

# On Abortion

I just read an interesting article written about one Emily Wilkinson. At this writing, she is about 27, less than half my age, and exhibits more purpose and character than I hope to, and much more understanding than I did when first thinking through the issue of abortion. Emily is presently the West Coast regional coordinator of Students for Life; I expect perhaps even a broader sphere of influence from her over time. She is the subject of an article, *Meet The Pro-Life Millennial*, by Kelsey Miller, published by/at Refinery29, where Kelsey is a feature writer. Emily is a remarkably sensitive and astute warrior against abortion, which she sees, as do I, as plain and simple murder. And I see from this article that I may be able to state my own position about abortion perhaps more succinctly than I might have otherwise. So, here goes.

The key point the reader should note is that I'm against abortion because it is the taking of a human life. If you don't believe that, we have a very fundamental difference on the facts. But you must then also acknowledge that as long as I so believe, I have no reason to discard opposition to any abortion. And, you might also agree that I'm perfectly reasonable in expecting you to reconsider what you conceive (no pun intended) to be the facts about personhood. You don't get to call me a wild-eyed extremist simply because we don't agree on this point.

Indeed, people of reason might well conclude that since A thinks abortion is the taking of a human life, and B does not: unless we can be certain of the correctness of one position or the other, we should take A's position, at least provisionally. Why? Because we are then certain that we don't kill a human. B should surely allow that we are not morally COMPELLED to abort.

Of course, we then immediately encounter the political hue and cry of "women's health" and "women's choice". I will share with you that, though a Christian, I welcomed the Roe v. Wade decision at the time. Why? Because I was a young guy at the time, who, though I saw it as sin, irrationally desired the possibility of some kind of "romantic" premarital relationship - y'know, something I might "fall into" - and wanted a way out of the consequences in case it (happened and) went bad. Hear me! That was ALL about my selfish desires and life convenience. In God's grace, no such thing happened. But I assure you that a great deal of the hue and cry is political, and a great deal of it is self-serving at one level or another. Don't believe me? Look into your own heart in the depths of the night. You can't escape your own self-knowledge, and you can't escape God's knowledge of you. (I report, to finish what I began earlier this paragraph, that by God's grace, I later became better instructed from the Bible so as not to have doubt about the facts of conception. My opposition to abortion follows directly, as a logical consequence. Separately, my thinking about the position one should take if unsure about the beginning of a human life also matured.)

The point of the last paragraph is not to guilt you, though I have no objection if it does. The point is that this issue is a right-and-wrong issue, not a my-convenience issue. Nor is it a women's rights issue. A woman already HAS choice: she may choose NOT to marry, NOT to drink beyond the threshold of self-control, NOT to engage in sex outside of marriage, NOT to choose a marital partner hastily or unwisely. In our society, she can choose as she pleases, but when she conceives, the evidence is that she has ALREADY made some choice or another, the choice having consequences. This is simply a fact. The "pro-choice" people want abortion as an "option" to deal with such consequences, and this only makes logical sense if we KNOW that we are NOT taking a human life.

Now, people also bring forth the cases where we might think taking a human life is acceptable. There are several cases proposed of which I'm aware.

- Rape
- Incest
- Life of the mother
- Health of the mother
- Anticipated birth defects
- Eugenics

Before dealing with any of these, I want to make clear that while I see these issues as simple, and nearly easy, to parse morally, they are by no means easy to live out when they present. Compassion and support for the woman involved is necessary: she is a person with a valuable life. And this is true even if none of these issues appear to apply but she still finds herself with an unwanted pregnancy. If we count her choices as unwise - who among us hasn't made some pretty unwise choices ourselves? We need to separate political concerns from the personal, to be firm on the one and gentle on the other. And judgment about a woman's actions should not imply judgment of the woman.

## **Rape**

If there is a reasonable taking of life consequent to a rape, it would be the rapist's life. A baby so conceived, by definition, didn't do the crime. I believe we may all know that pregnancy resulting from rape is infrequent, but it does happen, and we have to deal with it. First, if a woman does seek or get an abortion consequent to rape, let's not judge her. It is hard for her already. Let's help her. But can we by any means agree, and have in our values as a populace, that the child should not pay with its life for the sin of the father? A woman already having this view before becoming a victim may see the possibility of some healing to herself by her exercise of compassion toward her child - whom, at term, she may choose to offer for adoption. In any case, I don't see abortion as the correct moral choice.

As for the rapist, once actually convicted, we can take steps certain to avoid recidivism: we can see rape as a capital crime (historically valid), we can lock him up and throw away the key, or we might (I'm dubious about this) allow him to experience a lesser penalty by agreeing to medical procedures to remove the capability. My personal belief is that what is really a rape is really a capital crime, and execution is appropriate and effective.

At this point, it's appropriate to add that "he said, she said" isn't a good standard for conviction of a crime, capital or otherwise. And the penalty for a confirmed false accusation should itself be stiff. (I hasten also to add here that I don't see intercourse with a husband as rape. Period. Husbands may be guilty of acts that may be seen as other kinds of criminality, and so prosecuted and punished. But I do not see forcing the definition in this way.) Finally, I'll add that apparently consensual statutory rape is, perhaps, a lesser offense in some cases.

## **Incest**

Almost everything in the discussion of rape applies here equally as well. The difference may be in the age of the mother. I see the capability to conceive as presumptive, but not conclusive, evidence for the capability to carry to term. We should preserve the lives of both if we can, and we should treat the victim with kindness. If we consider that, like rape, this is a crime, we hold crimes to be against all of us. Therefore, we should, all of us, in some sense help to bear the load imposed on the victim, and restore her life as well as we can.

## **Life of the mother**

I believe that few issues of pregnancy held to threaten the life of the mother really do so. However, in the instance, that is not my call. If the attending physician really believes and so counsels that there is an either-or decision to be made, then the mother should be allowed that decision, or those empowered to act on her behalf. All concerned may have to consider whether there will be a mother to care for the child, and/or other children as may already be. And we will get it wrong sometimes - welcome to the world of human medicine. If the decision is either to lose both or the child only, then the decision is obvious, though painful. When I see abortion as a possibility in such cases, it is only because there is already expected the loss of at least one life.

## **Health of the mother**

My position here refers both to the issues of the mother's life, with which this issue may overlap by discussion of risk, and the issue of incest perpetrated upon a young girl. To be brief, we should preserve the baby where possible. It may be that in a few cases, the baby cannot live if the mother's health is insufficient to carry, and the very existence of the baby may compromise her health in a serious way. We can also imagine a case where the mother may live, but with a serious disability making care of children difficult or impossible. These decisions require first the best medical advice as to the facts, and then then the recognition of the baby as a human life. Then the decision can proceed perhaps somewhat after the example of the separating of conjoined twins. Once again, compassion and support are paramount.

## **Anticipated birth defects**

Assuming no issue above also applies, this is easy to parse but difficult to contemplate. The child must be preserved as well as we can. Some children born with birth defects are unlikely to survive, but that doesn't take away their humanity and our obligation toward them. Others, e.g. those with Down syndrome, are likely to be quite viable, if more challenging for parents. Abortion is not an option. (I mention that the whole of humanity bears the "birth defect" of a sin nature.)

## **Eugenics**

This relates a bit to the above issue, and I mention it only because some historically have thought we should cleanse the gene pool by sterilizing or discarding those considered (by whoever arrogates the decision to themselves) to bear defective genes. I hope it is obvious that I dismiss this notion out of hand as any "reason" of any kind for any abortion. This is not a disagreement upon facts, but upon basic morality itself, upon "shoulds".