

## CHAPTER 31

### IMPOSE MORALITY?

*“The old law permitted abortion to save one life when two would otherwise die. The new law permits abortion to take one life when two would otherwise live.”*

*Herbert Ratner, M.D.*

Abortion was known and practiced in the world of Greece and Rome into which Christianity came. Judaism, having developed a high respect for the family, for women, and for individual life, had condemned abortion but found certain exceptions to it. The Christian message brought a further dignity to the concept of the individual person and the value of life. The idea of an individual, animate, immortal soul given by God to every human person, and hopefully, returning to him for eternity, was a powerful concept which transformed the Roman Empire within two centuries. The value of the unborn person became associated closely with a similar value granted to the born person, and as Christian beliefs crystallized in writing and tradition, condemnation of abortion came to be “an almost absolute value,” as Professor John T. Noonan of the University of California at Berkeley says in his book.

J. Noonan, *The Morality of Abortion*,  
Harvard University Press, 1970, ch.1

By the time the curtain of the barbarian invasions rang down on the glory of Rome, the Christian teaching had codified itself into an extremely firm and certain moral opinion. Abortion was condemned. There was no question about Christian belief.

### **Does the New Testament oppose abortion? How and where?**

The most cogent look at this is through the clinical history of “Mary’s Pregnancy” and the Gospel’s story.

“Mary’s Pregnancy,” Hayes Pub. Co., pamphlet, 1989, \$23.00/100

### **What was Thomas Aquinas’ opinion 700 years later?**

Thomas totally condemned abortion for any and all reasons.

Aquinas did question when the soul was created. He spoke of the then-current scientific conviction that a male child was not fully enough developed to be judged human (and therefore to have a soul) until forty days, and that the female fetus could not be judged fully human until eighty days. This obviously says something about scientific knowledge of that age. Aquinas was reflecting a theological and scientific judgment that mirrored the most accurate scientific information of his time. When, to the most exact instrument available — the unaided human eye — the unborn child looked like a child and the individual’s sex could be determined, he or she was deemed dignified and developed enough to be the possessor of an immortal soul, and so Aquinas made his conclusions.

Since that time we have progressed to electron microscopes, ultrasonic stethoscopes, and Realtime ultrasonic movies, and increasingly sophisticated knowledge of chromosomes and genes. We now must make judgments in the light of our new and more accurate biological knowledge. Aquinas’ conclusions were the

best that could be expected in his day. While not applicable today, they are of historical significance. Had men of his time had today's knowledge of embryonic and fetal development, their conclusions would have been different.

**How does religious belief influence the abortion issue then?**

Belief in God, in our creation by Him, in His authorship of life, of His Commandments and His justice, and in our brotherhood and sisterhood with the unborn is a powerful motivation leading believers to work for the protection of the unborn. The bottom line is that our religious faith *motivates* us. It can never be the sole legal justification for seeking laws to protect the unborn, the handicapped, and the elderly.

**What right has any religious body to impose its morality upon a woman?**

If this were a sectarian religious belief, there would be justice to such a complaint. In fact, this is not a religious question except in the broad sense of equal rights, dignity, and justice for all.

If any religious philosophy has been imposed upon a nation, it is Secular Humanism. The U.S. Supreme Court has defined Humanism as a religion. The officer corps of the pro-abortion movement is almost entirely made up of secular humanists who have imposed their beliefs upon our nation.

I have the right to swing my fist, but that right stops at your nose. A woman has certain (not total) rights to her own body, but not over another living human's body just because he or she still happens to live inside her.

The Ten Commandments forbade murder and stealing. So do the laws of every civilized nation. Do those laws impose religious morality? Hardly!

This is a civil rights issue. It is a question of whether an entire class of living humans shall be deprived of their

basic right to life on the basis of age and place of residence.

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