



Roe vs. Wade, the watershed event of the Pro-Choice Movement

In 1973 the US Supreme Court heard the case of Roe vs. Wade. The case involved a set of 1854 Texas statutes that made it a crime to "procure an abortion" except with respect to "an abortion procured or attempted by medical advice for the purpose of saving the life of the mother." The court acknowledged that abortion had previously been made illegal for the following reasons:

- To discourage illicit sexual conduct.
- To protect woman from the dangers connected with abortion.
- To protect pre-natal life.

All of these reasons can find justification in the word of God. But in addition, the opinion noted that the Hippocratic Oath had through the emergence and influence of Christianity gained popularity, becoming "the nucleus of all medical ethics." The Oath itself says, "I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel; and in like manner I will not give to a woman a pessary to produce abortion."

However the court judged in favor of Roe on the following grounds.

- The right to privacy--that is, the woman has a right to be protected from the harmful effects of not being able to choose abortion of her child. The majority Court identified seven harmful effects the criminal abortion statute would have in denying a pregnant woman's choice to have an abortion. These "detriments" included: "Maternity, or additional offspring, may force upon the woman a distressful life and future . . . Mental and physical health may be taxed by child care . . . distress for all concerned" and finally, "the additional difficulties and continuing stigma of unwed motherhood."

- The second is the ambiguity about whether or not a baby in the womb is a "person" coming under the protection of the 14th Amendment. The court wrote, "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer."

Thus, the Court affirmed as their position, "the right of personal privacy includes the abortion decision, but that this right is not unqualified and must be considered against important state interests in regulation."

The U.S. Supreme Court vs. God

All discussion of life and death issues ought to begin with the Biblical affirmation of the sanctity and inviolate nature of human beings made in the image of God. This principle is taught in the first proclamation of God in man's creation: "*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;'*" (Genesis 1:26a). This principle was the grounds of God's law to punish those who disregard human life in this way: "*Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.*" (Genesis 9:6) Abortion is the shedding of innocent blood and should be rejected on the basis of this principle.

A Slippery Slope

The birth of a child does not mark the beginning of a person or the completion of his development as a human being. In fact, it is more logical to think of birth as simply another stage in a growth process that begins at conception and ends at death. Developments in the science of fetology have given us greater opportunities than ever to learn about the unborn and to see their humanity. We know that the baby has a completely different

circulatory system than the mother, and often a different blood type. He or she has a completely different genetic code.



By the end of the seventh week of pregnancy, the fetus has a vertebral column, a bony jaw and clavicle, a primitive cranium, ribs, femur, tibia, palate, upper jaw, developing nervous system, a closed circulatory system with a working heart, developing eyes, ears, and nose, lungs, arms, legs, hands, feet, a pancreas, a bladder, kidneys, a tongue, a larynx, a thyroid body, germs of teeth, and the beginnings of muscles. At this early stage of development the unborn child is unmistakably human, unmistakably alive, and unmistakably distinct from the mother. Why in the sense of reason would we conclude that it is perfectly moral to take the life a baby in the womb but immoral to do so after it is born! In fact there is no place on this life-continuum where one may say, "This is the beginning of a person's life". And the logic that allows us to take the life of baby in the womb can easily be applied to every other part of the life continuum. And it is now being applied in the advocating of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

Scriptural Terminology

In Scripture no distinction is made between the person in the womb and the one that is born. You may scientifically call the developing life a fetus and the new born life a neonate; but that doesn't change the issue. It is a child, a baby. The Holy Spirit spoke in through Elizabeth in describing the unborn child in her womb: "For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. (Luke 1:44) Later he spoke of the born child of Mary: "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger." (Luke 2:12. In the Greek text the infant outside the womb is called "brephos"; the child in the womb is also called

"brephos".

In spite of the Supreme courts ruling that the beginning of human life was ambiguous and uncertain, in 1981 numerous scientists testified before a congressional committee with one voice that human life begins at conception.

- "Father of Modern Genetics" Dr. Jerome Lejeune told the lawmakers: "To accept the fact that after fertilization has taken place a new human has come into being is no longer a matter of taste or opinion ... it is plain experimental evidence."
- Dr. Hymie Gordon, Chairman, Department of Genetics at the Mayo Clinic, added: "By all the criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of conception."
- Dr. McCarthy de Mere, medical doctor and law professor, University of Tennessee, testified: "The exact moment of the beginning of personhood and of the human body is at the moment of conception."

Abortion, Not a New Practice

We are not the first to confront the issue of abortion. The culture of the early church practiced abortion. The early church fathers contended for the immorality of this practice. This is significant, realizing that they were heirs of the apostles' teaching. One of the earliest pieces of extant non-canonical Christian literature to address the issues of abortion and infanticide is the Didache (original title, The Lord's Instruction to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles) composed probably before the end of the first century (while the apostle John was still living). Didache was an instructional handbook for Gentiles, dealing with matters of morality, liturgy, and church life. In a catalog of gross sins which are condemned including murder, adultery, sodomy, fornication, stealing, and the practice of magic and witchcraft, the Didache includes the following command, "thou shalt not

murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten [infanticide]." Written at about the same time as the Didache, or perhaps shortly thereafter, the Epistle of Barnabas repeats the same command. It states, "Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion, nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born." It is clear that the contemporary practices of first aborting a child, and then starving it to death if it were born alive, was strongly opposed as immoral by the early church.

A Plea for Life!

The church rightfully stands opposed to this practice while trying to maintain a compassionate outlook toward those who have made mistakes and who contemplate the difficulties of unwanted pregnancies. Facing an unwanted pregnancy is hard; living with an abortion is even harder. Ironically, the woman in whose name Roe vs. Wade was fought, now stands against the practice of abortion. So should we—for the sake of God's truth, for the sake of an innocent baby, for the sake of the women (and men) who must suffer the emotional scars of having taken a child's life and who must face the eternal consequences of their choices. Choose life! It is the only moral choice!



The purpose of this tract is not to increase the pain of those who have chosen abortion, perhaps without knowledge of God's will. Instead it is to provide moral direction for those who may be faced with this issue. We advocate a compassionate presentation of the gospel to all who are overcome with guilt related to this practice. Moreover, we do not endorse those, who in the name of morality, resort to violence and violation of the Law to prevent abortions from occurring. Instead we hope that through urging others to study God's word in a peaceable environment this practice may be eliminated from our society. To that end we offer this tract for your objective study.

This tract was written by Johnny Felker. If you would like to study this subject or other Biblical topics further please let us know how we can help you.



We would be honored to have you visit with us at Perry Heights at any of our services.

- Sun. 9:00 a.m. (Bible class)**
- 9:55 a.m. (Worship service)**
- 6:00 p.m. (Worship service)**
- Wed. 7:00 p.m. (Bible class)**

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Exploring Current Issues...

Is Abortion Moral?



On January 22, 1973 the U.S. Supreme Court gave its decision in Roe vs. Wade, making it legal in the US to perform an abortion through the full term of a woman's pregnancy. There have been more than 40 million abortions performed here in the USA since that controversial ruling. What does God's word teach on this subject?