

Week 2: The self and the right to life

1. Abortion

When the sperm meets the egg there is a flash of light. What reasons might people use for that life to be terminated but not think they are killing someone?

a) UK History

194,668 abortions in 2017, 9 Million since the Act of 1967. 1 every 3 minutes. 20 every hour. 600 every working day. Vast majority – over 90% – are for “social reasons”. medical abortions at home are now a significant proportion.

The Abortion Act was intended to be restrictive, allowing abortion only in limited circumstances, but its provisions have been very liberally interpreted by doctors. Abortion remains illegal under the Offences Against the Person Act (OAPA). 1861

b) Rationale for Abortion

Virtually no biochemist denies that life begins at conception. Yes it is killing a living organism, a human being, but it is not murdering a person.

We have no moral obligation to protect the foetus until it becomes a “person with rights” Roots are in Greek Philosophy.

Person separate from body and subject to different criteria

James Wilson / Francis Crick (discovered DNA) wait 3 days, pass certain tests. Peter Singer: up to 3 year olds

- Viability – can it exist independently
- Sensory – feeling pain
- Cognitive functions
- Sentience – awareness
- Sense of time
- Communication
- Desire to live

How much is enough of these? What about treatable illness?

c) Abortion as disrespect for women's body

Attachment to women's rights because associated strongly with liberation from consequences of sex. But does it liberate. Historically Christianity has revolutionised women's rights. Archaeologists found Roman sewers clogged with the tiny bones of new babies. The most frequent reason was to cover up illicit sexual activity with exploited women

Sexual hedonism does nothing to highly value women. Christianity did not oppress or limit the freedom of women but actually liberated them. It gave them the right to a secure life with a man who would not oppress exploit or be unfaithful to them.

A different kind of slavery now. Yes women have rights and opportunities but actually they are required to suppress their fertility with birth control

Women are not especially liberated but enslaved to a lifestyle where they have no reason not to have sex.

Also, men are disenfranchised

2. Euthanasia

Language mercy killing, assisted dying not suicide or murder.

Same logic about persons. Katie Hopkins "ridiculous we can put dogs to sleep but not humans".

Dutch right to die mobile euthanasia service

Personhood theory says when we lose conscious deliberate control over our bodies we can kill of the body – it's no longer of use.

Reasons given by survey: Loss of autonomy 91%; less able to engage in activities 89%

True compassion will bear the burdens of suffering with people

Christian view whatever state you are in you are uniquely personally loved by God.

N.B. Artificially prolonging life – not always easy to determine

3. Biblical View of Life

Human life is not to do with "viability" or whether the baby is starting to feel and hear things, or whether he or she has entered the outside world yet, but to do with the value God places on the child from the moment of conception.

Right to life comes from being image bearers (Gen 9:6)

Ex 20:13; Job 31:15; Psalm 51:6; Psalm 139:13; Isaiah 44:2; Jer 1:5; Luke 1:41

1. Remember the gospel: The gospel tells us how to live but it also rescues us when we fail to live the way we are supposed to live.
2. We are not imposing our views we are protecting human rights
3. Speak up for any moves towards less terminations and protects people at the end of their lives. This is not imposing our morality on them but saving lives of people made in the image of God.