



## GUIDANCE ON COVID-19 VACCINES - 11.18.2021

As Reformed Christians in the final months of 2021 continue to wrestle with whether getting a COVID-19 vaccine is a way to love our neighbors and whether we ought to obey the recent vaccine mandates of governments and employers, Presbyterians Protecting Life (PPL) sees this moment as an opportunity to further our mission to equip Presbyterians to champion human life at every stage. On December 2, 2020, we first published a blog written by a physician who serves on our Board of Directors. The blog pointed out that the Pfizer and Moderna COVID vaccines are tainted because of the use of fetal cell lines in testing; the AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are tainted because they used cell lines from an aborted fetus in their vaccine development and testing and even in their vaccine production. After careful study for a year, the gospel compels us to make an official statement to provide you further guidance on this complicated matter.

We affirm the Second Helvetic Confession—one of the most widely accepted confessions among Reformed Christians in the world—in greatly disapproving the empty deceit of the ancient “Cynics, who neglected the bodies of the dead or most carelessly and disdainfully cast them into the earth, never saying a good word about the deceased, or caring a bit about those whom they left behind them” (PC(USA) BOC 5.235). We refuse to join the Cynics and their cult of indifference. Instead, we believe that the bodies of deceased pre-born children should be honorably and without superstition committed to the earth where the blood of these innocents can cry out to God for justice like the blood of Abel in Genesis 4:10.

We always call on all Reformed Christians to take every lawful step possible to preserve the life of ourselves and others because of God’s commandment, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13, ESV; cf. WLC, Q&A 135). We know life in the womb, beginning at fertilization, is innocent human life and intentionally ending that life is murder. We know that both the immunocompromised senior and the baby in the womb are our neighbors. And with various experimental and potentially unethical technologies and the ability of scientists to manipulate cells and even subcellular structures, those of us who affirm God’s sovereignty over all life are confronted with difficult and complex questions such as whether to take these unethically sourced vaccines. Thus, the actions of these pharmaceutical companies create a moral dilemma for Reformed Christians who strive to live faithfully by protecting and defending the innocent.

PPL recognizes legitimate and moral uses of human tissue in health technology, but we believe that the development of technology that exploits, makes use of, or profits from the intentional killing of innocent human life is incompatible with God’s command not to murder because:

1. The use of aborted fetuses to produce technology or treat disease diminishes the human child to a collection of cells without human dignity and whose only purpose is to be exploited for the benefit of others.
2. Such utilitarianism disdainfully rejects the divine image in innocent infant children commodified in such a way.
3. The use of this technology requires killing the donor at the time the tissue is obtained. When cells are obtained with informed consent and in a manner that does not harm the donor, there is no ethical dilemma for their use in the development, testing, and production of vaccines or in other ways that would have the potential to save or significantly improve the life of someone else. But when killing the donor is required to obtain the cells, this is incompatible with the Sixth Commandment’s requirement that we make all careful studies and lawful endeavors to preserve innocent human life.
4. What is wrong is wrong, regardless of the potential good that might result for others. “Shall we do evil that good may come of it?” (Romans 3:8, PPL position paper on stem cells). This is the principle of restraint implicit in the Sixth Commandment.

The next question is: May we ethically use unethically sourced COVID vaccines? Here are some points to consider:

1. A patient's use of unethically sourced vaccines disincentivizes cynical developers from choosing ethical alternatives. It is worth noting that in addition to ethical sources of human tissue, God has provided tissues from animals, bacteria, insects, and even yeast, as well as the technological knowledge needed to develop, test, and manufacture vaccines using them.
2. The use of unethically sourced vaccines makes patients tacit participants in, and lends credibility to, those immoral practices. This contributes to an overall indifference to such practices, and in time lead to a tolerance, and even approval, of the use of vivisection to advance medical science.
3. Although refusing to accept vaccines developed, tested, and/or produced in these cell cultures<sup>1</sup> will not restore life to the children who have been sacrificed, as long as cynical companies continue to use aborted fetal cell cultures in vaccines, that will contribute to a demand for more aborted fetal cell lines for use in drug development, testing, and/or production.<sup>2</sup>
4. It is possible for God to bring good out of evil and His ways are not our ways. We refuse to excuse the unethical procurement of vaccines—those who did this sinned—but we acknowledge that God is always working for our good. Nevertheless, a Reformed Christian may also sin by getting the vaccine. “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Each person must examine him- or herself to see if they want to be vaccinated for the same kinds of reasons that women might choose to have an abortion—is it a matter of convenience, fear, income, comfort, and/or another idol? Or do they reluctantly decide to accept a tainted vaccine hoping that by doing so they are preserving their own lives or loving their neighbor? “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them” (James 4:17).

The Westminster Confession of Faith says, “God alone is Lord of the conscience and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to His Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship” (WCF 20.2). This is a fundamental principle of Presbyterian government. Thus, vaccine mandates are inherently problematic. **PPL supports those seeking a religious exemption from such mandates because the vaccines are unethically sourced.** Even if these vaccines were ethically sourced, Biblical wisdom in applying the Sixth Commandment includes weighing a variety of factors such as their effectiveness and whether they do more harm than good.

**So regardless of your decision on accepting or refusing COVID-19 vaccines or your convictions on these matters, none of us are absolved of our responsibility before God to speak for the voiceless whose lives were sacrificed for the sake of others. Each one of us should lament our sin and repent, knowing that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 8:1). As part of our repentance, PPL urges all Christians to speak out against the immoral use of aborted fetal tissue and to urge the use of moral sources. One way to do this is to share this statement widely including with your personal physician and pastor. Another way to do this is to write the manufacturers:**

**Pfizer Inc.** (COVID vaccine – human fetal cells used in testing)  
 235 East 42nd St  
 New York, NY 10017

**Moderna** (COVID vaccine – testing)  
 200 Technology Square  
 Cambridge, MA 02139

**Johnson & Johnson** (COVID vaccine that uses human fetal cells in development, testing, and production)  
 1 Johnson & Johnson Plaza  
 New Brunswick, NJ 08933

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<sup>1</sup> Fetal tissue was also used in the development or testing of the rubella portion of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccines, the chickenpox vaccine, and all the Hepatitis A vaccines. Please write **Merck** concerning the rubella portion of MMR, Varivax for chicken pox, Vaqta for Hepatitis A, and the MMR-V combo at Merck Headquarters, 2000 Galloping Hill Rd, Kenilworth, NJ 07033. Please write **GlaxoSmithKline** (GSK) concerning Priorix for MMR, Variirix for chicken pox, the Priorix Tetra combo, and Havrix and Twinrix for Hepatitis A. GSK can be thanked for Shingrix, an ethical vaccine for Shingles, and urged to test it for chickenpox. Write GSK USA at Five Moore Dr., Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-3398.

<sup>2</sup> For example, in 2015 the Chinese government aborted 9 babies in developing Walvax-2, a cell line to replace aging cell lines currently used for vaccines.