



Study Theological Approach on Abortion Actions based on Psalm 139:13 and the Responsibility of Today's Church Leaders

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Abstract: The church is a community united by the Lord Jesus Christ, empowered to be witnesses, agents, and examples. However, reality shows that the church often tends to be closed off and does not consistently practice God's love and justice, whether towards its congregation, among church organizations, or towards the surrounding environment, particularly concerning the issue of abortion among teenagers and young people. This study aims to analyse abortion in light of Psalm 139:13 and outline contemporary church leaders' responsibilities. The methodology employed is qualitative, using a literature-based approach (library research) grounded in hermeneutical study. Hermeneutics universally refers to the theoretical and methodological process of understanding the meanings of signs and symbols used in verbal or non-verbal communication. The approach used is the grammatical-historical study approach. The results of this research indicate that abortion of unwanted foetuses is inconsistent with biblical teachings; therefore, contemporary church leaders have a responsibility to nurture the morality of youth to help them avoid engaging in premarital sex, which could lead to abortion.

Keywords: Abortion, Church, Psalms 139:13, Responsibility

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1. Introduction

Bioethics is a branch of science that studies the ethical aspects of biological life, especially humans. Bioethics examines various issues related to human life, such as abortion, cloning, euthanasia, organ donation, test-tube babies, and others.¹ Dedi Afandi stated that the basic principle of bioethics includes a unique characteristic of the principles that can be used to investigate more closely a standard, to justify the rules, and can function as a guide in making ethical clinical decisions in daily practice.²

¹ Willy F. Maramis, 'Bioetika Dan Bioteknologi Dalam Dunia Modern', *Jurnal Widya Medika* 1, no. 2 (2013): 149–50, <https://doi.org/10.33508/jwm.v1i2.858>.

² Dedi Afandi, 'Kaidah Dasar Bioetika Dalam Pengambilan Keputusan Klinis Yang Etis', *Majalah Kedokteran Andalas* 40, no. 2 (30 September 2017): 111, <https://doi.org/10.22338/mka.v40.i2.p111-121.2017>.

One of the most controversial and sensitive bioethical issues is abortion, which refers to the act of terminating a viable pregnancy before reaching 20 weeks of gestation or weighing 500 grams. Abortion can be performed for medical, social, or personal reasons, but it may also occur spontaneously or naturally. The issue of abortion in Indonesia is a matter of grave concern, raising complexities related to ethics, morality, and reproductive health.³ Abortion has been a phenomenon throughout human history, particularly in the context of unintended pregnancies. Although legally restricted, the incidence of abortion continues to rise, including among teenagers and college students. Numerous studies indicate a high rate of abortion worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over 200 million pregnancies occur each year, approximately 38% of which are unintended pregnancies.⁴ Of these, about two-thirds, or approximately 50-58 million, end in abortion. In Indonesia, around 43% of pregnancies end in abortion due to being unwanted, resulting in more than two million abortion-related deaths annually.⁵

Abortion (referred to as *abortus* in Latin) refers to the termination of a pregnancy through the expulsion of a foetus or embryo before it is capable of surviving outside the womb, resulting in death. A spontaneously occurring abortion is also known as a 'miscarriage.' An intentionally performed abortion is commonly referred to as 'induced abortion' or '*abortus provocateurs*.' Although the term 'abortion' generally refers to '*abortus provocateurs*,' similar procedures conducted after the foetus has the potential to survive outside the womb may also be known as 'late-term abortion.'⁶ Abortion raises a range of differing ethical, legal, religious, and social perspectives. Some view abortion as a fundamental right of women over their bodies, while others regard abortion as the murder of an innocent human life. From a Christian perspective, abortion is an act that is inconsistent with God's will, who created and loves humanity.⁷

The Church is a community united by the Lord Jesus Christ, empowered to be witnesses, agents, and exemplars. God has called one person into one body. Within this framework, the Church has been mandated by the Lord to express God's love and justice amidst conditions that are not always aligned with His standards, namely the

³ Kasman, Dian Sidik Arsyad, and Wahiduddin, 'Faktor-Faktor Yang Berhubungan Dengan Sikap Terhadap Aborsi Pada Wanita Usia Subur Di Kelurahan Tamalanrea Kecamatan Tamalanrea Makassar Tahun 2010', *Media Kesehatan Masyarakat Indonesia (MKMI)* 6, no. 2 (2011): 117-18, <http://journal.unhas.ac.id/index.php/JMKMI/article/view/1072/933>.

⁴ Muhammad Atif Habib et al., 'Prevalence and Determinants of Unintended Pregnancies amongst Women Attending Antenatal Clinics in Pakistan', *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* 17, no. 1 (30 December 2017): 158-59, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-017-1339-z>.

⁵ Yohanes S. Lon, 'Kasus Aborsi Dan Pembuangan Bayi Sebagai Keprihatinan Gereja Dan Imperatif Edukatifnya Bagi Dunia Pendidikan', *JIPD (Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Dasar)* 4, no. 1 (2020): 12-22, <https://doi.org/10.36928/jipd.v4i1.296>.

⁶ Yosia Belo, 'Aborsi Ditinjau Dari Perspektif Etika Kristen', *Jurnal Luxnos* 6, no. 2 (2020): 205, <https://doi.org/10.47304/jl.v6i2.54>.

⁷ Belo, 206.

balanced pattern of God's love and justice. The Church, as a moral and spiritual institution, has a significant impact in guiding and shaping societal views on abortion. As one of the institutions with strong moral influence, the Church can play a crucial role in providing guidance, support, and counselling regarding the consequences of abortion.⁸ Theological and ethical considerations in bioethics can provide a foundation for the church in articulating its views and stance on abortion.

When we read Psalm 139:13, it reflects a divine perspective on creation and God's presence at every stage of human life. This issue arises from disagreements and complexities surrounding societal and religious views on abortion. At the same time, Psalm 139:13 provides a Biblical viewpoint on the value of life and the relationship between humans and their Creator. Psalm 139:13 affirms that God is the Creator and Weaver of humans in the womb and that humans are His marvellous and wondrous creation. God desires life, and every human life is His gift. Consequently, this life carries a moral responsibility that must be accounted for, given that the origin of life is from God. The life given by the Creator will be taken back by Him (Gen. 2:7; Gen. 15:11), and human hands should not end it.

Based on these background, the foundation of this research is the importance of analysing abortion through a theological approach based on Psalm 139:13 and outlining the responsibilities of contemporary church leaders.

2. Research Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method through a literature review or library research based on hermeneutical studies. Hermeneutics universally refers to the theoretical and methodological process that will understand the meaning contained in the signs and symbols used in oral or non-verbal communication.⁹ The approach used is the historical grammatical study approach.¹⁰ This method is used by the author in interpreting the text of Psalm 139:13 and drawing conclusions about abortion actions in Psalm 139:13 and its implications for today's church leaders.

3. Results and Discussion

Background of Writing the Book of Psalms

The Book of Psalms is one of the most cherished and frequently used books of the Old Testament, yet, alongside this, it is also one of the books that is problematic

⁸ Yanto Paulus Hermanto and Mishael Setiawan Wirianto, 'Pandangan Etika Kristen Terhadap Tindakan Aborsi Pada Janin Yang Cacat', *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup* 4, no. 2 (2022): 591–607, <https://doi.org/10.38189/jtbh.v4i2.243>.

⁹ Hasan Sutanto, *Hermeneutik: Prinsip Dan Metode Penafsiran Alkitab* (Malang: Literatur SAAT, 2007), 306–8.

¹⁰ Rainer Scheunemann, *Panduan Lengkap Penafsiran Alkitab: Perjanjian Lama Dan Perjanjian Baru*, 5th ed. (Yogyakarta: ANDI, 2013), 2–3.

within the canon.¹¹ The Book of Psalms has many admirers and users, as it contains various spiritual and emotional expressions relevant to human life. It also includes many prophecies and hopes about the Messiah, fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It should be recognized that the Book of Psalms is a collection of songs. Not surprisingly, collections like this are associated with a religion that extensively uses music. Typically, each Psalm has a title or introduction, and most mention a name that may be considered as its author. Thus, the name 'David' is mentioned in 74 Psalms, 'the sons' in 39. The Book of Psalms expresses the full range of human emotions and experiences, from deep depression to overflowing joy. While all of this is rooted in specific events, it is not limited by time.¹² The Psalms, hymns of praise in the Old Testament, are compiled into five books: 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, and 107-150. Each section is concluded with a 'doxology' (formal praise directed to God). Within these five books, the psalms are often grouped according to theme, purpose, author, or collector. Most psalms begin with a title or introduction. Some psalms mention the name of the author or collector, and others are associated with specific historical events.¹³

The Book of Psalms also presents challenges in understanding and application, depending on the context and purpose of its reading. For example, the Book of Psalms contains many hyperbolic, metaphorical, or contextual expressions which cannot be understood literally or universally. The Book of Psalms encompasses numerous theological, ethical, or eschatological themes that cannot be comprehended in a simplistic or secular manner. Therefore, it requires careful, critical, and creative interpretation, considering aspects such as genre, structure, context, meaning, and message.

Place and Time of Writing

It is very difficult to know exactly when each psalm was made, or where, how and when the various psalms were collected or arranged, although the process began since David - if not before - and continued until the time after the Babylonian exile. The manuscripts found in Qumran show that the entire collection of psalms that we have today must have been perfected before the Maccabean era (2nd century BC).¹⁴

Text Analysis of Psalm 139:13

Psalm 139 was written by David, the king of Israel who was a talented poet and musician. David experienced many struggles and challenges in his life, but he

¹¹ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *Survey Perjanjian Lama* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 1996), 122.

¹² Yap Wei Fong et al., trans., *Handbook to the Bible: Pedoman Lengkap Pemahaman Alkitab* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup, 2015), 200.

¹³ Fong et al., 200.

¹⁴ Fong et al., 200.

remained faithful and dependent on God. David also acknowledged his sins and asked for God's forgiveness. Psalm 139 shows David's deep and personal spiritual experience with God.¹⁵ God created us in an awesome and amazing way. This psalm relates to God who is omniscient and omnipresent, not in an abstract way, but in a personal way. God is Omniscient: He truly knows who humans are, even knowing their thoughts. God knew humans before they were born.¹⁶ David expressed his acknowledgment of the wonder of human creation. He realized that God Himself formed and created him in his mother's womb. This expression reflects the intimacy of the relationship between humans and their Creator and the recognition of the value of every life.

Psalm 139:13 relates to the main theme of the whole psalm, which is God who is omniscient and omnipresent. God who is omniscient means God knows everything about humans, both what is visible and what is hidden, both what is past and what is to come. God who is omnipresent means God is everywhere and there is no place that can hide us from Him. God who is omniscient and omnipresent is not a distant and uncaring God, but a close and loving God.¹⁷ God knows humans personally and loves them specially. God watches over humans continuously and protects them faithfully. God who is omniscient and omnipresent is God who is the source of hope and trust for believers.¹⁸

In interpreting the book of Psalm 139:13, a comparative translation is used to compare the original text with the translations that developed. The original text is the centre of the author in interpreting the text according to the problem and method used. The comparative translation that the author uses is the New International Version (NIV) and the New Translation (LAI). The author uses the New International Version (NIV) because it is considered to have a meaning close to the original text, while the New Translation (LAI) is used to see in the Indonesian translation. The following is the author's comparison of the translations:"

Psalm 139:13

Original Text

בְּרֶטֶן-אֲמִי: תִּכְסֶּנִי כְלִיֹּתִי קִנִּיתָ כִּי-אֲתָה :

¹⁵ Dapot Damanik, Afriani Manalu, and Aristar Sembiring, 'Fondasi Pluralisme Multikulturalisme Berdasarkan Alkitab', *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 3, no. 6 (2023): 4985, <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v3i6.6217>.

¹⁶ Fong et al., *Handbook to the Bible: Pedoman Lengkap Pemahaman Alkitab*, 200.

¹⁷ Herlince Rumahorbo, 'KETELADANAN TANGGUNG JAWAB YESUS SEBAGAI GEMBALA MENJADI DASAR PELAYANAN HAMBAN TUHAN MASA KINI', *Phronesis: Jurnal Teologi Dan Misi* 3, no. 2 (30 December 2020): 153, <https://doi.org/10.47457/phr.v3i2.68>.

¹⁸ William B. Evans, 'The Doctrine of Christ', in *The Oxford Handbook of Presbyterianism*, ed. Gary Scott Smith and P. C. Kemeny (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 331–48, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190608392.013.25>.

New International Version (NIV) : For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb

New Translation (LAI) : Sebab Engkaulah yang membentuk buah pinggangku, menenun aku dalam kandungan ibuku.

The author will analyse the important words according to the problem being studied using the historical grammatical approach. The author will also compare with various translations above.

יָצַר (*yatsar*)

The word of "created my inmost being" derived from the word of Hebrew יָצַר (*yatsar*), which means "created", "made", or "design".¹⁹ This word is used to describe the work of God as the Creator who determines the shape and nature of all His creations, including humans²⁰ This word also implies that God knows and loves us since we were in our mother's womb. God is the creator and giver of our life. God created our inmost being, which are organs that function to filter blood and regulate fluid balance in the body. The kidneys are also considered as the centre of human emotions and will.

קָנָה (*qanah*)

The word of "knit" derived from the word of Hebrew קָנָה (*qanah*), which mean "made", "profited", or "created".²¹ This word is used to describe the involvement of God in the creation of humans, both physically and spiritually.²² This word also implies that God has the right of ownership over humans because He has paid a high price to redeem us from sin. God weaves the life of human beings in mother's womb, which is a very complex and secret process of foetal formation. The word "created" describes that God is the designer and artist who makes human beings with care and beauty. God loves us before we are born, and that we are His unique and valuable creation.²³

¹⁹ Reinhard Achenbach, *Kamus Ibrani-Indonesia: Perjanjian Lama* (Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih, 2012), 57.

²⁰ Jonar Situmorang, *Kamus Alkitab Dan Theologi: Memahami Istilah-Istilah Sulit Dalam Alkitab Dan Gereja* (Yogyakarta: ANDI, 2016), 452.

²¹ Achenbach, *Kamus Ibrani-Indonesia: Perjanjian Lama*, 57.

²² Situmorang, *Kamus Alkitab Dan Theologi: Memahami Istilah-Istilah Sulit Dalam Alkitab Dan Gereja*, 452.

²³ Situmorang, 452.

The Responsibility of Church Leaders for Abortion Actions

God does not have to explain His love in terms that most Christians would find acceptable. The Old Testament tells of events that may not be understood directly but require a deeper biblical understanding. The assumption that God is the Highest, the Most Holy, the Best, the Most Just, the Almighty, the Omniscient, turns out that God can also show His Wrath. The injustice and hypocrisy of humans, against which actions humans justify, must receive God's wrath that befalls humans both individually and collectively.²⁴

The psalmist gives the term "weave me in my mother's womb". One's existence begins from the mother's womb, and grows to be like it is now, created by God in an awesome and amazing way. One's life begins from the mother's womb, and develops to be like it is now, the result of God's extraordinary and amazing creation. The process of God creating humans in the mother's womb (weaving) in an awesome and amazing way, gives life since conception that occurs in the mother's womb, a great mystery; that only God knows.²⁵

Therefore, abortion is an unethical and unbiblical action, because it is the same as killing human lives that have been created by God. God is the Creator and Giver of life, and that every human being is His unique and valuable creation, from before birth until death. The Bible forbids killing, both those who have been born and those who have not.

The church leaders are sacrifices to follow the call; therefore, the church leader is not a career but a call to service. In the church of God in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church - the Church or Congregation is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). Jesus is the core or focus of the church (Rev. 5:6, 1:13). He, the Head of the Church - that is, the congregation that crosses tribes, peoples, languages, nations, denominations, segments and strata of society. (Gal. 3:28). The universal church of the whole world. (Mat. 16:18). As the executor of his leadership in the universal church, God assigns leadership functions to: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, Teachers. (Eph. 4:11). Each with a special ministry. But they all achieve a goal: a world that is evangelized and a church that grows to perfection (Eph. 4:12-16; Mat. 28:18-20).²⁶

For contemporary church leaders, having a doctrinal foundation that can guide those they lead toward repentance is crucial. Therefore, a Christian leader today needs to prioritize leadership principles that can liberate and transform those they

²⁴ J. D. Douglas, *Ensiklopedia Alkitab Masa Kini: Jilid A-L*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih, 2002), 431.

²⁵ Karyo - Utomo, 'Tinjauan Alkitabiah Tentang Kejadianku Dahsyat Dan Ajaib Menurut Mazmur 139:14', *Sabda: Jurnal Teologi Kristen* 2, no. 2 (13 December 2021): 6, <https://doi.org/10.55097/sabda.v2i2.16>.

²⁶ Ariyanto Agus Handoyo, 'Pemimpin Gereja Masa Kini', *Academia.edu*, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/56194341/PEMIMPIN_GEREJA_MASA_KINI.

lead from sin and guide them towards eternal salvation by the example set by the character of Jesus.²⁷ In addition to possessing love, a Christian leader must also exhibit humility, following the example of Jesus, who was a humble leader. Through humility, a sensitivity to the needs of others and a readiness to assist become evident, ultimately reflecting the care inherent in the personality of a Christian leader.²⁸

Church leaders must understand what and how their duties and responsibilities are as the person in charge of fostering and educating the congregation.²⁹ Considering the needs of young people, especially about abortion actions that are increasing today, due to the declining morality, it is necessary to provide guidance so that they can be responsible as children of God. The Church Leader, responsible for nurturing the faith of its members, has the specific task of guiding young people to understand abortion correctly according to the Christian faith.

The church must take proactive measures to shape the personalities and moral behaviours of its members based on the understanding of the Christian faith by educating the youth to comprehend their calling in maintaining the sanctity of their lives. This understanding compels the church to consider addressing the issue of abortion as a concrete manifestation of its responsibility to instil values of purity in its members.

Church leaders must critically assess the current situation in their role to reduce the incidence of abortion among unwanted pregnancies, particularly among youth, and address the dangers posed by such actions to the younger generation. If the church neglects this issue, it risks losing future generations in its ministry. Therefore, the church must remember its duty and seek ways to support the younger generation, especially in preventing and reducing the rate of abortions. This can be achieved through collaboration between pastors, elders, and deacons as ministers within the congregation. Together, they should strive to guide and equip young people to avoid the dangers and temptations present in society.³⁰

The role of contemporary church leaders in instilling Christian moral values aims to help the younger generation avoid actions such as abortion. The guidance the church provides offers specific support so that they may act and behave by the will of

²⁷ Budisatyo Tanihardjo, 'Integritas Seorang Pemimpin Rohani', *RHEMA: Jurnal Teologi Biblika Dan Praktika* 3, no. 1 (2017): 22, <https://e-journal.stt-yestoya.ac.id/index.php/rhema/article/view/22>.

²⁸ Katarina Katarina and Krido Siswanto, 'Keteladanan Kepemimpinan Yesus Dan Implikasinya Bagi Kepemimpinan Gereja Pada Masa Kini', *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili Dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 2, no. 2 (31 July 2018): 90, <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v2i2.102>.

²⁹ Natanael S. Prajogo, 'Implementasi Kepemimpinan Gembala Yang Melayani Berdasarkan 1 Petrus 5:2-10 Di Kalangan Gembala Jemaat Gereja Bethel Indonesia Se-Jawa Tengah', *HARVESTER: Jurnal Teologi Dan Kepemimpinan Kristen* 4, no. 1 (27 June 2019): 6, <https://doi.org/10.52104/harvester.v4i1.5>.

³⁰ Dorothy I. Marx, *Pandangan Agama Kristen Tentang New Morality* (Bandung: Kalam Hidup, 1983), 40.

God. The view of morality from a Christian perspective emphasizes that human behaviour is closely related to their knowledge of God, as revealed in the Bible, serving as a guide for human conduct.³¹

The church must undertake several actions, including providing specialized services for congregation members on edifying topics, mainly concerning abortion, using the Bible as the standard for righteous living. Planned and ongoing teaching on this subject will have a long-lasting impact and touch various aspects of spiritual life, such as knowledge, mindset, attitudes, behaviour, and perspectives. The church should organize seminars on abortion to ensure that members gain accurate knowledge and understanding about abortion, which can otherwise be misleading. This will also prevent members from receiving incorrect information about abortion and offer opportunities for congregation members to be involved in church ministries. This involvement will help them understand the true meaning of life: to live in service to God and dedicate their whole being to holiness before Him.

4. Conclusion

Abortion is an act that is inconsistent with Biblical teaching, as it equates to the taking of a human life that has been created by God wondrously and marvellously, as depicted in Psalm 139:13. Contemporary church leaders have the responsibility to nurture the morality of young people, helping them to avoid behaviours such as premarital sex that could lead to abortion. They are also responsible for providing specialized ministry, seminars, and involvement in church activities for the youth so they can understand the true meaning of life, which is to serve God and maintain the sanctity of their lives. Additionally, they have the responsibility to show love, empathy, and forgiveness to women who have undergone abortions, offering support, assistance, and spiritual guidance so that they can find peace and restoration in God.

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³¹ Binsen Samuel Sidjabat, *Membesarkan Anak Dengan Kreatif: Panduan Menanamkan Iman Dan Moral Kepada Anak Sejak Dini* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi, 2021), 251.

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