

ABORTION

Abortion has become an everyday occurrence and a household word. Its name masks its true nature. Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy by artificial means with the destruction of the unborn child. At present in the UK there are upwards of 200,000 abortions carried out each year. Nearly a fifth of a million unborn children are murdered each year, in our so-called civilized society, and it has the full backing of the law of the land.

The 1967 Abortion Act

David Steele, a past leader of the Liberal Party, was instrumental in having this Act of Parliament passed. It permitted an abortion to take place up to the 28th week of pregnancy, under 4 specific circumstances, namely:

1. If the life of the mother would be placed in greater danger if she were to continue the pregnancy than if she were to have an abortion.
2. If the physical or mental health of the mother would be placed in greater danger if she were to continue the pregnancy than if she were to have an abortion.
3. If the physical or mental health of existing her existing children would be placed in greater danger if she were to continue the pregnancy than if she were to have an abortion.
4. If there was the risk of serious abnormality in the child.

On the surface it may be thought that there is some merit in the first criteria, but the first stated reason for abortion in the Act, actually opened the door for abortion on demand. We are inclined to think that this was always the intention, but even in 1967, that might have been met with more opposition. It is established medical opinion, borne out by statistics, that a full-term pregnancy does put the physical and mental health of the mother at some risk, albeit very small. Indeed the life of the mother is also put at risk. It is also true that an early abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy is much less likely to adversely effect the mother's life or health than if she were to carry the baby to term. Therefore any lady who is in early pregnancy can legitimately argue that to continue the pregnancy would put her life and health at greater risk than if she were to have an abortion, so this Act of Parliament, under the cloak of protecting the mother's life, legalized the abortion of any unborn child, and made it available on demand.

Other moves were employed in an attempt to legitimise and justify abortion. Rather than describing the unborn child as a baby, it was named a fetus. Early in its development it was referred to as an embryo, and at no stage a baby before it reached the point where it could be legally aborted. The phrases, *the potential for life*, and *human tissue* were used to depersonalise the unborn child, and reduce it to the status of little more than a removed tonsil or a discarded fingernail. There has been and there continues to be a reluctance to acknowledge that the embryo or fetus is alive, because the obvious implication is then, that in an abortion something is killed. If a woman is told that she is only having some human tissue removed, or simply the potential for life, then she is less likely to have a conscience about her actions. It is probably as true for the medical profession who perform abortions. If they can convince themselves that the fetus is not alive, they may not feel so bad. Though it does seem hard to credit that those same doctors, when they performed an ultrasound scan of the pregnancy prior to the abortion would, in many cases, have seen the *potential for life* to have a head, body, arms and legs, would have seen its heart beat, and seen this *human tissue* wave its arms, kick its legs and occasionally do summersaults.

In 1967 the chances of a child aborted at 28 weeks surviving was virtually nonexistent. Since then there have been dramatic advances in neonatal medicine and intensive care. Now a child born at 24 weeks has a 50% chance of survival. In the intervening years the law has often looked foolish. It

stated that an unborn fetus at 26 weeks was not alive, had no legal rights and it was not an offence to destroy it. There have been cases when some of these fetuses which were aborted, have lived in spite of the intention to kill them. As a result the law has had to be revised to restrict the time of legal abortions to 24 weeks. Even this barrier is being crossed at this very time.

Methods of Abortion

It would be wrong to overlook the barbarity with which abortions are carried out. The method used depends on the age of the pregnancy. Generally in the 1st three months the unborn child is removed from the womb by suction curettage. In this procedure a small tube attached to a vacuum pump is introduced into the neck of the womb, and the contents of the womb sucked out through the tube. It goes without saying that the infant is pulled limb from limb, and all, as far as the infant is concerned, without anaesthetic.

Later when the unborn child is bigger, the abortion is carried out by inducing a premature labour. When the child is born, it often shows signs of life, but it is left to die. Another method in fairly late pregnancy is partial-birth abortion, but the barbarity goes far beyond what could be included in this booklet.

Hard Cases

When the debate against abortion surfaces there will always be those who try to justify the practice by quoting hard cases. The one which inevitably comes up is that of a pregnancy resulting from rape. At the outset we must point out that the woman who finds herself in that position deserves the greatest sympathy and support. But to use this case as an argument for abortion on demand is in no way justified. Such cases are extremely rare in comparison to the millions of abortions that are carried out in the world every year. Secondly by whatever means this woman has become a mother does not take away from the fact that that child is alive. It has the right to live. Furthermore it is that woman's own son or daughter regardless of who the father may be. Killing an innocent child because of the sin of the father cannot be justified. Someone has said, "This is a case where the protection and preservation of human life comes at high cost, but the law of God surely requires it."

The case of where the child will be, or is thought at risk of being born with some serious abnormality is also used to try to justify the position of abortion on demand. A case where a child is likely to have a severe handicap is obviously very emotive, nevertheless we must weigh these cases too against the principles of Scripture. The debate is often sidetracked on the issue of the severity of the abnormality and the quality of life, when the only issue that needs to be raised is that of life itself. If the child is alive, then the debate must stop there -life exists, it is given by God, and no one has the authority to terminate it. Who has the right to say this child should live and that one should not, anymore than someone should decide an adult should live or die just because he has some illness or disability? Hitler's eugenics program, with his quest for the master race was one of the reasons why the world went to war against him, and yet the same arbitrary selection of which unborn child should live or die is made daily in the hospitals of our "post-war, civilized society."

Another hard case is the situation where the mother will die if she does not abort the child. Here it must be stressed that such a case is exceptionally rare. Roman Catholicism has always taken the view that the child's life should be saved in preference to the mother's. Protestant theology takes the other view. Now again there is no doubt that such a situation is very difficult for all concerned. Let us look at the possible outcomes. If the mother must have an abortion to save her own life, and she refuses it, she will die, but so will the baby -the net result is both mother and baby dead. So it could be argued that something could have been done to save life and it was not. This omission to preserve human life, in itself constitutes a breaking of the 6th Commandment. If the mother has the abortion and as a result lives, at least one life is saved. In a sense the poor unborn child had no chance of survival in

any case. Very rarely the situation arises where the doctors can save one life but not both, and there is a choice between the mother and the baby. The choice must be made otherwise both will die. To do nothing is to kill by omission. But to save the mother's life rather than the baby's is as much a proper preservation of the mother's life as it would be the other way round.

These *hard cases* are far removed from the abortion on demand, that they are used to justify. In the case of *on demand* abortions the intention is always to destroy life, in the case of the ill mother the doctors intentions are to save all within their power, and that is all-important.