

"Pro-Choice" Christians?

The 2004 Presidential election saw the escalation of a controversy which has been brewing for the past 15 years or so. It centered on the Democratic nominee, Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, a practicing Catholic, and whether or not he should be permitted to receive Communion due to his outspoken support of abortion "rights." Although as a Protestant, my understanding of Communion differs significantly from that of my Catholic friends, the concern is still a legitimate one. Christians of all denominations would agree that receiving the elements of Communion (which means "common union") is a sign of allegiance to Christ and His Body, the Church. The question then becomes, can a person genuinely be a part of this union while supporting something that is completely opposed to it? In other words, can a person be a so-called "pro-choice" advocate and still be a faithful, believing Christian?

At first, this question may seem a bit extreme, but as always, we must allow the Scriptures to be our final authority. Our beliefs do have consequences. We cannot claim to be Christians, yet still live and believe any way we choose. In the Christian faith, there are "in house" issues that sincere Christians can disagree on (i.e. mode of baptism, forms of church government, the Millennium, etc). On the other hand, there are essential issues that a person cannot deny and still be regarded as a genuine believer. Primarily, these issues deal with the nature of God (such as the Trinity, the Virgin Birth and the deity of Christ) and the nature of salvation (i.e. justification by faith in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection). I firmly believe that the abortion issue falls into the latter category, because it is a reflection of the very character of God.

The Bible tells us that God created human beings in His own image (Genesis 1:27), and and gave us life by breathing His own breath into us (Genesis 2:7). For this reason, the first civil law He ever established was a law against taking that life (Genesis 9:6). The shedding of innocent blood is something that God despises (Proverbs 6:17). In fact, it has brought His judgment upon entire nations (see Genesis 4:9-11; 42:22; Joshua 2:19; Ezekiel 7:20-27). In light of this, how can any person who truly loves God align himself with this sort of cause? The Bible also gives us a sober warning that "...no murderer has eternal life living in him (1 John 3:15)." Even more sobering is that God's judgment will come, not only upon those who actively do these sort of things, but even those who approve of those who do them (Romans 1:32; 2 John 11). In other words, God regards passive approval of sin to be just as serious as active participation. In the stirring words of Dr. Martin Luther King: "He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it."

We have already examined the personhood of the unborn, from both a biblical and a medical standpoint, in a previous article (see "Issues of Life: Abortion"-www.james-dave.com/abortion.html). As the article points out, modern prenatal technology has rendered the arguments of the "pro-choice" side all but obsolete. To define an unborn

child as being anything less than human is irrational, unscientific and is eerily reminiscent of excuses used to justify slavery or the Holocaust.

Some say that they are personally opposed to abortion, but they would not support legislating upon people who might not share this belief (Kerry himself frequently used this argument). However, this argument fails on a number of points. Following this logic, since "Thou shalt not steal" is a religious tenet, does that mean we should also repeal laws against theft? This statement also presupposes that abortion is strictly a religious issue, which it is not. Nor is it a Republican vs. Democrat, Conservative vs. Liberal debate. The right to life is the most foundational right human beings possess. Any politician, regardless of their party affiliation, who refuses to defend this right is unfit to lead, and is unworthy of the vote and support of any sincere Christian. It is also noteworthy to recall history's most famous advocate of the "personally opposed, but..." argument. I refer, of course, to that acclaimed "man of the people," Pontius Pilate: "I am personally opposed to crucifying this man, but..."

"...but doesn't God give us a choice?" Yes, God gives us choices to make and He also recognizes that we often make the wrong choices. When those wrong choices bring harm to innocent people, God has ordained that civil government bring the guilty party to justice. In doing so, they are acting as His ministers (see Romans 13).

"...but that's just your interpretation." No, that has been the position of the Christian church from its very beginnings. As historian and activist George Grant points out: "The pro life movement did not begin as the result of Roe v. Wade. The pro life movement began in the first century A.D....(The first Christians') unified opposition to child-killing was unwaveringly and entirely unquestioned (1)." We see this theme universally reflected in the writings of the early church:

"There are two ways: the way of life and the way of death, and the difference between these two ways is great. Therefore, do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant." -From the *Didache*, a first century collection of Apostolic moral teachings (2)

"You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not slay a child by abortion. You shall not kill that which has already been generated." -From the *Epistle of Barnabas*, a highly respected theological document from the second century (3)

"Our whole life can proceed according to God's plan only if we gain dominion over our desires, practicing continence from the beginning instead of destroying through perverse and pernicious arts human offspring, who are given birth by Divine Providence. Those who use abortifacient medicines to hide their fornication cause not only the outright murder of the fetus but of the whole human race as well." -Clement of Alexandria, third century (4)

"Our faith declares life out of death. Therefore, murder is forbidden once and for all. We may not even destroy the fetus in the womb." -Tertullian, third century (5)

"They provoke women to such extravagant methods as to use poisonous drugs to secure barrenness; or else, if unsuccessful in this, to murder the unborn child."-Augustine of Hippo (6)

There is no salvation apart from repentance. No matter how many "sinner's prayers" you may have uttered, they are completely meaningless unless they come from a heart that is truly sorry for its sins, and is willing to turn away from them (Luke 13:3). Jesus said that what we do to "the least of these," we ultimately do to Him (Matthew 25:40-45). If you have supported the taking of innocent life, whether it be the unborn, the elderly or any other victim, then you must call it what it is, and confess and forsake it. The Good News is this: Jesus died to pay the penalty for ALL sin, including advocating or participating in abortion. If you have never received Him into your heart, why not do it now, right where you are? He loves you, and will immediately forgive your sins and give you a brand new start in life. If we can be of assistance, please let us know (7).

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NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Grant, George. "Third Time Around: A History of the Pro-Life Movement from the First Century to the Present" Wolgemuth & Hyatt Publishers, Inc. Brentwood, Tennessee, 1991. p 31, back cover.
2. Quoted in Grant, p. 24.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid, p. 24-25
5. Ibid, p. 25
6. Ibid.
7. If you need more information on a relationship with Jesus, see If you would like to talk to someone one-on-one about your decision, call toll free 1-888-NEED-HIM (633-3446).

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