

custody the body of a person who has been convicted of crimes and abusing the body and mind of that person during his lifetime. Incarceration and capital punishment are not cruel and inhuman treatment.

DR. SEAMANDS

No.

5. What major insights does your profession give you concerning the question of capital punishment?

DR. KUHN

A specialized aspect of my profession is the study of Social Ethics. In this discipline-within-a-discipline, I am exposed to many and varied points of view and have access to sociological studies germane to the question of capital punishment. As an ethicist, I am committed to the proposition that God is Lord of Life and Lord of Death, and that the New Testament does not offer a clear mandate to capital punishment, nor a clear denial of its legitimacy. I feel it is one of the questions which the Almighty has left open to the (frightening) power of human choice, and that the issue must be settled upon the grounds of mingled compassion for the offender and compassion for society when violent men place its security in jeopardy.

MR. ANGGELIS

My experience in dealing with many hardened criminals convinces me that capital punishment effects their thinking and actions. These hardened criminals have said to me that "life is very precious to me". Therefore, the fact that they realize that capital punishment will not be met has naturally influenced their actions.

DR. SEAMANDS

Nothing special from my profession.

GENERAL TOPIC: ABORTION

1. Is the practice of abortion compatible with the general Christian concern for reverence for life?

DR. KUHN

If we accept the position that human life is sacred, then we must agree that human life ought to be protected. We believe, further, that human life ought to be protected at the times at which it is most vulnerable. Among these times are: in old age, during women's pregnancy, and in pre-natal life. If the Christian conscience is exercised to protect the

lives of the aged, and to set safeguards (medical) around pregnancy and confinement, then it seems wholly inconsistent for alleged Christians to take permissive attitudes toward abortion, such as is implied by the current slogan "abortion on demand" or "abortion is strictly a matter between the woman and her physician."

MR. ANGGELIS

No. In my opinion, only if it is a matter of life and death or the serious impairment of the mother's life, should abortion be considered. The indiscriminate abortion by married and single persons simply for enjoyment and use of their bodies is not compatible with the Christian principle.

DR. SEAMANDS

I presume that you mean "easy" abortion. NO!

DR. HOWELL

I think that the term "reverence" needs certain qualifications. In this case it is not to be taken in the sense that Albert Schweitzer or the Hindus take it. Nor is it to be considered in the same sense that would allow a hunter to shoot certain game animals or to catch fish, and then leave other forms of life to play out their roles in ecosystems. The moment of conception marks the beginning of a new human being.

To the Christian who is made in the image of God, there should be a reverence for man which transcends that for all other species. The fetus definitely has sacred value, and this value steadily increases until the time of birth when its value becomes equal to that of any living person. Abortion is never fully justified, yet it is sad but just to save the life of a mother whose fetus is poisoning her system.

To the non-Christian, and their number is legion, the sacredness of human life is more than likely not a deep reality.

2. Is it valid that restrictive abortion laws inhibit individual liberty?

DR. KUHN

Every preventive law inhibits individual liberty. This is true of legislation against murder, theft, speeding or mayhem. It is always necessary to weigh the rights of the individual against the rights of others. Many of us feel that the rights of the unborn, when once established in zygotic fashion in the uterine wall, are significant. We feel, further, that abortion represents a lack of responsibility toward normal biological processes. If it be argued that denial of the right to abortion violates the right of the woman to custody of her own body, let it be said that when a woman consents to sexual congress, she at that time

(potentially at least) yields certain rights to her own person. Responsibility ought to begin prior to conception: in the case of the unmarried by abstention from sexual intimacy, and in the case of the married, by utilization of the best and safest techniques for birth prevention. But given conception, we believe that responsibility includes both acceptance of and proper physical care in pregnancy. To interrupt pregnancy for considerations of preference or convenience represents a grave abdication of responsibility.

MR. ANGELIS

No. Society has a responsibility to maintain proper moral standards as well as protect individual liberties. A certain amount of restraint is inherent in any society. Abortion apparently attempts to destroy a growing body regardless of its stage of development. We do not yet know that life in that body is not present. We have not the right to permit and endorse the destroying of life at this stage.

DR. SEAMANDS

No more than any laws which prohibit the taking of human life.

DR. HOWELL

To the individual with an unwanted pregnancy restrictive abortion laws would more than likely be considered an infringement against personal liberty. The mother would be speaking for herself, but the **living** fetus cannot speak for itself as to whether or not it wants its existence terminated.

The state has in the past stepped in and passed laws which have protected the rights of the fetus against the whims of the mother. In January, 1973, the United States Supreme Court ruled that such state laws were illegal and that an abortion should be available to any woman desiring it. For them the fetus has no legal rights, since it is not a person until birth; and the Constitution guarantees constitutional rights only to persons. Here the Supreme Court erred, for the fetus, a potential person, needs protection.

Can there ever be circumstances under which a non-therapeutic abortion should be granted? Intangible parameters were mentioned earlier. In a terribly complicated sin-ridden world, perhaps there are situations where well-trained individuals would recommend an abortion as the lesser of several evils. Much more than the personal liberty of the mother would have to be considered.

3. Should the mental health of the mother be a point of consideration regarding abortion?

DR. KUHN

“Mental health”—yes, when this is a genuine consideration. But current permissive thinking seems to suggest that mere whim or depression at the realization of pregnancy implies an assault upon the expectant mother’s mental health. In a vast number of cases, there are times, particularly during early pregnancy, when prospective mothers positively resent their pregnancy. Women need the safeguards of both moral support and legal reinforcements at this time.

In cases where genuine threat to mental health is present, such cases should be referred to a responsible panel of consultative physicians. It should, it seems, definitely **not** be a mere matter of “consent of the women” or a pure “matter between the woman and her physician.”

MR. ANGGELIS

Yes, if it materially effects her physical well-being. Anything short of this would leave it wide open to a person to express the opinion that she would feel better if she was not carrying the child.

DR. SEAMANDS

No, it is too broad a term and too easily abused. The facts show that it is the abortion not the pregnancy which produces more mental ill-health.

DR. HOWELL

Yes, it should be a point of consideration, but the mental health of the mother is not the most basic consideration. Someone has to protect the rights of the unborn baby, and it is here that the state and society need to step in.

The mental health of a mother is a difficult parameter to measure. No doubt there can be many intangible other parameters which definitely enter into the picture, and these should be carefully considered before any medical abortion is performed. To grant a legal abortion solely on the grounds of “protecting the mental health of the mother” is allowing a legal loophole through which too many women would be prone to walk.

If there are other parameters to consider, would there be sensitive and well-trained individuals to make the most nearly correct value judgments for each unwanted pregnancy? This is a tough, tough world in which to live. No doubt those who favor legal abortion, and those who are against it, have, for the most part, the same ideal in mind—to see all abortions cease in the land. Control and a high sense of birth morality are the essential ingredients.

4. Biologically speaking, when does **human** life begin?

DR. KUHN

This is a matter which can be argued endlessly. But we believe that the following formula is valid: when the zygote (fertilized ovum) has passed the stage at which monozygotic (identical) twinning is possible and when it has permanently implanted itself in the uterine wall, then **all** of the elements requisite for the formation of a human being are present. The genetic code is established and the basic inheritance-traits, both monogenic and polygenic, are laid down.

Thus, the implanted zygote is, we believe, **a human being on the way to becoming a human person**. As such, it is entitled to legal and medical protection. It is true, of course, that the point of viability is significant; but that point (the sixth month) has been preceded by the development of the central nervous system, the establishment of reflexes, cardiac action, ability to suck and swallow, and above all, cerebral action.

Life has thus long been a reality (by time of viability); and the constituents or constitutive elements of **humanity** are already present.

MR. ANGGELIS

I really do not know, but in not knowing when human life begins I cannot make the decision that it begins at some point other than the beginning. I must assume that life begins at the very moment of conception.

DR. SEAMANDS

It begins at conception.

DR. HOWELL

As a biologist I have witnessed through a microscope the amazing motility of human sperm; and although I have never seen a living human ovum, I have seen the ova of a number of animals before fertilization, and with good light resolution their viability is quite apparent. I am satisfied that just as the human sperm has life so the human ovum has life, and that these two entities form the living bridge of life between two generations. The fertilization of the egg simply marks the beginning of the next living generation. The sperm of the egg alone cannot bridge the generations. They unite to form an entity which can bridge the generations. Thus a new human life begins with the moment of conception.

5. Is abortion equivalent to homicide?

DR. KUHN

This is something of a “red herring”. Certainly the visibility factor is different in homicide. Certainly the victim, whether child or adult, has a longer-established pattern of personhood. Certainly the living and growing/grown person has established a network of interpersonal relationships which the fetus does not have. Under any normal situations, moral and spiritual development of the live person transcends that of the unborn. **BUT**: the possibilities for all this are present in the unborn, and although it would be casuistic to equate abortion with homicide, yet both represent **VIOLENCE** against human-ness and humanness.

MR. ANGELIS

Yes. Homicide is present if one kills an insane person or a person in a coma. Homicide must be present in abortion, in any stage.

DR. SEAMANDS

No, not according to the inference of Exodus 21:22. Life begins at conception, but it increases in value until at birth it is as valuable as any living person.

6. Can involuntary sterilization ever be justified from the standpoint of Christian ethics?

DR. KUHN

By this is meant, we presume, sterilization of those whose mental endowment is insufficient to permit them to make a rational decision for themselves concerning the use of destination of their reproductive abilities. (We would certainly exclude the sterilization of infants or children, which has in times past been performed to secure family or inheritance lines). Sterilization is a serious matter in any case. In the situation of the hopelessly mentally deficient, or the undoubted bearers of lethal or radically negative genes, it would seem that sterilization might be an acceptable alternative to permitting reproduction (which in such cases might be random and unregulated). There would need, however, to be legal and medical safeguards; the spectre of Hitler and his gang of racists always looms before us.

MR. ANGELIS

No. I cannot as a person set myself up as the God of another life. Educating these persons in varied and many ways or even subsidizing them to avoid the birth of children from this type of person is far better than sterilization, from a Christian point of view.

DR. SEAMANDS

Yes, in the case of certain mentally deficient persons.

7. Please comment on your understanding of the Christian view of man, especially as it relates to the problem under consideration here.

DR. KUHN

The subject of the Christian view of man is a vast and expansive one. I presume what is desired here is: what features in the Christian understanding of man bear upon the issue of abortion. Certain rights belong to the human being *qua* human. Elemental is the right to life. Also basic is the right to develop to the point of moral and spiritual accountability and to the point of the capacity to accept and fulfill the roles belonging to a responsible adulthood. It is of even deeper significance, that human beings possess (as we firmly believe) “a never-dying soul to save and fit it for the sky”. The promiscuous practice of abortion denies the validity of these, and cuts off the potential human being from access to them.

MR. ANGGELIS

God created man, all living life and the universes. Man is responsible to God. No matter what man may think, God’s laws, natural and spiritual, are continually in effect. When man dies, he will meet God, regardless of what man may think. God was, is, and always will be. Man is here only for a short period of time.

God has a purpose for man, and man must find where he individually fits into that purpose and live his life accordingly. Since God created man and since God has a purpose for man, we must look to God for the answers to life’s problems. The solutions to life’s problems must be answered on the basis of what God has said to man.

In the Scriptures we find where God has punished man, and we find where God has taken sides when man was pitted against man. In the Scriptures we find where great spiritual leaders have taken strong action against men even to the point of punishment and death.

Therefore, I believe that it was intended by God that man may have government to help and protect man. The Scriptures even speak of government in the heavens; there are angels and archangels, and there are those who sit on the right hand of God and those who sit on His left hand. Consequently, in order to have a day to day orderly function of life, man must take proper action to guide man as well as to set standards of living and of punishment. All standards must be in accordance with God’s purpose, to the best of man’s ability, and all punishment must be accordingly commensurate with the offense. We must love our neighbors and even our enemies, but we must also love our families and institutions to the point of organizing society in such a way within God’s

purpose so that life may be lived to the fullest by all who seek fulfillment.

The Scriptures teach that God loves man, yet at the very same time the Scriptures teach that there is heaven and there is hell in the life hereafter. The present life also has its heaven and its hell, and those who disobey the law should and must be punished.

DR. SEAMANDS

Man is rooted in nature (made from dust) but he is above it: i.e. he is part thing—flesh, material, chemical, electrical. But he transcends all in that he is also “spirit”. This relates him to God and the potential for personal relationships and takes him clear out of the ordinary realm of the merely natural—like all the other plants and animals. So that, for example, when we consider abortion, we cannot consider the human fetus within the mother in the same way we would consider any other growth within her (like a tumor); we have to consider this other “spirit” factor. This means that ultimate decisions regarding life and death can only be in the hands of God, unless those decisions and powers have been delegated to man by God, so that when you are considering abortion, it is better to see it as the taking of human life: and in those extreme cases where therapeutic abortion may be necessary it is better to look at it very seriously as the taking of a human life, but only as a last resort and clearly to maintain a greater value: i.e. abortion would be an evil but in some situations a lesser evil.