

Where Angels Fear to Tread

Today, we are experiencing what has been labeled as a “culture of death.” Abortion alone has claimed 43-46 million human lives, and the Terry Schiavo controversy has bolstered euthanasia as a significant issue. While many support these practices or vacillate on the issues, the Christian does not need to doubt where he stands: on the Bible. But what does Scripture, the final authority, say? It plainly states that, since God has deemed life sacred, He has protected it. This concept, then, can be addressed with two questions: Why is life sacred? And how has God protected it?

The first of these two questions is answered through plain Scripture. In Genesis, God Himself states, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”¹ Man, therefore is the image of God. The Hebrew word for image, “tselem,” has the idea of an imitation or statue. According to *Strong’s Concordance*:

The word means image in the sense of essential nature...God made man in his own image, reflecting some of His own perfections: perfect in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and with dominion over the creatures.²

Dr. R.C. Sproul also gives an interesting definition of man’s inherent similarity to God. He states this in his lecture, “The Image of God in Man”:

When God makes us, He not only makes us as intelligent beings, as thinking beings, as rational beings, but He gives to us a will [and] He gives us emotions, so that we can make decisions and engage in actions that are of a moral kind.

There is nothing moral or immoral about the rolling of a stone, or the blowing of the wind, because the wind has

¹ Genesis 1:26a KJV

² Strong, James. The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001.

no consciousness. The wind is merely a force. In a word, what is lacking is personality. But when God creates, and creates creatures in His own image, He makes them persons.”³

Therefore, it is apparent that man was created and given the divine attributes of emotion, intellect, and volition. Man was created with inherent worth, and retains that worth, even though he has fallen. He is considered more valuable than the rest of creation, as implied in the rest of Genesis 1:26:

...and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ⁴

Thus human life is considered sacred because it has been created with innate worth and because it has been given a distinct superiority over animal life. It has been specifically designated as similar (though in no way equal) to divine life. It is then clear that God has deemed life sacred and thus protects it.

This principle leads naturally to the question, “*How* has God protected human life?” He has done so through law. On a human level, mankind has established government which protects people, property, and privileges. Other examples include such institutions as museums, where security guards protect artifacts, jewels, and other priceless objects. In doing so, however, man only follows the example of his Creator. Like those well-guarded jewels, human life is of inestimable value to God; thus He has set safeguards upon it and condemns the wanton taking of it, as can be seen through the following examples from the Old Testament:

³ Sproul, R.C. "The Image of God in Man." Ligonier Ministries. 12 Sept. 2008. <http://www.ligonier.org/rym.php> ., accessed 13 Oct. 2008

⁴ Genesis 1:26b KJV

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man. ⁵

Thou shalt not kill. ⁶

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him, a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood... ⁷

Though the issue of when life begins is hotly disputed, the fetus also falls within this definition of sacred life. If what God creates and calls “man” is a human person, then the unborn fetus must be considered a person as well, for God has created him. The Bible resounds with passages concerning God’s *specific* creation of the unborn child. Consider the following Scriptures:

Did not he that made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb? ⁸

For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. ⁹

God even purposely designates protection for the unborn by law. Would He provide the following safeguard for anything less than human?

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...**And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give **life for life...** ¹⁰

These texts make crystal clear, the immense value that God places on human life. The intentional taking of life is shown as such a severe transgression that it is only payable

⁵ Genesis 9:6 KJV

⁶ Exodus 20:13 KJV

⁷ Proverbs 6:16-17 KJV

⁸ Job 31:15 KJV

⁹ Psalm 139:13-14 KJV

¹⁰ Exodus 21:22-23 KJV

through the death of the transgressor. God has set definite boundaries which protect his most valuable jewels. God has deemed life so sacred, that He protects it with law.

What does this mean, then, for the “culture of death”? What implication does the truth of Scripture have for such practices as abortion and euthanasia? God has declared His boundary of protection to include unborn children; thus abortion can be correctly considered a clear violation of human life. The elderly, the infirm, and the incapacitated must fall within this boundary as well. To do any less would be to designate these groups as sub-human and unworthy of the aforementioned protection. The implication for these practices, then, is that they ought to be abolished. America must now choose. She must choose whether to respect the divine boundaries protecting life, or she must, as Alexander Pope wrote, choose to “*rush in where angels fear to tread.*”