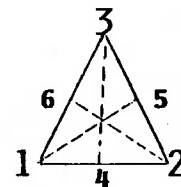


If you forget to invite to your party someone who's the right to come, you're in trouble; if you leave God off the invitation list, you're in big trouble, the biggest trouble possible, damnation (however you picture it, it's a biblical-prophetic essential). But it often simplifies a debate to leave God out (yes, oversimplifies). If put in, however, God will be coopted to be on the side of each against the other--God, who wants to be with each side always & choose when to be on one side against the other (unity, diversity, generosity, in yesterday's Bush Inaugural's version of the early Protestant "u., d., charity"). Let's get perspectival-pragmatic: In any debate, the deity is an asset when used by me against you & a liability when used by you against me. This fact tempts to shouts of "Leave God out of this!" But we must not, cannot, if we are theists. The Presence is a joy in our hearts, a challenge in our minds, & both a burden & a power in our witnessing, including our arguing. Nowhere moreso than in the current abortion-debate....This Thinksheet uses the liberationist phrase "God is on the side of" to present what I may call God's panel on abortion. God is the moderator, & the panelists are the fetus, the carrier ("mother" is both an unprecise & a prejudicial term here for the pregnant), earth (the biosphere), the nuclear family, the nation (or demographic area), & the species. Why do I make God the moderator? Neutrality, folks! Neither side can coopt the moderator. Besides, God, as does a good moderator, manages the debate in the interest of fairness, justice, & (to use a Bushism) a "fairer, kinder" society. While God's role as judge transcends the moderator role, the former does not displace the latter....On my model, the angles are the primary panelists, the bisectors the secondary (positions roughly intermediate between the primaries).

1. All panelists can be counted on to speak for, on the side of, the angels & life: all are "pro-life." The premise of this position (the numbers on the model corresponding with the § numbers) is that God is on the side of the fetus. This was the ancient & medieval position & until very recently that of the RC Church. If Caesar had not been taken Caesarianly, both he & his carrier would have been thrown away. RC hospitals formerly, when faced with a choice, discarded the carrier (ie, gave priority to fetal over adult life). While many contemporary antiabortionists reject this primitive position, what they mean by their prejudicial phrase "pro-life" is borne along on the current of the ancient-medieval numinous awe of the fetus as having a higher sacred status than that of the carrier.



2. The premise of this position, though many of its holders would be uncomfortable putting it this way, is that God is on the side of the carrier, who has a higher sacred status than what she's carrying & accordingly has decisional right over the fetus. This was & is the modern point of view, which sees human dignity existentially, as a function of the individual's right/responsibility to make decisions for, & thus rule over, the self. Accordingly, "pro-choice" is an accurate & lucid self-description of this perspective. It is "pro-life," for what is human life if one is unfree to make major decisions about one's future? As #1 is "pro-FETAL-life," #2 is "pro-CARRIER-life." Each fails to treat with sufficient seriousness what the other holds sacred.

3. The premise of this position is that God is on the side of the earth, the biosphere: not just fetus or carrier or family or nation or species, but "THE EARTH is the Lord's & the fullness thereof" (Ps.241cf.8911; 11516-18: God gave us the earth to render thanks & praise "forever," a commission implying biospheric homeostasis, the sustainable synergy of human life with our natural support-system). Last summer's greenhouse-effect sensitized millions to a consciousness-raising only a few had experienced before, viz, that ecology is humanity's problem number one, in the light of which all other problems, personal to global, should be viewed. Let's call this the post-modern point of view (though in the arts & literature since WWII the term has other meanings). Ecological deterioration is a fact, not just a threat though its threat-force is now exponential. To "develop" the Third World would be a planetary bio-horror, & every human neonate adds to the weight of human flesh under which the less & less good earth is groaning ever more loudly. Vis-a-vis abortion, this moment of moral clarity shifts from the permissive question "Why abort?" to the promotive question "Why NOT abort?" Neither "pro-fetal-life" nor "pro-carrier-life," but "pro-EARTH-life."

4 (the family), 5 (the nation), and 6 (the species) are the bisector-intermediate positions. They are secondary in requiring each of them two of the primaries, in the light of which God is seen as on the side of family, nation, & species.