

## **Abortion- A Misnomer**

*by Bishop John (Kallos) of Amorion*

The term 'abortion' is an exercise in semantic gymnastics to rationalize the taking of human life. The California Medical Journal calls abortion a "schizophrenic subterfuge." It is a deliberate attempt to avoid "the scientific fact, which everyone really knows, that human life begins at conception and is continuous whether intra or extra-uterine until death", so says the Journal in its editorial entitled "A New Ethic for Medicine and Society".

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision making abortion legal during the first three months of pregnancy will lead to even greater evils, that being death control and death selection, or in a word, 'euthanasia'. The Supreme Court's decision making abortion legal by no way makes abortion moral. Abortion is first and foremost a moral issue, for it is a question regarding human life. It is a flagrant violation of God's Law which is superior to man-made laws. Every Orthodox Christian has the moral responsibility to live according to the Divine Laws as revealed to us by Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition.

The Orthodox Church has always contended that abortion is murder — one has only to read the prayer of a woman who has had a miscarriage to be easily convinced of this matter. St. Basil the Great requires a woman who has had abortion to do penance for 10 years before being allowed to receive Holy Communion. The 91st Canon by the Quinisext Ecumenical Council (692) declares that "those who give drugs for procuring abortion, and those who receive poisons to kill the fetus, are subject to the penalty of murder".

The Orthodox Church does not condone abortion for she holds human life as sacred. Only in the case of therapeutic abortion when the life of the mother is endangered can the possibility of abortion be considered, and then too only in consultation with the priest, physician, mother and the father. The unwanted baby should not be aborted, but given the right to life and given to adoption agencies which are in dire need for infants who are sought to be adopted by married couples who cannot have children of their own. The war in Vietnam has ended, but the war on the womb has just begun, for abortion on demand is nothing less than murder.

To say that abortion is not a moral issue is to ignore the facts of life. The fetus is not a mere appendage to the pregnant woman, but is a living being with a capacity to develop and grow into a unique personality. From the medical and moral point of view abortion unquestionably is a deliberate killing of an embryonic human life.

Man was created by God in His image and likeness. The soul comes into being at the moment of conception as is evidenced by the biblical account of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary when the Archangel Gabriel came to Mary and announced to her the Good News. Also, when Mary visited Elizabeth, the unborn John the Baptist "leaped for joy" in Elizabeth's womb and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Bible regards personal identity as beginning at the moment of conception — "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." — Psalm 50. Behold, the miracle of conception and the miracle of birth. Every woman giving birth to a child is a co-creator with God who is the creator of the universe including man himself. Finally, the Orthodox Church considers abortion an evil, for in terminating life, it ignores the fact that men are not masters of life, but rather ministers of life.

As stated initially, those who contend that abortion is not killing are speaking 'hog-wash'. Medically speaking, life begins at conception. The psychiatrist Dr. Conrad W. Barrs states, "according to medical and genetic science, the expectant mother harbors within her womb from the moment of conception, human life which is not hers to destroy." Dr. Barrs further contends that "there are no valid psychiatric indications for abortion in spite of the fact that in States with moderate or liberal abortion laws, 80 to 90 percent are performed for reasons of so-called mental health." Furthermore, he maintains that "emotional problems related to pregnancy and child bearing can be prevented or treated without exposing the woman to the unnecessary or serious risks of additional abortion-induced feelings of guilt, remorse, self-hate and depression."

The Supreme Court seems to have likewise ignored the brief signed by 220 physicians of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology which concluded that an unborn fetus is an autonomous human being entitled to full protection under the law. This brief, the physicians had asked the Supreme Court to 'consider medical and other scientific evidence of the humanity of the unborn and to weigh a section of the document dealing with the medical complications of legally induced abortions'. The brief further stated that "modern obstetrics has discarded as unscientific the concept that the child in the womb is but tissue of the mother".

Dr. H. M. I. Eiley a New Zealand Pediatrician states that, "Another medical fallacy that modern obstetrics discards is the idea that a pregnant woman can be treated as a patient only. No problem in fetal health or disease can any longer be considered in isolation. At the very least, two people are involved, the mother and her child". In a word, the fetus 1) is different from the parent organism, 2) is independent, 3) is largely in charge of the pregnancy and the mother is the passive carrier and 4) is treated as a separate patient by the obstetricians.

The inconsistency of the U.S. Supreme Court as regards human life is most flagrant in recent times. In the same breath, the Supreme Court abolishes capital punishment — the killing of the guilty and then comes out advocating abortion — the killing of the innocent.

Our social moralists who have deplored the Vietnam War are the very same ones, for the most part, who are advocating the termination of unborn infants 'on demand' — if you please. To abhor the killing in Indonesia and the Middle East, and to advocate the death of the innocent in the U.S. is inconsistent to say the least. The term abortion is a social euphemism for the killing of a human fetus. Ironically enough, as we struggle to enhance the quality of human life, the paradox of it all is that the U.S. Supreme Court legalizes the terminating of a life.