

ABORTION: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

I. Introduction

- A. The root of the abortion question is not whether or not it is sociologically useful, that is granted, but whether or not it is ethical to re-define human life.
- B. The real issues behind this intensely emotional debate which has so polarized our nation are: *What is a human?* (How is man defined? or, How is human value determined?), and, *when does human life begin?*
- C. The abortion issue, is the issue it is, because it involves a primary collision of two differing worldviews: Humanism versus Judeo-Christian theism. It arose because of the loss of a Christian consensus in this country which we have had for almost 200 years.

II. How is Human Life and Value Determined, or What is Human?

A. Human Value is arbitrary or assigned.

- 1. Garrett Hardin, an eminent biologist says: *People who worry about the moral danger of abortion do so because they think of the fetus as a human being and hence equate feticide with murder. Whether the fetus is or is not a human being is a matter of definition, not fact and we can define any way we wish.* (From the ***Journal of Marriage & Family***).
- 2. Harvey Cox, a theologian, writes: *Secular man's values have been deconsecrated, shorn of any claim to ultimate or final significance... They are no longer the direct expression of divine will. They have become what certain people at a particular time and place hold to be good. They have ceased to be values and have become valuations...* (***Secular City***, p. 3.)
- 3. Four examples of subjective valuation with regards to man:
 - a. In the area of the physical--the setting forth of some standard for the ideal physical specimen.
 - (1) Francis Crick, Nobel prize-winning biologist, advocates legislation under which new born babies would not be

considered legally alive until they were two days old and had been certified as healthy by medical examiners.

(2) Philip Handler, a prominent scientist says: *The time has come to exert a national policy of eliminating defective unborn babies.* Not to do so, Handler warns, *would endanger the very stock of mankind and court the dreadful prospect of serious damage to the human gene pool.*

- b. Social Standards. Is he or she socially useful? Do they or can they contribute anything positive to society?

Hitler said *we must get rid of useless eaters.*

Our dwindling resources make this sound attractive. Example: the retarded child who is a financial burden.

- c. Mental Awareness. Value is assigned according to certain mental functions that are present.

(1) Winston L. Duke, a scientist says: *A philosophy of reason will define a human being as life which demonstrates self-awareness, volition, and rationality. Thus it should be recognized that not all men are human... (The New Biology, Reason, Aug. 1972.)*

(2) Ethicist Joseph Fletcher believes a person is not human when there is absence of cerebral function.

(3) A leading feminist as early as 1971 said: *Fetuses aren't human beings. A human being ought to have more brains than a puppy dog.*

- d. Social interaction

Anthropologist, Ashley Montagu says: *A newborn baby is not truly human until he or she is molded by social and cultural influences later.*

4. Implications of Arbitrary Definitions of Human Value

Ethicist Daniel Callahan said it clearly: *A power group society could, by the use of this principle (of defining humanness any way we wish), define the chronically sick, the senile, the elderly as non-human, and thus justify the taking of their lives on the grounds of the social good to be obtained. (Abortion, Law, Choice and Morality, p.125.)*

B. Human Value is Inherent.

1. Man has value because he is created in God's Image. This is known through Scripture.
 - a. Man is a spiritual being. Gen. 1:26; 2:7. God breathed into his nostrils and he became a living soul.
 - b. The Bible views the fetus as a human entity. Life is seen as a continuum of conception to death. Isa. 49:1-5; Job 10; Ps. 139.
 - c. The historical position of the church has always been that Christ was divine from conception. Matt. 1:20; Lk. 1:35.
 - d. The fetus is human with potential.
2. The Commandment not to murder (Exodus 20)

It refers to willful, premeditated, malicious taking of a life. Abortion and infanticide were common practice among the nations surrounding Israel. The only exceptions to this commandment were: legal executions (Gen.9:6; Ex. 2:23; Lev. 24:15; Rom. 13:4.), killing aggressors in war, and self-defense.

III. When Does Human Life Begin?

- A. Biologists in the past have always concluded that it began at conception. If it isn't human life, what kind of life is it? We know it is not part of the mother.
- B. Science has been inconsistent.
 1. Scientists in England experimenting with live aborted fetuses were opposed. Why, if the fetus is not human?

2. In Vitro experimentation. Where do you decide human life begins?
 3. Several years ago a baby born to a 14 year old in Connecticut was stuffed into plastic bag and put in the trash. In court the issue was *Did the baby breathe?* If it breathed it was human and she could be tried for murder.
- C. Francis Crick and Thomas Watson state that human life should begin when a baby is *pronounced* alive.
- D. The Supreme Court ruled that life begins with *viability*.
- E. The Christian view is that life begins at conception. It is then a developing human being. It is definitely the safe view, and historically the church has always viewed feticide as murder. See the Didache, Clement of Alexander, Athenagora, Tertullian, Council of Alvira (A.D.305), Council of Ancyia (A.D.314), St. Basil, and Thomas Aquinas.

IV. Conclusion.

The divisiveness of this issue is due to the different worldview assumptions of the two sides. The Christian must never allow the opposition's statement that the Pro-life view is based on religious beliefs while the abortionist view is based on reason and compassion. Their humanist worldview assumptions are no less based on religious beliefs. All worldviews are religious in that their presuppositions or assumptions are held in faith.

For Further Study:

Beckwith, Francis J. *Politically Correct Death*.
 Brown, Harold O.J. *Death Before Birth*.
 Davis, John Jefferson. *Evangelical Ethics*. See Chapter 6.
 Feinberg, Joel. *The Problem of Abortion*.
 Feinberg, John S., and Feinberg, Paul D. *Ethics For a Brave New World*. See Ch. 2.
 Fournier, Keith A., and Watkins, William D. *In Defense of Life*.
 Ganz, Richard L. Editor. *Thou Shalt Not Kill*.
 Gorman, Michael J. *Abortion & The Early Church*.
 Kohl, Marvin. Editor. *Infanticide and the Value of Life*.
 Montgomery, John Warwick. *Slaughter of the Innocents*.
 Pojman, Louis P., and Beckwith, Francis J. *The Abortion Controversy*.
 Sproul, R.C. *Abortion*.