

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

G. Michael Cocoris

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PREFACE

In 1989, I delivered a series of messages entitled “A Matter of Life and Death.” In the series, I dealt with four topics pertaining to death, namely capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. The titles were:

Should We Kill the Death Penalty?
Is Abortion Always Murder?
Is Euthanasia Wise or Wrong?
Do You Have the Right to Die?

This manuscript and the audio version are the 1989 Version. Therefore, some of the material is dated. Since then, some laws and practices have changed, especially concerning the death penalty and euthanasia. Nevertheless, the biblical view of these life and death issues has not changed.

Every believer in Jesus Christ should know about and be concerned about these critical life and death issues. What the Bible teaches about capital punishment should affect the way believers vote. Abortion is a personal decision that many Christian women have grappled with and some have made a decision they regretted. Believers are sometimes confronted with the issue of euthanasia concerning their parents! Even young people who are believers have struggled with suicide and some have lost the battle.

Beyond the fact that these issues can be personal, believers need to understand them because they may be in a place someday where they need this information for the benefit of others. On two occasions, I’ve had the opportunity to talk people out of committing suicide. On the other hand, I have had two friends who didn’t talk to me, go through with it. As a pastor, I’ve had to advise people concerning euthanasia. I suspect that we have all known people who have had an abortion and, in some cases, they have talk to us either before or after the abortion. We need to know what to tell them from a biblical perspective.

My prayer is that this material will help you think through the biblical issues pertaining to life and death so that you can make biblically wise decisions for yourself and help others do the same.

G. Michael Cocoris
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INTRODUCTION

Historically, Americans have valued the sanctity of life. The traditional American view is that life is something sacred and of immense value, something to be saved and salvaged at all costs. Whether or not individual Americans are aware of it, this opinion of the value of life is rooted in the Judeo-Christian concept of man. Both Judaism and Christianity view life as a holy thing and have had a profound influence on the thinking of Americans in this regard.

By contrast, other nations without a Christian worldview have not had such a high regard for human life. Japanese kamikaze pilots and Buddhist priests who set themselves ablaze in political protest are two outstanding examples. Atheists and agnostics, although they as individuals, may place a great value on human life, have no philosophical bases for doing so.

What exactly is the Judeo-Christian view of life?

The Biblical View of Life

The Bible teaches that man was created in the image of God. According to the book of Genesis, when God created man, He said, “Let Us make man in Our image according to Our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). The Hebrew word translated image literally means “image, likeness, resemblance.” The second word is merely supplementary to and explanatory of the first. These two words do not refer to two different things. Rather, these words are used interchangeably to express the idea that man was created in the very image of God. God made man not only after His plan but according to the pattern of His own person.

A coin bears the image and the likeness of the die from which it was stamped. Likewise, man bears the resemblance of God. The question is, what is involved in that likeness?

A popular misconception is that man was created in the image of God in that he has body, soul, and spirit. In fact, that is an official doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints. According to Mormonism, God the Father has a body, and when the Bible says He created man in His image, the image included man’s physical frame. The Bible, however, teaches that God is Spirit (Jn. 4:24) and a spirit does not have flesh and bones (Lk. 24:39). God is invisible (Col. 1:15). In the Old Testament, He forbade images to represent Him for the simple reason that there was nothing in the earth that could resemble Him (Deut. 4:15-19). The whole point of the incarnation, a word which means “in flesh,” is that a member of the Trinity, for the first time, permanently took upon Himself a body.

If the image of God in man does not include the body, what does it include? Theologians have debated this question for centuries. One of the most common suggestions is that since God is holy and man has His image, man has the capacity for holiness. Ephesians 4:24 seems to support that view. After salvation, the new man is created after God in righteousness and true holiness.

There is a difference, of course, between the holiness that a believer has today and the holiness that Adam had before the Fall. Martin Luther said, “I understand this image of God to be ... that Adam not only knew God and believed in Him that was gracious; but that

he also led an entirely godly life.” Ryrie called Adam’s holiness “unconfirmed holiness,” and our holiness “confirmed holiness.”

Whether or not Ephesians 4:24 absolutely proves that the image of God in man is the capacity for holiness, this much is certain: before the Fall, Adam had fellowship with God and the animals did not. Adam was a spiritual being with spiritual capacities.

But even if the capacity for holiness view is correct, it does not explain everything. After the Fall, man retained the image of God, at least to some degree (cf. Gen. 9:6; 2 Cor. 11:7), but after the Fall, man was not holy. Therefore, just to say that the image of God in man is holiness does not tell the whole story.

This observation has driven many to the conclusion that the image involves personhood, that is, God is a person, a being with a mind, emotions, and will. Thus, when man was created in His image, he, too, had intellectual power, natural affections, and moral freedom. He at least had sufficient intelligence to give names to all the animals (Gen. 2:19,20). Adam could think, reason, and speak. He could attach words to ideas. Man did not lose these capacities after the Fall. Colossians 3:10 seems to support this view. After salvation, man is created with knowledge after the image of God, who created him. Calvin said, “There is no doubt that the proper seat of His image is in the soul.”

The image of God in man, then, is not physical but spiritual and primarily in his personhood. A child is often said to be “just like” his father or mother. That can be physical, like the features in his face, but it can also be nonphysical, like his personality. It was said of a young girl, “She is just like her father. She is outgoing, fun-loving, and talks a lot. She was made in his image, but that was not physical. It was nonphysical.

According to the Bible, man is created in the image of God and, therefore, has value, immense value. A small scrap of paper might not be very important or have much value, but if that piece of paper bore the image of a loved one in the form of a picture, it would be much more valuable. It would be handled carefully and with respect, even cherished. If handled improperly, it could incense the owner. If something happened to it so that it was destroyed, it could even cause grief.

Thus, the sanctity of life is the result of the biblical doctrine of the creation of man in the image of God. It relates only to human life and not animal life. There is a difference between the Judeo-Christian concept of the sanctity of life and Albert Schweitzer’s idea of reverence *for* life. Schweitzer extended the same reverence for life to the termites eating away the foundation of his hospital as he did the patients in the hospital.

The Current American View of Life

Unfortunately, the biblical view of the nature of man, which either consciously or unconsciously radically affected the way people thought in this country in times past, is no longer the prevailing concept in America. This is truly post-Christian America, which is evident, not just in the morals of America but in America’s changing attitude toward the sanctity of life. When it comes to life and death, America is a schizophrenic society. While doctors struggle to save the life of a prematurely-born baby, obstetricians *in the same hospital* are destroying similar infants yet unborn. While some citizens are protesting for abortion on demand, the killing of the innocent, others are parading for the elimination of

the death penalty, the sparing of the guilty. The current American view of life is becoming the exact opposite of the biblical view.

Capital punishment has been an issue in this country for years. Major efforts have been made to kill the death penalty. What does the Bible teach about capital punishment? Most Americans do not know, which is to be expected, but tragically, many Christians do not know. That is deplorable.

Since the Roe vs. Wade decision in January 1973, Americans have practiced abortion on demand. Millions of fetuses have been aborted annually! What is the biblical view of the fetus? Is the fetus human or subhuman? Not all experts, theologians, and scholars are agreed on the answer to that question. What is the data from the Scripture and what is the proper interpretation of those facts?

Euthanasia, which is commonly called mercy killing, has been brought to the front because of the advancements in modern medical technology. Exactly what is euthanasia? Are there different types of it? What does the Scripture teach about this subject, which will only become more popular in the future?

Suicide is at epidemic proportions in America, especially among teenagers. Does a person have the right to take his life? There are cases of suicide in the Bible, Judas being the most outstanding example. Does the Bible sanction such activity?

These questions concerning capital punishment, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide will be answered in the following pages from a biblical perspective. Every Christian—yea, every American—should think through these questions biblically. It's a matter of life and death.

SHOULD WE KILL THE DEATH PENALTY?

The death penalty issue just won't die. The Supreme Court made landmark decisions almost killing it, but in January 1983, it was the cover story on *TIME* Magazine. In that article, it was reported 1,137 people were on "death row," which is twice as many as in 1979 and more than ever before [in 2020, the number was about 2500, which has declined in the 18 last years]. Over half of them were in only four states: 189 in Florida, 153 in Texas and 118 each in Georgia and California. A dozen of these murderers were teenagers.

TIME explained that the long-building public sentiment to get tough with violent criminals, to kill the killers, seems to be on the verge of putting the nation's fifteen electric chairs, nine gas chambers and several gallows and ad-hoc firing squads back to regular work. In addition, five states have a new, particularly American technique for killing, lethal anesthesia injections, which could increase public acceptance of executions. Experts on capital punishment, both pro and con, agree that as many as ten to fifteen inmates could be put to death this year, a total not reached since the early 1960s. "People on death row are simply running out of appeals," says the Rev. Joe Ingle, a prison activist and death-penalty opponent, "I fear we're headed toward a slaughter."

According to a Gallup poll in 1983, 72% of Americans now favor the death penalty. That's up from 42% in 1966. Should we encourage or discourage this revival? Should we kill killers, or should we kill the death penalty?

The Battle Rages

Those against the death penalty say things like, "It's downright murder." According to Henry Schwarzchild of the American Civil Liberties Union, each execution is a mere "spectacle, a dramatic, violent homicide under the law," and the society enforcing it is "deeply uncivilized." Some have gone so far as to suggest that capital punishment attempts to vindicate one murder by committing a second one, and furthermore, that the second murder is more reprehensible because it is officially sanctioned and done with great ceremony, in the name of all the people.

To complicate matters, both those for and those against the death penalty argue that doing it their way is a deterrent. The battle rages. For example, William F. Buckley has said that capital punishment is a "strong, plausible deterrent." Yet Cuomo, the governor of New York, contends, "There has never been any evidence that the death penalty deters." While some states, which abolished it, found their rates of homicides dropped, some that continued to execute people found their rates of homicide dropped, too. Similarly, studies in Canada, England, and other countries did not particularly find capital punishment to be a deterrent. *TIME* concludes, "Today a comprehensive study in the U.S., by the National Academy of Sciences in 1978, also found that the death penalty had not proved worthy as a deterrent."

Well, then, is capital punishment uncivilized? What is the biblical perspective?

Not All Christians Agree

Years ago, a lady wrote to the editor of a Baptist magazine in Texas: “You may not believe in capital punishment, but God does. He sent His Son to die on the cross for us because we are all murderers in our hearts (1 Jn. 3:15). We would have had to die according to God’s law, but Christ took our place. In the Old Testament, the punishment for murder was death, to be carried out by the civil government (Num. 35:19). When God said, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ He was speaking to the individual, not the state.”

The editor replied, “Contrary to your thinking, I regard the crucifixion of the innocent Christ by the hands of sinful man as the best possible argument against capital punishment. Because of our sins, we deserve death, and in mercy toward us, He died in the flesh in order to pay our debt. His death was part of the divine plan for the salvation of men, but there is no slight intimation in the Bible that the men who put him to death are justified in doing so. May I suggest, before saying God believes in capital punishment, go back to the first murder case in history and see what punishment God meted out to Cain? He was careful to mark the man so that other men would not attempt to administer capital punishment on him.”

What is the biblical position on capital punishment?

The Old Testament Teaches It

Because of the sanctity of life, murder was to be punished by death. This principle was established in Genesis 9:6: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God, He made man” (NKJV). Note that the basis of this dramatic punishment was that man was made in the image of God. Murder is, in effect, an outrage against God.

The application of this command was to extend to the entire human family. Noah, to whom it was given, stood at the head of a new beginning for the human race. What was given to him, like permission to eat meat and the promise of no future flood, was not confined to any group, family, or nation. The means of the punishment was to be carried out as stated, “by man,” thus leaving some flexibility as to its actual instrumentality.

Someone may legitimately ask, “If God favors capital punishment, why did He spare Cain?” The answer to that is found in the principle of progressive revelation. God had not yet revealed the command for capital punishment, so He did not demand the death of Cain.

Some have argued that life is sacred and, therefore, we should not practice capital punishment. One lawyer ridiculed capital punishment by saying, “We say we think human life is sacred, and then to prove it, we kill somebody. That’s crazy.”

But Genesis 9:6 argues that life is sacred and, therefore, the death penalty is to be practiced. Murder is more serious than shoplifting or embezzlement. Because life is sacred, the taking of a life is serious and deserves more punishment than a fine or imprisonment, even life imprisonment. We must affirm that man is made in the image of God. Life is sacred. You do not destroy that which is holy!

The death penalty was also incorporated into the Mosaic code. Moses said, “He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death” (Ex. 21:12). There is, however, a very significant difference. In Genesis, capital punishment was demanded for murder only.

In the Mosaic law, it is extended to other offenses. The list includes murder (Ex. 21:12). Rape: “But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die” (Deut. 22:25). Incest: “The man who lies with his father’s wife has uncovered his father’s nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They have committed perversion. Their blood shall be upon them. If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:11-13). Sodomy: “If a man mates with a beast, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the beast. If a woman approaches any beast and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the beast. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood is upon them” (Lev. 20:15,16). Kidnapping: “He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death” (Ex. 21:16).

The manner of execution is sometimes mentioned, such as stoning or burning. Where it is not indicated, one is left entirely to conjecture as to what method was to be used.

This brings up the whole issue of the means of execution. The electric chair, first used in 1890, was meant to be an improvement over the gallows. The gas chamber, first used thirty-four years later, seemed more progressive. In 1982, Charlie Brooks, Jr., was the first U.S. prisoner ever legally executed by intravenous injection. Many have promoted this means of execution, claiming that it is more humane. State Senator Edward Kirby has said, “Technology has come a long way since the electric chair. Because an injection is less painful and less offensive, it would be foolish not to use it.”

But not all agree. Says Henry Schwarzschild, “A lethal injection is all the more obscene because it is seen as safe and painless. It is an outrageous high-tech offense against human decency.”

States vary widely on the means employed. Gary Gilmore died before a Utah firing squad in 1977. Other methods include the electric chair, the gas chamber, and now lethal injection. Washington gives the condemned a choice between injection and hanging.

Personally, I would say that the means should be as quick as possible, but biblically that is not the issue. A Notre Dame professor of technology has said, “The search for a humane way of killing is a bunch of sentimental secular humanism. Why do you want to be humane? To reassure yourself?” I would have to say that stoning was not exactly the most humane way of execution.

The Mosaic law also brings up the issue of deterrence. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 seems to indicate, from a biblical point of view, that capital punishment is a deterrent: “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of the city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil person from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.”

TIME magazine made an interesting observation on the subject of the deterrent factor in capital punishment. It said, “In a sense, death’s deterrent factor has never really been given a chance in the U.S. Even during the comparative execution frenzy of the 1930s, hardly one in fifty murderers was put to death, a scant 2%. Reppetto estimates that if 25%

of convicted killers were executed, 100 a week or more, there might be a deterring factor. But it is unthinkable, he agrees, that the U.S. will begin dispatching its villains on such a wholesale basis. Even a rate of 100 executions annually, an implausibly high figure given today's judicial guarantees, a killer's chance of getting caught, convicted and executed would for him still be comfortably low: 25:1" (loc. cit. *TIME*).

But all of this is from the Old Testament. What about the New Testament? Jesus never taught revenge. He didn't stone the woman taken in adultery. Does the New Testament support the teaching of capital punishment?

The New Testament Teaches Capital Punishment

Romans 13:4 teaches that the government has the right to use a sword to oppose evil. Paul says, "For he [a ruler] is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil." The sword is an instrument of death. Dr. Ryrie has said, "While it is true that 'the sword' may also include other rightful restraints in the proper functioning of government (like fines, imprisonment, confiscation of property), it clearly includes execution of the death penalty. The word sword is significant." Dr. Ryrie goes on to point out that the word sword was an instrument of death (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Dallas Seminary, July 1972, p. 215). There is no question but that the word sword in Romans 13 means an instrument of death, for the same word is used in Acts 12:2 of the execution of James.

Furthermore, when Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, he appealed to Caesar and was transported to Rome. Before Felix, he said, "I do not object to dying" (Acts 25:11). Paul recognized the validity of capital punishment, even in his own case.

The principle of capital punishment was established in Genesis 9:6, elaborated on in the Mosaic law, not eliminated in the teaching of Jesus, embraced in the epistles, and exemplified in the life of Paul.

Someone might ask, "Does not the Sixth Commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill,' abrogate capital punishment?" The answer is "No." The Hebrew word translated "kill" means "to murder." The New Testament always translates the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not murder." But then, it is obvious that God did not intend for that commandment to include all killing. He who issued that command also issued the order to stone to death violators of the law and to kill the enemy in a war.

Summary: The Bible teaches capital punishment.

Should we kill the death penalty? Absolutely not. As we have seen, the Scripture teaches that capital punishment is a deterrent. Great Britain abolished the death penalty in 1965. In 1972, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, "There has been a sharp rise in armed robberies and violent crime throughout Britain since 1965 when the death penalty was dropped, and more criminals seem to carry guns now" (*Wall Street Journal*, cited in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1972, p. 217). Beyond that, the Bible teaches that the purpose of government is to punish those who do evil (2 Pet. 2:13). Capital punishment is evidently one of the ways this purpose is to be carried out.

If we do not, as a society, reinstitute the death penalty, individuals could start getting vengeance of their own. One deeply religious man shot the rapist/murderer of his daughter and was later set free on a technicality (*The Washingtonian*, Feb. 1983, p. 112).

Let's face it. Some men have committed such unthinkable crimes that they ought to die. The *TIME* article that was quoted earlier reports such a case: "On the night of June 3, 1973, a Chevrolet Caprice, driven by a woman, was forced off Interstate 57 in Southern Cook County, Illinois, by a car carrying four men. One of them pointed a twelve-gauge shotgun at her, ordered her to strip and then climb through a barbed-wire fence at the side of the road. As she begged for her life, her assailant thrust the shotgun barrel into her vagina and fired. After watching her agonize for several minutes, he finished her off with a blast to the throat. Less than an hour later, the marauding motorists stopped another car and told the man and the woman inside to get out and lie down on the shoulder of the road. The couple pleaded for mercy, saying that they were engaged to be married in six months. The man with the shotgun said, "Kiss your last kiss," then shot both of them in the back killing them. The total take for the three murders and two robberies: \$54.00, two watches, an engagement ring and a wedding band (op. cit. *TIME*, p. 30). God says: that killer ought to die.

IS ABORTION ALWAYS MURDER?

She was the product of a broken home in Dallas, Texas. She was a high school dropout, a bride and a mother at age sixteen. Within a year, she was divorced. When Norma McCorvey was twenty-one, she was raped by three men. As a result, she got pregnant. She didn't want the baby, but the state of Texas said she could not legally get an abortion.

Under the pseudonym of Jane Roe, her case went all the way to the Supreme Court. On January 22, 1973, she and her roommate were hanging wallpaper when they heard the news of Roe vs. Wade over the radio. She was shocked. She had never bothered to tell her roommate that she was Jane Roe and she certainly never dreamed the case would have such sweeping results. Her pregnancy set off a social revolution, for on that "Black Monday," as it has been called, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a 7-2 ruling, decided that henceforth the decision to have an abortion during the first and second trimesters would be solely between a pregnant woman and her physician. That decision overturned restrictive abortion laws in thirty-one states, as well as liberalized laws in fifteen other states.

By the way, Norma McCorvey never had an abortion. She was raped in 1969, but the Supreme Court didn't rule until 1973. She gave birth to an unwanted child and placed it for adoption. But that decision by the Supreme Court launched an era of legalized "abortion-on-demand." Non-therapeutic abortion has become the second most common surgical procedure after circumcision. "Non-therapeutic" means that the abortion is not performed to ensure the life of the mother but rather because of her desire for whatever reason: convenience, happiness, etc.

Doctors perform well over one million abortions per year in the U.S. alone—that's one for approximately every three live births. It is so frequent that population experts say that it has become, in effect, a new form of birth control. Of the women having abortions, 75% are unmarried, 32% are teenagers, and 20% are "repeat customers."

What should Christians think, say, and do concerning abortion? Should they practice it, advise it? If so, why? If not, why not? The answer to these questions is not as simple as it may first appear. To try and answer these questions, let's probe biblical principles. The place to begin is with the nature of the fetus.

Some Have Argued that the Fetus is Subhuman

Some have argued that Exodus 21:22-24 indicates that the fetus is subhuman. Waltke has said that this passage proves "that God does not regard the fetus as a soul."

Exodus 21:22 says, "If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine." The phrase "so that her fruit departs from her" is interpreted to mean that the woman suffered a miscarriage. The phrase "and yet no mischief follow" is taken to refer to the mother. Thus, if there is a miscarriage and no harm to the mother, the guilty party is only fined. On the other hand, if, as verse 23 goes on to say, there is harm to the mother, then instead of a mere fine, it is life for life, eye for eye, etc.

The Mosaic law plainly teaches that if a man kills any human, he is to be put to death (Lev. 24:17). In the Exodus 21 passage, only if the mother is killed is the guilty man put to death. But if the mother is not harmed in any way, and only the baby dies, the guilty individual is only fined. The destruction of the fetus is not a capital offense. Therefore, the fetus, it is argued, is not human. The majority of commentators and translators agree that this is the correct interpretation of Exodus 21; so does the Talmud.

Others insist that the Fetus is Fully Human

Others insist, however, that the fetus is human. Granted, they say that the Scripture does not explicitly say *when* the fetus becomes a soul, yet it does make statements that imply that the fetus is a soul. For example, God is involved in conception: “So Sarai said to Abram, ‘See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.’ And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai” (Gen. 16:2); “When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren” (Gen. 29:31); “Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb” (Gen. 30:22); “So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bore a son” (Ruth 4:13). Children are not simply the result of sexual union. Obviously, there is a causal relationship between conception and sexual intercourse, but the parents do not possess the power to insure it. God is involved in opening and closing the womb. Children are a gift from Him.

Furthermore, God is involved in the process of fashioning the fetus: “Your hands have made me and fashioned me, an intricate unity; yet You would destroy me. Remember, I pray that You have made me like clay. And will You turn me into dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews?” (Job 10:8-11).

No individual passage states that there is human life in the womb, but when passages are taken together, it certainly seems that a baby’s humanity is understood without being mentioned (Ps 139:13-16; Jer. 1:5; Lk. 1:41; 2:12, 16; 18:15; Acts 7:19; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Tim. 3:15). These, and other passages, seem to at least imply personhood from conception.

If that is the case, then how does one explain Exodus 21, which seems to say that the fetus was not fully human? The answer is that Exodus 21:22 is not talking about miscarriage. It is referring to the premature birth of an otherwise healthy child. The King James says, “So that her fruit shall depart.” The Hebrew text, however, reads, “and her child comes out” (see also the text of the New King James Version and the margin of the NASB). The noun is the Hebrew word *yeled*, which is the common word for “child” or “offspring.” The verb is the Hebrew word *yatza*, which has the common meaning of “to go out, to go forth, to come forth.” It is often used to refer to the ordinary birth of a child. He is either coming forth from the loins of the father (Gen. 15:4; 46:26; 1 Kings 8:19; Isa. 39:7), or the coming forth from the womb of the mother (Gen. 25:25,26; 38:28,29; Job 1:21; 3:11; Eccl. 5:15; Jer. 1:5; 20:18). In no case is the word used to indicate a miscarriage. Another Hebrew word, *shachel*, is used of miscarriage (Ex. 23:26). The New King James Version correctly translates “so that she shall give birth prematurely.” This passage is teaching that if there is a premature birth or no other harm is done, the guilty party is fined.

On the other hand, if there is further harm to either the mother or the child, then he must pay eye for eye, life for life (Ex. 21:23). So, this passage is not talking about miscarriage; it is distinguishing between a premature birth that harms neither the mother nor the child and the premature birth in which one or the other is injured or dies. In the latter case, the life of the fetus is valued just as highly as the life of the mother.

The conclusion, from an examination of all of these passages, is that the impression and implication of the statements of Scripture is that the fetus is fully human. In fairness, it should be said that theologians have argued for centuries about *when* the fetus becomes a soul. The three views of the origin of the soul have been: 1) pre-existentialism. Plato and Origen adhered to that view; 2) traducianism. According to this view, the soul originates by generation and is transmitted to the child by the parents. Luther, Shedd, and Strong prefer this view; 3) creationism. This view teaches that each individual soul is an immediate creation of God, but the time cannot be precisely determined.

Technically, this is more of a debate about *how* the soul was formed than *when*. Does God do it directly (i.e., each time there is conception) or indirectly (i.e., through the parents)? Montgomery argues that all traducianists and most creationists believe that the moment of conception is the point when the soul is bestowed.

Other evidence supports the view that the fetus is a life. For example, that has been the accepted tradition of the Christian church from the earliest times. A second-century letter to Barnabas included this prohibition: "Thou shalt not procure abortion. Thou shalt not command abortion." The Didache, chapter 2, explains, "Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion, nor kill that which is begotten." The date of the Didache is about 120 AD. These are two examples of the virtually unanimous testimony of the early church in opposition to abortion.

The biblical conclusion of the humanness of the fetus is confirmed by modern medical science. In the 1960s, the genetic code was unraveled. From the moment of conception, from the moment the sperm permeates the egg, twenty-three pairs of chromosomes are complete. The sex, size, shape, color of the skin, hair and eyes, intelligence, and temperament of the child are already determined. Between twelve and twenty-eight days after conception, the heart begins to beat. At four to six weeks, although the embryo is only a quarter of an inch long, the head and body are distinguishable and the brain waves can be measured. At eight weeks, the skeleton, fingerprints, circulatory system, and muscular system are complete. At nine to ten weeks, the child can use his hands to grasp at his mouth to suck his thumb. By thirteen weeks, when the pregnancy is only one-third through, the embryo is completely organized and a miniature baby lies in the mother's womb. He can alter his position, respond to pain, noise and light, and have an attack of hiccups. From then on, he merely develops in size and strength.

Heartbeat is generally used to determine life. The heartbeat begins between the eighteenth and twenty-fifth day. Electrical brain waves have been recorded as early as forty days.

If the fetus is not alive, why is he growing? If he is not a human being, what kind of being is he? If he is not a child, why is he sucking his thumb?

Is Abortion Always Murder?

The conclusion is clear. Life and personhood begin at conception. If the fetus is fully human, obviously, abortion is the termination of a human life and morally wrong. Does that mean, then, that abortion is always murder? Are *all* abortions wrong? Is it ever right?

In the beginning, I suggested that this was a difficult and complex subject. It is also an emotional one. Men and women on both sides get very emotional about the nature of the fetus and abortion. The answer is not as simple as it seems. Several things bother me personally.

The Bible nowhere explicitly says the fetus is a human. I am aware that I have just argued that it is, but let's be honest and face the fact that these are implications of Scripture and not direct statements.

Furthermore, the Bible nowhere forbids an abortion. That is deeply significant in light of the fact that archeologists have uncovered literature from ancient history which reveals that abortion was known and practiced back to the time of Moses. A Syrian law that dates as early as 1450 BC prescribed death by torture in cases of induced abortion. The text reads, "If a woman by her own deed has cast that which is within her womb and a charge has been brought and proven against her, they shall impale her and not bury her. If she dies from casting that which is in her womb, they shall impale her and not bury her." In light of that, how does one explain the silence of the Old Testament on the question of abortion? The failure of the Scripture to set forth a similar law becomes even more profound when one realizes that the Mosaic code is normally more extensive and more severe than other codes in sexual matters. The fact that the Bible does not explicitly forbid abortion infers that it may not be wrong in every case.

Yet, the church from the earliest times, has been opposed to abortion. Michael Gorman, in his book *Abortion and the Early Church*, documents that fact. He points out that in the ancient world, abortion was widely practiced. In fact, in both pagan Greece and Rome, abortion was often mandated by state law for utilitarian reasons to regulate the population and preserve genetic integrity. Yet, Gorman points out that even despite the lack of specific New Testament references to abortion, there was almost universal agreement among Christian writers of the first through the fifth centuries against abortion. Citing such sources as the Didache, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Apocalypse of Peter, and individuals including Clement of Alexander, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Chrysostom, he concludes, Abortion is almost always mentioned along with some form of violence; in fact, it is considered a subdivision of the general categories of violence, murder and infanticide.... Early Christian opposition, then, did not arise because abortion was seen as a means of interrupting the natural course of sex relations, but because it was viewed as murder (Gorman, p. 81).

What, then, is the answer to the question, is abortion always murder? Let's get specific. What if the mother's life is in danger? What if the pregnancy is the result of rape? What if the indications are that the child will be born defective or deformed? What is the Christian answer in each of these cases?

Is abortion murder if the mother's life is in danger? Traditionally, Christians have said that when that is the situation, it is the lesser of two evils to abort the fetus. It is not murder; it is the lesser of two evils.

John Warwick Montgomery has said abortion is, in fact, homicide, for it terminates a genuine human life. God's revealed moral law in holy Scripture, with its high view of the sanctity of life, is an absolute and, therefore, to cut off human existence is always an evil regardless of changing circumstances or "situations" (Montgomery, p. 83).

"The lesser of evils principle referred to above can (and frequently does) apply to Christian ethical decisions in abortion cases. The Christian, no less than the non-Christian, lives in an ambiguous and sinful world where few decisions can be regarded as unqualified good—untainted by evil consequences. Thus, the Christian physician may be called on to sacrifice the fetus for the mother or the mother for the fetus. Decisions in cases like this will be agonizing, but there is no apriori way of knowing what to do: given the particular medical problem, the Christian doctor will endeavor with all of his skill to cheat the grim reaper to the maximum and bring the greatest possible good out of the given ambiguity (Montgomery, p. 85).

Not all taking of life is murder. Capital punishment, legally applied, is not. Self-defense is not. Manslaughter is not. Nor, in the opinions of most Christians for hundreds of years, is abortion if the mother's life is endangered. In that case, it is not murder, it is simply taking the lesser of two evils.

What if the pregnancy is the result of rape? In the first place, that's rare. One study of 3500 rapes indicated that there were no pregnancies as a result. Another study of 8600 abortions revealed only twenty-two pregnancies because of rape. But it does happen. I personally know a lady who was raped as a teenager and got pregnant. Is abortion murder in cases of rape?

Candidly, we do not have a "Thus sayeth the Lord." There is no verse that says, "Thou shalt not" in this case. But based on the biblical data as I understand it, I would say that rape alone is not a sufficient reason for abortion. In all honesty, I have close, godly Christian friends who know the Lord and the Scripture, who would disagree with that. One of my Christian friends has pressed me on this issue, saying, "Suppose it was the rape of a young girl. Having a child at thirteen could ruin her whole life." In answer to that, let me tell you a story.

A woman said of her mother, she was religious and, at all times, had Christian learning. She was always where there was a church meeting and wanted to be an evangelist. She went to church instead of being with the boys. She shut out of her mind, everything worldly. One of the boys who came around to that rickety house in the ally was John Waters, my father. There was a saying used then when anyone wanted to ask if a girl was a virgin, they would say, "Is she broke in yet?" One day, John Waters asked Vi, "Is Louise broke in yet?" Vi told him my mother wasn't broken in. Vi was the eldest and mom had left her in charge of the others. But she plotted the whole thing out with John Waters, who was dark brown in color, though he had white blood. Vi told him to come around on a day when she was sure my grandmother wouldn't be at home.

So, John Waters, my father, came back one day and forced my mother to submit to him. She tried to fight him, but he raped her, holding a knife. She was only twelve and didn't know what it was all about. But she had to give in to him. And that was how I was conceived. My mother always hated and resented my father and never afterward would have anything to do with him. It was just that one time with him.

That story is taken from the autobiography of Ethel Waters entitled, *His Eye Is on the Sparrow*. She was the result of a rape. Would you say that she should have been aborted

just because she was conceived as a result of rape? Apparently, God didn't think so. He saved her and used her to bless multiplied thousands with her music.

What if the indications are that the child will be born defective or deformed? Again, there is no text to which one can turn, no word from God to wave before someone in that situation. But from all that I can determine, defect is not grounds for abortion. Consider Exodus 4:10-11: "Then Moses said to the Lord, 'O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' So the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?'"

Also, consider this. A teacher once asked a class, "How would you advise a mother who was pregnant with her fifth child based on the following facts: Her husband had syphilis and she had tuberculosis; her first child was born blind and her second child died; their third child was born deaf; their fourth child had tuberculosis. The mother is considering abortion. Would you advise her to have one?" In view of the data, most of the students agreed that she should have an abortion. The teacher then announced, "If you said she should have an abortion, you would have just killed the great composer, Ludwig van Beethoven.

When the Thalidomide tragedy was being discussed in European newspapers, and abortion was being suggested as an easy way to get rid of possibly defective babies, the following letter appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* in London (cited in *The Right to Live; the Right to Die*, C. Everett Koop, pp. 51-52):

Trowbridge Kent
December 8, 1962

Sirs:

We were disabled from causes other than Thalidomide, the first of us having two useless arms and hands; the second, two useless legs; and the third, the use of neither arms nor legs.

We were fortunate ... in having been allowed to live and we want to say with strong conviction how thankful we are that none took it upon themselves to destroy us as useless cripples.

Here at the Delarue school of spastics, one of the schools of the National Spastic Society, we have found worthwhile and happy lives and we face our future with confidence. Despite our disability, life still has much to offer and we are more than anxious if only metaphorically, to reach out toward the future.

This, we hope, will give comfort and hope to the parents of the Thalidomide babies, and at the same time, serve to condemn those who would contemplate the destruction of even a limbless baby.

Yours faithfully,

Elaine Duckett
Glynn Verdon
Caryl Hodges

By the way, abortion causes defects. An abortion increases the chance of a premature delivery the next time. If the abortion is in the first trimester, the chances are doubled and if it is in the second trimester, the chances are tripled. Premature births are a prime cause of birth defects. Thus, abortions are causing defects.

Summary: Since the indications from the Scripture are that a fetus is a human, abortion is murder in all cases except when it is the lesser of two evils. Life is sacred. The fetus is a life and has personhood. Unless there is a compelling reason, one that is a lesser evil, that life should be protected at all costs.

As a pastor, I wear many hats. I sometimes wear the hat of a teacher, and at other times the hat of a pastor, and there are those times when I must wear the hat of a prophet. Let me speak in each of these roles.

As a teacher, I teach. On this subject, as a teacher, I want to be fair and tell you all the facts on both sides of the question. But as a teacher, I must also tell you that the Scripture implies, yea indicates that the fetus is a human. (If it is not a life, it is at least alive.) It is different than a tumor or a tissue. To terminate a life is murder unless there is a justifiable reason to do so.

As a teacher, let me also say that there are other options. Adoption is an alternative to abortion. There are better than 1.5 million abortions per year and better than 2.5 million couples who want to adopt. There are still other alternatives. A seminary classmate of mine, who pastored on the east coast, tells of a couple who took a courageous alternative to abortion. Here, in his words, is their story.

This is a story about Rick and Cathy, and those are their real names. Rick and Cathy were a part of our congregation from 1976 to 1978. She was twenty-one years old, and she had a condition called “Marfan’s Syndrome.” The world expert on Marfan’s Syndrome is at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Rick and Cathy went there to decide if she should become pregnant because her mother before her had it and died. After the testing, they arrived back in Wilmington; waited, I guess, a week or so. The report came from Baltimore: “By all means, don’t get pregnant.”

If it wasn’t that very day, it was the next day they got a report from their O.B. that she was pregnant. An abortion was recommended, and nobody would have asked any questions, nobody.

Cathy made a choice to carry her baby. She wanted to have a child and her mother had born two children before her death. Cathy thought she could carry this one to term.

I will never forget the last weekend in October 1978. They had her on an helio pad outside the Wilmington General Division, ready to fly her to Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia, where there was a special cardio-vascular unit for pregnant women. She was in the hospital. The last nurse with her kit was getting on board to close the door and Cathy sat up in bed. Blood engorged her chest and she died of massive heart failure because with Marfan’s Syndrome, one of the things it can do is to take the aorta and separate it from the heart so that there is no way to pump blood.

Dr. William Johnson, an obstetrician in the General Division, had a patient who was under anesthetic. When he got the emergency call, he said, “Here’s my stuff. Get this woman out of here. I’ve got to go.” He ran one-quarter mile, set up an emergency O.R.

right there near the helicopter and delivered the baby: 7½ months, 4½ pounds. I can tell you the baby not only survived; she is healthy.

Now, how do you think about Cathy? Well, you know what anybody would say, and justly say, it was a foolish and unthinking decision. You're going on the faith of the world's expert on Marfan's Syndrome. But I just want to let you know there is another possible interpretation of what she did. Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this than he lay down his life for his friends." I do not say that to praise Cathy Holby. What she did is above praise. I do not say it to illicit anyone here to imitate what she did; that would be *insufferable* interference on my part. I just want you to know what she did is like a new sun in our heavens that has come to be like a flaming center of gravitation, that perhaps will draw others of us in some decisive way out of the gathering darkness of the old creation.

As a pastor, I would like to speak to those who have had an abortion. There are many Christians who have had one or more abortions. Permit me a personal word with you. What I am about to say may sound a bit strange, at least at first, but please bear with me.

In the first place, if you, as a Christian, have had an abortion, then no doubt there is guilt. I have a friend who, as a teenage girl, had an abortion. She told me, "For years afterward, I thought if the child had lived, he would be ____ years old today." It took her years not to think about him every day. She said she could remember going to bed at night and thinking, "Wow, I didn't think about it today. Maybe I'm going to get over it."

Now, let me say, the penalty of sin—this sin and all sin—is death. But Jesus Christ died for sin and you can be saved from the penalty of sin by trusting in Jesus Christ. If my friend, who had the abortion, were talking instead of me, she would say, "Thank God Christ died for me." Her guilt over abortion is what brought her to trust in Christ as her Savior.

On the issue of abortion, I must also speak not only as a teacher and a pastor but as a prophet. As a prophet—one who applies God's law to the immediate situation, especially condemning sin—I must say that we can question and quibble about the mother's life, rape, and deformities, but there is no question or doubt that "abortion on demand" is a hideous, odious, sickening sin. I am ashamed of my country in its reckless destruction of unborn human life. I think it puts us on a par with the Pharaoh of Egypt, Herod the Great and, the tyrants of twentieth-century Europe and Asia. Frankly, ours is more cowardly because it destroys those who have no way of defending themselves. It is doubly hideous because of the premeditation of the killing and the helplessness of the victim.

I have seen various figures on the number of abortions performed in this country. Since the Supreme Court decision in 1973, it is at least twelve million (it is actually much larger than that figure). Twelve million is twice the number Hitler killed in Germany! Twelve million is twice the number of men killed in all American wars combined. Every fifteen minutes, another one hundred and thirty babies are aborted.

Abortion is America's holocaust!

I know what they will say. They will say, "I believe in pro-choice." So do I. I believe you can choose not to get pregnant in the first place. Or someone may argue, "Well, what about the Supreme Court?" Candidly, I'm more concerned about the Supreme God.

America's national symbol, the bald eagle, is an endangered species. Its eggs are protected by federal law. There is a \$5,000 fine imposed on tampering with or breaking the egg of a bald eagle. We place a greater value on the egg of an eagle than we do on the

fertilized egg of a woman. If we are not careful, human babies may be the next endangered species.

The Diary of an Unborn Child

October 5 Today, my life began. My parents do not know it yet, I am as small as a seed of an apple, but it is I already. And I am to be a girl. I shall have blond hair and blue eyes. Just about everything is settled, though, even the fact that I shall love flowers.

October 19 Some say that I am not a real person yet, that only my mother exists. But I am a real person, just as a small crumb of bread is yet truly bread. My mother is. And I am.

October 23 My mouth is just beginning to open now. Just think, in a year or so I shall be laughing and later talking. I know what my first word will be: MAMA.

October 25 My heart began to beat today all by itself. From now on it shall gently beat for the rest of my life without ever stopping to rest! And after many years, it will tire. It will stop, and then I shall die.

November 2 I am growing a bit every day. My arms and legs are beginning to take shape. But I have to wait a long time yet before those little legs will raise me to my mother's arms before these little arms will be able to gather flowers and embrace my father.

November 12 Tiny fingers are beginning to form on my hands. Funny how small they are! I'll be able to stroke my mother's hair with them.

November 20 It wasn't until today that the doctor told mom that I am living here under her heart. Oh, how happy she must be! Are you happy, mom?

November 25 My mom and dad are probably thinking about a name for me. But they don't even know that I am a little girl. I want to be called Kathy. I am getting so big already.

December 10 My hair is growing. It is smooth and bright and shiny. I wonder what kind of hair mom has.

December 13 I am just about able to see. It is dark around me. When mom brings me into the world, it will be full of sunshine and flowers. But what I want more than anything is to see my mom. How do you look, mom?

December 24 I wonder if mom hears the whispering of my heart? Some children come into the world a little sick. But my heart is strong and healthy. It beats so evenly: tup-tup, tup-tup. You'll have a healthy little daughter, mom!

December 28 Today my mother killed me.

Extra Note

Abortion Linked to Depression. The British Medical Journal (1-19-02) reported that women who abort a first pregnancy are at greater risk of subsequent long-term clinical depression than women who carry an unintended first pregnancy to term. An average of eight years after their abortions, married women were 138 percent more likely to be at high risk of clinical depression compared to similar women who carried their unintended first pregnancies to term. David C. Reardon, Ph.D., the study's lead author, says the study's findings are consistent with other recent research that has shown a four- to six-fold increased risk of suicide and substance abuse associated with prior abortion.

IS EUTHANASIA WISE OR WRONG?

Imagine that the person you love the most—your mate, your child, your parent—has been in a serious accident. The injuries are extensive—skull fracture, brain lacerations, pelvis and fractured legs. The left arm is paralyzed. There are severe abdominal contusions and a ruptured urinary bladder. Your beloved is left deaf, blind, speechless, without reflexes, has been in a coma for two months, and the doctor says there is little or no hope. Even if he survives, he will never be normal. Should you, could you, pull the plug?

This is not a theoretical or academic problem. Given our modern medical gadgetry, persons having such extensive injuries can be kept breathing. Someday you, too, may be called upon to make that kind of plug-pulling decision.

I once attended a seminar on terminal illness conducted by a doctor, a lawyer, and a psychiatrist. The doctor touched upon this subject, saying that if he had a patient who was unconscious and in a hopeless condition, he would follow the wishes of the family.

Our imagined case might be relatively easy to decide, for the patient has been in a coma for some time. But let's consider a more difficult situation in which someone near and dear to you has a terminal illness like cancer. He is conscious and in unspeakable pain, begging to die. Would you permit the doctor to mercifully put that loved one out of his misery? Or would you—should you give that person a pill so he can do the job himself?

This is the question of euthanasia. The word comes from a Greek root, which means “good death.” More popularly, it means “easy death” or “mercy killing.” The purpose of euthanasia is to make easier a death that is inevitable. Is it wise to do that, or is it wrong? Is it mercy, or is it murder?

Arguments for Euthanasia

There are many arguments for euthanasia. For example, many people say that a person has a right to die. Joseph Fletcher of “New Morality” fame equates the right to die with the hero who gives his life for a cause. Others contend that when meaningful life has ended, so should life itself. According to this viewpoint, human life consists of mutual service. Adherents of this view believe that when all usefulness is over and one is assured of imminent and unavoidable demise, it is a human right to choose a quick and easy death in place of a slow and horrible one.

Another argument, the pragmatic one in favor of euthanasia, is that the amount of money it costs to keep a person alive by machines is so prohibitive.

Some Christians would argue for euthanasia on the basis that a suffering person should be shown mercy. They would point out that the Lord Himself said, “Blessed are the merciful.” If there were a Christian or biblical argument for mercy killing, it would be that of compassion. After all, it can be argued we accept that it is a kindness to end the life of a suffering animal. If putting a horse out of his misery demonstrates mercy, why not be equally merciful to a suffering human being?

Arguments against Euthanasia

Most Christians would argue that the Scripture is against euthanasia. For one thing, the Bible teaches that life is sacred; it is a gift from God, and we have no right to take it.

They would also point out that the psalmist probably faced death as much, or more, than anyone in the Scripture. Many Psalms express personal misery and eventual death. Yet the psalmist's plea is never for death but for deliverance and a continuance of life. For example, Psalm 22:19-21 says, "But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! Deliver Me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen!"

Psalm 88 contains a long list of expressions for the nearness of death: "For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave. I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength, adrift among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and who are cut off from Your hand. You have laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness in the depths. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves. You have put away my acquaintances far from me; You have made me an abomination to them; I am shut up, and I cannot get out; My eye wastes away because of affliction." The psalmist did not describe death as sweet or welcome, but what he desired is deliverance and restoration to life (vs. 1, 2, 9). In the dozens of Psalms that portray the writer as painfully near death, we never find expressed a desire for the end of life, but always a pleading for restoration to a fully active life.

Then there is one specific example of euthanasia in the Bible—the case of Saul. He was mortally wounded in battle against the Philistines. He pleaded with his own armor-bearer to stab him to death to prevent either a slow death or humiliation at the hands of the victorious Philistines. The aid refused (1 Sam. 31:1-6). The problem with this example is that 1 Samuel 31 says Saul fell on his own sword, but 2 Samuel 1:1-10 says Saul requested a bystander to finish him off (1 Sam. 31:9). Either Saul's fall on his own sword did not kill him and the Amalekite of 1 Samuel did, or the Amalekite wanted to gain David's favor. There is definitely no contradiction between these two accounts. Remember, these two chapters were originally one book written by the same author. Be all that as it may, 2 Samuel 1 assumes euthanasia and we can learn something from it whether or not it happened. Let me explain.

This is a classic description of the reason for euthanasia. The response of the bystander is precisely that of the practitioner of euthanasia (2 Sam. 1:10). The Amalekite was convinced that since death was certain anyway, he might as well shorten Saul's life and put him out of his misery. David responded by having the Amalekite killed (2 Sam. 1:15-16). Thus, the one clear case of euthanasia gives no justification for it. The man who practiced it lost his life because of it. The New Testament reminds us that the Old Testament was written for learning.

Based then on the sacredness of life, the case of the psalmist, and the case of Saul, one would have to conclude that the Bible is against active euthanasia.

At this point, a clarification needs to be made. Euthanasia is commonly divided into two classes: active and passive. Passive euthanasia involves a refusal to use life-sustaining medical equipment to prolong the life when there is no prospect of recovery. Active euthanasia involves purposeful action to end a person's life. The difference between the two is the difference between refusing to prolong life and artificially shortening life.

Passive euthanasia was unknown in biblical times because there was no life-prolonging equipment. Christians have rarely objected to it. In fact, Francis Schaeffer and Dr. Everett Koop, co-authors of a book and film series entitled, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* They say, “To use non-religious terms, the issue is motivation. It is his motivation or intent that a physician keeps uppermost in mind. He must constantly be aware of the wonderful uniqueness of human life. Of course, at times, he faces difficult decisions. Once he believes that the technical gadgetry he is using is merely prolonging the experience of dying, rather than extending life, he can withdraw the extraordinary means and let nature take its course while keeping the patient as comfortable as possible. This is what physicians have done for years in the realm of trust between the patient and physician, or between the patient’s family and physician. That is truly ‘death with dignity’ and no mere manufactured euphemism for euthanasia.”

This is not the question being debated today, however. It is not doctors with a biblical view of life who are debating the cases in which death is imminent and inevitable. Rather, it is the whole new breed of medical and paramedical personnel for whom the issues go much further. With these individuals, the intent is to advocate the death of a patient either by directly killing him or by doing nothing when they could be given help and support that will result in life—even though the circumstances might be difficult. This, ironically, is called “mercy killing” (p. 91).

I know a pastor in Florida who would not give a doctor permission to operate on his father, who was dying of cancer. He told me, “For years, I have watched people in my church have this operation. I knew that if my father had it, he would be in pain until the day he died. On the other hand, I also knew that if we let nature take its course, he would die in peace. He was old and saved and ready to go, so I refused to let the doctors operate.” Sure enough, his father died in peace. The point is that the Bible does not speak to the issue of passive euthanasia and traditionally, Christians have not opposed it.

Active euthanasia is another issue. That is the deliberate act of shortening life. That is what the Bible is against. It is unethical and illegal. But the way things are going in our country, it’s coming. For example, Joseph Fletcher has called it ridiculous to give ethical approval to ending a “subhuman life” by abortion but has refused to give the same approval to ending a “subhuman life” by positive euthanasia. Of course, by “positive euthanasia” what he means is the actual killing of a terminally ill or mentally defective person. Malcolm Mugridge has called the path from abortion to active euthanasia “a slippery slope.” We’re on the verge of replacing the “sanctity of life” ethic with a “quality of life” ethic.

Biblical Alternatives

It should be pointed out that the Scripture recognizes two alternatives to active or positive euthanasia. The first is the opportunity for recovery. There are many cases in the Bible of terminal illness or injury where there was no hope of recovery, and yet there was a miraculous healing. There are eight cases in the Bible of temporary resurrections from the dead itself (from 1 Kings 17:22 to Acts 20:10). Such a priority is placed on the goodness of life that even a temporary resurrection of this current miserable existence is seen as a blessing of God in all eight cases. That is the major problem with active euthanasia. There is always the possibility of recovery. Active euthanasia prevents it.

But not all recover. Some suffer. Should we not exercise mercy and end their life for them. The Bible never applies mercy like that. What it does teach is that God has a purpose in suffering. For one thing, we are to experience His power during periods of pain: “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, most gladly, I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:7-10). There is a benefit in suffering. Matthew 5:4 says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” A person who mourns in this life may well be fortunate or blessed above a person who does not.

In fact, the Bible even extols suffering: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part, He is blasphemed, but on your part, He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busy-body in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:12-17).

“My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful (Jas. 5:10-11). Suffering should be endured as necessary to spiritual growth.

Summary: Although active euthanasia was possible in biblical times, the Scripture does not condone it, but rather condemns it and offers the alternative of recovery and the realization of the benefits of enduring suffering. Simply put, passive euthanasia may be wise. Active euthanasia is wrong.

Passive euthanasia is not morally or biblically wrong. As a pastor, I have had to advise several people on this subject. I tell them that they are not violating any biblical principle by not using or continuing extraordinary medical procedures. On the other hand, active euthanasia is morally wrong, yea, it is murder. At the moment, it is illegal! But remember, it is a “slippery slope” from abortion to euthanasia. It is coming and we should be informed, armed and ready to speak out against it. One British doctor has said that a “death pill” will be available and perhaps obligatory by the end of this century. He has suggested that such a pill be given to old people if they ask for it. He has also concluded that ultimately he can see the state taking over and insisting on euthanasia.

Christians need to be informed just so such a thing never happens in this country.

DO YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO DIE?

Few people are untouched by suicide. Most of us have either thought about doing it, attempted it, or have known someone else who has. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that throughout the world a thousand people take their lives every day. In the United States, someone attempts suicide on an average of once a minute, and every day sixty or seventy of those attempts succeed.

There are more suicides in this country than murders or drownings; only auto accidents rank higher as a means of violent death. Even more startling is the opinion of experts that many suicides aren't reported as such, that some "accidental" deaths are actually cases of self-destruction. For example, many single-person automobile accidents are probably planned suicides.

Victims of suicide range in age from eight to one hundred—and perhaps even younger as statistics are not gathered for children under eight. People of all ages and religions kill themselves, as do people in all economic situations.

While most of the people who consider taking their own lives do so out of despair, some argue that suicide is a viable option to life, that psychologically-rational people under certain circumstances should actually kill themselves. It is this philosophical question I would like for us to consider.

Reasons for Suicide

Throughout history, people have committed suicide for a variety of reasons—duty, disgrace, imminent death, despair, and disease. And we need to take a look at each of these.

Duty Duty is a common reason for suicide, and this was especially true in the ancient world. The mass suicide at Masada is an example. In 70 A.D., the Roman general Titus stamped out the Jewish rebellion and destroyed Jerusalem. A number of zealots fled south to Masada, which was Herod the Great's old fortress, built in 37-31 B.C. on top of an isolated mountain of rock near the Dead Sea. After finishing off Jerusalem, the Romans marched to Masada and laid siege to it. For several years there was a standoff; meanwhile, Caesar's troops were constructing a ramp to the top. Finally, Eleazar, the leader of the Jewish extremists, realized that it was only a matter of time before his people would be taken. He encouraged them to commit suicide, arguing that they should never be servants to Rome, or to any other than God Himself. Out of a sense of duty, some 960 Jews killed themselves. Only two women and five children survived to tell the story.

But this is not just an ancient phenomenon. Modern examples could be cited, such as the Kamikaze pilots of Japan who flew planes into ships and died in a blaze of glory; the Buddhist priests who set themselves on fire in Vietnam; and even protestors who starve themselves to death—all motivated by a sense of duty.

Disgrace Another reason for suicide, perhaps more common in the ancient world than in the modern era, is a disgrace. For some, humiliation and dishonor are so intolerable that death is the only alternative. Some college students today, fearing they have disgraced their families by not making a perfect grade point average, have taken their lives.

Death A third reason for self-destruction is impending death. It sounds strange, doesn't it, that someone would kill himself so that he would not be killed by others, but that is exactly the idea. In these cases, it is not just death but death by torture that is avoided. If someone else does it, they will torture the dying person first or put him to death slowly and painfully. If the person kills himself, he will do it quickly.

This was the case in Rome when Caecina Paetus was condemned for being part of a conspiracy against Claudius in 42 A.D. His wife, Arria, encouraged him to commit suicide by first stabbing herself and then, as she lay dying, handing the dagger to him,

The general in a battle who sees he is about to lose will often kill himself. Adolph Hitler was such a case. In fact, an American psychoanalyst commissioned by the United States government to produce a profile on Hitler predicted his suicide two years before he actually did it.

Despair The most common reason for suicide, especially in America today, is despair. This is the case that occupies most of the attention of psychologists and authors of magazine articles. Suicide occurs when one's outlook on life becomes one of despairing hopelessness. One author, writing on the subject of suicide, said that the one characteristic of every suicide was the loss of hope. Life, to the potential suicide, is a hopeless mess. In light of the fact that, among the medical professionals, psychiatrists lead the list of suicide victims, that observation is most interesting.

Disease Physical deterioration or disease has become the new rationalization for suicide. In his book *Good Life, Good Death*, Dr. Christian Bernard said, "If society insists that the doctor has no right to end the life of a dying patient, can it also insist that the patient has no right to end his own life? Should an individual, sane in mind, be condemned if, after careful assessment and the conclusion that the quality of his life has deteriorated to the point where it has become meaningless to be alive, he takes his life? I don't think so. I believe it is the fundamental right of any person who is capable of making a clear assessment of his situation to take his own life. It is a right because no one can stop him and no one can punish him for his action" (Bernard, p. 105).

Dr. Bernard goes on to argue that suicide is a basic human right and should be an option always available to every individual. A Swedish public health physician named Ragnar Toss wants to open a suicide clinic for the more than 2,000 Swedes who kill themselves each year. He does not want to treat them but to help them "do it." Writing in the respected Swedish Medical Journal, he suggested that helping a suicide victim is related to the choice that women now have about abortion.

"The right to die" is the wave of the future. In fact, California, as do more than a dozen States now, has a law allowing for a "living will." Adopted in 1976, this law recognizes the right of any adult to sign a written directive instructing his or her physician to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining procedures in the event of a terminal condition. In August of 1980, a national organization called "Hemlock" was formed in Los Angeles to support active voluntary euthanasia.

Years ago, British television viewers were allowed to watch a shocking scene. A police camera had been hidden in the bedroom of a nursing facility and its recording was later aired. What the English watched in their homes and pubs was a sixty-year-old woman, Mrs. Yolanda McShane, urging her eighty-seven-year-old mother, Mrs. Ethel Mock, to end her life by suicide.

“It’s not cowardly, mum,” Mrs. McShane said. “If you had a dog in this condition, you’d take him to the vet, wouldn’t you?”

Mrs. Mock slumped over in her chair, replied, “But a dog doesn’t have a soul. I am so afraid of being punished afterward.”

With this, Mrs. McShane replied, “Oh mum, you wouldn’t be punished for this. Don’t be having doubts.” Then she cautioned, “Don’t bungle it, mummy, don’t make a mess of it.”

The television audience watched as she pulled out fifteen tablets of Nembutal to give to her aging mother and urged her to take them with a strong drink of whiskey. “It’s always fatal, mummy,” she said. Then she left the room.

Immediately, attendants rushed in and snatched the pills out of the hands of the protesting Mrs. Mock, and her daughter was arrested as she left the nursing home. The videotape was introduced as evidence at Mrs. McShane’s trial. She received a prison term for attempting to aid and abet a suicide. However, if the current trend continues, this scene will be commonplace and even legal in the future.

The Biblical Data

What does the Bible say about this subject? Is it for or against suicide? From a biblical point of view, does a person have the right to take his own life?

There are cases of suicides recorded in the Bible. Having been captured and blinded by the Philistines, Samson was brought into the temple of Dagon to entertain them. He asked the lad leading him to let him lean against the support pillars. He then prayed for strength, saying, “Let me die with the Philistines.” He pulled against the pillars and the place came tumbling down, killing him and thousands of Philistines (Judg. 16:30).

King Saul is another example. He had been wounded in battle and the enemy was about to capture him. He asked his armor-bearer to kill him instead. The armor-bearer refused. So, he fell on his own sword and when the armor-bearer saw it, he did the same (1 Sam. 31:4-6).

There are other examples. Ahithophel advised Absalom to kill David. Absalom didn’t take his advice. Meanwhile, David heard of Ahithophel’s treason, so he was discredited in the eyes of both David and Absalom. He promptly put his house in order and hung himself (2 Sam. 17:23).

Or take the case of Zimri, who killed King Elah of Israel and all of his male relatives, then made himself ruler over Israel. The people rejected Zimri and chose Omri instead. When Omri led an army to Zimri’s city, Zimri saw that the city would be taken, so he burned the king’s house and deliberately died in the fire (1 Kings 16:18-19).

Perhaps the most famous suicide in the Bible is that of Judas. After he betrayed Christ and realized that Christ would really be put to death, he tried to return the thirty pieces of silver. The chief priests and elders would not receive it. Consequently, Judas hung himself (Mt. 27:3-5).

Of all the examples of actual suicide in the Bible, all but Judas were in a battle situation with death or dishonor as their only other choice besides suicide. King Saul, Ahithophel, and Zimri faced death. Samson and Judas were disgraced.

There is one case in the Bible of an attempted suicide. When Paul and Silas were in jail at Philippi, an earthquake freed them, whereupon the jailor woke up, supposing the prisoners had escaped. He drew his sword and was about to kill himself when Paul cried, "Do yourself no harm. We are here." The jailor's life was spared and he was saved, not only physically, but spiritually (Acts 16:27-28).

The desire to die was expressed in two or three other incidents. Elijah was a bold and courageous prophet. He stood before the king and the nation and fearlessly proclaimed God's message. Then Jezebel, the queen, said, "I've had it with you. I'm going to get you!" That caused the faithful and fearless prophet to flee and plea, "Lord, take away my life!" (1 Kings 19:4).

Reluctantly, Jonah prophesied to Nineveh. As a result, the whole city repented and, true to His word, God did not destroy them. Jonah became exceedingly angry because God was gracious and so asked God to take his life (Jonah 4:1-3). It should be carefully noted that these two can only be called death wishes at best. They were not even attempting suicide. They wanted death and expressed that desire to God.

There is one other story that should possibly be listed. It is not an actual suicide, nor an attempted suicide. Technically, it might not even be called a desire for death, but it is a questioning of life and in the name of completeness, it should be listed. Job lost his property, children, and health. He then questioned why he was ever born in the first place (Job 3:11).

The Philippian jailor and Elijah were both facing the possibility of death when they contemplated dying. Jonah and Job did so out of despair.

What are we to make of the biblical data? Frankly, there are no direct statements concerning suicide in the Bible. As we have seen, there are only examples. So, our conclusions about the biblical attitude toward suicide must be drawn primarily from these examples. Beyond that, there are perhaps some principles or implications which apply.

From the examples, we can learn several things. For one thing, most who committed suicide or even thought about it faced death anyway. That was true of Samson, Saul, the armor-bearer, Ahithophel, Zimri, and the jailor. All either clearly faced death or thought they did. It is also obvious that a few did it, or at least thought about doing it, when faced with despair. Job, Jonah, and Judas faced despair and contemplated the meaning of their lives and the possibility of death.

It should also be pointed out that none of these men were models to be emulated at the time, and some not at any time. Ahithophel, Zimri, and Judas were evil from the beginning. Samson and Saul were not exactly what they should have been, especially at the point of their deaths. Elijah and Jonah were out of it when they thought about suicide, and, furthermore, when they asked, God did not take their lives but rather, in essence, talked them out of it.

This is an important point in biblical data. The men who did commit suicide didn't ask God about it first. The men who asked God about it first didn't commit suicide. The evidence from the examples, then, suggests that God is not in favor of suicide.

Beyond these examples, there are two points that we need to ponder. One is a principle; the other is an implication.

There is a principle in the Bible concerning the sacredness of life. Genesis 9:5-7 teaches that man is made in the image of God. Life, according to the Bible, is a gift from God. If you destroy a gift, what does that say about your attitude toward the gift and the Giver?

There is also an implication that has a bearing on the subject of suicide. Exodus 20 says, “Thou shalt not kill” (KJV). The Hebrew word means “murder,” but there is no object. It does not say, “Thou shalt not murder another;” it just says, “Thou shalt not murder.” That includes yourself as well as others.

My conclusion is, from a biblical point of view, that an individual does not have the right to take his or her life. God gives life and only God has the right to take it or dictate when it should be taken by another, as in the case of capital punishment.

For people to decide that they have the right to take their own life is to play God. James 4:12, in speaking about judging others, says that God is able to save and to destroy. Therefore, you should not judge. I wonder if the same logic could not apply here. God is the one who gives us life and who destroys. Therefore, for us to do that is to take the place of God.

For us, as a society, to conclude that an individual has the right to die will only promote suicide. Japan has a permissive attitude toward suicide and consequently has a higher suicide rate.

Some Practical Suggestions

The primary purpose of this chapter is to deal with the subject of suicide philosophically; that is, to answer the question, “Does an individual have the right to die?” But frankly, most suicides we will personally encounter stem from despair, not a terminal illness or approaching death.

In psychiatric theories concerning suicide, guilt, inferiority, alienation, and anger are reoccurring themes. People commit suicide because of guilt, a feeling of having done something wrong, or of inferiority, a feeling that one has not reached his own standard. Alienation, a lack of love, loneliness, and isolation make life seem more horrible than death. Anger is often said to be involved. Suicidal people are self-centered and very angry with themselves and with others. But beyond all of these factors, one common denominator of all discussions on suicide is despairing hopelessness.

With that clue, let me make some practical suggestions in dealing with someone contemplating suicide. The temptation is to brush it off by saying, “Oh you can’t or wouldn’t do that,” or to say something like, “You can’t be serious!” Granted, not everyone who threatens to commit suicide does it, or even attempts it, but on the other hand, almost all who do commit suicide talk about it first. So, instead of brushing the threat aside, treat it seriously. Ask such questions as, “Do you have a plan?” That determines how serious the person is. Those who are not very serious don’t have a plan, and those who are do.

I have personally talked several people out of committing suicide at a point when they were about to do it. One of the things I did was assure them that I loved them. By listening and spending time with them, in one case many hours, I communicated my concern and love for them.

But remember, the common thread in all theories of why people commit suicide is hopelessness. What we must do, then, is realistically show potential suicide victims that there is hope. That’s what Paul did in Acts 16. When the Philippian jailor was about to commit suicide, Paul shouted, “Don’t do that! We are all here!” The Philippian jailor was going to kill himself because he knew that if his prisoners got away, the Roman government

would kill him anyway. What Paul did was to show him there was hope. The prisoners had not escaped, and therefore there was hope that he would not have to die. Then Paul talked to him about the Lord. Paul took the first opportunity to preach the gospel, but it was not the first thing he did.

Since the Bible is pro-life, we should do all we can to promote life and not terminate it. American society used to have at least a semblance of sane Scriptural thinking on this subject, but it seems that recently it has gone crazy concerning the value of life. Some are beginning to argue backward from the Bible. They want to kill the death penalty so that criminals can live, but they would support abortion, active euthanasia, and suicide. That's backward. The Bible is pro-life. It teaches that we should kill killers, save babies and promote life.

Philosophically and practically, we must be against suicide. Regardless of what the critics say or how strongly a person bent on committing suicide argues, we must, as believers in Jesus Christ, stand for life. If we do, they will thank us in the end.

In 1972, I was conducting a city-wide evangelistic crusade in one of the central cities of California. Several thousand people a night were attending services. During the crusade, a young man decided to take his life. He had it all planned. He loaded the gun. But before he took the final and fatal step, he decided to say goodbye to a girl he knew in college. She wasn't his girlfriend, but she had befriended him. So, he at least decided to say goodbye to her. When he arrived at her house, she said to him, "There is a crusade going on in town. Why don't we go?"

They came. When I gave the invitation, the young man came forward and trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior. After the counselor led him to Christ, the new convert said, "Do you want the gun now?"

The counselor had no idea what he was talking about and inquired, "What do you mean?"

The young man pulled out a loaded revolver and handed it to him, saying, "I won't need this now."

The next day, the crusade committee sponsored a luncheon for a number of the service clubs in town. On each table was a potted plant as a centerpiece. At the end of the luncheon, the plants were sold for a nominal fee. Unknown to me, this young man, who had trusted Christ the night before, was there. He bought one of the plants, walked up to me, and told me his story. Then he said, "I would like to give you this plant. Last night you gave me my life and I would like to give you this life for the life you gave me."

A life for a life! That's it. Instead of death for life, we ought to be giving life for life. And as we do, although they may not appreciate our attempts at the time, ultimately, they will thank us for it.

Summary: The Bible teaches that people was made in the image of God and, therefore, have value. Life is sacred. That Judeo-Christian concept of humans and life has predominated the American culture throughout most of its history.

From that view of man beings, several things logically follow. Since people are made in the image of God, anyone who premeditatively and deliberately destroys a human being deserves to be destroyed. Capital punishment at one and the same time demonstrates how valuable man is, how serious murder is, and that justice needs to be done.

Since a fetus is a life, it reasonably follows that no one, not even the mother carrying the fetus, has the right to arbitrarily abort it and, thus, terminate its life. If horse owners practiced abortion as capriciously and as widespread as women are currently doing in this country, there would be a national public outcry. Organizations would be formed to save and salvage the helpless horses. That should tell us something. A person doesn't have to have a Bible in his hand to know in his heart that the wholesale abortion of horses is not right. But horses are not created in the image of God. Are humans not more valuable than horses? A person ought to have a powerfully good reason before performing an abortion on a human being. Saving the life of the mother is a good reason.

Since man was created by God in His image, only God has the right to say when that life should be taken. He has decreed that when one human murder another, it is proper and fitting for his life to be taken. He also permits individuals and nations to defend themselves, even to the point of death of the attacker if necessary. But beyond those exceptions, no one has the right to take a life, not even his own.

Abortion, euthanasia, and suicide, whether legal or not, are being practiced in this country. The prognosis is that it will not be long before active euthanasia and suicide are as legal as abortion. That is already true in some countries of the world, and there are organizations in this country whose purpose is to get them legalized here. After that, infanticide is next. Once we accept abortion on demand, active euthanasia, and suicide as an individual right and we make them legal, the next step will be to kill babies who are born deformed, or deficient, or just not wanted.

Having abandoned the sanctity of life with the abortion decisions, unless American society reverses itself, it will end up killing infants and the infirmed, the very young and the very old. The progression will be: 1) the right to kill the unborn—abortion; 2) the right to die—suicide; 3) the right to kill “in mercy”—euthanasia; 4) the right to kill the newborn – infanticide; then (5) the right to kill unwanted, unneeded of any age—murder! That's not as farfetched as it may sound. It has happened before in history and could easily happen again.

The abortion movement began in Germany about 1900. By 1911, it had the support of the intellectuals. After World War I, though still illegal, abortion became rampant. Then the euthanasia movement against worthless people was launched about 1920. Ultimately Hitler came to power and exterminated 275,000 people (not Jews—Germans) because they were frail, infirmed, or retarded. Amputees from World War I were eliminated because they were of no service to the Third Reich. All of that happened in the land of Martin Luther!

No less than Dr. C. Everett Koop, the surgeon general of the United States, has said, “The legalization of abortion-on-demand in the United States, if it is not reversed, will someday be looked upon by historians as the last turning point of a materialistic society in abandoning the advantages accruing to our society from a Judeo-Christian heritage in favor of a change in our culture where an unreal concern about overpopulation has replaced our traditional view of the sanctity of life. Regardless of one's spiritual understanding, his religion, or his faith, when he abandons the sanctity of human life in the unborn state, he seeks to live in harmony with a materialistic society that has permitted itself to be brainwashed to the point where words no longer have their original meaning. He has permitted expediency to replace natural law if he can tolerate the madness of abortion to avoid the inconvenience of pregnancy” (Koop, p. 78).

It should be obvious that as soon as one questions the value of human life there really is nothing to prevent him from considering what human beings under what circumstances should rightfully be exterminated. It takes almost nothing to move from abortion, which is the killing of an unborn baby in the uterus, to the killing of the retarded, the crippled, the sick, the elderly (Koop, p. 79).

That is not an exaggeration. A Nobel Prize winner has already suggested infanticide. Dr. James D. Watson, the man who discovered the double-helix DNA in the genetic code, stated in *Prism*, a publication of the American Medical Association: "If a child were not declared alive until three days after birth, then all parents could be allowed the choice only a few are given under the present system. The doctor could allow the child to die if the parents choose and save a lot of misery and suffering. I believe this view is the only rational, compassionate attitude to have" (Watson, "Children from the Laboratory," *Prism*, vol. 1, No. 2, May 1973).

At first, infanticide will be practiced on the physically deformed and the mentally deficient, those with problems like spina bifida (cleft spine), or Down's Syndrome (mongolism). But if those considered unworthy of life because of physical or mental incapacity are to be eliminated, is it not "rational" to conclude that other undesirables should also be terminated? Will it not be concluded that some are unworthy because of ethnic origin, economic potential, productivity, ability, and who knows what else?

Dr. Koop argues, "Once any one category of human being is considered fair game in the arena of the right to life, where does it stop? If the mongoloid is chosen as the first category whose life is not worthy of being lived, what about the blind and the deaf? If the hopeless cripple confined to a wheelchair and considered to be a burden on society is the first category to be chosen, what about the frail, the retarded, and the senile? It does not take much fanciful imagination to extend these categories to include certain categories of diseases such as cystic fibrosis, diabetes, and a variety of neurologic disorders. The population-control people who are concerned about food supply have been very effective in influencing society's thinking on abortion; it seems very logical that eventually one of their targets could be the obese individual who not only has eaten too much already but has to eat a lot to sustain his large body.

"It is very easy to slip into moral deception in a discussion of euthanasia. One starts from the point of view of abortion and says, 'I can see why you are against abortion because, after all, someone, preferably the law, must protect the fetus because the fetus is not in a position to protect itself. But when one is talking of euthanasia, if the person is willing to undergo a 'mercy killing,' why should other people object?' The answer is really the same as it is for abortion. Abortion-on-demand opens up abuses of which euthanasia is number one. Euthanasia opens up the opportunity at this early stage of the game for almost inconceivable fraud, deception, and deceit. Think of the burdensome elderly people, economically burdensome, whose rapid demise could be looked upon as an economic blessing for their family. Think of the temptation to hasten a legacy. Think of how easy, when there are ulterior motives, to emphasize the ceasing from suffering and anxiety that comes with painless death" (Koop, pp. 96-97).

To sum up: since the Bible is pro-life, Christians should do all that they can to promote life and not terminate it. American society used to have at least a semblance of sane Scriptural thinking on this subject, but it seems that recently it has gone completely crazy concerning the value of life. Some are beginning to argue backward from the Bible. They

want to kill the death penalty so that criminals can live, but they want to support abortion, active euthanasia, and suicide. That's backward. The Bible is pro-life. It teaches that we should kill killers, save babies, and promote life.