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Research Paper: “Is There Anything Wrong with The Slogan “My Body My Choice”
When It Comes to Abortion?”

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Introduction

Induced abortion, which is defined here as the deliberate termination of a pregnancy before its full term resulting in the loss of the embryo and/or fetus, was a known practice since antiquity. For example, ancient Ebers Papyrus dated around 1500 BC described crude recipes to stop a pregnancy in the first, second, or third trimester.¹ Hippocrates (460-370 BC) spoke against abortion in its oath.² Aristotle's work described both chemical and mechanical methods to induce abortion, and ancient Rome also practiced it as a mean of birth control in their society.³ Even Jewish writings such as the Talmud and Midrash mentioned abortions and contraception for sterility.⁴

Therefore, the issue of abortion is not new to mankind, and since women are the ones who carry the pregnancy, the burden was usually on them to prevent a pregnancy from happening or from reaching its term.⁵ Throughout history, there has always been primarily two opposing views in regard to abortion, even to this day: Those labeled as pro-choice, who support, encourage, and sometime force abortion on women for diverse reasons including population control, poverty control, gender selection, race control, freedom of choice etc., and those called pro-life, who oppose that practice, because to them, it is equivalent to "an assault on the most vulnerable segment of society, the unborn."⁶ The pro-choice group often refers to the slogan "My Body, My Choice" to defend a woman's right to have an abortion if she does not want to

¹ John M Riddle. *Contraception and Abortion from the Ancient World to the Renaissance*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992. Page 69.

² Alan Emery. "Hippocrates and the Oath." *Journal of Medical Biography* 21, no. 4 (2013): 198-99.

³ Plinio Prioreschi. "Contraception and Abortion in the Greco-Roman World." *Vesalius* 1, no. 2 (1995): 77-87

⁴ John Riddle. *Contraception and Abortion*. Page 19.

⁵ Ernest Havemann. *Time-Life Books. Birth Control*. New York,: Time, 1967. Pages 21-22

⁶ Scott Rae. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*. Chapter 5. *Abortion and Embryonic Stem Cell Research*. Kindle Locations 2495

keep a pregnancy, for if it is her body, they say, then it is her choice. However, one may ask: Is there anything wrong with the rhetoric “My body my choice” when it comes to Abortion?

Thus, to address this question, this paper will first take a closer look at the logic behind the pro-choice rhetoric, then explore what really happens inside the womb during a pregnancy, and finally, what Scripture says about the life of the unborn child in the womb.

The Logic Behind “My Body, My Choice”

Some pro-choice supporters argue that the unborn child is *part of a woman body*, and that since women are the ones to carry babies, they alone can decide for themselves whether to keep or end a pregnancy. Others say that even if an unborn child is viewed a distinct person from the time of conception and is not considered to be part of a woman body, a woman still has the right to refuse that her body be used by the unborn child during pregnancy.

This last argument became very famous, particularly after Judith Jarvis Thomson argued in her essay “A Defense of Abortion” in 1972 that “*in some context, an individual’s right to determine what happens in or to her body overrides another’s right to life.*”⁷ Therefore, if they choose to have an abortion to remove an unwanted part of their body, they should have to autonomy to do so. No one but the woman has the right to tell herself what to do with her body, they argue. Those two logics are in line with the Freedom of Choice Act bill introduced in the US Congress in 1989, which stated that a woman should have the right to “choose to terminate a pregnancy before fetal viability, or at any time, if such termination is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman.”⁸ Even though that bill is still pending in congress, the Supreme Court

⁷ Source 1. R. Munson. *Intervention and Reflection: Basic Issues in Medical Ethics*. Wadsworth, 2000. Pages 86-98
Source 2. John Martin Fischer. "Abortion and Ownership." *The Journal of Ethics* 17, no. 4 (2013): 275-304.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10892-013-9152-z>

⁸ S.1912 - Freedom of Choice Act of 1989

had already endorsed abortion since January 1973 by the landmark decision they handed in the case of *Roe v. Wade*, which recognized the constitutional right of a woman to make her own personal medical decisions including the one to have an abortion.⁹ As a result, abortion became legal in the whole United States. Because it concerns the woman's body, it is therefore, their choice.

Issues with “My Body, My Choice”

Despite this legal victory of pro-choice supporters, according to *what science and the Bible reveal*, the slogan “My body, my choice” is not accurate. Let us explore the available data to see what really happens inside the mother's womb during pregnancy and when exactly life begins according to the Bible.

Life Inside the Womb

The moment the male sperm cell, the spermatozoid, merges with the female egg cell, the ovule, the genetic materials from both cells amalgamate to form the unique genetic material or genes of the unborn. Those genes are units of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) that came from both parents. There are about 24,000 unique genes divided in 23 pairs of chromosomes in a human cell, and one of each pair comes from either the mother or the father.¹⁰ But, even prior to that chromosome pairing in the beginning of a pregnancy, the genetic content in each parent's eggs had already gone through an internal exchange process called “crossing over” where identical chromosomes associate with each other and share different segments of their materials to form

⁹ Source 1. "Roe V. Wade." Planned Parenthood. Last modified Accessed July, 21, 2017.

<https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/issues/abortion/roe-v-wade>.

Source 2. Scott Rae. *Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics*. Chapter 5. Abortion and Embryonic Stem Cell Research. Kindle Locations 2495.

¹⁰ Miriam Stoppard. *Conception, Pregnancy, and Birth*. (1st Amer. ed. London ; New York: D. Kindersley, 1993), 22-23

recombinant DNAs, which are not found in either parent.¹¹ As a result of this crossing over and chromosome pairing, the unborn child's genetic content becomes unique, and that uniqueness is what makes him different than the mother's body.

One of the early features of this difference is the brain development and function. As early as the third week into the pregnancy, a group of cells in the upper part of the embryo starts to emit electric signals through their extensions, and the brain and spinal cord ignite and start slowly to control the rest of the unborn body.¹² That brain activity is independent of that of the mother.

Another difference is the unborn heartbeat. At around the time the brain starts its activity, one particular embryonic cell starts to contract, which triggers other surrounding cells to do the same, and shortly afterward, those cells, synchronizing their activities, become the heart,¹³ which will be beating until the person's death. The unborn heart rate is different than that of the mother.

Also, the unborn child in many cases has a different blood type than the mother. For example, if a mother's blood type is A+ and the father is B-, the unborn child has a 75% chance of having a different blood type compared to the mother. The fetus also has its own blood system that is independent from the mother's system. Inside the placenta, the two systems get near to each other to allow nutrients to cross the mother's tiny blood vessels called capillaries and enter the fetal system. But under normal functioning the two blood systems remain separated.¹⁴

¹¹ Crossing Over. (Genetics at www.encyclopedia.com)

¹² Keith Moore et Al. Before We Are Born: Essentials of Embryology and Birth Defects. (9th edition. ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier, 2016), 38-39, 251-264

¹³ Ibid, 40-43, 189-203

¹⁴ Ibid, 40-43, 189-203

There are actually pregnancy cases in which the defense system of the mother will attack the unborn child because it considers it as a foreign to the mother. For example, if a mother does not have on the surface of her red blood a protein called Rhesus (Rh) factor, her blood type is therefore a negative blood type. If the first baby she carries is Rh-positive (because of the father's contribution), and if for any reason some of the baby's blood enters the mother's circulation while in the womb, which may happen during some special tests, abnormal bleeding or during delivery, the mother will develop what is called antibodies against the current baby and any future pregnancy with a Rh-positive child. Consequently, any future unborn child may end up having a severe type of anemia that may even lead to its death inside the womb. This is the most concrete proof that the unborn child is not part of the mother's body otherwise, the mother's defense system would not have attacked it when it has a different Rh factor.¹⁵

The unborn gender in about half of the cases can be different than that of the mother. In those cases, while the mother's sex chromosome is "x", that of the unborn child is "y". This is another evidence that the genetic material of the unborn is not the same as that of the mother.

Finally, if during in vitro fertilization, the conception of a child can take place outside of the mother's body and later be imported inside to body for development, we cannot say that the unborn child is part of the woman's body as are her kidneys or liver, etc.

Based on the evidence available today, it is more appropriate for a woman to say "It is in my body" instead of "it is my body." It is generally observed that after an abortion without complication, there is no part of the woman body that becomes missing. If this is the case, the

¹⁵ Source 1. Gary Cunningham. Williams Obstetrics. 24th edition. ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Medical, 2014. Chapter 15: Fetal Disorders. Page 306-308

Source 2. Leon Salem and Karen R Singer. "Rh Incompatibility." 2017 (2017). From: <http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/797150-overview#showall>

aborted fetus must have been a different entity that was only plugged or attached to the woman's body for the first nine months of his life. The location just changes after delivery, but the baby will still depend on his parents to nurture, feed, and protect her for quite some times before he can function independently. That dependency on the mother during early life is different than being part of her. If a human being normally has two brains, two hearts, or two livers – just to name those few organs – then, the unborn child is part of the woman's body. Otherwise, he must be different.

The View of Scriptures

There is not a place in Scripture that literally says “Abortion is wrong” or “You shall not have an abortion,” but there are plenty of evidence from it that showed that God values life, and that He is deeply involved in the interweaving and crocheting of the unborn child in the womb. He considers the unborn child as a unique being since the very early stage of a pregnancy. For example, in Psalm 139, David praised God for his unlimited power as expressed in the making of man/woman inside the womb. In verses 13-16, he said:

For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.
My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When as yet there were none of them.

According to David, even when we were only a bowl of unformed cells, God's eyes were upon us. In addition, God said to Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly – that is, in the

womb – I knew thee; and before thou came forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” Jeremiah 1:5. In other words, while Jeremiah was being interweaved in the womb, God already had a ministry for him. In light of those passages, when an abortion happens, “it encompasses not only the termination of a pregnancy but also the termination of the very work of God in the womb.”¹⁶

When Jesus was about to be born, the angel talking to Marie referred to the unborn child as “that holy thing,” and when the newly pregnant Marie met with her cousin Elizabeth who was six months pregnant, the baby of Elizabeth leaped for joy in her womb when she heard the voice of Mary. Luke 1:35-44. So, at six months in the womb, Elizabeth’s baby could react strongly to external stimuli such as Mary’s voice. Thus, biblically speaking, the inborn child seems therefore to have life in him/her while in the womb, and to respond to external stimuli.

When does this life actually start? If we truly consider human’s reproductive cells as already living cells, human life actually started since the garden of Eden when God said: “let us make man in our image after our likeness” Gen 1:26, “So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” Gen 1:27. Thus, since that time, that transfer of life, that marvelous work of God, continues with each and every pregnancy in this world. In other words, every human is a continuation of the life that started with our first parents, which came from God. Technically, women do not create life, but through pregnancy, they transfer the life that is originated from God to the new unborn child. The womb of a woman is by design the first safe environment to protect and nurture the life of that tiny human during the first nine months of all the days of his life. After birth, the location has changed, but the

¹⁶ Scott Rae. Moral Choices: An Introduction to Ethics. Chapter 5. Abortion and Embryonic Stem Cell Research. Kindle Locations 2634

nurturing must continue for a while by the parents until the child can survive on his/her own.

The LORD has blessed women to play such a unique and noble role in the continuation of life since creation.

However, since God created us free to choose, He will not force us to do the right thing. In that sense, pro-choice supporters might have the freedom to choose the way they want to terminate a pregnancy. If they want to destroy the life that is maturing in their womb for any reason, they certainly have that freedom. However, they should be warned also that this is a wrong choice according to Scripture. God did the same thing with his people throughout time. He warned them on their choices. He said for example to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 30:19

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”

Now, despite those warning, and despite the reality that it matters to God that we do not stop this marvelous process in the womb, if by any chance someone has been through the experience of terminating the life of an unborn child through voluntary abortion, she should not let guilt overwhelm her, nor allow Satan to keep reminding her of the past, for we are serving a redeeming and loving God who can forgive, cleanse, and restore us (1John 1:9). Indeed, David also recognized this when he said in Psalm 103:2-4, 8-12

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,*

*The Lord is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.*

*He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

God is not willing that any should perish (mother or baby), but that all should come to repentance and the life.

Conclusion

In this paper, we sought to demonstrate that in reality, the unborn child is a separate body that lives inside the woman's body during the first nine months of its life. The rhetoric "My body, My choice" is only a deceiving way to encourage abortion. By design, the unborn child depends on the mother to survive inside the womb. That life only changed location at delivery moving to the world outside, but it will still depend on the loving care of both parents afterward. Contrary to what most pro-choice supporters are advocating, hurting that child willfully at any stage of his life is outside of God's will for us, and it violates the principles of Christian ethics that we all are called to follow. If it is unacceptable in most society to kill or neglect an infant or a child, the same should apply to that first part of someone's life, which is in the womb. Since the gift of life come from God, let us all give everyone the opportunity to enjoy such life while we have it. Let us all help to preserve it instead of destroying it.

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