

Perfect man
Permissive will

Contraception
Inter-uterus device

NO. - 0
Box 6
Folder E

Comments and Reactions to the paper "A Christian
Perspective on Abortion" - by Bro. Vern Ratslaff

once a month pill.

abortion on demand.
Eph 5: "He is the Savior of his body."

The task assigned to us necessitated a very hard look at the work that the author has done and we wish to express our appreciation for the fine paper he has given us. Discussing its contents with several men interested in the content of this paper it was repeatedly accorded very high recognition as a very valuable asset in showing our brotherhood the Christian perspective on abortion.

1) The author does not attempt to define abortion, but discusses two types - artificial or induced abortion and therapeutic abortion.

2) Concern of Science

We have a lucid discussion. There is a position taken by Kenneth Kantzer,² that is between creationism and traducianism but really adds nothing. We must agree that Science cannot answer the questions of life. From the Biblical point of view, its value is so large as to be immeasurable by us except in terms of the essential and infinite worth of humanity.

3) Concern of Medicine

Our primary concern here (page 4) is not therapeutic abortion but abortion on demand because this is where the present and especially future pressures lie. Paragraph 1, page 5 deserves further acceptance then, of course, the nature of the situation requires that its position of priority rises. We also are concerned that many problems are created. Residents and interns, in areas where abortion on demand is accepted, shy away from entering this area of medicine. Operating nursing staff and related personnel have nightmares. Many refuse to participate and others do so under distress. We can understand that one cannot without total involvement assist in removal of a fetus that moves and shows all

What is Jesus' life-style.

the evidence of life. Maybe the question is fitting here, "Are they just people carrying out the will of higher authorities?" In the Judiciary the executioner carries out the decision of the court and is not asked nor given the opportunity to work out his philosophy. Must the doctor and nurse, etc. work out their position under great public pressure? As you must see from the paper the problem of abortion on demand is a theological problem for the church of Jesus Christ, and ~~not~~ a medical one *second*. In matters of birth control the Christian doctors received little theological guidance but sought answers under God and in consultation with one another. Adding page 19 it again might appear that theologians (Judiciary) wish the doctor (executioner) to provide the leadership. The Roman Catholic church has always given leadership. As part of the church we are anxious to be in consultation but need guidance as do other areas of profession and business. In reply to the first sentence of the last paragraph of page 10 we would ask, "Is the Mennonite Brethren Conference clear as to what the Christian perspective on artificial abortion is?" This brings us where the emphasis must lie.

4. Concern of Theology

We repeat, we do not know when life begins and if we expend our energies here, then our prejudices will determine the issue of abortion. We feel that the writer's interpretation of Exodus 21:22-24 weakens his own arguments against abortion. The passage refers to the result of an unpremeditated act. In the history of Israel provision was made for situations where unpremeditated or accidental killing occurred. The one who caused the death had a way of escape into a city of refuge or free city. Not so the murderer. We feel this is a parallel situation and is not related to the problem of premeditated artificial abortion which we are concerned with at this point.

Further on page 7 the argument "that there was personhood even before term" is rather weak. While passages such as Ps.139:13-15 and others quoted indicate a traducian origin of that which constitutes man, they do not prove that man existed as personal and fully human from conception any more than the Biblical statement that Levi paid tithes in the loins of his father Abraham proves that Levi had personal and fully human existence in the semen of Abraham. Such passages have quite different points to make, and their reference to the individual man serves to call attention to the origin and explanation of man. They do not imply that a process was unnecessary before that which constituted the stuff from which man came would become fully and truly human and personal."³ One might strengthen his fine argument that we have not the right to "control of their own body" by adding: first; facetiously - if we had full control of our body no one would need to ask for abortion. (Second) society would call us very irresponsible and the patient would be declared insane and forced to submit to treatment if she were to extend this claim to other areas of the body and insist on the surgical removal of a perfectly functional healthy arm or eye.

In the case of "those cases where continuing pregnancy threatens the life of the mother" the writer seems to accept "situational" and yet on page 11 under point 1. "that all abortion - is a violation of God's will."

in 5 → The whole area of Control of Human Reproduction poses a danger i.e. our value of human life is threatened. The conscience of a church, a society and a nation can very quickly change. Society today has strong voices for abortion on demand. This attack on this helpless life is easily transferred to other areas of life. The medical profession has conscientiously attempted to uphold life - be this a deformed life - mentally or physically.

Today questions are arising as to the value of certain retardates, certain classes of the aged that are "vegetables." Our "Free" society is in a sense moving toward a position for which some totalitarian states were strongly criticized. *Removal of*

In conclusion we would take the position:

Never Abort anyone for birth control.

For some situations e.g. rape, incest, medical disease, we have no answer and maybe because "the whole universe has been infected and got out of kilter" in man's alienation from God, we will have to open to a somewhat "situational" position - or at least have some tolerance to people ^{who take} ~~in~~ this position.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernard Froese

I wish to give recognition to Dr. John Foerster and Dr. G.J. Froese for their valuable counsel given. They assume no responsibility for what is written.

Footnotes;

1. Stedman's Medical Dictionary -

abortion 1. The giving birth to an embryo or non viable fetus. 2. The product of such premature birth. 3. The arrest of any action or process before its normal completion, as the abortion of pneumonia. A distinction is sometimes made between abortion and miscarriage, the former signifying the emptying of the uterus prior to the fourth month of pregnancy, the latter during the fourth, fifth, or sixth month; premature delivery denoting the delivery of a viable fetus after the beginning of the seventh month and before full term. artificial a., induced a. contagious a., infectious a. criminal a., induced a., undertaken solely for the purpose of getting rid of the product of conception and not necessitated by the state of the mother's health. embryonal or embryonic a., expulsion of the embryo prior to the fifth month of pregnancy, true abortion. fetal a., miscarriage, a. during the fifth or sixth month. habitual, a recurring usually at about the same period, with each pregnancy. incomplete a., expulsion of the ovum with retention of the membranes induced a., brought on by drugs or mechanical means. infectious a., Bang's disease, a disease attacking cows with calf, a striking symptom of which is abortion;

it is caused by the presence of B. abortus, and it may occur in the human female. missed a., the long retention in the uterus, and subsequent expulsion, of a dead embryo. ovular a., espulsion of the ovum in the first week or two of pregnancy. therapeutica., induced because of the mother's poor health. tubal a., rupture of an oviduct, the seat of ectopic pregnancy.

- 2) Birth control and the Christian - Sterilization, contraception and abortion p. 251 - 258, chapter on the Origin of the Soul. as related to the abortion question.
- 3) Same as 2) p. 255.

The point is made several times that the Bible is normative, that from it we receive guidance in the areas of "faith and practice."

Though the Bible does not speak directly to abortion, it does lay down principles which can be brought to bear upon it. These have been pointed out in the paper. Since abortion, as the paper states, is an ethical problem, it is the Bible we must go to for answers. The bases for ethical decisions are the principles laid down in scripture.

At this point I believe we should stress something that the paper does not do, and that is that we must begin to think in Biblical terms. Rather than bringing only personal philosophies to the problem, or personal biases, we must seek to find the biblical principles that bear on the problem.

Perhaps we also need to go beyond simply saying that the Bible is normative in the area of faith and practice, and look to our own commitment to the Scriptures, both as a church and as individuals. We need to be willing to submit to the truth that is **revealed** to us.

In speaking of the sanctity and value of human life, and the wrongness of tampering with it, we might also mention, in addition to abortion, the question of the experiments in genetic engineering and the growing fertilized human area in the laboratories of some universities.

Should not the Church take a position in relation to this kind of experimentation and to some of its frightening implications.

But we need to do more than simply establish that ~~since~~ a foetus is in fact a human being, that does in fact have life and that therefore its destruction is a violation of God's will and of His law. We need to look to the responsibility of the church in the question of abortion. We need to teach our own church members God's truth as it bears on this question, and then we need to bring our influence to bear on Society.

Here is responsibility not only for theologians, but for other professions as well - medicine, social work, education and indeed for all Christians to attempt to stem the erosive tide that tends to destroy regard for human life and so dehumanize society. The paper speaks very clearly to this question, and how we can meet our obligation on this question could be a useful area of discussion for this conference.

Walter Regehr.