

# Abortion

by John Tate

In the more than two centuries of American independence, many issues have become hot topics with the American people. Divisions between groups are nothing new, but usually some common ground can be found that will effect a compromise. Abortion, however, does not seem to be one of these issues. The issue of a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy is one that has divided the American public to a degree not seen since the slavery debate that literally tore the nation apart a century and a half ago. As with slavery, abortion has become an issue in which there is no middle ground. Like slavery as well, the abortion debate is at heart a debate of morality and intellectual discussion (or debate or fighting), and any statistics brought forth on the subject are merely secondary to the debate. To those who support abortion rights, it is clear that abortion, while sometimes seen as regrettable, is nevertheless an inherent right that a woman has since it is her body that is involved and that to restrict abortion in any way is a sexist and repressive measure against the woman. Those who oppose abortion see it as a debate on the value and sanctity of human life. To them life begins at conception, and that life must be protected at all costs unless, perhaps, it would endanger the life of the mother who carries this unborn child. In this book, the antiabortion/prolife argument is taken up by Judge Robert Bork, and the proabortion-rights/prochoice side is represented by author Mary Golden.

Judge Bork looks at abortion as a matter of convenience. As he sees it, at the union of sperm and ovum a new human life, albeit very different for a time, is created. He gives statistics that the vast majority of women who abort do so for reasons such as not being able to afford another child and being afraid how a child will change their lives. Bork argues that abortion-rights advocates must hide the gruesome truths of abortion in euphemisms so that the public will be more accepting of the prochoice position. Judge Bork sees the vast majority of aborted babies as victims of inconvenience who otherwise could have been adopted out to families who cannot have children. He also uses abortion as an example of the lessening of the value of human life, and as leading now to the acceptance of partial-brith abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia.

Mary Golden sees things quite differently. To her, abortion is about a woman's right to control her own body and govern herself. While the decision to abort may be difficult and may not be entirely desirable, she sees it as a moral decision that a woman is more than capable of making on her own. She decries those on the "antichoice" side as sexists who wish to restore male dominance over women's lives. She says that women are far more educated on the matter than the prolife side would like to believe and that women who abort usually do so in full realization of the consequences (which Golden adds are few). To her, a fetus is living and human in the way that a hair or blood or organs are, but is not a person deserving any protection whatsoever. Those who do wish to protect the unborn, she says, are doing so for selfish reasons.

If any issue had the potential to raise ire and emotions, it is this one. It is difficult to make an argument that does not have an emotional basis. However, it seems that Bork at least argues from statistics on the rarity of "necessary" abortion and argues that the proper use of social programs can lessen the need for abortion. Golden makes vague arguments about overpopulation, but overpopulation is by no means a proven fact and many would say that it is a myth altogether. To this reader Golden seems to write as an angry feminist who sees another plan to repress women behind every bush. To her, sex should not have any consequences that a woman does not wish it to have. This seems irresponsibility at its highest. And while her "bloody mass" may not look like a human being, note that a sperm will always be a sperm and an egg will always be an egg, but their union results in something that will become human. She notes how miscarriages are seen as less important than stillbirths; I say "this is a good thing?"

Unborn children are the most helpless and dependent beings who deserve the most protection from the law, though I feel that the states should make the laws and the federal government should stay out. If the unborn do not deserve protection because they cannot fend for themselves, why do infants and toddlers deserve protection? They live off their parents as well. Abortion is a dangerous slippery slope and has led to the acceptance of many practices that once were seen as taboo and even evil. We fought one civil war with slavery as a big point; let us hope that abortion does not become another one of these. The preamble to the *Constitution* promises that "the blessings of liberty" are "to ourselves *and our posterity*", which would seem to indicate the unborn. I leave with a

quote by President Reagan: *"Simple morality dictates that unless and until someone can prove the unborn human is not alive, we must give it the benefit of the doubt and assume it is. And, thus, it should be entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."*