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The question of killing the unborn

A consideration of a vexed subject current in the Northern Ireland

"Leading clergyman speaks out over sensitive issue"

(Liam Clarke, Belfast Telegraph)

A leading Free Presbyterian clergyman has warned that sensitivity and respect must be shown to couples seeking an abortion due to foetal abnormality.

Rev David McIlveen's statement shows that while the main Christian denominations are broadly opposed to abortion and don't want the law changed, most Protestant churches do not see the issue in quite the black and white terms adopted by Jim Wells.

Rev McIlveen said: "We are opposed to abortion in almost all cases including rape but foetal abnormality presents a very difficult issue.

"In that situation, we would give respect to the parents' view.

"Our advice would always be to preserve the life of the child but this is an area that demands the right of the parent to have their own express wishes treated sensitively, whether that conforms to law or not."

Mr Wells took no account of parental opinions or burdens, only of medical necessity.

He said: "Abnormality of the foetus is not a reason for an abortion and neither is rape."

Other views on pregnancy did not count unless the mother would die or suffer significant damage if the pregnancy continued.

This is closest to the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Fr Eddie Magee, of the Down and Connor Diocese, said: "From the moment of conception we recognise the unborn child as a person with all the rights and associations of a human person, so the Catholic Church is against abortion. The only exception is where a mother's life is in danger and if the death of the child is a secondary effect of saving a mother's life, but the intention must not be to kill the child." Mr Wells' own Baptist denomination is an association where individual congregations have considerable freedom.

It contains "a range of views but is generally anti-abortion" a church worker said.

Like the Catholics, the Presbyterian Church believes in "the sanctity of human life and does so from conception. Accordingly the termination of human life at any stage within the womb should not be considered except under the most extreme circumstances" including rape.

In the past the Church of Ireland has taken a similar view. This is where Mr Wells appears to stretch the Christian consensus when he calls for ministerial oversight of individual medical decisions.

This article appeared in the August 25, 2012 edition of the Belfast Telegraph and was published on News-hound.

Response by Rev. Ivan Foster.

Rev David McIlveen has denied that the "Belfast Telegraph" report of his views is accurate. That being so, we trust that he will challenge the "Belfast Telegraph" and the writer Liam Clarke and seek a retraction and an apology for what is a most serious case of misrepresentation.

The view accredited to Rev. David McIlveen is most dangerous indeed in the light of the Christian's belief in the sovereignty of God and His superintendence of all things. "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" Lamentations 3:37, KJV. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand," Proverbs 19:21, KJV. "And the LORD said unto him,



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Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Exodus 4:11.

It would seem clear that Liam Clarke was seeking to make out a case for the right of parents, who have been told that the child they are expecting is abnormal, to abort that child, that is kill it before it is born. Such a thing is most dreadfully wrong.

The "views" of parents cannot take precedence over the unchanging law of God. Sensitivity yes, but respect in the sense of making such views authoritative and final regarding the fate of an unborn child, that doctors have stated is "abnormal", would be very wrong indeed.

I recall an incident in a nearby Free Presbyterian congregation, some years ago. A young couple had been told by hospital medical authorities that their expected child was "abnormal" and an abortion was recommended. Greatly distressed they attended the morning service in the Free Presbyterian Church in which they worshipped and the minister, unaware of the situation, preached on the text, "Thou shalt not kill," Exodus 20:13.

Following the service, the young couple took a decision not to accept the medical advice to abort the child. Some months later a perfectly healthy baby was born! How wrong they would have been to have acted on the basis of the obviously faulty advice of the medics! Abnormality does not render an unborn child "a non-human". Therefore to abort it, that is, kill it, is the murder of a human being. Many so-called "abnormal" children have lived useful lives and have been a joy to their families.

There can be no more justification for the destroying of an "abnormal" child in the womb than for the killing of a person who, through an accident, becomes quadriplegic. Though doubtless, it will not be long until a case is made for such, as the campaign for euthanasia for those severely handicapped illustrates.

Once we surrender the truth that God, the sole Author of Life, is sovereign in how and when it ends we are on a slippery slope similar to that which the Nazis and their ilk descended.

The Christian must ever be aware of the crafty words of such liberal thinkers as Mr Liam Clarke and not be swayed by their smarmy words!

Saturday, 1st September, 2012.

A personal statement from Rev David McIlveen

I am in full agreement with the Rev. Foster on the issue of "parental rights". Under no circumstances can the Word of God be treated as subservient to any form of "human rights".

In the short interview that I gave to the Belfast Telegraph the question of, "parental rights" was not raised. Rather, I endeavoured to emphasis the need for Pastoral and Congregational support for those who give birth to disabled Children. Such parents should be afforded all the help and encouragement as they face additional problems in family life, and their adherence to the principle of pro life greatly respected by all. This, I believe to be in keeping with the words oh Hebrews 13 verse 3, Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. Personally, I will continue to oppose the sinful practice of Abortion as being contrary to the plain teaching of Holy Scripture.



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