

B I R T H     C O N T R O L

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A B O R T I O N

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Early last summer, I returned home after making a hospital call to be told by my wife that one of the members had called to inquire about a wedding date for her daughter. Her daughter was one of a set of twins, an honor student who had only recently graduated from high school. She was active in the Young People's Society, had served as our baby sitter, attended services regularly. However, since haste seemed to be the order of the day in the request my suspicions were aroused. When the girl arrived with her fiance we talked and made the necessary arrangements. The nearness of the date encouraged me to speak my thoughts about their relationship, however, without making any accusations, but pointing out that if they had had a sinful relationship they must make sure that they had forgiveness. They left shortly thereafter, and while my fears were not confirmed, they had not been denied either.

A short time later, I was busy in the yard when they returned, and the girl tearfully admitted that she was indeed pregnant which necessitated the early wedding date. Sound familiar?

Not too long before that another girl, this time not yet finished with her high school education by several years, came with her boyfriend with the same request. I sensed something different with this relationship, so I spoke more directly. In this case I asked point blank if she were pregnant and she freely admitted that she was. I spoke of the sinfulness of this relationship, and pointed out the great difficulties which they would now face, in view of her age, the fact that they were of different faiths, he had no job, etc. I pointed out that once married it would be for life, and they would need a very deep and understanding love to be able to make the necessary adjustments for a happy future relationship. As it turned out in this case they realized that marriage would be more difficult than other solutions, and the girl called the wedding off. She has subsequently borne the child with the intention of raising it herself, or letting her mother do so. I continue to have great fears about this situation.

Now I know that I am not relating instances which are uncommon. Every one of you has had similar cases, and perhaps, a great many more than I. The prevalence of this problem is clear by what was told one of our pastors by a boy of his congregation when asked, "How could you do such a thing?" His answer was, "Pastor, everybody does it!" By speaking directly to our young people, and by providing their parents with Scripturally sound instruction, we must help them form attitudes which will enable them to solve the situations and problems which confront them in family living.

The influences of this world are strong and growing stronger, aided by the spiritual cancer of sin. Statistics concerning out of wedlock children, disdain for the estate of marriage, venereal disease of epidemic proportions, compounded by a growing drug problem, often cause us to shake our heads in disbelief, and cause us to puzzle over what might be done. The recent decision of our Federal Supreme Court in the matter of abortion compounds the problem. Perhaps soon I will call on one of my young female members in the hospital to be told matter of factly that she had an abortion. Maybe some of our members have committed this sin already.

We might like to think that it is only "other" people who are facing this problem. We might like to think that we have supplied our people with adequate instruction in God's Word so they won't get into such situations or be tempted to toy with God's wrath by contemplating or taking part in grossly sinful activities. But we have a real problem in that young people are living in a loose moral society where they are led by their peers to think that it is okay to indulge in sexual activities outside of marriage as long as they protect

themselves. When a girl thinks she loves a boy, and he is pressuring her to give in and go all the way to prove her love, when the passions of a developing sexual power in her body, which she does not fully understand, when the attitudes of her peers and her fears at not being accepted are all focused in one desperate moment, it will be extremely difficult for her, as Ann Landers puts it, to use the pill with 100% effectiveness, by holding it firmly between her knees.

We face a very difficult far reaching, and on-going problem. And we must be able to lead our people, the youth and their parents, to formulate God-pleasing attitudes according to the principles of Scripture concerning sex, its use, its place in our lives, and its attendant ethical problems of birth control and abortion.

Which brings us finally to the subjects of this essay, Birth Control and Abortion. In discussing this topic, I would like to take a brief look at the Ethical and Pastoral problem we face regarding Birth Control and Abortion, then I would like to consider each of these two and finally draw a few conclusions.

## BIRTH CONTROL AND ABORTION

- I. An Ethical and Pastoral Problem; II. The Purpose of Marriage;
- III. Birth Control: What Decision? IV. What About Abortion?

### I. Birth Control, an Ethical and Pastoral Problem

I am confident that you all, or most of you at least, are acquainted with Hans Kirsten's fine essay on this subject printed in the January 1968 issue of the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly. When he speaks in this essay, he points out that we are faced with an ethical question first of all, that is, a question we have to face, or have faced in our own lives, in our relationships with our wives and families. Only when we have faced a problem squarely in the light of God's Word, can we supply counsel and aid to our people in our role as Pastor. As in any ethical problem, one must choose between right and wrong. As Children of God we want to make, and we want our people to make, the right choices.

Let us view again the primary difference between the revelation of the Law and the Gospel. The Gospel of our salvation has been revealed only in the Bible. The Law, however, has had a twofold revelation, the Word and in the heart. The Law as revealed in the Bible is the authoritative interpretation of the law originally and essentially written in man's heart. Kirsten makes this observation:

*"The Law is part of man's nature, given in the creation, that he can never simply turn away from preaching about God and the demands of His Law and utterly ignore them, since his 'conscience' testifies to him of God's existence and that same conscience (his 'thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another,' Romans 2, 15) brings to naught every attempt on his part to deny the validity of the Law as a norm for man's conduct."*

Therefore, as Luther terms it, the revelation of the Law in the Scriptures was a "law code for the Jews," and not an original revelation of Law. It was a codification for the purpose of edification, of the Law originally written in the heart of man, as is clear from a study of the Sermon on the Mount. The point to be made is this, and again, I quote Kirsten:

*"Consequently, in any question of ethics, it is not always so perfectly clear precisely what it is that the Law demands at every time and in every situation, especially when Holy Writ does not have anything specific to say about the matter at hand."*

Roman Catholic theology assumes that there is a continuity between man's original state of innocence and his state in a world fallen into sin, and that the effect of sin's entrance into the world has been merely to disturb that continuity. For this reason the Roman church assumes itself able to know precisely where man's responsibility to the natural law lies, and therefore, able to say in every case what each person's obligation is.

We know of no such continuity, however, and also of no natural law which is able in this way to prescribe and prohibit. What must be reckoned with is man's fall into sin, which has made it impossible to know what the Law demands, and hence renders man unable to act according to knowledge of the Law. Man is confronted with a mass of erroneous past decisions so that He doesn't even know what good is, and therefore will, even with the best of intentions, commit sin. Paul says of himself:

*"For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do." Romans 7, 18b-19*

So sin has changed man, changed his knowledge of the natural law, and changed the function of the revealed law. Therefore, man does not often know where his duty lies in any concrete situation. This makes it clear that, because man is guided by a conscience subject to error and sin, and because conscience may be deceived and used by sin, man cannot be sure in advance where his duty lies in every case. Kirsten draws the following conclusion:

*"There is then actually no perfect system of natural law and no infallible moral teaching, neither in man's consciousness nor in the divine Law, that could without fail be applied in every case and that could tell us with absolute certainty how we are to conduct ourselves in a given situation."*

This does not reduce us to "situation ethics". We still have in Scripture numerous interpretations of the Decalog which must be recognized as having binding force. When properly expounded and understood they enable us, in concert with the message of the Gospel, to arrive at correct decisions there where the Law itself does not answer the question for us, and even there where others may not understand. Let us see now if we can arrive at any valid considerations in solving the problems before us, Birth Control and Abortion.

We will agree that generally speaking birth control is thought of as a problem confronting married persons only. A look at recent news reports will show, however, that birth control is becoming increasingly a consideration of unmarrieds who follow the lust of the flesh and fornicate freely. The question, "Should Birth Control methods and devices be made available to unmarrieds?" is often answered by, "As long as they do it anyhow they might as well be safe than sorry." This, of course, is worldly reasoning. What we must be ready and able to do is to lead our young people to a proper understanding of marriage, of sex, and its proper use before God, so that they may lead chaste and decent lives in word and deed, and, so that we may not find ourselves in a situation where one sin might be compounded by another. Let us therefore explore the question, "What is the Purpose of Marriage?"

## II. The Purpose of Marriage

As a manner of approach let us first view this question as does Rome, and see how they deal with it, remembering their understanding of natural law in relation to man. To Rome there is but one prime purpose for marriage, to which all others must recede into the background, i.e., Propagatio Humani Generis, propagation by means of begetting children. We can see, however, that to focus one's attention solely on this is to cause the other purposes, God-given as they may be, to be forgotten. Those purposes are the fostering of mutual companionship and the prevention of unchastity.

This determines the entire conduct of the Marriage according to Rome. Pius VI declared:

*"Every act in marriage in which its natural power for the coming-into-being of new life is frustrated by the arbitrary action of man violates the Law of God and of nature. Those guilty of doing so, defile their conscience with grievous guilt."*

It might appear that things are quite simple and clear, but not so.

All know of Rome's efforts to differentiate between natural and unnatural methods of forestalling conception, such as the rhythm method and complete continence, verses mechanical and chemical means. Recent developments within the Roman church for policy changes indicate that all is not as clear and simple as previously thought. This makes it easy for us to see that when the premises of the system are false, the entire structure of the system becomes false, as are the conclusions drawn from it. Rome simply does not, nor does modern man, take man's fall into sin into consideration. But as we know, man's fall into sin has caused a change in man and in the function of the Law.

To find the answer we must go back to where marriage had its beginning, and see what considerations God made when he instituted marriage. Is propagatio humani generis the prime function of marriage? We will remember that the proper understanding of the creation account is that chapter one is the general description God gives us of the entire creation week, with man and woman as the crowning achievement. In chapter two, He gives us a detailed account of that crowning work, His creation of man and woman, and the institution of marriage.

As we view that creation again, we will see that God created woman as a complement to man, of who God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him an help meet for him." By this creation of woman, and by bringing her to Adam, God also instituted marriage, the lifelong relationship between one man and one woman. In Genesis 2, 24 God states: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh."

What consideration did God make when He created the woman? It was not the propagation of the races, but rather to provide a companion for man, one who would be a helper fit for him. The God-created complement to man is the woman, who is flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. Luther translated this way: "eine Gehuelfin...die um ihn sei." That means we must understand the prime purpose of marriage as companionship: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." That companionship finds its greatest expression as one flesh in the sexual union.

God then proceeded to provide for the crowning blessing of that companionship, which would complete their oneness. "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish

the earth and subdue it. Kirsten says:

*"What must not be overlooked is that the institution of marriage and God's reason for it, actually preceded the blessing pronounced on it. The blessing is pronounced on the wedded pair living in marriage: "Male and female created he them." So we note also that the essence of marriage does not depend upon its resulting in childbearing, or else childless marriages would not really be marriages...accordingly, we are convinced that as Scripture here teaches us, that the primary purpose of marriage is companionship, a total communion of body and soul. Of this communion children are a special divinely intended blessing, of which the Psalmist says, Psalm 127, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is His reward."*

Marriage has yet another purpose, and that, according to I Corinthians 7, 2 & 9, is the prevention of sinful desires. This makes it clear to us that marriage has a function as an ordinance for life in this sinful world. This will help us as we instruct the unmarried about Birth Control.

Let us then see that there are different answers to the different ethical problems raised by marriage which results in a different pastoral practice in our church, than is found in the Roman church.

We must keep clear in our minds that it remains God's will that marriage result in children. While the prime purpose of marriage is companionship, as fulfilled in the sexual union of the man and his wife, it is also God's will that by this act the man and his wife join with Him in providing for a continuation of the race of man on the earth. To overcome man's reluctance to cooperate with Him in the procreation of children God has made the sex urge a great one. But to provide for happiness for man, and to control man's use of sex strictly for his personal gratification a sinful use whether married or unmarried, God has ordained marriage. He has ordained in His word that sexual functions are to be limited to the married state. It therefore follows that when man, for any reason, determines to have the one, sexual gratification, without a willingness to have the other, children, such interference with God's will that children be born becomes sin. It is in this area that we must guide our people.

We must understand and guide our people to see the proper relation of the one purpose of marriage to the others. Roman theology states that the regularion of conception except by natural means is sin. By Pius XI's edict man is to understand that all marital relations that are not engaged in with the intention of producing children, but purely as an expression of the companionship they know and of the joy that spouses find in each other, are essentially immoral and wicked. Its efforts then to okay the rhythm method are illogical, for if sexual intercourse is to serve only to beget children, then there can be no marital relations at those times when conception is not to be expected.

The Reformers recognized: that sex for the sake of sex was not tabu. They recognized that God ordained marriage primarily for companionship and that this companionship finds its greatest expression in the sexual union of man and wife. It is stated in the Apology, XXIII : 12, Triglota, p. 367:

*"...the natural desire of sex for sex is an ordinance of God in nature, and for this reason is a right, otherwise, why would both sexes have been created?"*

Therefore, sex is something of position<sup>ve</sup> value, given to man to be enjoyed within the prescribed limits, that is, within marriage and in obedience to God's Command. It is to be received in the sense of Paul's word to Timothy (1 Tim. 4, 1-5):

*"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry... (for) every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."*

### III. Birth Control: What Decision?

In view of this, then, also birth control will be seen in a different light, namely, as a responsible manner of meeting the problem of the limits to be set on marital relations. Methods, too, of forestalling conception, like the "rhythm method", will not be seen as violations of the essence of marriage or as mere concessions to human weakness.

In His Word, God helps us to arrive at convictions which are truly God-pleasing. With great care God outlines for us the principle according to which the relationship between a man and his wife is to be governed.

Certainly, we are not to be guided by mere animal passions. Nor has God created us only with instincts to procreate as do the animals. God created us free rational beings who are to make choices so our actions will glorify His name. Sin has perverted our abilities in this respect. Therefore, God has caused the Scriptures to be written, so we might learn therefrom, and guide our people to learn His will. Then, with grateful hearts over God's love to us in Christ, we can respond with willing obedience.

To find the principles by which we are to be guided, I direct your attention to 1 Corinthians 7, 1ff. Especially, give attention to verse 3, which reads:

*"Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence, and likewise also the wife unto the husband."*

The word of importance here is *ωφειλο*, obligation, or duty. The duty here expressed falls to husband and wife. The context of verses 2 - 5 clearly indicate that the duty here spoken of is the duty of sexual relations. Kirsten points out that this is not merely something that pleases or something allowable, but a duty:

*"Not merely a means toward procreation, but an owed (and not merely tolerated) expression of marital companionship and affection."*

Consider furthermore 1 Peter 3, 7:

*"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with (your wives) according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."*

Emphasis here is on *γινωσκω*, knowledge or understanding, Vernunft, as Luther puts it. This is the reasonable understanding that in this case takes into consideration that the wife is the weaker partner in the marriage relation. Luther puts it this way:

*"The wife is physically weaker and of a more delicate and timid frame of mind. Therefore your actions and relations to her should be such that she can bear it."*

Since the wife is the principle bearer of the burdens of the household, the husband able to get out from under, to get away from it all by virtue of his obligation as provider, he must all the more consider his wife and act with understanding. This cannot but mean that in our marital relations we don't just give free reign to our impulses, but to conduct ourselves as intelligent beings who can control their sexual drive so that the wives can bear their burdens. Here Kirsten concludes:

*"Understood in this way a control of births, practiced in mutual love and responsibility, is not a reprehensible wrong, but a moral requirement made of marital relations, a demand based on the fact that the companionship of husband and wife is implicit in marriage itself, and is a blessing so great that it must be preserved and never needlessly or heedlessly put in jeopardy."*

What shall we then say? Man has liberty and responsibility here, so long as he does not go contrary to the express will of God. To practice birth control for the purpose of preventing any and all births, or to limit them where wedded bliss is not jeopardized is contrary to the will of God. It is wrong to enter into marriage with the design to have no children, or to limit their number only for the sake of convenience, or out of lack of faith, as when their is fear that additional children would cause a lack of physical means to care for them. God cares for the birds and the flowers; will He not also care for you, of ye of little faith? To think only of one's own pleasure and comfort, so as to indulge in all the worldly pleasures, and to say children will hinder this, is likewise sinful. But we can go no farther, lest we judge the hearts of members. Each Christian must constantly examine his motives to see if his excuses are really a cover-up for a desire for convenience, which is a lack of faith. And let us avoid judging men's hearts, but ever put the best construction on everything.

Here also we must take a look at the various methods of birth control to see if any may be intrinsically wrong, so that we may guide our people away from such methods. Of all the methods, natural, mechanical or chemical, only a couple deserve mention. Psychologists make a great thing out of "coitus interruptus" as a bad thing. It is claimed to be harmful to the mental wellbeing of those who practice it. Some theologians claim that it is anti-Scriptural, citing the case of Onan who spilled his seed on the ground. Onan's sin, however, lay not in the method of conception prevention, but in his refusal to obey the "lex leviratus", the law requiring a brother to marry the wife of a brother who had died, in order to raise up seed to the brother.

In my thinking one other method is not only suspect, but one which I would counsel against, the IUD or intra-uterine device. The IUD is a tiny coil or odd shaped piece of plastic or stainless steel which is inserted into the uterus of the woman. Its action is to irritate the wall of the uterus causing it to expell any foreign object, even a newly fertilized ovum, thus preventing pregnancy. This, in my opinion, is preplanned abortion, and should be avoided for those reasons which will eliminate abortion as such from the thinking of the Christian.

Our duty then is this, that we lead our people to a proper understanding of the relationship between a man and his wife, as God has clearly set it forth in His Word. Let us urge our people to speak simply but clearly to their children about sex. Let us so instruct our people that they may be able to instruct their children, the youth of the church, who look to us for guidance in all spiritual



matters. Let us ever warn our young people against the sin of fornication as the vile evil that it is. When they avoid fornication as God's Word enjoins on us, then there will be no need for practicing birth control outside of marriage. A proper respect for the estate of matrimony, as ordained by God, will help in this respect. We must help our young people to develop a healthy spiritual attitude about marriage, so that when they enter it, they may be enabled by knowledge to an understanding, and truly loving relationship with their spouses, and thus receive from God the wondrous blessings He bestows on His people in marriage. Let this not be found only in our teaching, but in our entire conduct, for the eyes of our people are on us, and they learn as much by what they see us do as by what they hear us say.

#### WHAT ABOUT ABORTION?

Abortion is a subject which has received a great deal of exposure and treatment in all the media of communication in recent months. One TV show in prime time aroused a great deal of adverse publicity when it presented the 47 year old matron heroine of the series as unexpectedly pregnant, and encouraged by all around her to have an abortion. A great amount of publicity has been generated by the Women's Lib Movement in the area of abortion, by their demands for equality, in order that they may be able to have among other things, abortion on demand for whatever excuses imaginable. The recent precedent setting decision of the Federal Supreme Court has not invalidated most of the present state laws concerning abortion. This alone generated 6 newspaper articles in a period of eight days, besides many letters to the editors.

You and I may well be distressed by this situation because of the influence exerted on our members. I think that for a great number of our people the very idea of aborting a child brought into existence by the creative act of almighty God is totally abhorrent. The very idea is repelling, to say the least. I don't think, however, that we need forget about the problem. I don't think either that we need not talk about it to our older members, parents and grandparents, just because their age and upbringing will make the thought of abortion as abhorrent to them as to us. We need to speak forthrightly to them especially, because it is the parents and their attitudes, as they discuss these matters with their families, who will ultimately shape the attitudes of their children. When those attitudes are in accord with Holy Writ, then our children also will grow up with healthy attitudes which will enable them to walk in the way of the Lord.

Is abortion just a recent development in the history of man? I have not, in my research, run across any figures regarding the use of abortion as a means of ridding ones self of unwanted children in ancient days. That the idea did rise in the hearts of sinful men of old is evident from the fact that God made a prohibition of such actions in the old testament Law, Exodus 21. It is evident also in the fact that Hippocrates included in his oath for physicians, still subscribed to by doctors today, the solemn promise not to give any woman a pessary for the purpose of aborting a child.

A more prevalent practice seems to have been exposure and abandonment. Unwanted children were simply left behind to be eaten by wild animals, die from exposure, or be found and picked up by wandering traders who raised them, and sold them as slaves. This idea was urged by such as Plato and Socrates, and a tribunal of Sparta ruled on the fitness of each child born in that society to live. The idea of considering some children as unwanted is as old as sin itself. For sin makes of man a selfish creature who is unwilling to share himself or his possessions with others, even in the grossest of cases, with his own flesh and blood. And this appears to be the overriding reason for abortion today.

The Christian influence had a profound effect in bringing the practice of abandonment to an end in ancient times. And we might point out here, for the benefit of our young people, that it was not accomplished by placards, bumper stickers, demonstration marches, and open rebellion and riot. Rather it was the quiet preaching of the Gospel injunction of our Lord Jesus: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God."

What we are seeing is the efforts of men to rid themselves of what they call the "shackles of the obsolete rules and regulations of the peculiar Judeo-Christian ethic but what we must call further rebellion against God's authority. Not only do we have the demands and protests of the ultra liberals of our day, but efforts to change legislation as proposed by well-meaning but unprincipled men and women, including churchmen.

Our laws were formulated after the British Law against abortion, in the late 19th century. These continued generally until around 1967 when most states still had laws prohibiting abortion, except to save the mother's life. The Wisconsin statute is typical. Statute 940.04 states that anyone who destroys the life of an unborn child (of any age) is subject to a maximum \$5,000 fine or three years in prison or both; if the mother does it, she is liable to a fine of \$200 and up to two years in prison, but this does not apply to a therapeutic abortion performed to save the mother's life. It is under this statute that the now famous Babbitch case was begun, which, according to a February 6 news release, has now been dismissed. This law was declared vague and unconstitutional by a three judge federal panel in the Spring of 1970.

Some states have set aside old abortion statutes. From 1967 - 1970, twelve states revised their laws to allow abortion for the physical and mental health of the mother, rape, fetal deformity, up to 16 - 26 weeks of pregnancy. Three states, New York, Hawaii, and Alaska have abortion practically on request, but all require a licensed physician.

Is abortion all that prevalent? One will never know how many illegal abortions were performed in the days before liberalization by quacks, and all manner of other people, sometimes under the most unsanitary of conditions, and often resulting in the death or very serious illness of the women involved. In recent years, with liberalized laws, the prevalence of the act is becoming more known. A late issue of Christian News reveals the following statistics: 1968 - 18,000 abortions; 1969 - 50,000; 1970 - 230,000; 1971 - 600,000; 1972 - 700,000. Consider now the possibility of one illegal abortion for every "legal" abortion and that comes to around 4,000 every day! Monstrous? Yes, indeed.

Society's view of abortion indicates that a great many people are unconcerned about the facts which must be considered in regard to this problem. A 1971 survey indicated that half of the people were in favor of liberalized laws. One contra-indication in this respect is the fact that referenda in Michigan and North Dakota rejected the liberalization of abortion laws. Many of the news media, however, urge that because abortion laws are impossible to police, they should be changed and removed from the lists of criminal offenses. They further claim that abortions "should be considered primarily a medical matter, and a private one between a woman and her doctor."

A scientist recently addressed a group of Appleton pastors, and said, "I believe that the fetus is a living being from conception. But there are things worse than taking a human life." Then he went on to recommend abortion in various instances.

We note with alarm that many church bodies, which call themselves Christian,

are now, with pious sounding statements, endorsing abortion for almost any reason. I will cite only one such statement by some Baptists:

*"We call upon some Baptists to work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother." (Christian News, 6/7/71, Page 2)*

Now the Federal Supreme Court has stepped in to make pronouncements where none others will. The point of difference which they say determines if, and when, an abortion may be allowed is the so-called time of viability, the time from which the conceived being becomes a person. The reasoning is that before that time what exists is nothing more than a part of the mother to be kept or rejected at will like any other growth or tumor.

Various times are stated as the time of viability, such as conception, the time the heart starts beating, the first trimester, or even the time when the child is capable of life on its own outside of the body of the mother. Common sense can easily answer the question, yet sinful man wants to hedge. Scientists do not want to decide for fear of playing God, and for fear of their conscience bothering them. How commendable!

We will, of course, lead our Christian members to the Word of God which does indeed give us an answer, the same answer that common sense gives, but which the scientists and the lawyers and many theologians claim to be unable to answer.

Scripture plainly regards the unborn child as a person in the very real sense of the term from the moment of conception onward. For instance, when Mary had heard the announcement that she was to be the mother of the Christ, she went off to visit with her cousin Elizabeth, who now, in an advanced age, was about ~~three~~<sup>four</sup> months pregnant. Luke tells us that when Elizabeth heard the voice of Mary, "The babe leaped in her womb." Luke goes on to tell us that Elizabeth, speaking under the influence of the Holy Ghost, said, "As soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." Note how she, and St. Luke, both under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, clearly speak of John as a real person who rejoiced over the impending birth of the Son of God.

In Psalm 51, 5 David says, "In sin did my mother conceive me" (not it). And in Psalm 139, 13 - 16 we read:

*"For thou has possessed my reins: Thou has covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."*

Jeremiah 1, 4 - 5 reads as follows:

*"Then the Word of the Lord came unto me, saying, before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."*

If God thus considers what He creates in the conception of a new being from the sperm cell of the father and the ovum of the mother as a person, a living human being, we can do no other. And consequently, we will hold as our credo that which God himself says of the one who performs an abortion in Exodus 21, 22 - 23:

*"If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow, he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life."*

Accounts such as these surely justify us in saying that unborn children are human beings, that they are persons, and that therefore, they come under the protection of the 5th Commandment. The Bible does not tell us when the unborn child becomes a person, nor yet does it tell us of any time when it is not a person. Dr. Siegbert Becker, in his article A CHRISTIAN LOOK AT ABORTION, (NWL Jan. 4, 1970) draws this conclusion:

*"A Christian, who confesses that the Lord Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, who believes that the fruit of the womb is His reward, and who knows the love of Christ for little children, will never give consent to abortion except in the most unusual circumstances."*

It is not difficult to see that abortion is murder in the very strict sense of the word. Our studies in God's Word make it clear that he who hates his brother is a murderer in his heart. If the mere feeling in the heart is a gross sin before God, then surely, excuses notwithstanding, the act of taking the life of a living being brought to its living state by the creative act of God, whether born or unborn, whether viable outside the mother's body or not, whether having and showing definite personality or not, is indeed murder.

Can there possibly be any reason at all for abortion? We must agree first of all that we are not dealing here with a mere lump in the uterus, which is no different from any other growth. Since that new being is a person in the true sense of the word from the moment of conception onward, since God speaks as he does about even the unborn child, since, in the eyes of God, children are beloved gifts which He bestows graciously on His people, we dare never tolerate the common excuses given to justify abortion. The 14th amendment of our Federal Constitution specifically says that no one shall "deprive any person of life...without due process of law." Since God brought life to that new being, since also for that person, though unborn, the Lord Jesus suffered and died, that life must ever be held in the highest esteem and preserved at almost every cost. We must point out that most of the reasons given are wrong reasons because God is left out of the picture. Most of all we must help our people to beware of the danger of being deceived by the high sounding words of those who foster a more liberal attitude towards abortion..and those who have it performed on them. They are such, who, according to Romans 16, 18, "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

To speak to our people only of the evil of abortion is a strictly negative approach. We should rather seek out positive ways of leading them to a God-pleasing life, especially because a deadly sin is involved. Consider what St. Paul writes in Ephesians 5, 3 - 6 (TEV):

*"Since you are God's people, it is not right that any questions of immorality, (fornication, (JV) or indecency, or greed should ever be mentioned among you. Nor is it fitting for you to use obscene, foolish, or dirty words."*

*Rather you should give thanks to God. You may be sure of this: no man who is immoral, indecent, greedy (for greediness is a form of idol worship) will ever receive a share in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Do not let anyone deceive you with foolish words: it is because of these very things that God's wrath will come upon those who do not obey him."*

Here surely is God's direction for our action to combat the insidious evil of the practice of abortion by prior instruction. We must instruct our people, young and old alike, about the nature and function of sex, about the fact that God Himself has limited the exercise of sex to marriage; that God has ordained marriage as the estate in which sex and its pleasures, and blessed rewards may be used and enjoyed in a God-pleasing manner; that sexual activity outside of marriage is sin, and not without its grave dangers to the body and the soul. We must emphasize that the Lord our God has untold blessings for those who show their love and trust in Him by walking in accord with His Commandments, including the Sixth Commandment. We must teach them that their bodies are the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost, and that they must ever live in such a way that their bodies remain places where He will want to dwell continually.

We must not forget to teach our people, especially our youth, that when we fall into sin, when we violate God's Commandments, all is not lost, for the death of God's Son, Jesus Christ, is sufficient to cover every sin, while not giving us license to indulge ourselves. When the sinful acts of our people result in difficult circumstances, like the conception of an illegitimate child, we must show them that one sin cannot be covered and erased by another. There are alternatives to abortion, and we must, with love and understanding, lead our people to find them. Even if all our instruction results in the hindrance of one sinful act, it will not have been in vain. Let us preach the Gospel of God's Word in season and out of season. Let us talk fearlessly on every subject about which our people are concerned without embarrassment. Above all, let us encourage those of our members who are parents to give to their children the kind of training which will enable them to fight the good fight of faith. Let us provide them with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God in its truth and purity, which will enable them to fight that battle, and with, Jesus help, win.

I am sure that everyone has been waiting for me to answer the question, "Is abortion always out of the question for the Christian?"

I will answer only with a qualified, "No". And this is why. God's Word on abortion in Exodus 21 states the general principle according to which He expects his people to order their lives. It is for us to live thereby. But this word is principle, and does not go into the many circumstances where the principle must be applied. Even as God Himself mitigates some of His commandments, so also He indicates that we must use our sanctified judgment in applying each of these principles. It is that principle of ethics, the application of God's Law to our people, as stated earlier in this essay, which applies also here. I quote again from Kirsten's article on Birth Control:

*"In any question of ethics it is not always so perfectly clear precisely what it is that the Law demands at every time and in every situation, especially when Holy Writ does not have anything specific to say about the matter at hand."*

Now don't get me wrong. Scripture is very clear as to what we are dealing with in the matter of abortion. I am, thereby, convinced that in almost every circumstance abortion is certainly proscribed. However, I will admit to the possibility of a circumstance under which abortion may, yea, must be considered. I have had one such circumstance in my congregation where an abortion was decided

upon, and with which I agreed. To help elucidate I quote Dr. Becker from his aforementioned article:

*"The mutual and physical health of the mother certainly deserves consideration, but to allow abortion on grounds as vague as this is to invite wholesale abuse. Some doctors already make it clear that in their opinion a mother who would even consider an abortion is in a mental state sufficiently disturbed to justify an abortion. Nevertheless, if it is established that a pregnancy will almost certainly result in the death of a mother, then the life of the mother will surely weigh as much as the life of the child, especially if both are likely to die if the pregnancy is not terminated by artificial means. In this case we might say that an abortion is not only justified but perhaps even demanded. There may also be other unusual circumstances in which a Christian may not be certain about the will of God in this area. We can only pray that God may help us decide all difficult cases in His fear and that He might, for Jesus' sake forgive us if we do wrong in regard to our unborn children."*

I would also like to make a few brief remarks about the recent ruling of the Federal Supreme Court. That ruling states that in the first trimester the matter must be considered a strictly private matter between the woman and her doctor. In the second trimester the state may make regulations which will guarantee the health and well-being of the mother. In the last three months, or better yet, 10 weeks, the state may go so far as to proscribe abortion since the fetus is then technically viable outside of and independent of the mother. Its reasoning is that medicine can now guarantee abortion to be safer than childbirth itself.

Such a ruling opens a whole Pandora's Box of evils. In a word it has been summed up very nicely by William F. Buckley in an editorial printed in the Post Crescent on February 1, 1973:

*"In a sentence which will survive in the annals of syntactical inelegance and analytical chaos, the Court said: 'Maternity, or additional offspring, may force upon the woman a distressful life and future. Psychological harm may be imminent. Mental and physical wealth may be taxed by child care.' So that is the reason to allow abortion! I should think it at very least a good excuse to justify infanticide. And the very best of reasons for justifying the elimination of all adolescents as a class. God knows they force upon most mothers a 'distressful' life, as the judge put it. The psychological harm of wayward children is not only 'imminent', but concrete, as is the 'tax' on the 'mental and physical wealth' of their parents."*

Again, let us teach our people God's pure Word. Let us not be afraid to speak on any subject of concern to them, nor to call a spade a spade, a sin a sin. And let us remind them that "we ought to obey God rather than men" and "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it". The Court's declaration of legality does not make it less of a sin in God's sight than before. God's people will always do His will, and thus glorify His name before men. May God guard and keep us and our members in such a life of service to Him and to our fellowmen. In His name. Amen.

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