

A Physician Speaks About Abortion



This chapter was written by the former Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. C. Everett Koop.

Abortion [killing infants before birth], infanticide [killing infants after birth], and euthanasia [killing adults] stand before us like dominoes; the first to fall has been abortion on demand. It is a grave issue. Nothing like it has separated our society since the days of slavery.

It simply isn't true. Abortions in the United States for rape, incest, to protect the life of the mother, or to void a defective fetus comprise less than five percent of all abortions. The rest are performed just for convenience. And we're talking about one million abortions a year.

Rape practically never results in pregnancy. Studies in Pennsylvania and Minnesota concerning rape and pregnancy show that as many as five thousand rapes have occurred successively without a single pregnancy . .

Most people do not know that the younger the mother is the more likely she will suffer sterility later if she has an abortion. Studies in Canada indicate that sterility is as high as thirty percent among women fifteen to seventeen years old who have had abortions . .

Protection of the life of the mother as an excuse for an abortion is a smoke screen. In my thirty-six years in pediatric surgery I have never known of one instance where the child had to be aborted to save the mother's life.

When a woman is pregnant, her obstetrician takes on the care of two patients—the mother-to-be and the unborn baby. If, toward the end of the pregnancy complications

arise that threaten the mother's health, he will take the child by inducing labor or performing a Caesarian section.

His intention is still to save the life of both the mother and the baby. The baby will be premature . . . The baby is never willfully destroyed because the mother's life is in danger.

Infanticide was the second domino, and it fell very silently. Unless you know someone who talks about his work in an intensive care unit for newborns, there is no way the public would know about this. Abortion is legal. Infanticide is murder.

It is still illegal in every state in the union; yet for some reason when a newborn baby is starved or in some other way allowed to die, the law turns its back. It isn't that the law doesn't know about it because reputable medical journals publish papers where authors acknowledge that they have engineered the deaths of babies under their care . . .

Corruptive forces are exerting an influence on medical men and women in this country. Some obstetricians admit that they abort because the patient wants them to, even if it is not medically required . . .

Zoologists and biologists say life is a continuum from fertilization until the death of the organism, whether earthworm or baboon or fox or pigeon. Is it different for man?

We're just smoke-screened to death.

The medical profession must not let itself be pushed by society and by our social planners into the role of social executioner. For as the medical person becomes an abortionist, he becomes the social executioner of the unborn.

As he allows infanticide in his intensive care unit, he becomes the social executioner of the newly born. In days ahead, he may well be required to commit euthanasia and become the executioner of the elderly.

"Parental rights are [now legally] gone. Spousal rights [of the husband] are gone. The rights of the child are gone. Legally, a minor child may now have an abortion without her parents' knowledge; but, technically, she cannot have her ears pierced for earrings without parental consent.

Abortion is an atrocity changing the whole thought process of our country. More than a million unborn lives a year cannot be violently terminated without taking its toll on us as a nation.

Japan has records of more than fifty million legal abortions since World War II. That country is less than one percent Christian. Here in America we will destroy a larger number than that in the same amount of time, and we're supposed to be a Christian country.

I have spent thirty-six years in the practice of pediatric [infant and child] surgery, longer than anybody else now practicing in this country . .

Some raise Exodus 21 as a proof text that God doesn't regard the unborn child in the same way as He does the newly born child. But if you read the text carefully, you will find it says that if a man in an argument with another man *accidentally* strikes a woman and she has a premature birth, there is to be a fine. Nothing here is premeditated.

But if any further mischief is done—and I take that to mean a deformity of the baby or the death of the baby—then the old law applies of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Francis Schaeffer checked the exegesis [meaning] of these verses with five Hebrew scholars and was convinced that God means just that, and in no way does He mean to down-grade the worth of the unborn child.

The story of the incarnation leaves no room for doubt. The angel told Joseph, "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." From the moment of conception God had entered human life. The soul that I am has also existed from the moment of conception . .

I have always been interested in the fact that when the preborn John the Baptist leaped in Elizabeth's womb because of the presence of the Lord in Mary's womb (Luke 1:41,44), He—the Lord—was a very tiny baby. [John was six months older than Jesus, and already well-enough developed for vigorous movement.] He would not have been discernible as an individual at that time, but He certainly was a Person.

Our churches must get educated. That means they've got to find somebody who can talk to them about the origin of life. Many of our people don't realize that by the twenty-first day—before most women even know they are pregnant—the baby's heart demonstrates its first feeble beats.

By the sixth week the adrenal gland and the thyroid are functioning. A child's fingerprints are indelibly in place by the twelfth week. Abortion kills a developing human being! No matter how old or how large the organism is when he/she leaves the womb, that emergence—by whatever means—is still a birth. .

An orthodox Jewish law student gave up a year of his time at Boston University to go to Akron [Ohio] to fight legislation through the courts. He sought passage of an ordinance requiring that a woman know what the unborn child she is aborting looks like by having the physician show her a picture of a fetus of the same gestation [age] he thinks her child is.

The ordinance passed. It also asked that the woman not have the abortion until twenty-four or forty-eight hours have gone by after she has signed the papers for operative permission.

But the pro-abortion forces do not want the pregnant woman to know what she is aborting and they don't want her to have the time to think it over.

But this idea is contrary to everything happening in this country; there is a tremendous movement now for informed consent. Legally, if you bring a child to me for a hernia repair; I can't tell you that he should be operated upon or even schedule him for admission unless I tell you all of the possible good and bad results from that hospitalization.

With abortion, the counseling is not done, and the clinics do not tell you about alternatives to abortion; but worse yet, the pro-abortion people get terribly upset if somebody pushes for informed consent . .

I believe that infanticide, now practiced illegally behind closed doors, will become legal and eventually, for certain types of deformity, may become mandatory.

I believe that through the Living-Will, passive euthanasia will become so much a part of our culture that after we've had it for five years or so we will adopt active euthanasia.

So, what will be next? The parallels that can be drawn between Germany with its holocaust and America here and now are frightening. We are too close to the abyss. We are right at the edge."—*C. Everett Koop, M. D., as told to Dick Bohrer, in "Moody Monthly," May, 1980. Reprinted by permission.*