

Abortion: Questions and Answers

Q *Just why is abortion wrong anyway?*

A The principal reason why abortion is wrong is that it involves taking the life of an innocent, unborn human being. The child in the womb is human in origin, destiny and make-up. This newly conceived child is one of us. Human life comes into being at conception, and from conception on each new human being possesses all that is internally required to grow and develop into a mature adult.

Q *But isn't abortion basically a private matter?*

A No. An abortion involves not just a woman and her doctor. Even more directly and intimately involved is a third human being—the mother's unborn child, the doctor's unborn patient. If the unborn child did not exist, there would obviously be no question of performing an abortion.

Also, the generation of new human life has broad social consequences. Both a mother and a father are involved. And society as a whole has an interest in the well-being of its members and, in a special way, the well-being of the family.

Finally and most important, we are not the absolute owners but the stewards of our being, body and soul, and in all things accountable to God. Says St. Paul: "You must know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is within—the Spirit you have received from God. You are not your own" (1 Cor. 6: 19-20).

Q *What about the problems of poverty, overpopulation, and out-of-wedlock pregnancy? What about pregnancies that result from rape or incest? Aren't these reasons that would justify abortion?*

A Abortion is proposed as a solution to various personal and social problems. In many cases, though,

Do You Know That...

- More than one million legal abortions are now being performed in the United States each year. This figure has been increasing ever since abortion was first legalized in some states in 1967.
- In 1975 four women died from illegal abortions, but 27 from legal abortions.
- In the United States in 1975 there was about one abortion for every four live births. In some jurisdictions the number of abortions exceeds the number of live births.
- Public opinion polls show that the majority of Americans oppose permissive abortion. A recent study shows that public opinion has remained virtually unchanged since 1973.

abortion merely postpones or obstructs the search for solutions which go to the heart of the problem. Furthermore, the crucial fact is that every abortion destroys an innocent human life. Killing the innocent is not a fit way to solve anything. It is a barbarous approach to problem-solving. Its effects on society are no less deadly than its effects on the unborn child.

It is far better to respond to problems constructively and with compassion. Each of the above-named problems is important and complex. A lasting solution to each requires its own specific answers—not abortion.

Q *All right—granting that abortion is wrong, do we need a law?*

A Morality and the law are not identical, but neither are they completely separate. Law reflects moral values in many ways.

Protecting human life, especially in its weakest forms, is considered a mark of a civilized society. The right to live is the most basic human right bestowed on us by God. If we deny that right to the unborn child, there is no sure way to guarantee the child's life and well-being. U.S. law now says, in effect, that unborn children can be killed by abortion—a million, two million, whatever the

number, it is legal to kill them.

We must restore the basic protection of the law to the unborn. The Supreme Court abortion decisions of January 22, 1973, must be reversed. The only feasible option is the enactment of a constitutional amendment which would protect the life of the unborn child from conception onward.

Q *Didn't the U. S. Supreme Court recently hand down a decision about the use of public funds to pay for abortions? What did the Court say?*

A On June 20, 1977, the Court said the government is not constitutionally required to use public funds to pay for abortions—though it may decide to do so. This question should, in the Court's opinion, be resolved through political debate, not through the courts.

However, this does not reverse or change the 1973 decisions. Abortion can still be performed for virtually any reason.

Q *But doesn't this ruling discriminate against the poor?*

A You might argue it was discrimination if the Court had said rich women can have abortions and poor women can't. But all the Court actually said was that government has no obligation to use taxpayers' money to provide free abortions. However, there's an underlying notion in this argument—that abortion is some kind of blessing for the poor—which is terribly off-target. Many people who support abortion for the poor do so because they view it as a way of saving money: as they see it, it's cheaper to abort the children of the poor than help care for them after birth. This degrades the poor by implying that they have less human dignity and human worth than those who are economically better off.

Some Life Facts

- Human life is a continuous developmental process that begins at conception and ceases at death. Most developmental changes take place during the embryonic and fetal periods, but important changes also take place during infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Most developmental changes are completed by age 25.
- More than 1,000 Birthright and Alternative to Abortion centers have been established in the United States in recent years.