

## ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

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### *Confusion in Defining the Value of Life*

Recent developments both within the United States and outside our nation point to the astounding confusion about the value and worth of a human life. What gives value to life? Is a baby growing in its mother's womb of value and worth? Is China's repugnant one-child policy, which despite denials is still, practically speaking, the policy of China, acceptable or ethically wrong? How should we even think about the contraception issue that surfaced as a result of President Obama's health care law? These are three interrelated categories that I seek to address on this edition of *Issues*.

- First is the ongoing confusion concerning how to think about life in the womb or even a life recently born. Columnist George Will cites an article recently published in the *British Journal of Medical Ethics* which argues that “after birth abortions—killing newborn babies—are matters of moral indifference because newborns, like fetuses, do not have the same moral status as actual persons” and “the fact that both are potential persons is morally irrelevant.” Therefore, it is permissible to kill them “in all cases where abortion is (permissible), including cases where the newborn is not disabled.” Are you astonished at this logic? The position articulated in this article is reprehensible! Will concludes that “this helpfully validates the right-to-life contention that the pro-abortion argument, which already defends third-trimester abortions, contains no standard for why the killing should be stopped by arbitrarily assigning moral significance to the moment of birth.” Defenders of infanticide, along with its sister abortion, are both now using the same tortuous logic to kill!
- Second, consider the case of the Chinese activist and dissident, Chen Guangcheng. His crime, in the eyes of the Chinese government, is that he was an enemy of the state. How so? Despite years of persistent beatings, this blind dissident continued to document forced abortions under China's one-child policy. Amazingly, last year, the Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, argued that he understood China's one-child policy and would not “second-guess it.” Such a statement by an American leader is indeed reprehensible and without any ethical support. China's one-child policy is ethically wrong and Biden knows it. Dissident Chen—blind, courageous and heroic—deserves the full support of every American. If Americans do not speak out in support of Chen, who will? America remains one of the few nations on earth that champions freedom of speech, of conscience and of actions. We of all nations must lead in the

defense of all life—even life in the womb. Dissident Chen is a hero and he should be treated as such when he and his family arrive in America.

- Third, consider the debacle over contraceptives. Earlier this year, the Obama administration mandated that all employers, including religious ones (e.g., Roman Catholic institutions) were required to purchase a health insurance product that offered contraception of all types for their employees. Since the inception of this Republic, the US government has respected the beliefs of religious institutions when it comes to matters of conscience. Since the Roman Catholic Church believes that life begins at conception and that it is ethically wrong for the government to mandate insurance that requires offering contraceptive products, the uproar over Obama's mandate was furious! Hence, the Obama administration shifted the contraceptive mandate from Catholic employers to insurance companies. Instead of being forced to buy an insurance product that violates their beliefs, religious institutions will be forced to buy an insurance product that contributes to the profits and viability of a company that is federally mandated to violate their beliefs. As columnist Michael Gerson argues, two things are crystal clear in this controversy. The controversy is likewise quite revealing when it comes to Obama's ideology: (1) All discussions on the structure and restructuring of the contraceptive policy were conducted between the administration and pro-choice and feminist groups. The institutions targeted by the mandate (e.g., US Conference of Catholic Bishops, evangelicals) were not at the table. (2) The Obama administration has a view of religious liberty that is the narrowest in US history. It imposes no limits on federal action! In its view, the modified contraceptive mandate still presupposes that religious liberty only applies to institutions whose primary purpose is worship, leaving every other religious institution vulnerable to federal regulation. There is not only confusion within the Obama administration about the value of life and when it actually begins; there is an arrogance so deep that it is unprecedented in American history. In the view of this president, there are virtually no limits on the power of the federal government to regulate our lives. That, dear friends, is appallingly frightening. The threat to life and the threat to religious liberty are both very real—and inextricably linked.

Therefore, a brief review of God's view of life is in order, which reveals that God views life in the womb as of infinite value and in need of protection.

- Exodus 21:22-24--Whatever these difficult verses exactly mean, God views life in the womb as of great value. Whether by accident or by intent, to cause a woman to miscarry demands accountability on the part of the one who caused it. The Law did not treat the fetus frivolously.
- Isaiah 49:1, 5--Referring to Messiah, God called Him for his mission *from the womb*. Life that is prenatal is precious to God.

- Jeremiah 1:5 and Luke 1:15--As with Isaiah, God viewed Jeremiah and John the Baptist from the womb as of infinite value. He even filled John with the Holy Spirit when he was in Elizabeth's womb.
- No other passage deals with the question of prenatal life so powerfully and conclusively than Psalm 139. In this wonderful psalm, David reviews four phenomenal attributes of God--His omniscience, His omnipresence, His omnipotence and His holiness. In reviewing God's omnipotence, David reviews God's power in creating life which he compares to God "weaving" him in his mother's womb. God made his "frame," his skeleton. In verse 16, he writes, "Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance. . ." Undoubtedly, David is referring to the embryo. If correct, then the divine perspective on life is that it begins at conception. So awesome is God's omniscience and His omnipotence, that he knew all about David even when he was an embryo! This is God's view of life.

See Michael Gerson in the *Washington Post* (14 February 2012); Kathleen Parker in *ibid.* (6 May 2012); George Will in *ibid.* (6 May 2012) and James P. Eckman, *Biblical Ethics*, pp. 27-31.