

Abortion

In Roman times, abortion and the destruction of unwanted children was permissible, but as our civilization has aged, it seems that such acts were no longer acceptable by rational human beings, so that in 1948, Canada along with most other nations in the world signed a declaration of the United Nations promising every human being the right to life. The World Medical Association meeting in Geneva at the same time, stated that the utmost respect for human life was to be from the moment of conception. This declaration was re-affirmed when the World Medical Association met in Oslo in 1970. Should we go backwards in our concern for the life of an individual human being?

The unborn human is still a human life and not all the wishful thinking of those advocating repeal of abortion laws, can alter this. Those of us who would seek to protect the human who is still too small to cry aloud for its own protection, have been accused of having a 19th Century approach to life in the last third of the 20th Century. But who in reality is using arguments of a bygone Century? It is an incontrovertible fact of biological science - Make no Mistake - that from the moment of conception, a new human life has been created.

Only those who allow their emotional passion to override their knowledge, can deny it: only those who are irrational or ignorant of science, doubt that when a human sperm fertilizes a human ovum a new human being is created. A new human being who carries genes in its cells that make that human being uniquely different from any and other human being and yet, undeniably a member, as we all are, of the great human family. All the fetus needs to grow into a babe, a child, an old man, is time, nutrition and a suitable environment. It is determined at that very moment of conception whether the baby will be a boy or a girl; which of his parents he will look like; what blood type he will have. His whole heritage is forever fixed. Look at a human being 8 weeks after conception and you, yes every person here who can tell the difference between a man and a woman, will be able to look at the fetus and tell me whether it is a baby boy or a girl.

No, a fetus is not just another part of a woman's body like an appendix or appendage. These appendages, these perfectly formed tiny feel belong to a 10 week developed baby, not to his or her mother.

The fetus is distinct and different and has its own heart beat. Do you know that the fetus' heart started beating just 18 days after a new life was created, beating before the mother even knew she was pregnant? By 3 months of pregnancy the developing baby is just small enough to be held in the palm of a man's hand but look closely at this 3 month old fetus. All his organs are formed and all his systems working. He swims, he grasps a pointer, he moves freely, he excretes urine. If you inject a sweet solution into the water around him, he will swallow because he likes the taste. Inject a bitter solution and he will quit swallowing because he does not like the taste. By 16 weeks it is obvious to all, except those who have eyes but deliberately do not see, that this is a young human being.

Who chooses life or death for this little one because abortion is the taking of a human life? This fact is undeniable; however much of the members of the Women's Liberation Movement, the new Feminists, Dr. Henry Morgentaler or the Canadian Medical Association President feel about it, does not alter the fact of the matter. An incontrovertible fact that cannot change as feelings change.

If abortion is undeniably the taking of human life and yet sincere misguided people feel that it should be just a personal matter between a woman and the doctor, there seems to be 2 choices open to them. (1) That they would believe that other acts of destruction of human beings such as infanticide and homicide should be of no concern of society and therefore, eliminate them from the criminal code. This I cannot believe is the thinking of the majority, although the tendency for doctors to respect the selfish desire of parents and not treat the newborn

defective with a necessary lifesaving measure, is becoming increasingly more common. (2) But for the most part the only conclusion available to us is that those pressing for repeal of the abortion laws believe that there are different sorts of human beings and that by some arbitrary standard, they can place different values on the lives of these human beings. Of course, different human beings have different values to each of us as individuals: my mother means more to me than she does to you. But the right to life of all human beings is undeniable. I do not think this is negotiable. It is easy to be concerned with the welfare of those we know and love, while regarding everybody else as less important and somehow, less real. Most people would rather have heard of the death of thousands in the Honduras flooding disaster than of a serious accident involving a close friend or favourite relative. That is why some are less disturbed by the slaughter of thousands of unborn children than by the personal problems of a pregnant woman across the street. To rationalize this double standard, they pretend to themselves that the unborn child is a less valuable human life because it has no active social relationships and can therefore, be disposed of by others who have an arbitrary standard of their own for the value of a human life.

I agree that the fetus has not developed its full potential as a human being: but neither have any of us. Nor will any of us have reached that point: that point of perfect humanness, when we die. Because some of us may be less far along the path than others, does not give them the right to kill us. But those in favour of abortion, assume that they have that right, the standard being arbitrary. To say that a 10 week fetus has less value than a baby, means also that one must consider a baby of less value than a child, a young adult of less value than an old man. Surely one cannot believe this and still be civilized and human. A society that does not protect its individual members is on the lowest scale of civilized society. One of the measures of a more highly civilized society, is its attitude towards its weaker members. If the poor, the sick, the handicapped, the mentally ill, the helpless are not protected, the society is not as advanced as in a society where they are protected. The more mature the society is, the more there is respect for the dignity and rights of all human beings. The function of the laws of the society, is to protect and provide for all members so that no individual or group of individuals can be victimized by another individual group. Every member of Canadian society has a vital stake in what value system is adopted towards its weak, aged, cripple, its helpless intra-uterine members; a vital stake in who chooses life or death.

As some of you may know, in 1969, the abortion laws were changed in Canada, so that it became legal for a doctor to perform an abortion if a committee of 3 other doctors in an accredited hospital deemed that continuation of the pregnancy constituted a severe threat to the life and health, mental or physical of the woman. Threat to health was not defined and so it is variously interpreted to mean very real medical disease to anything that interferes with even social or economic well being, so that any unwanted or unplanned pregnancy thus qualifies. What really is the truth about the lasting effect of an unwanted pregnancy on the psyche of a woman? Of course there is a difference of opinion among psychiatrists, but if unbiased, prospective studies are examined certain facts become obvious. (1) The health of women who are mentally ill before they become pregnant, is not improved by an abortion. In fact in 1970 an official statement of the World Health Organization said, "Serious mental disorders arise more often in women previous mental problems. Thus the very women for whom legal abortion is considered justified on psychiatric grounds, are the ones who have the highest risk of post-abortion psychiatric disorders. (2) Most women who are mentally healthy before unwanted pregnancy, despite a temporary emotional upset during the early weeks for the pregnancy, are mentally healthy after the pregnancy whether they were aborted or carried through to term.

Do we accept killing a human being because of a temporary, emotional upset? All obstetricians and gynaecologists know of many cases where the mother, be her single or married, has spoken of abortion early in the pregnancy and later on, has confessed her gratitude to those who have not performed the abortion. On the other

hand, we have all seen women what have been troubled, consumed with guilt and development significant psychiatric problems following and because of abortion. I quote Ft. John L. Grady, Medical Examiner for Florida State Attorney's Office, "I believe it can be stated with certainty that abortion causes more deep-seated guilt, depression and mental illness than it ever cures".

We used to hear a lot about the risk of suicide among those who threatened such action if their request for abortion was refused. How real is that risk - it is not - in fact, the suicide rate among pregnant women be they happy of unhappy about the pregnancy, is 1/4 of the rate among non-pregnant women in child-bearing years. An accurate 10 year study was done in England on unwed mothers who requested abortions and were refused. It was found that the suicide rate of this group was less than that average population. In Minnesota in a 15 year period, there were only 14 maternal suicides. 11 occurred after delivery. None were illegitimately pregnant. All were psychotic. In contrast, among the first 8 deaths of women aborted under the liberal law in the United Kingdom, 2 were from suicide directly following the abortion.

Are there any medical indications for abortion?? Is it valid for a doctor to co-operate in the choice for abortion? The late Dr. Guttmacher, one of the world leaders of the pro-abortion movement, has stated: "Almost any women can be brought through pregnancy alive unless she suffers from cancer or leukemia, in which case abortion is unlikely to prolong her life much less save it."