Is abortion murder? Some say yea and others nay. Before proceeding we must first define our terms, regardless of our personal moral convictions vis-à-vis the rightness or wrongness of the act. Murder is defined as the unlawful taking of a human life, therefore we must first determine whether or not a fetus is a human life and if terminating one is unlawful. Human lives can be taken and it is not murder. Anyone may use deadly force in defence of one’s own life or that of another. Law enforcement, correction officers and soldiers etc. not only may, but are, under certain conditions, required to take human life and it is not murder. It is justified homicide. Also, many jurisdictions employ, and in Canada many, this writer included, advocate the use of capital punishment. This is the lawful taking of a human life. Homicide is the taking of a human life. It may be justified or not, it may be lawful or it may be an act of negligence. Is a fetus a human life or if not, at what stage of development does
it become one? Do we need to go back even further and extend the question to the embryo, blastocyst, morula or even the zygote? These are questions that are even now being pondered by the wise and the learned. They have yet to come to any firm conclusion and perhaps never will. It therefore behoves us to look into our own hearts, our moral and ethical values, and reach our own conclusions.

One must now look at some further facts that may or may not be to one’s liking. If a fetus is not human, then ending its life is not murder. If it is human, then taking its life is also not murder but justifiable homicide, given that abortion is legal.

Where then does that leave us, dear reader? It leaves us, each and every one of us, with a moral and ethical dilemma. There are no easy answers. Inasmuch as abortion is not, legally murder, should it be? Is it even the taking of a human life? Should there be exceptions? Does the pregnancy place the mother’s life at risk? What if the pregnancy is the result of rape, incest or there is evidence of genetic or congenital disease? Again we must look into our hearts and decide for ourselves. This is a personal responsibility that cannot be relegated to anyone else. Your conscience can be your only guide.

Much has been said about a woman’s right to control her own body. On the other hand, very little has been said about her right to control the body of another, even if it be sheltered within her own. Indeed, that is her natural biological function. If she abrogates her responsibility in this regard, who speaks for the unborn? One might also give some thought to the moral and ethical values of a society that routinely places upon the lives of convicted murderers and fur bearing animals, a value greater than the value placed upon the life of an unborn human child, securely ensconced within the protective custody of its mother’s womb.

In conclusion, I will venture to offer a personal thought. Although this writer is not a pro-lifer per se in the religious or any doctrinaire sense, I am against abortion on general principles, its use as a form of birth control for example. Unlike ardent pro-lifers however, I am willing to consider individual circumstances and do not believe in an absolute ban on abortion. Now it’s up to you, reader, to make your own decision. How will you define human life? How highly will you value it, especially innocent life and what circumstances justify terminating it prematurely?

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