place at 120 days, until this point the mother has greater rights, after this the child has equal rights

[Abortion - Islam]

- Views are divided
- For many other issues the unborn are seen as people with equal rights in Islam (e.g. execution, inheritance, miscarriage)
- Abortion seen by many as interfering with Allah's plan for the mother and child
- Others find it acceptable in extreme circumstances