

GOD CAN'T BE EXCLUDED FROM MORAL REASONING ABOUT ABORTION, which is sometimes/never "THE WILL OF GOD"

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Alrightalright, so I **do** point the God-magnet at everything & everybody.

Like a child getting a bright red magnet for Christmas & running around to see what'll pull. Only moreso: The child gradually learns that only iron will "pull" / be pulled; nothing, not even only conceivables, escapes the God-magnet of saints & theologians, of which I'm one of the latter....So you're not disappointed if I make divine nay of abortion.

To avoid both blasphemy & the accusation of arrogance, most speakers/writers on abortion use circumlocutions instead of directly claiming for their positions "the will of God." Further reasons are (1) uncertainty about the ultimate grounding of their claims, (2) fear of being thought "pious," (3) theodic shakiness, (4) deism (God thought of as at a distance, not personally involved with sparrows & the hairs of our heads but as [eg] a depositor who lets the bank manage his investments), & (5) the greater comfort of using secular speech, the language of our public schools & of the media. (God-talk, "the language of Zion," is comfortably used only by those who make continuous use of it in their religious enclaves. And most of them confine its use to their enclaves; "mum's the word" against God-talk witness in the world.)

Something about the phrase "the will of God" grabs folks. Whenever I use it in a letter to the editor (eg, #2338) I get responses to it whether or not to anything else in the letter! If people want something to read, I usually suggest the little classic of Leslie D. Weatherhead (THE WILL OF GOD, Abingdon/44, perpetually in both cloth & paper). Here's a quick capsuling of it:

It's five sermons for tough times: "the will of God" rises to consciousness & discussion during tough times (his was WWII, during which the sermons were preached to his London congregation) & during controversy on tough issues (as, now, abortion). "There is nothing about which we ought to think more clearly; and yet...there is nothing about which men and women are more confused" (9).

1. God's **intentional** will. A physician fought against his wife's illness, lost, & said, "Well, I must just accept it. It is the will of God." But (9) her recovery or death "cannot equally be the will of God in the sense of being his intention." Mt.18¹⁴: "It is NOT the will of your Father...." "The discipleship of men, not the death of Christ, was the intentional will of God, or, if you like, God's ideal purpose"; too bad we don't use "the will of God" only for God's intentional will (12).

2. God's **circumstantial** will. When the pressures on him foreclosed that "Christ was compelled either to die or to run away, then *in those circumstances* the Cross was the will of God" (12). So Jesus' "Not my will, but Yours." Only in this sense could I ever say that abortion (or divorce, or many other human decisions for wrong, decisions in which considerations of the good and the sensible or fitting countervail against the right) is the will of God.

3. God's **ultimate** will. This is "God's ultimate goal--the purposefulness of God which, in spite of evil and...even through evil, arrives, with nothing of value lost, at the same goal as would have been reached if the intentional will of God could have been carried through without frustration" (12f). His omnipotence means "God cannot be finally defeated...--not that everything that happens is his will, but that nothing can happen which *finally* defeats his will. So, in regard to the Cross, God achieved his final

Respect all life for world health

Our local, self-appointed, pro-abortion prophet Willis Elliott uses erroneous logic in an attempt to explain his reprehensible conclusion that "abortion is the will of God" (letter, June 20). Apparently he worships the bloodthirsty Hindu goddess, Kali, because abortion is the premeditated annihilation of a living, growing human being.

The millions of babies that are sacrificed each year to the humanistic god of self are victims of the gross indifference and ignorance promulgated by confused souls such as Elliott. Elliott believes the end justifies the baby-butcher means in his search for "environmental world health," but the environment will never be healthy if we continue to

view a part of humanity as just another disposable commodity. This type of insensitivity will always lead to further indifference to the value of human life as witnessed by the recent tragedy in China.

The spiral of death and destruction will continue as long as we devalue life and fail to realize the consequences of our interactions, which would be more responsible to society as a whole if we stood in awe of God and the life he creates in each one of us.

As long as our culture denies the importance of respect for life and God, the result of "environmental world health" will never occur.

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goal not simply in spite of the Cross but through it."

Circumstances untoward both us & God occur because God allows freedom (34): "Power means ability to achieve purpose. Since the purpose is to win man's volition, any activity of God's which denied or suppressed man's volition, in that it would defeat the purpose, would not be a use of power but a confession of weakness and an acceptance of defeat." But (35) "if he cannot use men as his agents," he will, "with great pain to himself and to themselves, use them as his instruments." Job 42²: "You can do everything you want to."

Chapter 4, "Discerning the Will of God" through friendship, conscience, common sense, the advice of a friend, great literature (esp. the Bible, "written from a unique point of view--that of the will and purposes of God"), the voice of the Church, the Inner Light. 46: God wants to weave our mistakes, as well as our sufferings and sins, "into his plan." But "Do I really want to discern God's will, or do I want to get his sanction for my own?" And "Have I got the courage to do God's will when I discern it?"

Chapter 5, "'In His Will Is Our Peace'" (Dante). Prov.3⁶: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Inner peace (1) "because we lose the fear of getting lost"--as a plane heading for home on a silent radiobeam, the radio howling when he gets off. (2) "The dread of carrying the responsibility of what happens is removed." Again, Prov.3⁶. (3) "In his will our conflicts are resolved." His last sentence (56), a quote from W.C.Bryant's address to a wild bird he'd watch disappear into the sunset: "He who, from zone to zone, /Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight, /In the long way that I must tread alone /Will lead my steps aright."

Because "God" & "ideals" are firmly associated in the public mind, it's sophisticated to be able to think of God's will unideally, viz as what God wants under the circumstance of having given us freedom & in the actual situation which contains, in addition to divine gifts, some of the unideal consequences from our ignorant & wilful uses of our freedom. While I was writing this, the phone rang: a Lutheran theologian, on a committee of five to write the ordination requirements for the new Lutheran merger, asking what I'd say in the section on "Ordination and Homosexuality." The will of God (ie, my opinion on) is that homosexuals (1) be ordained, (2) their vows to include chastity. But, said he, "what statement would that make to & about homosexual Lutheran *laity*?" Yep, it's complicated, folks. But while (Aquinas) "we must walk to the edge of the world & beyond, off into the darkness," we can steadily intend to walk "into the arms of God" (once more, Prov.3⁶: "...acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths")....I'm a **normist**: sometimes say never, sometimes say always. But also I'm a **circumstantialist** (contextualist, situationalist): "Circumstances alter cases," so almost never say either never or always. So I could never say "Abortion is never the will of God" (an option in this Thinksheet's title); & I accuse those who can & do of unthinking legalism & rigoristic inhumanity & the deistic idolatry of putting in place of the prayer for guidance a sacred tabu. To the affirmation in this Thinksheet's title add this one: Moral reasoning about abortion can't be excluded by pulling God (ie, pulling God's six-star rank, on the assumption that he's written an all-mouths-shutting directive against abortion).

Since absolutists, such as this letterwriter (in today's CCT), have no use for the category of God's "circumstantial" will, they read, eg, my June 20 letter ("Therefore, abortion is the will of God.") absolutely, as declaring God's "intentional"--"ultimate" will. (They should hear Wm. James: "I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist but a **possibilist**.")...I don't care what the subject is, I wanna get people thinking--talking about God. This letterwriter accuses me of talking about a godDESS, Kali! He assumes each conception is by the will of God (contrast, eg, Jn.1¹³), implying tabu: the fetus is sacred, inviolate. He identifies, as one motion of the soul, "respect for life and God." And he misreads the editorial's "the environmental health of the world" (meaning the health of our environment, the biosphere) to mean (his phrase) "environmental world health" as inclusive of all preborns--my point having been that that is impossible (eg, the population of Central America having tripled since WWII, with inevitable decline in political stability, living conditions, health care, & employment opportunities).

"To be of greatest use, a Christian method of moral judgment must steer between perfectionism on the one hand and situationalism on the other [*italics mine*]. It must seek to combine the moral seriousness of the one with the flexibility of the other" (J. Philip Wogaman, CHRISTIAN MORAL JUDGMENT [Westminster/John Knox/89, 60]). That's the kind of "prophet" (as the letterwriter calls me) I am: **serious & flexible**. It's serious, very serious, I'm saying, to be only serious on abortion (or any other complex issue).

Since "the [circumstantial] will of God" means what God wants under the circumstances, what are the circumstances? Description, situation-definition, inescapably is interpretation: it doesn't say simply "Look!"--it says "Look at it this way!" Well, the way I look at it is that the population boom is a population boomboom, a bomb blowing up the biosphere, our only home. Let others speak (so I won't have to) from other coigns of vantage, thus coming up with differing situation-definitions--the fetus, the pregnant, the inseminator, the family/families, the communities local & larger, traditions, customs, laws, the family, social stability/disorder, socioeconomic factors. Somebody has to defend the environment, present & future, against the human fetus, its enemy numero uno. Take just one case: mass-murderer Charles Manson was booked as "Manson, Charles; a.k.a. Jesus Christ, God." The unwanted bastard of a teen prostitute, he had, as we say, "everything against him." Jesus speaks of someone who had better not been born (Mt.26²⁴ M.14²¹): is Manson in that category? (ICI.46⁸ combines this with the execution pericope, Mt.18⁶ & parallels; the canonical references by themselves render it impossible to dragoon the canonical Jesus into either "pro-life" absolutism or opposition to capital punishment.)

This 29June89 letter suggests I be aborted of my humanistic selfishness (projection? I'm accusing absolutist pro-lifers of just that: intraspecific egotism, blind to our species increasingly evil effects on the environment) & of my perverted hermeneutics. She exposes her Pollyanna perfectionism, equating it with "Judeo-Christian belief." While I agree with her that "'the creature does not have to make up for any deficiency in the Creator,'" I must ask her: What about possible deficiencies in the creation, in the creatures, from whatever cause, granting (1) that such are not the Creator's direct, intentional doing & (2) that the biblical God is "of infinite love"? I'm preaching/teaching that there are such deficiencies & that it is indeed the will of God that we worshipers of the biblical God should seek to "make up" for them--including failed marriages, which should end in divorce; & unwanted pregnancies, which should end in abortion. Over against her, I have a Protestant conviction of the radical **freedom** God has given humanity & of our radical (not Catholic, superficial) **fallenness**, convictions I shall with FF (our American Founding Fathers, who assumed human evil would produce horrors like the S&L & HUD scandals if the structures & processes of government did not put dams against the flow of evil). [Yesterday, Poland's Communist boss Jaruzelski surrendered the Leninist perfectionistic doctrine of the one-party system: "We have become convinced that monopoly is a very unhealthy thing, not only in the economy but also in political life."] God "never 'makes mistakes,'" yes, & hasn't done so in turning population control over to us. Ironically, massively nonChristian peoples--eg, the Japanese--are doing better at this control than are the dominantly Christian peoples (eg, the worst population situation in Asia is in the most Christianized nation, the Philippines, where Catholic influence is against baby-selling for foreign adoption & also against baby-stopping (abortion)--both oppositions weighing on the side of population increase, the most destabilizing factor in the national life).

Secular efforts to exclude God from moral reasoning about abortion inevitably appeal to some ultimate "really real" functioning holophrastically for & as God.

Abortion is not the will of God

In response to Willis Elliott, his illogical conclusion suggesting "abortion is the will of God" can only make those of Judeo-Christian belief shudder, and ask which God does Mr. Elliott serve?

The God of the Bible is a God of infinite love for his creation both born and pre-born, a God of infallible design who never "makes mistakes" (a category some would suggest babies that are aborted fall into), a God of inscrutable wisdom and knowledge calling for each and every person conceived to have a vital part in his world.

He is a God of loving patience who desires men to abandon their prideful ill-conceived ways for "the creature does not have to make up for any deficiency in the Creator."

The abortion of man's selfish humanistic tripe and his perverted interpretation of "God's will" is the only sense of abortion God condones.

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