

IS ABORTION WRONG?

In 1970 a Texas woman became pregnant and decided to fight the antiabortion legislation of her state. Using the pseudonym Jane Roe, she took Henry Wade, the Dallas district attorney, to court. The case eventually went to the Supreme Court in January, 1973, and is now the renowned Roe vs. Wade case. The Supreme Court ruled 7 to 2 that the Texas law banning abortion was unconstitutional. Its judgment inhibited all regulation of abortion during the first three months of pregnancy, and during the second and third trimesters regulated it only in relation to the mother's physical or mental health. This ruling implicitly permitted abortion on demand at every stage of pregnancy. The number of legal abortions in the United States in 1969 was less than 20,000. This year more than one and a half million unborn babies will be aborted. That is 4,250 today, 177 this hour, and three since you began reading this paragraph.

The debate over abortion is admittedly complex; it has medical, ethical, theological, social and personal aspects. Since this issue is a highly emotional one, it deserves the sensitivity and compassion of those who consider it. There are no easy answers to the problem of unwanted pregnancies.

Yet, the Christian cannot opt out of making any personal decisions on the matter; nor can he afford to remain silent on the subject merely because it is complex. There are some overlooked matters surrounding the subject of abortion, which must be brought into focus. At the heart of this discussion is what we believe about the nature of God, the nature of man, and the sanctity of human life. These subjects are too important to dismiss.

The Bible often speaks in principles rather than specifics. This demands that we study the principles as they apply to abortion. Our purpose is to arrive at the truth. Is abortion wrong? What does the Bible say? If one is to be a Christian, one must allow God to speak to any and every matter.

Man is made in the image of God!

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Gen. 1:26,27) Being made in the image of God is not something one earns or becomes. It is something God gives to every human being from the moment he is conceived. We must never think that because one is different or one is not whole mentally or physically that one is not, therefore, in the image of God.

Nor should we think that man is merely a higher form of animal. Man is distinguished from the other creatures by being made in God's image. He is more than a "rational animal." He is to multiply and fill the earth. He is to rule over the other creatures. Only man is the "copy" of his Creator. Man is to know God as Father (Rom. 8:15,16); to have a pure and sincere heart (Matt. 5:8; Heb. 10:22); to have his mind set on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:6; Col. 3:2); to thirst after God and to wait for Him (Psalm 62:1; 63:1); and to offer his body as a living and holy sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). No other creature is like man.

Killing a man is differentiated from killing an animal, because man is made in God's image. Gen. 9:6 says: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man."

Psalm 8 reminds us that God views man as His special creation, that God is "mindful of him." Every person, male or female, young or old, handicapped or whole, has a valued life given to him by God. Acts 17:28 reminds us that we "are His offspring." In Heb. 12:9 we learn that God is the "Father of our spirits." We do not merely have one parent who has conceived a child on her own. There is the physical father who has participated in this new life; and there is God who places our spirits within us. In Luke 3:38, Adam is called "the son of God." Our relationship to God as human beings is much closer than many realize.

God has always been the protector and provider for the disadvantaged.

Some have suggested that it would be better not to be born than to be born

disadvantaged or poor. They argue that a poor woman should have a right to abort her child because she is unable to care for him anyway. They assume the unborn child has no worth or value in this world. The value of an unborn child in such an instance is actually measured by his mother's pocketbook. Do the poor have a right to live?

God has always had laws that protect and provide for the poor and disadvantaged. For the poor, these laws provided for a new start every seventh or fiftieth year, so that the poor could break out of their cycle. His laws also aided the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and those who became impoverished due to disease, fraud, or catastrophe.

Jesus too was an advocate for the disadvantaged. Jesus stated that he was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18,19)

Jesus loved those whom others rejected. He healed those whom others cast away. Jesus had a heart big enough for everyone.

Jesus loved and cared for little children.

Proponents of abortion argue that the taking of preborn lives is not murder since the unborn do not measure up to the definition of a person. They believe that a person is one with good mental and physical health and the ability to socialize. It is obvious that a fetus does not measure up to such a definition, since it cannot contribute anything to society. (One must wonder at such a definition how many other people do not qualify as a "person." Is one with diseases such as Alzheimer's a "person?" Is one in a coma a "person?" Is one who is temporarily insane a "person?") Jesus cared not only for those who were productive, healthy citizens; he also cared for those who were only potentially capable.

We must worry about a society that allows harm to come to the innocent with impunity. At a recent National Prayer Breakfast, Mother Teresa rebuked our President and the nation, when she said, "The greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a war against the child, a direct killing of the innocent child, murder by the mother herself. And if we accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another?"

She further argues, "By abortion the mother does not learn to love, but kills even her own child to solve her problems. And, by abortion, the father is told that he does not have to take any responsibility at all for the child he has brought into the world...So abortion just leads to more abortion. Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want."

The Scriptures view infants and children as a blessing and a gift of the Lord (Psalm 127; Gen. 4:1). He provided laws to protect them, even though they were not fully developed (Ex. 22:22-24). When children were abused and even sacrificed to idols, the prophets of God were not silent but spoke out on the wrath of God (Lev. 20:1-5).

Jesus too loved little children. When others rebuked them, Jesus took time to pray for them and bless them (Matt. 19:13-15; cf. Luke 18:15-17). Though some have a low view of children, Jesus saw the future in them and what they could become. Jesus knew that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. On another occasion Jesus used a small child as an example of what the disciples should be (Matt. 18:3,4). No doctrine is more false than the one that regards children as totally hereditarily depraved, that they are sinners incapable of any good. Jesus warned, "See that you do not despise these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven." Jesus had a high view of children. He regarded them as important.

It is significant to note at this point that the Scriptures use the same word to describe an

unborn child that is used to describe these little children. In Luke 1:41,44 John the Baptist in his mother's womb is called a βρεφος, a baby. Interestingly, this same Greek word is used of Jesus as a newborn baby (Luke 2:12,16). Even more significant, βρεφος is used of the little children Jesus prayed for and blessed in Luke 18:15. The Scriptures do not make the strong distinction between the preborn and the post-born that many make today. It logically follows that to do harm to the preborn is a serious matter.

God's Word Contains a Very High View of Life!

The Scriptures regard life as a precious gift of God. Man neither earns life, nor does he gain it by his own ability. We live by the grace of God. In Gen. 2:7, Moses said, "the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Life is a gift of God. Paul on Mars Hill proclaimed that He "gives all men life and breath and everything else"; and "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:25,28). God is the one and only giver and sustainer of life; and without Him there can be no life!

Life has to do with the whole person, body, soul and spirit! All of this has been given to man as a blessing; and to take it away in any form is to rob man of himself. When Cain slew Abel, Abel's blood cried out to God (Gen. 4:10). The taking of preborn life is a robbery indeed of the life that is and the life that can be. If we mourn our infants and children who die at tender ages, how much more should we mourn those who by force and with cruelty were delivered so that they die.

When one commits abortion, one is not only taking a life but also putting himself before God. When people on their own initiative decide who has the right to live and who has to die, they make themselves Almighty God. They presume an authority they have no right to possess. They also presume a wisdom about the future that may not be true at all! No one has a right to play God with the lives of other people.

Aren't you glad they didn't abort Jesus? He was conceived in an unwed mother by the Holy Spirit. I feel sure that people looked down on young, unmarried Mary. He wasn't even Joseph's child! "How would she be able to care for Him? She's so young with all of her life ahead of her! She has no job. She has no education. She has no hope." Some make decisions before the time. The unfortunate thing is that abortion is irrevocable. Once a baby is aborted, there is no bringing him back. Where would the world be if Mary considered her rights before all else?

Through Bible history there have been many ill-timed pregnancies, which in modern times would surely have been an excuse for abortion. Sarah and Elizabeth were old women, past the age for child-bearing (Gen. 21:1-7; Luke 1:18). They could have died in childbirth, but what would have happened without Isaac or John the Baptist? If Jesse and his wife had thought that seven sons were enough, there would be no David (1 Sam. 16:10,11). If Deborah or Esther's parents had wanted a boy and destroyed them because they were girls, where would Israel have been? What if your parents had some reason to abort you?

Were all those millions of babies aborted since 1973 worthless children, who had no contribution to make to our society?

God Considers the Beginning of Life to Be at Conception!

Some 40 times the Scripture refers to conception as the start of a new life. In Genesis alone, the phrase, "and she conceived and bore" a child appears eleven times. In each case conception and birth are events of a person. God spoke to the lad Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you" (Jer. 1:5). Paul said that God had set him apart, "even from my mother's womb" (Gal. 1:15). Surely, God recognizes that the spirit He places within that fertilized egg is a person! He knows that person and has plans for that person.

David reflected on God's knowledge of him from the beginning of his life in this way in Psalm 139:13-16:

For You created my inmost being;

You knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from You
when I was made in the secret place.
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
Your eyes saw my unformed body.
All the days ordained for me were written in Your book
before one of them came to be.

Much of our problem is that we see through human eyes the things that are on the outside and fail to see by faith the eternal things that are part of the inner man. God put us together in the womb, body, soul and spirit. Abortion is an interference with God's work. God may very well know some things about the future we do not know.

That the fetus in a woman's body is not mere tissue but a true person is not only evident from Scripture but also from common sense. No one mourns the loss of tissues like one's tonsils or appendixes. We regret the pain and the hospital bill, but those who lose them do not need comfort for their grief. Yet when a woman miscarries, she and her husband may mourn for months. They have lost someone precious, a child they will never know. Women who undergo abortion often have deep, lasting emotional problems. The choice they made as an "easy" solution has a much higher price than they may have imagined. A recent survey of women who had undergone abortion states that 80 percent regret their decision and would change it if they could. They often wonder what their child would be like and what he would be doing if he were alive.

According to Dr. Vincent Rue, executive director of the Sir Thomas More Clinics in Southern California and one of the leading post-abortion syndrome therapists, women who abort are at greater risk for psychiatric hospitalization than women who deliver. They also indicate that there is significant psychological damage following an abortion. This is true regardless of the patient's religious beliefs or how that person felt before the abortion. (Keith J. Finnegan, "Post-Abortion Syndrome: An Emerging Crisis," AFA Journal, August 1988, pp. 4-6.)

In a recent issue of USA Today, Nancy C. Carmel wrote a letter to the editor entitled, "Abortion can burden a woman for life." She said:

"A burden? Women undergoing abortion have no idea what suffering they will encounter after the abortion, and daily for the rest of their lives, when it suddenly dawns on them that they chose to extinguish a precious life.

"Twenty-three years ago, as a frightened young girl, alone, seeing no way out, I opted for a legal abortion that left me infertile to suffer an eternal hell on earth, constantly aching for a child of my own to nurture.

"The guilt of killing your child eats away at your soul continually, like a ravenous cancer, causing one to pray for a quick demise. You will always wonder if the fetus was male or female, what he or she would look like. Yearly, you will mournfully recall the day your baby was ripped from your body, only to be carelessly tossed into a garbage pail at your side.

"If only someone had mentioned adoption to me as a viable alternative to a temporary condition, my child would be alive today, perhaps making a difference in someone's life." (USA Today, March 21, 1994, p. 10A)

Technically speaking, a fetus is not merely the mother's tissue. Within a short period of time, an unborn baby has its own circulatory and nervous systems. Genetically speaking, the baby and mother are clearly not identical. A fetus is the product not just of the mother but also of the father. The new baby is the result of the union of two people. Women do not produce babies alone.

God Opposes the Taking of Any Innocent Life!

In Proverbs 6:16-19, Solomon reveals that one of the things God hates is "hands that

shed innocent blood." Unlike criminals who are condemned to die for crimes that they have committed, aborted babies die because they are unwanted or inconvenient to the plans of the parents. They are truly innocent of any crime except in the eyes of others for their own existence. God will not hold guiltless those who shed innocent blood.

The book of Exodus speaks of the accidental causing of a premature delivery in these terms: "If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the law allows. but if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise" (21:22-25, NIV).

The word for "giving birth," translated "depart" in the KingJames Version, is the common word for giving birth and not "miscarriage," as some other versions translate. The concept that the mother's life is important but the child's is not is misleading. The premature birth is to be recompensed by the husband's demands and the law's allowance, if everything is normal. But if there is any injury, to mother or child, then there will be an equivalent recompense of those who are guilty. If men who unintentionally injure an unborn baby and are held accountable, what do you imagine will be required of those who intentionally take a life?

If we may cast off unwanted babies because they are inconvenient or unwanted, whom will we next destroy because they are burdens? Some are already suggesting that we do away with the aged. Shall we also unburden ourselves of the handicapped, the mentally impaired, or the diseased? Will our children one day regard us as unwanted and decide to end our lives? Should we become a burden to society, perhaps we too will go the way of more than 25 million aborted babies. Who will have the right to choose whether we live or die? What choice will we have?

Christians are Not to be Silent about Sin!

This minute three more babies will die; this hour 177 more unborn people will never know their mothers or fathers; and today more than 4,250 will have their earthly lives taken from them forever. Whatever they could have been, whatever God had in store for them, and whatever joy they may have brought or known, will never come to pass.

Abortion is not merely a poor choice or ethically unwise; it is sinful. The Christian ought to actively expose and oppose it as a moral stain on our country. In a democracy where citizens have the right to vote on its laws and leaders, Christian citizens should by all means participate in the political process. God, help us not to be neglectful of our duty to speak out boldly on something so important!

There is Forgiveness in Jesus Christ!

Those who at earlier times became victims of the temptation to abortion ought to know that there is still hope for them. Sin has a terrible price, but the blood of Jesus Christ offers mercy, compassion and hope! While we cannot go back and change the past, we do not have to be the slaves of sin. In Christ there is true freedom from sin and shame (John 8:31-36). Though our sins be many, God's grace is more abundant in Christ (1 Tim. 1:12-16). There is forgiveness, even for the taking of an innocent life.

Those to whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost were guilty of the murder of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:36). When they realized what they had done, they were pierced to the heart and cried out, "what shall we do?" Peter's answer was: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Regardless of what may be in your past, there is hope in Christ for you too! Why not give your heart and life to the Lord, find His deliverance from guilt and sin, and live from now on a life committed to His cause!

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