

A Pro-Abortion Worry

By Rev. J. Kirk van der Swaagh,
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The pro-life movement has seen some advances in the past year. President George W. Bush has signed into law two significant measures: the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act (PBA Ban Act) and the Unborn Victims of Violence Act (UVVA), both of which, should they be allowed to be enforced, will serve to undermine the shaky foundation upon which the child-killing industry and their apologists stand. The lie of the pro-abortion movement has been to assert that the organism growing inside of a woman's womb is somehow not human enough to be considered in the so-called "choice" of abortion. This destructive philosophy, which sounds strangely similar to the notions that supported the notorious Dred Scott decision of the 1857 Supreme Court, [in which a black man was ruled to be not a legal person] is slowly, but surely, being exposed for the falsehood that it is.

Both the PBA Ban Act and UVVA capitalize on the obvious reality that what is developing in the mother can be considered nothing less than fully and completely human. I remember one of my "pro-choice" seminary professors having to admit that the fetus is a "living human being." "Is it alive?" he asked rhetorically. "Of course" he answered, "otherwise there wouldn't be a problem." "Is it human?" he continued, "What else would it be? Does it have being? Well, every thing has being. By that test, it is a living human being. But," and he paused for emphasis, "is it a person?" [This distinction implies that the state can define who is a person and who is not.] The situations for which the laws referenced above were designed are ones that leave no doubt in anyone's mind that the fetus in question is also a living human being, a person.



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The language of the UVVA is most important. It strives to establish that violence against an "unborn child," by which is meant "a member of the species *homo sapiens*, at any stage of development, who is carried in the womb" is to be treated as a separate crime from anything done against the mother. Again, this is only recognizing the obvious: what is developing in the mother's womb is nothing less than a living human being, a person.

The significance of this language is not lost on the pro-aborters. Kim Gandy, president of NOW, responded in a press release dated March 26, 2004 that "the sponsors of this cynical bill have devised a strategy to redefine the Fourteenth Amendment, which guarantees equal protection of the law to 'persons,' which has never been defined to include fetuses." She worriedly adds, "[s]uch a definition of 'person' could entitle fertilized eggs, embryos and fetuses to legal rights – ultimately setting the stage to legally reverse *Roe*." Ms. Gandy proves herself a logician; even she cannot deny the connection between the stages of development of a living human being. Should both of these bills be enforced she may prove herself a prophet as well.

The Threat of "Terminal Sedation"

By Kate Norris, NOEL

Healthcare is changing in America. Medicine has crossed the line from "doing no harm" to actively killing a patient. As the Supreme Court legalized abortion, many hospital policy boards, doctors, and bioethicists began to deny effective medical care and hasten death. These practices encourage hospitals to view vulnerable people—the sick, dying and disabled—as not worth it. Quietly, many hospitals and doctors have begun to process people in light of their healthcare costs, their disability, and their life expectancy. Assisted suicide, euthanasia, and Futile Care Theory practices do not treat people based on their inherent value.

Thankfully not all hospitals and doctors accept these medical trends, but many do. As people who value life, if we are not prepared before we get to the emergency room, we—or someone we love—could become a victim of these practices. We need to understand the different approaches to medical care, and the implied messages behind them, so that we can protect those we love and stand up for the sanctity of every human life even in the midst of death.

The American Medical Association (AMA) defines euthanasia as "the medical administration of a lethal agent to a patient." In other words, the doctor prescribes and administers the lethal dose himself. He "kills" the patient. It is "voluntary" euthanasia when the patient consents. It is "nonvoluntary" when someone else consents on behalf of the patient—a doctor or relative—because the patient's wishes are unknown. It is "involuntary" euthanasia when the patient is killed against his wishes. It is "passive" euthanasia when effective medical treatment is withheld. ***Food and water delivered through a feeding tube is now considered medical treatment instead of basic nutrition. Therefore it can be denied as "artificial" or "extraordinary" treatment.*** In the Netherlands, the only country to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide, doctors prefer to describe their method of euthanasia as "terminal sedation." The doctor removes all treatment, food and water so the patient starves and dehydrates to death while sedated to unconsciousness. Doctors cloak the killing with medical terms in order to hide the brutality of the process. Indeed, it seems easier on the conscience to say "terminal sedation."

...Thankfully, God does not abandon us in our loss of bodily functions, in our suffering, or even in our dying. Death is a part of life, and the beginning of eternal life for those who believe in Jesus (John 3:16). With this real hope, we can walk through trauma, sickness, disability, and depression with the assurance that no matter what our condition, we are his creatures and are dearly loved by him. Christ has suffered for us and overcome death. His voice speaks in opposition to our culture saying, I will give you the strength to walk through the suffering. You don't need to be afraid. A believer's death shines with eternal life. We can stand up to the abuses tolerated in the medical community. We can encourage those struggling with illness, disability, and despair by...modeling hope, courage, and dignity even in the face of death. We can make a difference.

Reflections on the Signing of "Laci and Conner's Law"

By Dennis DiMauro, Lutherans for Life

On April first of this year, I represented Lutherans for Life at the signing of the Unborn Victims of Violence Act in the East Room of the White House. This bill, also known as "Laci and Conner's Law," provides that, under federal law, any person who causes death or injury to a child in the womb will be charged with a separate offense, in addition to any charges relating to the mother. Laci Petersen's mother and stepfather were present to view the signing, as were the parents of other women who were murdered while pregnant. And not a few tears were shed by the crowd as we saw justice being done for Laci, her little son Conner, and many other women and children. The President concluded that by passing this bill, "we [as a nation] widen the circle of compassion and inclusion in our society, and we reaffirm that the United States of America is building a culture of life."

What seems so surprising is that it took until 2004 for this bill to become a law. Who in our nation would argue that no crime is committed when a pregnant woman is beaten so badly that the baby she is carrying dies? The answer of course is the abortion lobby. And one of the most visible spokeswomen in this lobby is Kate Michelman, who heads up NARAL Pro-Choice America, (formerly the National Abortion Rights Action League). At a recent NARAL luncheon she said, "The situation is perilous, it's very scary. There's a lot going on in the world, and this (unborn victims' act) might get missed. But this is a very, very serious setback."

One might ask why this bill is such a serious setback? How could passing a law which protects a pregnant woman's unborn child be considered "very scary"? And to answer that question one must look at it from the perspective of the "pro-choice" lobby. You see, Christians like you and I think that individuals like the one who killed Laci Petersen are "very scary." They are terrifying people who brutally kill pregnant women and their unborn children. But what pro-abortion leaders see as "very scary" is that there is now a law which might convict someone for committing such unthinkable acts. Because protecting just one child in the womb, even a wanted child, defeats the goals of the pro-abortion movement and its allies—legal abortion at any time, for any reason, and at the taxpayer's expense.

Today's argument over abortion is really a more realistic contrast than what we heard about in the 1970's and 1980's. In those days we debated, "When Does Life Begin?" Some said life began after the first trimester (the first three months of gestation). Some said after "quickening", or when the baby could be felt moving in the womb. But today you don't hear too much about this type of debate. The debate is now solely one of "choices". The reason for this debate shift is twofold. First, ultrasound photography has allowed people to see what embryologists have known: that human life clearly begins at conception. Second, since abortion is legal through the entire 9 months of gestation (with the possible exception of partial-birth abortions, if the recently signed bill gets through the courts), when human life begins is of little importance to our legal system.

So this brings up the new question for this decade: "When does birth begin?" If a child is born at 20 weeks and is wanted by her parents, neonatologists will furiously work to keep this tiny baby alive. In fact, due to our great medical technology, birth can occur any time from 40 weeks all the way back to 20 weeks. Therefore, the question arises that if birth begins at 20 weeks, how can human life begin at 40 weeks as our courts argue? Indeed, today's image technology has shown just how illogical our current abortion laws really are.

And since our technology has so discredited the former arguments for abortion, these old reasons have been totally replaced by the "choice" of the abortion-minded mother. In a recent article for the San Francisco Chronicle, columnist Joan Ryan pointed out that the question for pro-choicers is simply a "woman's fundamental freedom to decide for herself, without political interference, when and if she becomes a mother." But is that really true? [As soon as a child is conceived, a woman becomes a mother.] And Laci Peterson did want to be a mother; so we can well assume that Laci wanted little Conner to be protected under the law. But as we have seen by its



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opposition to this bill, the "pro-choice" lobby doesn't feel that the law should even protect the "wanted child". No, the only protection that should be granted is to the mother and not to the child, even when wanted. And where is the mother's "choice" in that? I think that this new law has brought into greater focus the fallacy of the pro-abortion movement's "pro-choice" arguments.

So where does this lead us as Christians who are trying to follow Jesus' plan for human life? Well, I think it leads us to try to change the hearts and minds of those still caught up in the old lies.

But the question is how?

First, we need to be supportive of pregnant women in our churches. We need to offer to make them a meal when the baby is born and share in their joy of this precious new arrival. We need to let them know that their child is a blessing to the entire church community. One pastor I know prays at each service for every pregnant woman and their unborn children by name. What a great way to value these tiny gifts from God!

Second, we need to help with the unexpected pregnancies in our communities. We can do this by volunteering at our local pregnancy center, helping a woman with a ride to the doctor's office, or simply being a supportive ear to an unwed mother who just wants to share her difficulties.

And finally, we need to speak out in defense of the unborn. We need to publicly praise good laws like *Laci and Conner's Law* that are passed to help protect women and their children. We need to stop avoiding conversations about pro-life topics, because these conversations can change the minds of others. And we need to tell others who are contemplating abortion that God has another and better plan for their unborn child.

THOUGHTS ON CLONING

By John B. Brown, Jr United Church of Christ Friends For Life

"When Science moves faster than moral understanding, as it does today, men and women struggle to articulate their unease." Michael J. Sandel. "The Case Against Perfection" The Atlantic Monthly, April 2004, p.54

Those struggling with their moral unease about cloning and genetic enhancement today are many. There are many others, however, who have overcome their uneasiness with ease, and are all for moving full steam ahead. Their reasons include the promise of developing new technologies to treat and prevent disease, providing parents the opportunity to choose the sex of their child, or to enhance their genetic endowment, and giving athletes the chance to improve their performance. Moreover, say some proponents, unlike the old eugenics programs which sought to improve the race by culling the weak and genetically impoverished through the power of state or government action, cloning and other bio-genetic technologies would enable individuals to better the race through their own choices. Personal decision coupled with the versatility of market economics makes the coercion of the state unnecessary. What could possibly be wrong with such efforts?

A great deal, answer pro-lifers. Though there is widespread agreement that ameliorating illness or preventing certain illnesses and disorders is a good thing if it can be done in morally appropriate ways, cloning and a variety of other genetic engineering techniques are considered unacceptable.

Concerns relate both to technology and morality. Many scientists believe that cloning is simply unsafe, and will be for some time to come, especially with animals or humans, as it is likely to produce a variety of serious abnormalities. There are too many unknowns. Dolly, the first cloned sheep, died recently of a premature ageing process related to her cloning.

Of greater concern to the pro-life community are the moral issues involved. First is the fact that cloning and stem cell research, as pursued by many scientists and technicians, commonly involves the

development of human embryos for research with the understanding that they will be deliberately destroyed at some point. For Christians and pro-lifers this is unacceptable. The human embryo, though primitive from the standpoint of development, is ontologically a human being from the moment of conception, and requires only time, sustenance and love to develop into a mature human being. As such it is a member of the human community and should be protected by law, as we hope shall one day be the case.

Another concern, well articulated by Michael Sandel and others, is that the pursuit of cloning and the related technologies is a massive exercise in hubris. The concern for the enhancement of human abilities, whether in sports, arts or academics is the concern to direct our own future. To make man in our own image. In Sandel's words, "eugenics and genetic engineering represent the one-sided triumph of willfulness over giftedness, of dominion over reverence, of molding over beholding."

The Christian tradition over the 20 centuries of its history bears witness to the ongoing struggle to balance the giftedness of our nature with the wisdom to alleviate suffering, remove injustice, and build a community where every human being, before and after birth, of every race and nation, is valued. These efforts are based on the knowledge that we are creatures made in the image of God, whose purpose is to love him and our neighbor in a balanced manner such that we become wise stewards of both nature and human nature. To attempt to manipulate and enhance the givens of our nature is to play God, and to open ourselves to the possibility of unknown disasters, whether scientific, political or theological, the greatest of which would be to cut ourselves off from Him whose will and Spirit are the very source of life and meaning.



Rev. John Brown

National Pro-Life Religious Council

The National Pro-Life Religious Council (NPRC) is a Christian coalition which acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and works to encourage every Christian denomination to affirm and witness to the biblical standard of the value, dignity and sanctity of human life, and to foster ministry to those vulnerable to the violence of abortion or euthanasia.

Member Organizations

Alpha Omega Life

Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC)

International Communion of the Charismatic Episcopal Church (CEC for Life)

Lutherans for Life (LFL)

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS)

National Clergy Council (NCC)

National Organization of Episcopalians for Life (NOEL)

Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL)

Priests for Life (PFL)

Religious Outreach, National Right to Life Committee

Task Force of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS)

United Friends for Life (UFL)

PREACHING THAT "PRO-LIFE STUFF."

By Rev. Rob Schenck, President of the National Clergy Council

I was recently asked by a colleague in a different denomination, "Are you still preaching on that 'pro-life' stuff? Isn't that getting old?" It was a strange question, as if 'pro-life' stuff gets old or passé. Yet, I suppose that Americans do weary of the "same old stuff." Americans, in fact, have insatiable appetites for new things. We want new music, new fashions, new car designs, and new slogans. Too many Christians even want to hear something "new" in church—not just the same old, boring Bible stuff.

There are some things that never—or at least should never—grow old, though. Even the most innovative of preachers would be slow to suggest that Christ's atonement is yesterday's news and should be replaced with something new....

The Bible states unequivocally that human beings are created "in the image of God." (Genesis 1:27) And, it makes quite clear that human life begins in the womb: "Before I

formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." (Jeremiah 1:5) One of the Ten Commandments orders us never to intentionally take innocent human life. (Exodus 20:13) Who would abandon the Ten Commandments as if they were yesterday's news?

So, I will continue to assert these truths and more, including the beauty, sanctity and treasure of God's gift of Life. Why, shame on us preachers if we think less of this majestic gift of Life than Thomas Jefferson did. Under the rubric of self-evident Truths, he listed it first among unalienable rights given by the Creator. That doesn't sound like something trendy or easily discarded as outmoded, does it?

I told my colleague that I was, indeed, still "preaching on that pro-life stuff." And, I promised I would keep on preaching on it until there was not one soul left anywhere who hadn't heard it!



MEMORIAL GARDEN FOR THE UNBORN DEDICATED AT PENNSYLVANIA CHURCH

By Rev. Benjamin E. Sheldon, Presbyterian Church (USA)

A Memorial Garden where aborted babies as well as stillborn and miscarried babies can be reverently interred has been dedicated in the cemetery of the Forks of the Brandywine Presbyterian Church in Glenmoore, PA. The Pastor and Elders of this evangelical, prolife congregation of the Presbyterian Church(USA) wanted a place where the remains of these little ones whose lives have been ended before they ever saw the light of day could be lovingly laid to rest. This cemetery also holds the remains of unidentified Revolutionary War soldiers and has been the burying ground for this Presbyterian church since the early decades of the 18th century. The Forks of the Brandywine Church was founded in 1735.

Easter Sunday morning, April 11, 2004, despite the unseasonably cold weather

and rainy conditions, saw a gallant band of church members, including some who had experienced the pain of miscarriage and abortion, dedicating the spot under a magnificent oak tree that has stood there for many decades. A simple stone bench and a unique wrought iron sculpture featuring birds in flight mark the spot where little aborted or miscarried or stillborn babies can be buried and also where mothers and fathers can come for prayer and meditation. The Board of Elders of the church has invited neighboring churches to participate in and support this effort, known as Operation Life, so that a positive witness for the sanctity of life and the humanity of unborn babies can be spread throughout Chester County. For information about this, call 610-942-2626

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