



Context of Abortion

By Marcus Lander (1996)

I wrote this poem as a teenager, and it reflected my strongly held views about the sanctity of life. To me a human life is still a life, whatever stage it may be at. We would hopefully not treat the elderly person, in their weakness and frailty of body, undergoing the cognitive decline associated with senility, perhaps even suffering with dementia, with any less respect and dignity than a young person in their prime, full of youthful vigour. Hopefully we might even accord them a little more, in view of their sufferings and what they have lived through. Likewise a person's place of residence should not determine whether they are given deferential treatment or regarded as vermin. Unfortunately in the world in which we live, this is all too often the case, but most of us, even those of us who are guilty of entertaining such prejudices ourselves, would recognise this as an injustice. When it comes to the unborn child however, there is a stark contrast in many people's recognition of the fundamental human right to even exist, let alone be treated with the dignity befitting a person.

Of course during the span of a person's life, the level of consciousness of the individual varies, and initially the zygote and subsequent developing embryo may seem a far cry from the human beings that we interact with on a daily basis, however life has to start somewhere. A foetus at full term is surely no less human than a newborn baby, and we would recoil in horror at someone who maimed and killed something as pure and innocent as a newborn child. Yet abortion law in most countries, including this one permits an unborn child's life to be taken, as though it were a thing and not a someone. This poem explores these issues and tries to look at the matter from both a biblical and scientific standpoint.

I understand that this is an emotive topic for many, and some feminists might argue that a man has no right to express an opinion on the subject, not having a womb, and never having had to give birth first-hand. Well, they are entitled to their opinions, as in my view the right to form and hold opinions is another human right, and as I count myself human, I think I too have a right to an opinion.

That said, this poem is not meant to be judgemental of those who have had abortions, as I realise that some have had to deal with difficult and trying circumstances that I have not had to face. There are some situations in life that are seemingly hopeless and full of tragedy. There does not always appear to be a right answer, however from my own standpoint, I feel that taking the life of another cannot be justified unless it is a choice between the life of that person and the life of another, as in war, or unless the being in question has committed some heinous wrong that is worthy of capital punishment, and the law clearly and fairly applies that penalty.

Many who disagree with capital punishment, agree with the right of a woman to have an abortion, as though both these things were progressive ideas. While I think that a woman should have the right to determine what she does with her own body, I happen to think that a baby is not her body, but a separate body, and as such I do not feel that anyone has jurisdiction to take away its life, being as it is surely innocent of any crime, unless there is a life and death struggle between the foetus and the mother that means that one of those lives will likely be lost should the pregnancy be allowed to continue.