



No doubt you're aware of the intense controversy within the pro-life movement about whether it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines since some vaccines were developed, produced, and/or tested using cell lines that were derived from body tissues taken from aborted children.

Many people are confused by the conflicting statements and divergent conclusions that have been issued by various pro-life leaders and organizations. This analysis aims to provide some clarity to help you make a good decision for you and your family. Unfortunately, within the pro-life movement, we seem to have formed a "circular firing squad" where people are questioning the sincerity of one another's pro-life commitment, based on whether people accept or reject the Covid-19 vaccine. I think this is a mistake. Call me ambitious, but I hope this analysis will help promote a more unified (and therefore more effective) response from the pro-life movement.

Point 1 – Narrowing the issue

First, I want to clarify that this discussion is limited only to the issue of morally evaluating the linkages of the Covid-19 vaccines to abortion. There are many other issues that have drawn attention—for example, safety, side effects, the fast development of the vaccines, etc. We're not addressing those issues because we have no special expertise. To find good answers to these questions, each one of us has to identify sources of information that are trustworthy, educate ourselves, and act accordingly.

Point 2 – We've been here before

This isn't a novel controversy. While the Covid-19 vaccines may be new, the problem of researchers using cell lines derived from aborted babies is, sadly, an issue that has dragged on for decades. For example, pro-life parents have long struggled with the fact that all vaccines available in the U.S. against certain common diseases (e.g., rubella and chickenpox) were grown in cell lines derived from the bodies of aborted children.

Point 3 – Covid-19 vaccines vary considerably in their connection to abortion

The pro-life Charlotte Lozier Institute has compiled a straightforward chart that examines the various Covid-19 vaccines and whether or not they are linked to abortion. This includes vaccines that are currently being administered and those that are still under development.

You can [review or download a copy here](#).

The three vaccines that have received the most media attention are those developed by Pfizer/BioNTech, Moderna, and AstraZeneca.

The Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines were NOT developed or produced from cell lines derived from abortion. However, some of the confirming laboratory tests of the vaccines did make use of such tainted cell lines. In contrast, AstraZeneca has used cell lines derived from abortion at ALL stages of its vaccine process: development, production, and testing.

Thus, many pro-life groups and leaders have stated, not unreasonably, that the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have much less of a connection to abortion than the AstraZeneca product. Yet we cannot say accurately that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have no connection whatsoever with cell lines of illicit origin.

Point 4 – Morally evaluating the vaccines

Clearly, all persons who are pro-life have a duty to protest the immoral use of tissues from aborted babies in any kind of medical research, including the development of vaccines. Granted, a lot of groups which point out this duty don't have helpful advice for how to do that practically. **At the end of this analysis we will provide two relatively simple and practical steps you can take.**

Apart from those steps, one obvious way we can express our opposition to unethical research is to exercise discernment when choosing a vaccine. As a basic rule, if there are multiple vaccines available for the same disease, and we have the option to choose one that does NOT have any connection to abortion in its development, then we should choose the one that made no use of illicit cell lines.

However, what if all vaccines for a particular disease are somehow tainted by a connection to abortion? Is it immoral to receive such a vaccine? As noted earlier, this is not a new issue – it's the same situation people already confront with vaccines for diseases such as rubella, chicken pox, and hepatitis A.

The relevant question is whether a choice to receive such a vaccine constitutes immoral cooperation with evil. There is an excellent discussion [on this issue here](#) by Dr. Edward Furton, a pro-life expert on medical ethics. Dr. Furton's article was published more than 20 years ago, long before Covid-19 came into the world, which just underscores how long we've been dealing with this troubling reality.

I also recommend [a more recent article](#) specific to the Covid-19 vaccines written by Janet Smith, a retired philosophy professor who taught at the University of Dallas and other schools.

Dr. Smith, Dr. Furton, and many others who have examined the underlying issues have concluded that it is not intrinsically immoral to receive the Covid-19 vaccinations, because this action would not constitute immoral cooperation with evil. This is because the

connection between the act of receiving the vaccine and the evil act of abortion is so remote. The chain of moral reasoning that leads to this conclusion is not easily distilled down into simple sound bites, so I'd encourage you to take a few minutes to read the articles linked above. But I will say this...

Consider that most of the railroads in this country were built using slave labor. We are all well aware of the brutality slaves endured. But ask yourself if you've refused to travel by rail or to use or purchase any products that were transported by these railroads. The issue of remoteness between the original act and the benefits derived from that act years later is a significant one and should not be brushed off as an attempt to turn a blind eye to the original evil. More on that later.

Point 5 – Understanding divergent opinions among pro-life groups and leaders

Many people are troubled by what appears to be conflicting advice from pro-life groups and leaders on this issue. However, if we draw some careful distinctions, at least some of these seemingly divergent views can be harmonized. For example, Janet Smith agrees that receiving the Covid-19 vaccine is not immoral. And yet she argues that many pro-life people should consider boycotting the vaccine:

“Those who have a very low chance of dying from COVID-19 (and that is virtually everyone under 60 or so, without the underlying risk factors identified by the medical community) should seriously consider not getting it at this time. But they should be careful not to give the impression that receiving the vaccine is morally wrong in all cases and should take all other due precautions to ensure they do not contribute to the spread of the virus. They should explain that while they very much would like to receive a vaccine that would protect themselves and others, they do not believe the risk is high. Most importantly, in conscience they believe there is also need to give witness to the humanity of the unborn whose value is too often in our world considered to be negligible, lives for whom some sacrifice should be made.”

In a similar vein, Dr. Furton observes that the refusal to be vaccinated on grounds of pro-life conscientious objection “...appears to represent a course of action that goes beyond what is morally required. When carried out in the light of a fully formed conscience, heroic acts based on sound moral principle can be highly praiseworthy.”

However, while conscientiously refusing to take the Covid-19 vaccine can be praiseworthy for many persons, I want to offer a word of caution. We must avoid developing a fixation on this issue that causes us to lose sight of the many other ways that our society is intertwined with the abortion culture.

In my home state, if I go to the store and buy a toy for my child, I'm helping support abortion. How? Because my state collects sales tax on my purchase, and the state government then uses some of that money to pay for abortion-on-demand. If I have an

account with almost any major national bank (e.g., Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, Wells Fargo), I'm helping to support abortion. How? Because I'm giving money to companies that turn around and give massive subsidies to Planned Parenthood. These are just two examples, but I could literally come up with hundreds. Enjoy drinking a latte at Starbucks? Sorry, but you're supporting abortion. Everywhere we look, if we're being honest, our lives are entangled with what we might call the "abortion-industrial-complex."

The controversial vaccines we've been discussing are connected to abortions that happened more than 50 years ago. But many of our economic and cultural activities are contributing to abortions that are happening right now, day in and day out. What about our culture of sexual promiscuity, which we all know creates the high demand for abortion? What are we doing to combat that? Do you pay for cable TV to come into your home? Even if you personally avoid watching morally objectionable content, you're helping ensure high profits for entertainment companies that are spewing out a toxic sewage of impurity and nihilism. This poisons the entire culture, and fuels the demand for abortion.

I know that I sound like a Jeremiah here, but my real purpose is not to send everyone reading this on a guilt trip. Rather, it's a call to look beyond the narrow issue of vaccines and consider the myriad ways in which we could be shouldering greater responsibility to combat the abortion culture. For the record, I don't think someone is committing a sin through the mere act of having a cable TV account. But I also won't hesitate to argue that you, your family, and your culture would be better off if you killed your TV. In our family, we killed the TV eight years ago. I regret that we didn't do it earlier. We don't miss it. Let's dare to be countercultural on more things than just vaccines.

Point 6 – Focus on where we agree: stop unethical medical research

Many pro-life people will decide to receive the Covid-19 vaccine, while many others will refuse it. Both can be morally acceptable options. Regardless of what you decide, we all have a duty to protest the evil use of the bodies of aborted babies in medical research, whether for vaccine development or any other purpose. This is the point where ALL pro-life people agree. But most pro-life people are frustrated by the dearth of practical information about HOW to register an objection. There are perhaps a dozen things we could do, but if I list all of them, it's unlikely anyone will take the time to wade through it. I'm going to suggest just two courses of action:

- 1) Send a message to the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) (scroll down to the bottom of the page to find the form for sending your comments).
- 2) Send a message to the [Food & Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) public affairs specialist who is in charge in the state where you live. A list of regional FDA public affairs specialists can be found at the link above, with email address provided.