

Teachings against Abortion from the Early Church Fathers, Doctors of the Church and Others

BARNABAS (early second century) "Never do away with an unborn child, or destroy it after its birth."
(Epistle of Barnabas, chap. 19)

The DIDACHE (first century) "You shall not slay the child by abortions." (Didache 2:2)

The Didache - Alternate title: *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* c. 60-100 A.D.

The Didache is, in all probability, the oldest surviving extant piece of non-canonical literature. It is not so much a letter as a handbook for new Christian converts, consisting of instructions derived directly from the teachings of Jesus. The Didache claims to have been authored by the twelve apostles. While this is unlikely, the work could be a direct result of the first Apostolic Council, c.50 C.E. (Acts 15:28). Similarities to the Apostolic Decree are apparent, and the given structure of the church is quite primitive. Most scholars agree that the work, in its earliest form, may have circulated as early as the 60's C.E., though additions and modifications may have taken place well into the third century. **2:2 {Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery,} thou shalt not corrupt boys, thou shalt not commit fornication, {thou shalt not steal,} thou shalt not deal in magic, thou shalt do no sorcery, thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born, {thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods, thou shalt not perjure thyself, thou shalt not bear false witness,} thou shalt not speak evil, thou shalt not cherish a grudge, thou shalt not be double-minded nor double-tongued;**

The Apocalypse of Peter ca 135 "I saw a gorge in which the discharge and excrement of the tortured ran down and became like a lake. There sat women, and the discharge came up to their throats; and opposite them sat many children, who were born prematurely, weeping. And from them went forth rays of fire and smote the women on the eyes. These were those who produced children outside of marriage and who procured abortions." -26

"Those who slew the unborn children will be tortured forever, for God wills it to so." -2:264

HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME (170-236 AD) "Women who were reputed to be believers began to take drugs ... to expel what was conceived, since they did not want to have a child. See then what great impiety that lawless one [Emperor Callistus] has fallen to, by teaching both adultery and murder at the same time."

The Early Church Fathers condemned the atrocity of abortion as child murder and **excommunicated for life until on their death bed**, those women and her accomplices in the brutal act. It is a historical fact, Canon Law 1398 was applied immediately and rigorously in the Early Church.

ATHENAGORAS OF ATHENS (ca. 177 AD) "What reason would we have to commit murder when we even say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give account of it to God? For the same person would not regard the fetus in the womb as a living thing and therefore an object of God's care, and at the same time slay it, once it had come to life." (A Plea Regarding Christians, chapter 35)

TERTULLIAN (ca. 223 AD) "We acknowledge, therefore, that life begins with conception, because we contend that the soul begins at conception. Life begins when the soul begins." "For us [Christians], murder is once and for all forbidden; so even the child in the womb, while yet the mother's blood is still being drawn on to form the human being, it is not lawful for us to destroy. To forbid birth is only quicker murder . . . He is a man, who is to be a man; the fruit is always present in the seed."
~ Tertullian, 197, Apologeticus, page 9.

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (345-407 AD) "Where there is murder before birth, you do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make of her a murderess as well."

"They [John and Jesus] were both alive while still in the womb. Elizabeth rejoiced as the infant leaped in her womb; Mary glorifies the Lord because Christ within inspired her. Each mother recognizes her child and is known by her child who is alive, being not merely souls but also spirits." -De A ninta 26:4

SAINT CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (223 AD) "Those who use abortifacients commit homicide."

"... if we would not kill off the human race born and developing according to God's plan, then our whole lives would be lived according to nature. Women who make use of some sort of deadly abortion drug kill not only the embryo but, together with it, all human kindness."

~ Clement of Alexandria, priest and the "Father of Theologians" (c. 150-220), *Christ the Educator*, Volume II, page 10

Athenagoras of Athens, letter to Marcus Aurelius, 177, Legatio pro Christianis ("Supplication for the Christians"), page 35. "Those women who use drugs to bring about an abortion commit murder and will have to give an account to God for their abortion."

Minucius Felix, theologian (c. 200-225), Octavius, page 30.

"... there are women who, by the use of medicinal potions, destroy the unborn life in their wombs, and murder the child before they bring it forth. These practices undoubtedly are derived from a custom established by your gods; Saturn, though he did not expose his sons, certainly devoured them."

Menucius Felix condemned abortion with, "...after such audacious acts [abortion and child murder], they, lost to all shame, attempt to call themselves a Catholic Church!" Menucius Felix goes on to say, "Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten...and make the chamber of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter."

Council of Eivira ca 305 "If a woman becomes pregnant by committing adultery, While her husband is absent, and after the act she destroys the child, it is proper to keep her from communion until death, because she has doubled her crime." -*Canon 63*

St. Ambrose of Milan ca 339-397 The wealthy, in order that their inheritance may not be divided among several, deny in the very womb their own progeny. By use of parricidal mixtures they snuff out the fruit of their wombs in the genital organs themselves. In this way life is taken away before it is born Who except man himself has taught us ways of repudiating children?"

-*Hexameron*

SAINT AUGUSTINE of HIPPO (354-430 AD) "Sometimes their sadistic licentiousness goes so far...they find one means or another to destroy the unborn and flush it from the mother's womb." (*The City of God*, Book One, Chapter 16)

St. Jerome (c. 340-420), Letter to Eustochium, 22.13.

"Some virgins [unmarried women], when they learn they are with child through sin, practice abortion by the use of drugs. Frequently they die themselves and are brought before the ruler of the lower world guilty of three crimes; suicide, adultery against Christ and murder of an unborn child."

St. BASIL THE GREAT (379) "The woman who purposely destroys her unborn child is guilty of murder. The hair-splitting difference between formed and unformed makes no difference to us."

"Moreover, those, too, who give drugs causing abortion, are deliberate murderers themselves, as well as those receiving the poison which kills the- fetus." -Letter 188:2

The Apostolic Constitutions ca 380 "Thou shalt not slay the child by causing abortion, nor kill that which is begotten. For everything that is shaped, and his received a soul from God, if slain, it shall be avenged, as being unjustly destroyed."

-7:3