

Readers' Corner

Scholar's View

As a clergyman and scholar, I wish to offer some information as some Bristol voters consider the abortion issue.

— Although Christians believe that God is the creator of the

physical laws of the universe and participates in some events of human history, many Christians do NOT believe that the Creator intends and participates in each occurring pregnancy; on the contrary, it is a traditional conviction among many Christians that God's laws of nature combined with parental activities initiate pregnancies.

— It is also sound Christian doctrine in some traditions that individuals choose their roles in life, NOT that every fetus has a definite pre-determined purpose for his or her whole life.

— Although murder is the wrongful killing of an innocent person, if what you're killing is a human organism or human life BUT not a person, "murder" does not apply. ("Human life" does not automatically mean "person.")

— Consider this, too: "Spontaneous abortions, also called miscarriages, occur at a much higher rate than many people realize. It has been estimated that about 33 percent of all fertilized eggs abort before the next menstrual period is overdue. In these cases most women never realize that they are —or were— pregnant. An additional 25 percent of all pregnancies miscarry between the time of fertilization and labor, meaning that almost 60 percent of all pregnancies end before a viable birth occurs. These abortions and miscarriages occur, of course, without any human intervention." (Quoted from "McCary's Human Sexuality", 3rd ed. in my "Living Issues in Ethics".) If this information is accurate, the laws of nature created by God permit some abortions.

— There is disagreement within Christianity as well as within other religions and among philosophers and scientists about (a) when human life becomes a person or a being with a right to life; (b) the value of various forms or stages of life; (c) the meaning of "the right to life;" (d) the extent to which humanity shares with God and/or nature the responsibility to begin, shape, and end lives; (e) distinctions between killing and murder (in

Hebrew the Commandment is "You shall do no murder"); and many other critical issues.

Given the responsible differences among sincere and informed Christians and among other religious and professional groups, Bristol voters may well ponder which, if any, convictions ought to be made law. And yet, some legal structure consistent with the Constitution is necessary.

Richard Nolan
Bristol