

Abortive Arguments

The Arid, Incoherent Culture of Death is Slowly Receding

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Introduction

In 1984 I wrote a booklet on abortion entitled *Open Your Mouth for the Dumb: Abortion and the Christian* (Banner of Truth), and in 2010 it was revised and enlarged as *Abortion: 'Open Your Mouth for the Dumb'*. It has been an interesting exercise to pick up the trends over a quarter of a century. We might now ask: 'Is the pro-life position winnable?' Or perhaps: 'Is the pro-choice position increasingly untenable?'

Obviously weaker arguments used by the pro-choice side.

Gone are the days when abortion could be compared to the removal of an ingrown toenail. The Supreme Court of the United States in 1973 stated: 'We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins.' That is often restated today, but with less conviction.

Janet Hadley cites one woman who wanted an abortion because she was going on a skiing holiday, but then adds: 'Dividing reasons for abortion into "good" and "bad" is a treacherous moral enterprise.' She asks: 'How can anyone make such moral judgments?' It is strange, but such reasoning is usually only applied to matters like abortion and sexual ethics, not racism and paedophilia.

A British feminist, Amanda Platell, in 2007 expressed her horror at the scale of abortion in Britain since 1967, but maintains, rather lamely, that 'We support the principle of abortion, but abhor the way it has come to be so misused and abused by the current generation.' She accepts that abortion is killing but says that it is the lesser evil. She writes: 'The nearly 200,000 aborted babies in the UK each year are the lesser evil, no matter how you define life, or death, for that matter. If you are willing to die for a cause, you must be prepared to kill for it, too.' It seems that the sisterhood is willing to kill for the cause.

Leslie Cannold admits: 'Any attempt to place a wedge somewhere in this gradual process and declare that before the wedge the fetus doesn't matter, while after the wedge it does, is a decision that is as much a part of the sea of subjective values around abortion as any other.' Despite this concession to reality, Cannold's vehement defence of the woman's right to abort her child remains unchanged. She objects to abortion on the grounds of sex selection – which usually means the death of the female child – but accepts most abortions as responsible decisions to 'kill from care'.

Even Jane Caro, the spokeswoman for Pro-Choice NSW, has written that 'No one wants to have an abortion. It is not something women take lightly, but sometimes they decide it is the lesser of two evils.' One can only wonder why she considers abortion an evil in any sense. Most startling of all is the view of Peter Singer who is ready to acknowledge that 'the opponents of abortion are right to say that abortion ends a human life' and that 'birth is in some ways an arbitrary place to

draw the line at which killing the developing human life ceases to be permissible, and instead becomes murder.’

Advances in science - notably the use of ultrasounds - have made it increasingly obvious that the unborn child is a human being. The normally pro-abortion *New Scientist* in March 2006 reported soberly:

The task force finds that the new recombinant DNA technologies indisputably prove that the unborn child is a whole human being from the moment of fertilization, that all abortions terminate the life of a living human being, and that the unborn child is a separate human patient under the care of modern medicine.

The so-called pro-choice side has often shown a distinct dislike for the use of ultrasounds. In May 2008 the student union at the University of Queensland would not allow the Newman Society to display a poster showing an unborn baby eight weeks after conception. The administration then refused to allow a pro-life stall to be set up in the university.

Another problem for pro-choicers is the issue of sex-selection. In 2007 at the United Nations a resolution was brought forward to condemn sex-selection abortion on the ground that it discriminated against women, but many feminist organisations opposed it because they feared the implications for all abortions. In April 2010 Canada was trying to curtail sex-selection abortions without curtailing abortion itself.

In China and India ultrasounds have detected females in the womb, leading to more abortions. There may be something like 35,000 forced abortions daily in China. A movement that has supposedly championed women’s rights has led to cruel violence against young girls in the form of female infanticide and sex-selection abortion directed at female babies. Janet Hadley protests: ‘A society which tolerates female infanticide or abortion of female fetuses holds women in contempt, whatever status women may achieve as mothers of sons.’ Yet she fears that banning sex-selection abortions will drive a wedge into other abortion laws. It is irony indeed to be ‘hoist with one’s own petard’ - blown up by one’s own bomb.

Furthermore, there is growing evidence that abortion causes pain to the unborn child. In April 2010 a law was proposed in Nebraska which banned abortions beyond twenty weeks of pregnancy on the grounds that the foetus can feel pain. The *New York Times* was alarmed and spoke of ‘a spreading peril for women’s privacy and freedom’ based on ‘a questionable theory of fetal pain.’

Late-term abortions have always been difficult to explain away. Janet Hadley admits that ‘Late abortions represent a wafer-thin line between the tolerable and the intolerable, the merely disturbing and the truly revolting.’ Possibly some 500 to 1,000 abortions are born alive each year in the USA. On 24 October 2006 in Miami in the USA, a premature baby, Amillia Taylor, was born. She was aged only 21 weeks and 6 days, and was slightly longer than a ballpoint pen in length. Yet four months later she was strong enough to be taken home.

Dr Joseph Bruner of Vanderbilt University in Tennessee has been privileged to witness some remarkable things, but few more remarkable than this. On 19 August 1999 Dr Bruner was operating on a spina bifida patient, Samuel Armas, when Samuel was just 21 weeks old in his mother's womb. At one point in the operation, Dr Bruner lifted the baby's hand out of the womb, and supported it with one finger. A photographer, Michael Clancy, was there to capture the moment. Nearly four months later, on 2 December 1999, Samuel was born. He has since grown into a lively young boy with his only obvious disability being his need to wear leg braces.

There is also the issue of infant deaths apart from abortion. In May 2010 the

NSW Attorney-General, John Hatzistergos, announced a review into NSW laws involving the deaths of unborn children. This came about because an eight month old child in utero, Zoe, was killed on Christmas Day 2009 by a driver allegedly on drugs. The driver could not be charged with manslaughter because the baby had not taken a breath. Those with vested interests in not dealing with the abortion issue took refuge in saying how complex the matter was.

Growing evidence that abortion can have a devastating effect on the living.

In Britain the Royal College of Psychiatrists in March 2008 significantly modified a 1994 finding that the risks to mental health associated with continuing an unwanted pregnancy far outweighed the risks of regret over the abortion. Increasingly, even secular agencies were warning that abortion is linked with breakdowns in mental health.

One of the most devastating indictments of abortion has actually come from the pen of Jo Wainer, who spent her life participating in the practice. In a collection of stories entitled *Lost*, she has unwittingly revealed how inherently dehumanizing is the practice of abortion. One woman is quite emphatic: ‘I hate children. I especially hate babies.’ When she aborted her child at twenty weeks, her rage knew no bounds: ‘I should have made sure it was dead. I should have torn it apart with my own bare hands, wreaking my vengeance upon it for what it did to me.’ These are stories of guilt, grief, callousness, fantasy, and almost unbounded sorrow.

Abortion often terminates a relationship – about 80% break up after an abortion. Jo Wainer records one woman who raged against her boyfriend’s total lack of care, that ‘he couldn’t bear to be in the same room as me when I came back from the doctor’s room.’

A number of converts from the pro-choice side to the pro-life side.

In recent times there have been some spectacular changes of mind on this issue. Dr Bernard Nathanson, the New York gynaecologist who in 1969 helped to form the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws and who himself performed or supervised some 75,000 abortions, came to the conclusion that the foetus is, in fact, a tiny human being, and so worthy of all protection. In the USA it was routinely claimed that before abortion was legalised, there were about 5,000 to 10,000 deaths per year due to illegal abortions. Since his change of heart on the issue, Bernard Nathanson has written: ‘I confess that I knew the figures were totally false, and I suppose the others did too if they stopped to think of it.’ It is also incontestable that the number of maternal deaths fell during the twentieth century in the West not because abortion was legalised but because penicillin was discovered.

Carol Everett too was involved in selling 35,000 abortions in the United States, and had one herself, and felt the pain of depression, guilt, and shame – even a sense of being raped – as well as the breakdown of her marriage. Finally, she was converted to Christ, and faced her sin honestly. Norma McCorvey too has swapped sides. She was the Jane Roe in the Roe v. Wade case that led to the United States Supreme Court decision of January 1973 when it struck down all abortion laws in the country. Ms McCorvey was supposedly gang raped – but that was untrue – and in fact she never had an abortion. She was used and manipulated by celebrity pro-abortionists.

Growing support for the pro-life position in the USA.

There is a paradox in this, and it may not be lasting, but it is interesting and could be significant that at a time when Americans have elected an intractable pro-choice president, they seem to have increasing doubts about the morality of abortion. A Gallup poll in the USA found that in May 2009 a majority of Americans

identified themselves as pro-life for the first time in the history of the question being asked by the pollster. This fell slightly by May 2010, but the pro-life majority remained. Gary Langer of ABC News in the USA has commented that the majority of Americans are actually pro-life and pro-choice simultaneously. In April 2010 *Newsweek* expressed alarm that the abortion-rights movement was run by ageing women and few men. Sociology may be regarded at times as somewhat akin to the ancient practice of consulting the entrails of a chicken - much depends on how the question is phrased. Nevertheless, some signs are there.

Warning.

Taking all of these trends together, none of this means that victory is necessarily near. This is the kind of issue where a number of battles may be won but still the war is lost. People will rationalise evil because they consider that that is in their best interests. Yet in 1970 the Soviet dissident, Andrei Amalrik, published his extraordinary essay, *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* He was wrong, but only by seven years. Amalrik himself was killed in a car crash in Spain in 1980, but the period from 1989-1991 saw the sudden collapse of communism. We may live to see the sudden collapse of a similarly anti-life worldview. Increasingly, it is the pro-abortionists who look like they are spitting into the wind.