

In the Third Edition of *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Greg Stafford takes up the familiar defense of subjects having to do with the use and pronunciation of the divine name, the identity of the biblical God Jah and of Jesus of Nazareth, as well as issues and questions having to do with salvation, God's sovereignty and mankind's "free will." This edition also contains discussions of several controversial issues, including questions related to abortion, a person's sexual orientation, and regarding uses of blood.

Most significantly, this book puts forth not only a defense of some the biblical teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses associated with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, but it also further introduces the Christian Witnesses of Jah, Jehovah's Witnesses who reject human traditions when these can be shown to contradict what is based on the best available reasons. Thus, a call is made to all Jehovah's Witnesses, to all Christians, indeed, to "every breathing thing" to bear witness to and to praise the biblical God Jah, and to acknowledge what can be shown to be true for good reasons about Jesus of Nazareth.—Psalm 150:6; Isaiah 29:13; 43:10, 12; Acts 18:24-28; Galatians 1:10; Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6.

GREG STAFFORD is also the author of *Three Dissertations on the Teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses* and of various articles and debates on biblical Christianity and the history and the beliefs of the Watchtower Society and Jehovah's Witnesses. He is a Christian Witness of Jah, one of Jehovah's Witnesses who rejects traditions and beliefs that are not based on the best available evidence.



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Murrieta, California

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compromised by what we believe or by what we practice, Christianity is extremely inclusive (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31; Romans 14; Colossians 3:17; 1 Timothy 2:1-4). Still, there are beliefs and practices which can be shown to have good reasons with other competing beliefs lacking equally good or even any good reasons, and possibly even being contradicted by the other belief's good reasons.

In spite of the fact that we all would likely agree that we have or desire beliefs and practices that have good reasons, there remain today disagreements about many issues and answers to questions about what is right, and what is wrong, what is immoral and what is moral, what we may believe is right but what we recognize is the right of all men and women in this world. Since there are differing views on important personal and social issues, we must work at learning about and understanding as good as possible the beliefs and practices of others and how these relate to what we otherwise have come to believe and practice, so that if nothing else we may, "If possible, as far as it depends upon [us], be peaceable with all men."—Romans 12:18.

Some important issues and questions that I will discuss in this chapter involve abortion, sexual conduct, a person's sexual orientation, the use of blood, and other personal interests. For the benefit of Jehovah's Witnesses and for those who want to know more about what we believe the Bible teaches, I will address each subject to the extent that it is warranted in this book. Thus, the section on "Uses of Blood" is the largest in this chapter, due to the history and the issues involved in the Watchtower Society's teachings concerning uses of blood and of its component and fraction parts.

Abortion

In April, 2007, I published several questions regarding abortion along with good reasons from the Bible which I believe answer some important questions related to the abortion debate.¹

¹ See my answers to "Abortion Questions," in "*Upon the Lampstand*" (April 7, 2007 [rev. May 4, 2008]), pages 1-5, available online through the Elihu Books web site (www.elihubooks.com).

In this sub-section I will re-present these questions along with my answers, revised and expanded in part, with appropriate modifications to style, grammar, and content for presentation in this chapter:

Question #1: *Do Jehovah's Witnesses support laws that would prohibit a woman from having an abortion under any circumstance?*

In the “new earth” (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1) which “will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea” (Isaiah 11:9), there will not be a circumstance in which a person will be subject to any questions related to abortion, ‘because pain and death will be no more’ (Revelation 21:4 [underlining added]). In the present world, where “man dominates man [and woman] to his injury” (Genesis 3:16; Ecclesiastes 8:9), and where “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19), there will be times when choices people make may result in an unwanted pregnancy. There are also times when a woman is forcibly made pregnant with the child of a person with whom she did not intend to have sexual relations, let alone have a child. So what is a person to do if he or she wants to please God and Jesus, but finds him- or herself in either of these circumstances?

When abortions happen today there are good reasons for believing that Jah God is saddened greatly at the loss of a life that if left to grow will (more likely than not) become a human person, whom we believe to be made in God's image (Genesis 1:27; 9:6). Jehovah's Witnesses who are Christian Witnesses of Jah teach what the Bible teaches about the life of an unborn human (see the answer to the next question on this subject), and then we leave the matter to each Christian to decide before God and Jesus “individually,” for they are the only ones truly capable of fully understanding all of the decisions any of us have had to make in this life.—Revelation 2:23; 22:12.

Question #2: *Do Jehovah's Witnesses believe the Bible clearly teaches that an abortion of an unborn fetus is wrong, and if not then shouldn't an abortion be a matter of conscience?*

Whether any circumstance in this world justifies an occasion where a person should have an abortion and thereby keep a living, human organism from growing into a person with rights and liberties is ultimately between that person and Jah God. Jehovah's Witnesses believe for good reasons that the Bible teaches us ways to live in the present world that will help us enjoy life and be happy. When it comes to abortion, here is what the Bible teaches according to the NWT:

Exodus 23:25-26

And YOU must serve Jehovah YOUR God, and he will certainly bless your bread and your water; and I shall indeed turn malady away from your midst. Neither a woman suffering an abortion [Hebrew: *shachol* or *shachal*] nor a barren woman will exist in your land.

Though "abortion" often refers to the voluntary termination by a mother of the life of her unborn fetus, it can also refer to unintentional miscarriages, which appears to be the meaning of the term in the above text from Exodus. I will consider this and other, similar texts below since they reveal how Jah views the death of an unborn child, which is why they are relevant when answering questions related to intentional abortion (at least in terms of the consequences, namely, the loss of the unborn child's life). If the above text does indeed refer to the death of an unborn child, then it clearly puts such an "abortion" in a negative light because it would *not* be an indication of Jah's blessing.

Job 21:10-11

His own bull actually impregnates, and it does not waste semen; his cow brings forth and suffers no abortion [Hebrew: *shachol* or *shachal*]. They keep sending out their young boys just like a flock, and their own male children go skipping about.

Here Job compares his state with that of "the wicked," who are here blessed with 'cows that do not suffer abortion.' Job then parallels this with their 'sending out young boys just like a flock,' that is, rather than die or be aborted. Here "abortion" of the unborn is clearly contrasted with the 'bringing forth' of young

bulls, and with the “sending out” of “children.” One is viewed positively and one is viewed negatively, apparently because life comes forth when there is no abortion or miscarriage. Just how negatively such abortions are to be viewed here or how Jah himself views them in all possible circumstances, is not clear (but see the final question and answer in this sub-section). But one (birth) is desirable while the other (abortion or miscarriage) outcomes are not desirable from Job’s perspective.—Compare Genesis 31:38; Psalm 144:14.

Exodus 21:22, 23

In case men should struggle with each other and they really hurt a pregnant woman and her children do come out but no fatal accident occurs, he is to have damages imposed upon him without fail according to what the owner of the woman may lay upon him; and he must give it through the justices. But if a fatal accident should occur, then you must give soul for soul.

While the above account does not for a certainty refer to the child that comes out prematurely as the “fatal accident,” events related to the premature ‘release’ of a child from a mother’s womb is again put into a negative light. In the light of the above texts, some of which appear to touch on the subject of the death of an unborn child (primarily through miscarriage), the following appear to be reasonable, biblical positions based on the best available evidence:

- 1) There is no biblical basis upon which Christians can teach that abortion under any circumstance is something God looks upon favorably. The death of an unborn child through abortion or miscarriage is also contrary to what we know about how Jah views the life of an unborn child from biblical texts such as those quoted above.
- 2) There is evidence from the Bible which shows that in certain instances Jah God views the death of an unborn child negatively.
- 3) It is not the responsibility of any Christian to go around trying to create laws that prevent abortions from occurring under any circumstance. Christians can and should support whatever laws

are in harmony with God's laws, and certainly if abortions are illegal then Christians should abide by such laws. But where a person who has become pregnant under various conditions faces questions involving abortion, each individual must decide for him- or herself what he or she will do when faced with a question about the life of their unborn child in this world.

At the same time, Christians do not have to endorse or otherwise support any form of an act (abortion) that involves the termination of the life of a fetus which, if left alone, will grow into a mature man or woman in God's image (see Genesis 1:26-27). Christian Witnesses of Jah teach these things because of the biblical texts cited above. But we allow and encourage individual accountability before God and Jesus for the choices we make, that is, so long as a person does not practice or attempt to justify what can be shown for good reasons to be contradictory to Jah God's will for unborn children. Of course, not every decision made concerning the life of an unborn child is an easy one to make, as the final question in this section reveals.

Question #3: *Is abortion "less wrong" when it involves cases of incest, rape, or mistakes made through artificial insemination than when a person aborts a child conceived through consensual sexual intercourse?*

If the "wrong" in view here is the abortion of the unborn child, then it is not "less wrong" no matter how the child was conceived. However, when a woman conceives a child through forced sexual intercourse (rape), then people today tend to be more understanding of the mother's dilemma, because of the circumstances involved. Of course, the life of the child is still an innocent one. But a mother's thinking and desire for a child born from unwanted sexual contact is understandably complicated under such conditions.

People often consider the morality of abortion relative to the belief about whether a fetus is a "person." Unless "person" can be assigned to the unborn fetus, then some believe it can be aborted no matter what the reason. Others believe the fetus is a "person" at the moment of conception, because it begins to grow according

to the genetic code which results from the combination of the male sperm and the female egg. If left alone, the unborn child will (more than likely) grow into a human person outside of the mother's womb. As I noted above, some believe there are circumstances such as rape which may morally permit the rape victim to justify an abortion because the child was not *wanted*. So the basis for some of the differing views about abortion can relate to *the mother's circumstances*, not simply to whether the fetus is an actual "person" before birth.

After considering the good reasons for one position or another, I look at questions having to do with abortion apart from the question of the "personhood" of the fetus (that is, whether the fetus is a "person" at the time the abortion is considered). Rather, for good reasons I consider a fetus to be a living being without having to define it as a "person" (though without denying that it is a "person"). However, if allowed to live the fetus will grow and become a mature human person with rights given to him or her in the part of the world in which he or she is born, that is, to the extent to which human rights are there granted.

Thus, the primary question for me as it relates to abortion issues is whether it is ever permissible to deny a living, human fetus *the opportunity* to grow into a mature human person. In the second question presented above, I presented what I learned from the Bible about the life of the unborn. After considering the best available evidence, I do not have good reasons to further answer questions about abortion issues than what I have here provided. Further, as a Christian Witness of Jah I hope to give people good reasons for beliefs, but also to empower others "individually" to decide "inward questionings," for that is how we shall all also be judged, "not in comparison with the other person."—Galatians 6:4; Revelation 2:23; 20:13.

Sex

Life exists. It is all around us. We are also life. Indeed, the best available reasons show that life can only come from life, or from what is manipulated by something already living (such as a scientist in a laboratory). In fact, there is no evidence to show that