

# **Bioethics and Sanctity of Life: Kantian and Catholic Perspectives on Human Dignity in Vaccines Technology**

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## **Bioethics and Sanctity of Life: Kantian and Catholic Perspectives on Human Dignity in Vaccines Technology**

### **Introduction**

Diverse and sometimes contradictory statements in the media by bishops, Catholic organizations, and experts have raised concerns about the morality of Covid-19 vaccines. This paper will first show that the Church has been inconsistent on the moral permissibility of using Covid-19 vaccines. The Catholic Church has not been speaking in one voice concerning the Covid-19 pandemic, especially its moral and ethical aspects; even when it was confirmed that some of the vaccines offered had used aborted cell lines in their research, production, and manufacture. On December 21, 2020, the Congregation for the doctrine of faith (CDF) observed that "...diverse and sometimes conflicting pronouncements in the mass media by cardinals, bishops, catholic institutions or associations, and experts have raised questions about the morality of the use of Covid-19 vaccines" (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith). Such a statement raises the question of why there is no agreement among the Catholic magisterium on the Covid-19 vaccines, which the Pope has deemed licit. Pope Francis, through the Congregation for the doctrine, taught that "If ethically sound Covid-19 vaccines are not available, for example, in countries where ethically unproblematic vaccines are not provided to doctors or patients, or where their distribution proves more difficult due to special storage or transport conditions, or if different types of vaccines are distributed in the same country but health authorities do not let citizens decide which vaccine they be vaccinated with, it is therefore morally permissible to receive vaccinations against Covid-19, which have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their development and manufacture (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith). So it is discouraging to perceive contradictory messages from the magisterium regarding the Covid-19 pandemic,

especially on the part of vaccinations. As mentioned above, some church authorities have permitted their use, and some have not. I will resolve this by taking the side against their use by arguing that it is immoral to use Covid-19 vaccines that have been developed using fetal cells. I will argue that a fetus is a person right from conception and thus should be accorded dignity. As a result, harvesting cell lines from elective abortion for producing or testing Covid-19 vaccines is morally wrong. This study will look at Kantian and Catholic Church teaching on the dignity and sanctity of the human person. The study will also provide a background and statement of the problem, the epidemiology and science of Covid-19 vaccines, bioethical principles from the perspective of the Catholic Church, a personal critique, and a conclusion.

The Catholic Church teaches the value of life and warns against violating its sanctity. Pope John XXIII declared that "procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth" (John XIII). Also, Pope John Paul II, in his Encyclical 'Evangelium Vitae' declared that the Church finds "direct abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constituting a grave moral disorder" (No. 62). According to the Church, from the moment of conception, a human person exists. Pope John Paul II said that "the human person is a unified totality, that is, a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit (The Gospel of Life: Evangelium Vitae). Thus, a person's rights must be acknowledged as inviolable and must be defended.

### **Background and statement of the problem**

Bioethics studies ethical issues from health care and biomedical science to enhance understanding. Bioethics is inclined to ask deep philosophical questions about the nature of

ethics, what it is to be a person, the value of life, and the significance of being human (The Person in Secular and Orthodox Catholic Bioethics). Therefore, this project will use bioethics to question vaccine technology's ethical dimensions, particularly concerning Covid-19.

Consequently, the impact of bioethics on the sanctity of life will be determined, bearing in mind that both Kant (Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* 422-25) and the Catholic Church (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith) exalt dignity as the basis of the sanctity of life. Furthermore, the 1997 UNESCO declaration referred to dignity that "Everyone has a right to respect for their dignity and their rights regardless of their genetic characteristics; that dignity makes it imperative not to reduce individuals to their genetic characteristics and to respect their uniqueness and diversity" (Art. 2). Accordingly, we will be interrogating if Covid-19 vaccines pose any moral and ethical dilemmas in the public arena with reference to the Catholic Church and Kant since some of the vaccines use fetal cell lines that are harvested from aborted fetuses. For example, "HEK-293 cell that was derived from the kidney of an aborted fetus in 1973 is used to produce AstraZeneca and CanSino Biologics, whereas PER.C6 from an aborted fetus in 1985 is used to produce Johnson & Johnson" (Lancet commission on Covid-19 Vaccines & Therapeutics 2021).

I will briefly highlight dissenting comments by cardinals, bishops, and Catholic associations on using Covid-19 vaccines. On December 02, 2020, the Catholic bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories wrote a pastoral letter to their faithful saying:

Reception of a vaccine developed and produced from aborted fetuses or destroyed embryos presents us with a dilemma that seriously engages our conscience... We worry that receiving the vaccine would render us complicit in the moral evil of

abortion and thus unfaithful to the teaching of the Church on the sanctity of life (Catholic Bishops of Alberta).

The bishops also dealt with the thorny question of whether it was morally permissible to receive a vaccine that had been produced unethically when an ethical alternative was not readily accessible. Nonetheless, I judge that the bishops never answered the above question exhaustively other than quoting what the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith had instructed. If they had followed their prior argument and premises, their conclusion would have been to reject the Covid-19 vaccines. Again, the Anglican archbishop of Sydney, Glenn Davies, revealed his disapproval of the vaccines when he declared that "to use that tissue for science is reprehensible" (Samantha Anglican Church Leader Boycotts Covid-19 Vaccine 2020).

On the other hand, the Catholic Medical Association (CMA) and National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) voiced moral objection to the use of aborted fetal cell lines in the development, testing, and production of all the three currently available vaccines, that is, Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson. They stated that the Church rule is apparent, "that as a rule vaccination must be voluntary and based on an individual's assessment in the good conscience of the medical risks or benefits and morality of a particular vaccine" (Pattison National Catholic Reporter 2021). They, therefore, did not mandate Covid-19 immunizations. Besides, on December 08, 2020, Bishop Strickland, in his pastoral letter to his flock, castigated the Covid-19 vaccine mandate. Even though he was expressing a personal opinion, his point impacted this study. The bishop remarked that:

For university, government, or industrial scientists to use materials obtained from the remains of an electively aborted child in the research, development, testing, or

production of any vaccine is immoral and constitutes formal cooperation in evil. Thus, we must never cease to protest this practice with maximum determination to defend the dignity and sacredness of children in the womb. As your shepherd, I cannot in good conscience receive a vaccine that has been produced using an aborted child (Strickland).

Lastly, in Bishop Schneider's editorial in the Crisis Magazine, he asserted that "When we use vaccines or medicines which utilize cell lines originating from aborted babies, we physically benefit from the fruits of one of the greatest evils of mankind, which is the cruel genocide of the unborn" (Schneider 2021). Such strong words are intended to disparage the Pope's message that urged the Catholic faithful to take the Covid-19 vaccine. Therefore, such discrepancies and inconsistencies among Catholic magisterium concerning messaging about Covid-19 vaccines have confused the people. This begs the question of why church leaders are not reading from the same script even though they all are aware of the primary teaching of the Church. Many people feel utterly betrayed by their shepherds who have actively cooperated, either willfully or out of ignorance, in advance of the Covid-19 immunizations.

Covid-19 vaccines have triggered both philosophical as well as religious interests. Although, as shown above, some manufacturers used fetal cell lines during research and development, the production and manufacturing of Covid-19 vaccines use fetal cell lines. Frank defines cell line eugenics as the science that generates a cell culture developed from a single cell (Frank 2005); for this matter, fetal cell lines for scientific research.

Kant asserts, "Having autonomous goodwill with the capacity to act from moral duty is central to being a person in the moral sense, and it is the basis for an ethics of respect for persons

(GM 4: 423-26). Furthermore, Kant says, "persons conceived as autonomous rational moral agents are beings that have intrinsic moral worth and hence deserve moral respect" (Critique of Practical Reason 136).

However, embryos or fetuses do not fall under this category of person. Kant does not explicitly recognize fetuses as persons, in addition to never expressing an opinion on the morality of abortion. Therefore, we cannot have a direct moral obligation to fetuses because they are not persons according to Kant's criteria. A human being has no obligation to non-humans. Nevertheless, fetuses are morally considerable either because they are members of the class of beings who typically have the capacity to reason or because fetuses themselves are beings who have the potential to become persons (Altman 252). Korsgaard adds her voice to the discussion by stating that "fetuses are persons who have not yet become responsible or conscious beings" (Altman 252). It is because they are still in a developmental stage and will eventually mature into conscious and responsible individuals. Therefore, fetuses need to be respected just as persons in a Kantian sense.

Kant's duty to non-persons is only a duty to himself. So, any duties we have to non-human beings would be indirect. Kant asserts that "Nature's end in the cohabitation of the sexes is procreation, that is, the preservation of the species; hence, one may not act contrary to that end" (Kant, Metaphysics of Morals 6:426). Thus, the duty of parents would be to take care of the child and protect it at all costs. Kant emphasizes that "the child has an innate right to be cared for by her parents because she has been entrusted to them by God" (The Metaphysics of Morals 6:280).

Moreover, when a pregnant woman kills herself, she not only commits a crime against her own person but against another person, of whom her fetus is included" (The Metaphysics of Morals 6:422). That means abortion would not be an option for the parents because it seems contrary to natural reproduction purposes. From that point, an abortion does not permit this ultimate end to be attained.

Therefore, in this project, I will state that fetuses are beings that have the potential to become persons. Becoming a rational being is a process, and children become persons over time (Altman 261). Thus, assuming that he or she will be raised correctly, he or she will become a moral agent (Kant, The Metaphysics of Morals ). Therefore, I will argue that procuring abortion to harvest cell lines for generating vaccines is morally wrong according to the interpretation and application of Kant's Ethics. Kant warns against using persons merely as things for self-satisfaction. Again, Ederl says that though fetuses do not yet engage in any activities typically understood to define the essence of personhood, they arguably possess the intrinsic potentiality to develop themselves (Persons with Potential 97). He further asserts that "possessing the intrinsic potentiality to develop oneself into a fully actualized person suffices for an organism to be, both ontologically and morally, a person already is (Persons with Potential 98). In addition, Ederl argues that something which has an active potentiality for rational activity already possesses the essential nature definitive of personhood. Therefore, "a developing fetus possesses an active potentiality for self-conscious rational thought although it cannot think in such a manner (Persons with Potential 99).

Accordingly, Kant affirms that "any nature would contradict itself if its law were to destroy life by the same feeling of self-love whose function is to promote Life (Kant, GM 4:422, 35). Furthermore, although fetuses are not rational, their capacities are related to rational nature

in a way that distinguishes them from things that can be treated merely as a means (Altman 257). Thus, although Kant could not have imagined or anticipated vaccine technology that uses aborted cell lines in their testing, production, manufacture, and distribution, my argument will be that we can validly use Kant's moral philosophy to pursue this matter. Also, considering the use of human material would tend to desensitize us to the imperative to treat autonomous human beings as ends in themselves.

Therefore, this project will seek to provide a philosophical and ethical framework for conceptualizing and assessing vaccination decisions regarding moral aspects of the use of Covid-19 vaccines that have been researched, developed, produced, and manufactured using cell lines from aborted fetuses or embryos (Stevenson 130). Therefore, the question that I will aim to ask is, "if the Roman Catholic Church renounces every form of elective abortion of human fetuses, would she not contradict herself by permitting the use of the developed, produced, and tested vaccines on aborted cell lines? Would it not be a matter of illicit cooperation in evil even though this evil was executed many years ago?" The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith proclaimed that "When ethically irreproachable Covid-19 vaccines are not available...due to various reasons, it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process" (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith No. 2). Accepting Covid-19 vaccines from aborted cell lines is like using the fetuses as a means of humanity's selfish ends which Kant would object. In what sense would Kant object to such treatment? According to Kant, our possession of rational capacities for morality determines whether we have dignity.

Therefore, while fetuses do not fit into Kant's perspective of who commands dignity, it is valid to argue that "one has status dignity only if he or she has the potential now or in the future

to exercise moral capacities" (Kantian Ethics, Dignity and Perfection 120). Thus, since fetuses could exercise rational capacities after the proper development in the future, they should be deemed as having dignity and treated with respect as worthy beings. They should not be used as mere means for our selfish ends. Human beings, or any rational being, exist as an end in themselves, not merely as a means to be used at one's discretion. I passionately believe that there can be an alternative to using fetal cell lines because "before fetal cell lines were available, scientists used cells from animals to develop vaccines (Vera Filles 2021).

Kant declared that "rational beings are called persons because their very nature points them out as ends in themselves, which must not be used merely as means (Kant, Kant's Theory of Ethics or Practical Philosophy 66). Furthermore, while interpreting Kantian Ethics, Formosa taught that Kant affirms "all persons having dignity in virtue of their possession or including their potential for developing rational capacities" (Kantian Ethics, Dignity and Perfection 75). Therefore, our capacity to freely set ends is not to be sacrificed for the sake of any particular accidental end. So, my question is, when applying their conscience in such moral matters, do Catholics have a moral duty to decline an inoculation if it was unethically produced?

In defending its position, the Catholic Church claimed that receiving vaccines designed, tested, and produced by aborted cell lines is passive or material cooperation in evil. Nevertheless, is not a remote connection to abortion still a connection? Furthermore, in seeking to understand the influence of bioethics on the sanctity of human life, I will investigate how Kantian and Catholic moral philosophies resonate with the concept of human dignity and perhaps identify their concurrent or divergent opinions and teachings. For example, Kant asserts that "that which constitutes the condition under which alone anything can be an end in itself has an intrinsic worth (Kant, Critique of Practical Reason 134) which is dignity. At the same time, the Catholic

Church teaches that "by his existence, every human being must be fully respected. Thus, the introduction of discrimination regarding human dignity based on biological, psychological, educational development, or health-related criteria must be excluded" (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith 5). Nevertheless, this project will also consider ascertaining if human dignity is the only concept determining the liceity or illicitness of Covid-19 vaccines and if human dignity is intrinsic or extrinsic.

This project will conclude that the Catholic Church has been an ardent defender of life. Sadly, a shift in emphasis has occurred among the Church hierarchy and Catholic ethicists when determining cases of abortion-tainted vaccines. Instead of emphasizing the diligent objection, the Church is persuading its flock to take the vaccine. In this way, it was emphasized that accepting the vaccines is an act of charity that will enhance the common good. When the Church permits the use of vaccines produced or tested from fetal cell lines, will this not weaken the campaign against abortion?

### **Covid-19**

Coronavirus infection has caused disease and death and affected almost every aspect of life. The covid-19 pandemic disrupted many human sectors, organizations, and livelihoods. The World health organization declared the Coronavirus outbreak a public emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020, and a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Koley, Tapas Kumar & Monika). The pandemic strained healthcare systems worldwide, where third-world countries were the worst hit. According to Dr. Margaret Stevenson, Covid-19 is the disease caused by the novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, a severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (Stevenson). Koley & Monika (2021) confirms that the virus reaches the nose of the host and

invades his/her respiratory tract, where it starts multiplying locally in the cells, causing cell damage and inflammation. The symptoms range from mild to severe dry cough, fatigue, fever, loss of smell, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, sore throat, and nasal congestion. Moreover, today, the "development of an effective vaccine against the SARS-COV-2 is a top global health priority because no efficient antiviral drugs are available, and vaccines are the only solution to stop the pandemic from spreading (Mohsen, Akbarian, et al. 162). Hence, such will be essential for humanity's protection.

According to the world health organization dashboard, as of July 15, 2022, the global situation of covid-19 confirmed positive cases were 557 917, 904 including 6 358, 899 deaths (WHO). Therefore, vaccines will remain the best choice to prevent and control pandemics and emergent infectious diseases. Furthermore, a vaccine strategy may be used to reduce illness severity, limit viral transmission, and prevent future infections (Kaklauskas, Arturas et al. 12). Therefore, it is for both private and public good for people to be vaccinated since the Covid-19 vaccine is to protect the population and control the pandemic from worsening.

### **Development, manufacture, and testing of Covid-19 vaccines**

It has been noted that "many vaccines, including Covid-19, are developed and produced with the use of cell lines derived from aborted human fetuses" (Have 183). The cells are commonly derived from abortion in the 1960s and 1970s, and therefore I opine that accepting such vaccines implies complicity with the moral evil of abortion. My impression is that when we use such vaccines, which use cell lines derived from aborted babies, we physically benefit from the fruits of evil, which is related to the genocide of the unborn. Such utilitarian practices promote the culture of death. Pope John Paul II submitted that the culture of death is a situation

in which abortion and other crimes against life are justified in the name of individual freedom (Evangelium vitae No 19). Such a culture denies the value and dignity of the individual human being. Taking such vaccines which used aborted cell lines in their production will also weaken the campaign against elective abortion, that is, the destruction of potential human Life. Pope John Paul II reiterated that “Being willing to engage in such behavior will eventually lead to further concessions to a permissive mentality, undermine the required defense against attacks on life, and bring scandal (Evangelium vitae No. 74). Therefore, Christians, like all people of good will, are under a grave moral duty to refrain from officially supporting acts that, even though they are approved by civil law, are so against God's law. That is why some Christians and other people of faith cite their religion as a reason they will not get the COVID-19 vaccine. For instance, “pew research in February 2021 found that 36% of Protestants and 22% of Catholics are unwilling to be vaccinated since receiving such vaccines implicated the recipient in cooperation with abortion” (Zimmerman). This paper will seek to articulate that a fetus is a person and should be accorded the utmost dignity it deserves as a human being. In the next sub-topic, I will use Kant's potentiality view to support my position on a fetus' personhood. In interpreting Kant's ideas, Formosa states that “beings have dignity if and only if they have a capacity for morality or have a humanity in them that is capable of morality” (Kantian Ethics, Dignity and Perfection 121). Moreover, since a fetus has the potential for morality and hence becomes a person with dignity, I believe aborting it would be unacceptable from both moral and religious perspectives.

Vaccine manufacturing may use fetal cell lines during research and development or production. Rees notes that “certain vaccines used human embryonic tissues from elective abortions during their development and production” (Rees). He also reiterated that “many are

produced in immortalized human cell lines that were originally derived from fetal tissue, for example, WI-38 isolated in the early 1960s, MRC-5 in 1970, HEK-293 in 1973, and PER c6 in 1985” (Rees). It is reported that “Covid-19 vaccines currently approved in Western countries make use of fetal cell lines that were obtained from aborted fetuses either at the testing stage like Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines or a developmental stage such as Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca/Oxford” (Giubilini, Alberto et al.). As a result, this paper will argue that using human foetuses as the object or instrument of experimentation is a crime against their dignity as human beings with the same right to respect as human persons. In the later sub-topic, Kant’s concepts will be used to bolster this argument. I will also note that using cells from electively aborted fetuses for vaccine production will lead to some Covid-19 vaccine programs being potentially controversial and thus reducing some people's willingness to use them since most people would see an ethical problem in such vaccines. Thus, the project would state that compliance to the highest ethical standards in bioethics serves all humanity because it values the dignity of every human life and respects the consciences of all without exploitation of any person whatsoever.

One of the reasons why pharmaceuticals or sponsors for vaccine development use fetal cells is that “cell lines are essentially immortal, meaning they can reproduce many times before dying, as well as being suitable for their sterile environment since they are not contaminated with other viruses (Offit, Paul A. & Charlotte A. Moser 85). Thus, they can make viral vaccines for a long time. Offit & Charlotte also opine that human fetal cells are much more likely to support the growth of human viruses than animal cells (ibid). Arguably, this project contests the idea of the suitability of fetal cell lines in making viral vaccines at the expense of their dignity. I strongly believe that it is possible to produce an efficient alternative vaccine that does not use fetal cell

lines. According to Vera's files, "before fetal cell lines were available, scientists used animal cells to develop vaccines" (Vera Filles). The possibility of diligent objection by those to whom a vaccine is offered creates ethical demands on the policymakers, healthcare officials, scientists, and vaccine funders to think about developing alternative vaccines that do not violate fundamental ethical and moral standards. Such should be vaccines that are safe, effective, and ethically sound. For instance, uncontroversial human cell lines created from amniocentesis cells have been available for over a decade (Sherly, James L. & David A. Prentice). Likewise, John Paul II's medical research institute uses umbilical cord and adult stem cells in drug and vaccine development.

According to Zimmerman, the HEK-293 cell line was developed in Holland from embryonic kidney tissue from an abortion that was transformed by adenovirus type 5 and the PER. C6 cell line was developed from the retinal tissue of an aborted fetus (4242). For the sake of this project, I will define abortion as the "deliberate and direct killing by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his/her existence, extending from conception to birth" (Paul II). In the later subtopics, this project will substantiate that a fetus, though just potentially, has personhood and deserve dignity. This is based on Kant, who insisted that "every person has an equal and absolute dignity that raises him/her in moral importance above other creatures and which must be respected at all times" (Kant, Human Dignity and the Kingdom of Ends: Kantian Perspectives and Practical Applications). Correspondingly, the Lozier institute has assessed unethical Covid-19 vaccine programs currently being used worldwide, considering they use fetal cell lines (Sherley, James L. & David Prentice).

Sponsors	Country	The fetal cell line used
Cansino Biologics, Inc. Institute of Biotech; Academy Military Med	China	Adenovirus vaccine HEK-293 cell line
AstraZeneca/Oxford	USA/UK	Adenovirus vaccine HEK-293 cell line
Jansen Res. & Dev. Inc. Johnson & Johnson	USA	Adenovirus vaccine PER.C6 cells
University of Pittsburgh	USA	Adenovirus vaccine HEK-293 cells

After showing that most vaccines approved for human inoculation against the Covid-19 pandemic are developed, tested, and produced using fetal cell lines, this project will now interrogate if such vaccines should be used on the human population. The National Catholic Bioethics Center in the US recommended the following to its church members,

There is a general moral duty to refuse certain vaccines produced using human cell lines derived from direct abortions. However, using such vaccines only under certain case-specific conditions is permissible based on a judgment of conscience (Rees 468).

Therefore, with an informed and right conscience, a person is obliged to refuse such abortion-tainted vaccines. Perhaps, this may lead to an alternative vaccine production for which there is no ethical controversy even though the governments will deny the anti-vaxxers access to some services. Nevertheless, as Martin Luther King Junior reiterated, freedom is never voluntarily

given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Therefore, if most people remain firm in agitating for morally safe vaccines, I guess scientists will be pressured to produce and manufacture the ones that do not use fetal cell lines. However, unfortunately, not many people are privy to information on the development, production, and testing of Covid-19 vaccines. So, how will they be informed? Moreover, since the government oversees the vaccination process, will it allow people to choose which vaccines to take based on religious affiliation? These are challenging questions that the bishops never answered.

The Catholic Church's position is that “if there are alternatives, people have a moral obligation to request the vaccine whose link with abortion is more remote” (Giubilini, Alberto et al.). This means they should refuse AstraZeneca/ Oxford and Johnson & Johnson vaccines since they used fetal cell lines in their manufacture, development, production, and testing. Regrettably, it was never reported about any government that gave its citizens options on which vaccines to be inoculated with. One got what was available. Again, there was no consideration of religious reasons in offering Covid-19 vaccines. Consequently, the USA conference of Catholic bishops urged its flock

To distance themselves as much as possible from the immoral act of another party, such as abortion; the AstraZeneca vaccine should be avoided if alternatives are available (Giubilini, Alberto et al.).

The bishops confirmed in the above statement that we must be purposeful in vilifying abortion acts. Moreover, if the AstraZeneca vaccine is contentious, why don't the bishops proclaim to their flocks out rightly that taking it is immoral instead of appealing to their consciences? Arguably, not taking a firm stand against such vaccines places the faithful in a precarious

situation since the Catholic Church does not seem resolute in its pronouncements about the ethical vaccines its flock should take. To say that people should use their consciences does not give proper direction to the people. I think the bishops will fail in the shepherding role since a shepherd must give direction to his/her flock.

### **Conscience**

Peschke defines conscience as a faculty that makes his/her moral obligations known to a person and urges him/her to fulfill them (Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II 168). According to him, conscience is distinct from mere reason, will, and feeling, and it urges a person to accept the known good and realize it. While commenting on the Covid-19 vaccination, the national Catholic bioethics center urges robust, transparent, and readily accessible exemptions for medical, religious, and conscience reasons (NCBC 2021). However, will the state exempt people from vaccination for such reasons? Since the media has reported that states have continued to deny services to their unvaccinated citizens. Conceivably, the tendency to appeal to conscience discontinues personal discussions and objective scrutiny of the subject of the Covid-19 vaccine. The recourse to conscience, therefore, can become a cheap basis for the rejection of introspection and amendment hence becoming a means to cover one's rejection of any advice. Invocation to conscience could blur an open discussion concerning the ethical grounds of Covid-19 vaccination.

The frequent appeal to conscience also raises questions, especially "in the name of conscience the state and its laws are opposed, one dissociates oneself from the value standards of society, and one abandons traditions and refuses to take directions from the Church" (Peschke 158). For example, the Church has judged it permissible for people to accept or reject vaccines

produced and tested using fetal cell lines. Therefore, when the bishops appeal to people's consciences regarding taking Covid-19 vaccines, it means staunch Catholics could reject the vaccines, opposing the state's laws. An example is the freedom convoys in Ottawa. Moreover, the decline to take the vaccines means the nation will not achieve its goal of combating the pandemic. For example, in their pastoral letter to Christians, some bishops observed that "making use of abortion to create cell lines for research and development of Covid-19 vaccine is an affront to human dignity and cannot be morally acceptable" (Catholic Bishops of Alberta 2020). Such a statement can make committed Catholics reject vaccination which, according to the state, could be interpreted as defiance.

### **The inessential force of conscience**

While it is essential to follow one's conscience in deciding moral matters, it is necessary to beware that some consciences should be disregarded. First, we note that "conscience may judge a line of conduct to be right which is objectively wrong and vice versa" (Peschke 173). Some consciences are erroneous, such as lax, doubtful, and perplexing. Erroneous or false conscience presents to us an action as good which is terrible, or represents what is good as something awful (Muller 265). Such conscience leads a person to commit all kinds of crimes, confusion, and extremes and becomes to him the source of blindness or hardness of the heart. At the same time, perplexed conscience is a type that, in a conflict of duties, fears sin in whatever choice it makes (Peschke 185). Moreover, lastly, a doubtful conscience prevails in a state of uncertainty as to the lawfulness or obligation of action (ibid. 186).

Lack of knowledge and mistrust towards vaccines entails a challenge in achieving an informed decision for using one's conscience to take or refuse Covid-19 vaccination. Most

recipients of these vaccines are unaware of how they are developed, produced, and tested, so they do not have informed consent. Further, there has been no clear and transparent information addressing the areas of concern like side effects and long-time immunity. Thus, the greater distrust of governments, experts, science, and facts influenced by the historical, political, and social-cultural context (Kheng, Khorswec & Hasbullah) concerning the Covid-19 vaccine has considerable influence on one's conscience.

Therefore, when facts are misunderstood or misrepresented, as in the case of the science of Covid-19 vaccines, exaggerated claims about side effects, and issues about when and how Covid-19 vaccines are made, they blur a person's reasoning. Consequently, such mental distortion leads to erroneous conscience like lax, perplexed, or doubtful. Therefore, I find it incomprehensible for the Catholic bishops to tell their flock to use their consciences in determining the taking or refusing the Covid-19 vaccination. Instead, the Vatican announced that "all vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such vaccines does not constitute formal cooperation with the abortion from which the cells used in the production of the vaccines derive" (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith). On the contrary, I argue that one cannot have a good conscience if he/she lacks proper or specific knowledge on an issue under review, Covid-19 vaccines.

### **Dignity and Sanctity of Life**

#### **Kantian perspective on personhood, dignity, sanctity, and the evil**

In this section, I will discuss Kant's understanding of a person and what qualifies a being to have dignity. The question is whether human dignity is intrinsic and present by membership in the human race or is it something extrinsic and hence assigned by others, or is it acquired to such

a degree that it can be lost. We shall note that personhood is grounded in reason; thus, human beings enjoy inviolable moral status as far as they are rational creatures. This section will also establish that being autonomous with the ability to act from moral duty is significant to being a person in the moral sense. It is the foundation for an ethic of respect for persons. Therefore, Kant will advance an argument that persons conceived as autonomous rational moral agents are beings with intrinsic moral worth deserving of moral respect. Besides, what should we say about children whose rationality is not fully developed? What about those with mental disabilities or growing fetuses? We shall note that Kant attributes reason to beings but not on an empirical basis.

The question of the inherent value of human life is intensely philosophical and religious; thus, science alone cannot provide adequate answers. Therefore, to understand Kant's ideas and contextualize them in our theme, I will seek to define who a person is and why all persons deserve dignity. The project will use the categorical imperative, especially the formula of humanity and the formula of universal law, in debating such issues. Again, this section will attempt to unearth the relationship between Kant's and Catholic Church's teaching on dignity. I will also endeavor to find out if a fetus is a person. Further, I will interrogate if abortion has the same intensity as the murder of a fully grown person.

Furthermore, on the issue of Covid-19 vaccination, what does Kant teach about cooperation with evil? Moreover, can we use Kant's teaching on person, dignity, and sanctity of life to advocate for Covid-19 vaccines? In the same respect, the Catholic Church discusses material and formal cooperation, and she maintains that a person is culpable for formal cooperation in evil.

## Dignity

According to Kant, dignity is respect worthy of status, the bearer of which has an absolute, unconditional, and incomparable worth (120). Chan reiterates that dignity is the value of a human being as existing by nature for his good as an ultimate end (Bioethics: The Concept of Human Dignity 274). In addition, Kant explains that each person has an equal and absolute dignity that elevates him/her in moral value above all other creatures since human beings are rational and autonomous. That is why he declares, "act in such a way that you treat humanity whether in your own person or anyone else's, never merely as a means, but also always as an end" (Kant, GM 4:429 42).

Furthermore, "if I am to treat the rational capacity to make choices in this particular person as an end, then I must treat him/her as an end in itself since it is this person as a whole who makes those choices and exercises those rational capacities." I opine that being an end in itself and having dignity are analogous. Accordingly, rational beings are called persons because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves, and they may not be used merely as a means" (Kant, GM 41). Therefore, the existence of such a being has worth, and "I cannot dispose of in any way of this person to mutilate, damage or to kill him" (Kant, Metaphysics of Morals 2014, 55). Even so, we need to ascertain if fetuses are persons and that they have dignity. I envisage what does Kant say about the personhood of children, the comatose, mentally impaired, and senile human beings? Since such people have weakened rationality or even no rationality, can we conclude that they lack personhood, not human beings? This project will therefore aim to show that, potentially, fetuses have the rational capacity for morality and that we need to preserve their dignity and sanctity. So never use yourself or any other person merely as a means

but as ends in themselves since all persons have dignity in virtue of their possession or including their potential for developing rational capacities (Formosa).

### **The personhood of the fetus**

Our duty to the fetus depends on its worthiness, and we should respect it. According to the formula of humanity, we cannot kill someone for utilitarian reasons, for doing so uses him as a means. Kant gives an example of suicide, if a person “destroys himself in order to escape from painful circumstances, he uses his person merely as a means to maintain a tolerable condition” (Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* 55). Assuming a fetus is a person, we cannot abort him to use his cell lines since, by doing so, we would be violating our duty to respect the dignity of the person, hence treating him as if he had merely a market value (Kant, *GM 4*: 435, 48). In interpreting Kant, I submit that fetuses should be acknowledged as persons because they are members of the class of beings who typically can reason or because fetuses themselves are beings who have the potential to become persons (*ibid.*252). Capacity for morality can mean either a potentiality or an accomplishment. Thus, it would be a show of contempt “for rational nature to be indifferent to its potentiality in children or ‘fetuses’ and to treat them as mere things or as mere means to the ends of those beings in whom rational nature is persistently actual” (Wood, Allen W. & Onora O’Neill 198).

Moreover, the fetus is worthy of respect because it is the same being that will one day become a person. Therefore, it commands some value because it is indistinguishable from the future subject. However, in a true sense, Kant never appealed to what a thing may become but only considered how an action affected rational beings.

Even though Kant does not explicitly talk about our treatment of those humans who lack dignity, this view does not imply we have no moral duties or legal obligation to them. According to Kant, human agents have duties to themselves and others. Kant says, "at issue here is not practical love, the morally required maxim of promoting other's happiness but types of love that cannot be directly commanded and yet can be morally valuable because they benefit another. Love of another human being, therefore, is not merely a morally useful feeling but a predisposition for duty (Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* 6:448-53, 213). Accordingly, if we submit to Kant's perspective that feelings of love and sympathy aid us in performing the same duties to animals and are hindered by heartless treatment of them, we may also assume that such feelings can have encouraged us to take care of the fetus and weakened by destructiveness towards it.

Besides, Kant asserts that one expects to find qualities of sympathy and love in a virtuous person because we have duties to cultivate them, and they naturally result from fulfilling our duties of love as well [MS 6: 402] (ibid). Typically, such virtues reflect, embody, and reinforce critical moral commitments. We can therefore argue that a person who espouses the virtue of love, kindness, and sympathy would feel obliged to take care of the fetus. For instance, if a woman carries the pregnancy, she will not consider aborting. Since obliging to one's plan and preferences to the ends of the fetus requires patience, generosity, humanness, and other traits that one morally must exercise in raising a child, "a woman aborting her developing fetus will go against her morally significant tendencies of love and sympathy, and toward attachment to her fetus" (Lara, Denis & Agnes Scott 129). In addition, the ultimate prevention of abortion corresponds with a woman's rational and animal nature, which includes a predisposition to feel attached to and protective of the fetus.

My final argument on why abortion cannot be favored is when Kant declares, "So act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature (Kant, GM 4:421, 35). Kant's perspective is that a nature where law seeks to destroy life, whose proper function is the furtherance of life, would contradict itself. Therefore, it is morally impermissible to adopt a policy of non-beneficence as a universal law without undermining the efficacy of our agency. The maxim of beneficence must always be adopted. In quoting Herman, Denis says:

In the case of an agent needing an organ transplant, the agent's needs do not justify killing someone else whose organs she could use. A maxim of so doing would treat the victim as an expendable resource for the continuation of the agent's own life. Such a maxim does not rebut the presumption against killing, despite the severity of the agent's need (Denis 564).

In my submission, therefore, I argue that a human being must improve his will up to his proper virtuous disposition to be beneficent. That is why Kant asserts that "the happiness of others is an end that is also a duty" (The Metaphysics of Morals 6:394, 166). Moreover, to do good to others or potential human being is a duty whether one loves them or not. In other words, a pregnant woman has to take care of her growing fetus whether she loves it or not. She is under an obligation to acknowledge, in a practical way, the dignity of humanity in every other human being. For benevolence always remains a duty even to a fetus that one cannot indeed love but to whom one can still do good. Such thought is supported by Kant as he says, "to annihilate the subject of morality in one's own person is to root out the existence of morality itself from the world (The Metaphysics of Morals 6:424, 190) and that failure to fulfill mere duties of love is lack of virtue (MM 6:463). As well, I opine that "honoring rational nature as an end in itself sometimes requires us to behave with respect toward non-rational beings if they bear the right

relations to rational nature, for example, those having rational nature only potentially, or virtually, or having had it in the past or having parts of it or necessary conditions of it” (Wood, Allen W. & Onora O'Neill 197).

### **The Catholic Church Perspective on dignity and the sanctity of life.**

Fundamental to Catholic bioethics is a belief in the sanctity of life, that is, the value of human life as a creation of God and a gift (John Paul II). In this view, a human being is a steward, not the owner of his body. He is, therefore, accountable to God. In this section, I endeavor to show the foundation of Catholic theology on the sanctity of human life, determine who a person is, establish if a human person has dignity, and find a nexus or disagreement between Kantian and Catholic understanding of the mentioned issues. I will demonstrate that” Human life is sacred and inviolable at every moment of existence, including the initial phase which precedes birth” (The Gospel of Life: Evangelium Vitae NO. 61). And throughout the “scientific and legal development, the Catholic magisterium has consistently affirmed that human embryos and fetuses must be recognized as possessing the same inviolable dignity as born human beings” (Philosophy and Medicine 2017 11).

### **What is a Person?**

Numerous doctrinal debates continue to occur regarding the personality of a fetus. In secular bioethics, a person "is a moral agent who is rational and thus able to draw universal logical connections, self-conscious, autonomous, and able to set ends for himself and with a minimal moral sense" (Bole 86). Moreover, some contemporary philosophers declare that a prenatal human is not a person. Some scholars argue that "it is possible to be a human person, which refers to one's biological and legal status, or to be a human non-person not possessing the

same worth, dignity, rights, and status under the law as a human person does" (Kim 146).

According to Ronald Dworkin for instance, he opines that "what makes a person a person is the capacity to appreciate and value one's existence. If you lack this capacity, you may indeed be human, but you are not a person" (Kim 146). This approach then becomes an ethical and legal basis for abortion because, according to Dworkin, a fetus cannot value its existence hence lacking in worth, dignity, rights, and status under the law. Besides, Mary Ann Warren imagines that "what makes a being a person is not its biological humanity but its intelligence, its capacity for thought, reason, reflection and self-awareness" (Warren 95). Therefore, according to such mentioned characteristics, a fetus may not qualify as a person and so does not merit be respected as a person but is treated as a mere thing.

Furthermore, Peter Singer and Elga Kuhse debated what sufficient properties make a person. They talk of "self-consciousness, rational thought, being a moral agent, being a subject of non-momentary interests, and having a mental life that involves an adequate amount of continuity and connectedness" (Kuhse, Helga & Peter Singer). So, if it turns out that a mere consciousness and rational thought are sufficient to make something a person, it will have severe ramifications regarding moral recognition of a fetus as a person with dignity.

According to the catechism of the Catholic Church, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person from the first moments of his conception (Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 2270). And since the fetus must be treated from conception as a person, it must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed like any other human being. Furthermore, the Congregation for the doctrine of faith asserted that "the human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception, and consequently from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which is the inviolable right of every innocent

human being to life” (Donum Vitae No. 16). The Congregation further states that any medical research must refrain from operations on live embryos unless there is a moral certainty of not causing harm to the life or integrity of the unborn child and the mother (No. 17). Accordingly, the body of a human being from the very first stages of its existence can never be reduced merely to a group of cells as some other scholars would argue. Instead, it should be noted that "the embryonic human body develops progressively according to a well-defined program with its proper finality as is apparent in the birth of every baby" (Instruction Dignitas Personae No. 4). Hence the fetus bears complete moral and ethical status that is proper to any human person. Moreover, as Kant says, they are 'ends in themselves.' Consequently, they have an intrinsic dignity that is abused if they are used as mere means to the ends of others.

### **Sanctity of Life**

The aspect of the sanctity of life is indispensable to Catholic bioethics. Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the creator, who is its sole end (Evangelium vitae No. 53). Furthermore, the scripture says, “So God created humankind in his image; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). At the same time, in Jeremiah 1:5, God says, "before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you." This means every individual's life from its very beginning is part of God's plan. In such a way, all living beings have full, inherent dignity and deserve protection from the moment of their creation (The Ethics of the New Eugenics 1). The Church also holds that a "human fetus at every stage is a person possessing a right to life" (Bioethics for Clinicians: Catholic Bioethics 190). Thus, "by its substantial union with a spiritual soul, the human body cannot be considered as a mere complex of tissues, organs, and functions hence not elevated in the same way as the body of animals”

(Donum Vitae). Ultimately, "if the image of God is the constituent element of personhood and it is present from the earliest point of embryonic life, then fetuses and embryos, as well as newborns and adults, are indeed full persons with the corresponding rights to life and full dignity" (Bioethics 136).

So, what respect is due to the human fetus considering his nature and personality? As it has been insisted above, since the human fetus has dignity, it must be respected from fertilization to all stages of growth. Such an idea is bolstered by the teaching of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith that "The human being is to be respected and treated as a person from the moment of conception; and therefore, from that same moment his rights as a person must be recognized, among which in the first place is the inviolable right of every innocent human being to life" (Donum Vitae No. 4). Thus, procuring abortion for the sake of harvesting cell lines to produce Covid-19 vaccines is morally wrong.

Using fetuses for research purposes for designing, testing, and producing Covid-19 vaccines is treating them as means, not as the end. The Congregation continued to warn its audience that "proposals to use embryos and 'fetuses' for research or treatments of diseases are unacceptable because they treat the embryos as mere biological material and result in their destruction" (Instruction Dignitas Personae No. 11). They are not to be regarded as a product but as a person. Such teaching corresponds with Kant's imperative that "act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or anyone else's, never merely as a means but also as an end" (Kant, GM 4: 429). Furthermore, to see fetuses as mere things or products which can be disposed of at will is not consistent with the dignity of their personhood.

No one has permission to kill an innocent human, whether a zygote, embryo, fetus, infant, or adult. For instance, the unborn child is under the pregnant woman's care and stewardship. However, the craving for fetal cell lines to manufacture Covid-19 vaccines has placed unborn children under siege. Pope John Paul II says, "the multitude of weak and defenseless unborn children whose life is being trampled upon because of the widespread legalization, promotion, practice, institutionalization of abortion has placed unborn lives at an unprecedented risk" (Evangelium vitae No. 57).

### **The dignity of the human person**

The Catholic Church declares that human life is precious and that a moral plan for society should be built on the dignity of the human person. Moreover, Catholic theology has traditionally argued for the dignity of the human person from two theological bases: creation and redemption (Kelly, David F. et al.). In Genesis 1.26-31, we hear God created people in his image and likeness. Therefore, the Church believes that since every person is valuable and individuals are more significant than objects, the actual test of any society is whether it protects or advances the life and dignity of the individual human beings who are persons, for that matter. In his encyclical letter, 'Laudato Si', pope Francis emboldens this discussion, "When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities, it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself since everything is connected" (Laudato Si' No. 117). In addition, the Church demonstrates that "the reality of the human being for the entire span of life, both before and after birth, does not allow us to posit either a change in nature or a gradation in moral value, since it possesses full anthropological and ethical status. Thus, the human embryo has, from the very beginning, the dignity proper to a person" (Instruction Dignitas Personae NO.

5). Here, this idea of dignity links respect to safeguarding a person's interests rather than only to their biological existence as a human being.

Further, according to the Catholic Church, “human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God, and it remains forever in a special relationship with the creator who is its sole end” (Evangelium vitae No. 53). Thus, no one in any circumstance should claim for himself/herself the right to destroy an innocent human being (No. 53) directly. In like manner, the scripture teaches that “God formed a human being out of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being (Genesis 2:7). And, because of its significant union with a spiritual soul, the human body cannot be regarded as a mere complex of tissues, organs, and functions, nor can it be compared to the bodies of animals. Human dignity is, therefore, not something we can grant or take away from another person because it is a gift from God. It is fundamental to who someone is. As a result, the exploitation of human fetuses as experimental subjects or cell lines for manufacturing Covid-19 vaccines is a crime against their dignity as human beings with the same rights as everyone else. Whether a child or an adult. Science and technology, in my opinion, are valuable resources for humanity when they are put to use and promote integral development for the benefit of all. However, they cannot define the meaning of existence or human progress. Accordingly, “every person is to be respected and cannot be reduced in worth to a pure and simple instrument for the advantage of others” (Lysaught, Therese et al.). Such a view is supported by the Congregation for the doctrine of faith when it asserted that "proposals to use embryos for research or treatment of diseases are unacceptable because they treat the embryos as mere biological material and result in their destruction" (Dignitas Personae No. 19).

## Critique

In using Kant's teaching for the sanctity and dignity of a human being, this study never envisaged the extreme interpretation of his doctrine. Some, like Dworkin, had taught that "it is possible to be a human person, which refers to your biological and legal status or to be a human non-person, which means although you are biologically human, you do not possess the same worth, dignity, rights, and status under the law as a human person does" (Kim 146). However, assume that moral autonomy is a necessary condition for human dignity: that what makes a person human is his or her ability to be responsible for his or her own decisions or to be rational. In that sense, a fetus or a newborn infant is not a person. As a result, I argued that a fetus or infant does not lack rationality; instead, they have this capacity in an undeveloped state of potentiality.

Moreover, considering the fetus as a potential rational agent implies that it gradually develops into a rational agent over time as its brain matures and various mental capacities develop. Accordingly, fetuses are morally significant either because they belong to the class of beings with the ability to reason or because fetuses themselves are beings with the potential to become persons. This research determined the Catholic Church's teaching that human life has dignity and merits protection at every stage. As a result, it will be absurd for the Catholic Church to campaign against abortion while also using vaccines developed or tested using cell lines from elective abortion. Since if someone opposes all forms of voluntary abortion, would he not be contradicting himself by allowing the use of these vaccines containing live attenuated viruses? Would it not be a matter of illicit cooperation in evil even though this evil was carried out forty years ago?

## **Bioethical principles and vaccine technology**

The Covid-19 problem impacted people's health and made it clear those public administration policies and social, cultural, and religious practices need to be examined. It also revealed a conflict of values that calls for evaluating healthcare research expenditures. All aspects of dealing with the Covid-19 epidemic, from religious concerns to patient treatment, require bioethical considerations. Regarding beneficence and non-maleficence, I contend that if vaccination decisions are not viewed from an ethical viewpoint, they may appear to be mere government authoritarian impositions, although being supported by medical and scientific evidence. Therefore, while approving Covid-19 guidelines, the government should use a collective approach rather than preferring specific clinical actions, therapeutic or preventive. Individual freedom should be guaranteed if it does not pose significant threats to the whole. Therefore, the preservation of these values must be based on the accuracy of data regarding the diagnosis, side effects of medication, and moral justifications.

Autonomy is another principle. From this research perspective, autonomy means "personal self-governance, remaining free from controlling interferences by others and from personal limitations that prevent choice" (Ashcroft). It, therefore, means that the Catholic Church is justified to stand in the debate on Covid-19 vaccines and technology, however much its perspective may not be popular. Respecting an autonomous agent in this way means appreciating people's or institutions' capabilities and perspectives. This includes the right to hold certain opinions, make certain decisions, and take specific actions based on personal values and beliefs. For example, the supreme court decision on *Roe v Wade* acknowledged the diversity of philosophical and religious views on the question of the moral status of human embryos and fetuses as well as that the potentiality of human life possessed by embryos and fetuses merit a

degree of legal protection (Contemporary controversies in Catholic Bioethics 2). Lastly, justice balances the demands of autonomy. For instance, the Catholic demands on vaccine technology will be subjected to the public arena; hence its teachings are considered in relation to the broader community. As a result, it is critical that the public debates such minority viewpoints openly and honestly. We cannot fully respect people or institutions from diverse cultural or religious backgrounds unless we make a concerted effort to understand and appreciate aspects of their culture or faith that they see as critical to their argument. Typically, the Catholic Church is called upon to “shape a constituency of conscience by measuring every policy by how much it touches dignity of a fetus, the least, the lost and the left out among us” (NCCB). Besides this, justice will strike a balance between the demands of autonomy. In addition, respect for autonomy ensures that the government does not enforce justice at the expense of minority opposing views.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to discuss how bioethics improves the sanctity of life. As a result, it achieved its goal by contrasting Kantian and Catholic perspectives on human dignity in vaccine technology. "From conception, a human being must be recognised as having the rights of a person because they have inner worth or value, which is known as dignity," according to the Catholic Church. As a result, using human fetuses as experimental subjects or for cell lines is a violation of their dignity. On the other hand, Kant argued that people should never be treated as a means to an end but as an end in themselves. Persons, according to him, are autonomous rational moral agents with intrinsic moral worth and thus dignity. Kant also advocated for using humanity as a goal rather than a means.

Consequently, I questioned whether Covid-19 vaccines pose any moral and ethical dilemma in reference to the Catholic Church and Immanuel Kant, given that some of these vaccines use fetal cell lines from aborted fetuses. Therefore, I argued that it is immoral to use Covid-19 vaccines developed and produced using fetal cells since every medical benefit or scientific breakthrough resulting from fetal cells from elective abortions desensitizes recipients, scientists, and doctors to the original evil act of abortion.

I also observed that if the Catholic Church's voice is clearly argued in the public arena, it can be an integral part of public discourse on health care. Religion has been essential in shaping healthcare ethics as we know it today. Despite its secular appearance, Bioethics deals with religious patients and healthcare providers whose faith influences their approach to healthcare. Thus, John Paul cautions that "Christians, like all people of goodwill, are called upon under grave obligation of conscience not to cooperate formally in practices which, even if permitted by civil legislation, are contrary to God's law" (Evangelium vitae No. 74). Such cooperation can never be justified by applying respect for the freedom of others or by claiming that civil law allows or requires it. Hence by using their consciences, they should not take Covid-19 vaccines that are manufactured using fetal cell lines. However, John Paul cautioned that "sometimes the choices which have to be made are difficult since they may require the sacrifice of prestigious professional positions or the relinquishing of reasonable hopes of career advancement" (Evangelium vitae No. 74).

It is my considered opinion, too, that those developing vaccines and formulating vaccination policies should consider the specific medical needs of various segments of the population, particularly citizens' moral beliefs. They must ensure that their citizens have access to proper and acceptable treatments. It would be absurd for a secular and liberal state to cater to

and enforce only one moral perspective. Pharmaceutical companies and government health agencies should be encouraged to develop, approve, distribute, and offer ethically acceptable vaccines that do not cause moral dilemmas for either healthcare providers or those who will be inoculated.

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