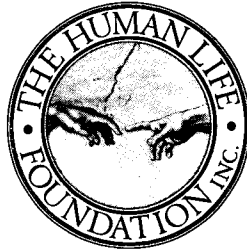


# the HUMAN LIFE REVIEW



SUMMER 1991

*Featured in this issue:*

Joseph Sobran on.....The Sign of the Crotch  
Ellen Wilson Fielding on .....Birth as a Gift  
Faith Abbott on.....Family Is as Family Does  
Kay Ebeling on....Eco-Feminists & Pagan Politics  
Chilton Williamson, Jr. on.....The Holy Greens  
Nicholas Davidson on .....Abortion & Families  
Paul Mankowski on .....Domesticity & Evil  
Thomas Molnar on .....Juvenal & Decadence

*Also in this issue:*

Pope John Paul II • The Durham Declaration • Mona Charen  
Ray Kerrison • Nat Hentoff • Suzanne Fields • Charlotte Allen

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. . . FROM THE PUBLISHER

As this issue goes to press, Judge Clarence Thomas is preparing for “confirmation hearings” in the U.S. Senate. While most observers are predicting that he will indeed take a seat on the Supreme Court, it is generally agreed that he will face stiff opposition from “Pro-choice” forces, who presume that Thomas opposes abortion, and would vote to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. At this writing, that presumption seems based on a single fact: in 1987, Thomas praised an anti-abortion article written by Lewis Lehrman, which was originally published in *The American Spectator* (April, 1987). For the record, Lehrman’s article was reprinted in this journal (Summer, 1987), so we are junior accomplices in the Judge’s crime.

It’s amazing, but *crime* really is the word: the New York *Times*, that great Flagship of the pro-abortion fleet, headlined (July 3) “Court Nominee Is Linked to Anti-abortion Stand”—sounds like the kind of headline Sen. Ted Kennedy might make if caught in another after-hours bar? (*Re* that, see Joe Sobran’s article in this issue.) It used to be said that *we* were the “single issue” people, but times have changed.

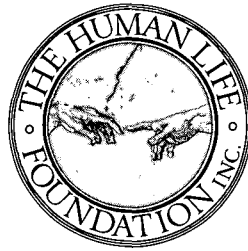
We have changed a bit too: unlike our usual editorial mix, this issue gives you eight original articles, plus a fine mix of reprinted pieces in the Appendices—beginning with Pope John Paul’s latest anti-abortion statement—and a goodly number of cartoons, including three by Wayne Stayskal, one of the few major-paper (he’s on the *Tampa Tribune*) editorial cartoonists who is not *pro*-abortion. We’re glad to show off his good work to our growing international readership.

Another international point: you will note that the article by Nicholas Davidson (“Abortion and the Family,” page 62) quotes from a book well known in Europe—*On Divorce*, by Louis de Bonald—but little known over here. Mr. Davidson has solved that problem: his translation will soon be published by Transaction Books (details to follow).

Finally, you will find information about back issues, bound volumes, etc., printed on the inside back cover.

EDWARD A. CAPANO  
PUBLISHER

# THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW



SUMMER 1991

Introduction . . . . .	<i>J. P. McFadden</i>	2
The Sign of the Crotch . . . . .	<i>Joseph Sobran</i>	7
Children Who Ask To Be Born . . . . .	<i>Ellen Wilson Fielding</i>	19
Family Is as Family Does . . . . .	<i>Faith Abbott</i>	27
Eco-Feminists and Pagan Politics . . . . .	<i>Kay Ebeling</i>	45
Of Presbyterians and Greens . . . . .	<i>Chilton Williamson, Jr.</i>	56
Abortion and the Family . . . . .	<i>Nicholas Davidson</i>	65
The Discreet Domesticity of Evil . . . . .	<i>Paul Mankowski</i>	85
Juvenal's Satire, Our Decadence . . . . .	<i>Thomas Molnar</i>	89
Appendices . . . . .		97

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## INTRODUCTION

**C**OULD YOU IMAGINE this staid journal featuring an article on “sex and public life” with Madonna and Senator Edward Moore Kennedy as the leading actors? We certainly couldn’t, until Joseph Sobran sent us an article linking those two headline-makers with his argument that “the idea of virtue” has “simply dropped out of public life” in our era. Our old friend Joe is notorious for his ability to tackle *any* subject, sacred or profane, and make you *listen*. For instance, listen to this on Madonna:

One of her steamier videos, “Like a Prayer,” shows her in a Catholic church adoring a statue of a black saint, who comes to life and kisses her passionately. She receives the stigmata, and there are burning crosses and things, and . . . well, again, you get the idea: a deliberate fusion of such hot-button themes as sex, race, and religion. These elements are combined in surreal montage, and the effect is eerie, shocking, Weimar-decadent.

You may find his commentary on Senator Kennedy even more interesting. We don’t for a minute doubt that if you start reading his article, you will read every word of it, right down to his conclusion that sexual transgression—and abortion as well—have been “elevated by liberal opinion from a sin to a right.” And as everybody knows, Americans nowadays carry on a love affair with “rights” that is almost as passionate as Madonna’s affair with herself—it’s fascinating stuff, we trust you will consider it a fine piece of writing, however “explicit,” and enjoy it.

It is followed by another pleasant surprise for us: Ellen Wilson wrote her first article for this journal during her senior year at Bryn Mawr in 1977. Back then, Ellen surprised us too with her account of campus lesbianism (we titled it “Young and Gay in Academe” in our *Fall* issue that year). Veteran readers will remember the dozen-plus essays Ellen contributed over the next few years, until marriage (and now three children) somehow distracted her. But she is back in this issue with another finely-honed essay on our “contraceptive era” in which every baby’s conception is “either intended or not intended”—put that way, it sounds like a heavy burden on “modern” parents, who are forced to play

God with what was once considered His greatest gift, freely given. As the now-Mrs. Fielding says, the “unwanted” baby now appears “as an aggressor, a trespasser, because that is what it feels like to people who have long since accepted the divorce of sex and procreation”—recreational sex isn’t always the fun holiday it’s advertised to be?

The notion that children are “a choice, not a gift” leads you smoothly into Faith Abbott’s latest story, which details the terrible *angst* radical Feminists suffer when confronting “family” problems. For instance, while the traditional “Nuclear Family” may be the font of all patriarchal evil, what’s wrong with “alternatives” such as Lesbian Parenthood? Evidently there are Gay men willing to serve as “natural” donors of the necessary means to achieve that result. Of course what the *kids* will grow to think about having “two Mommies” is another matter.

But then there are also problems when a child has only the traditional one-father, one-mother status—while his natural father has an unusual relationship with several (or more) *other* mothers. Yes, indeed, “plural marriage” is bidding to take its place as just another “lifestyle”—Faith conveys her usual “I’m not making this up” surprise that all this is really *happening*, and you may be surprised yourself—it makes fascinating reading.

Even stranger things are recounted by Kay Ebeling, who was intrepid enough to find out for herself what goes on in the New Age “workshops” on goddesses, witchcraft and the like. It didn’t take her long to find out: the “Shaman” woman who opened the session chanted “Our goddesses who art in heaven and upon this earth, we celebrate the divine feminism within and without” while swaying in trance-like motions—she also sang “I am god”—but before Kay had finished her investigations, she concluded that this goddess was “one of the more sane voices rising up under the aegis of ‘Eco-Feminism,’” a movement that is “part ecology, part self-made religion.”

For instance, she is *against* abortion, which evidently seems as outrageously strange to her sister Shamans as their doings seem to us. It all makes quite a story, and one that ought to be better known because, Ebeling concludes, the ecofeminist movement “can be dangerous” if not watched more closely than it has been so far—we’re glad to do our bit to shed some light on it.

As it happens, Chilton Williamson is also investigating the ecology craze: here he describes the “Deep Ecology” movement, which insists that “Human beings must adjust” to Planet Earth—that while it may be good to be “kind, compassionate and caring” for other humans, “Earth comes first.” Not surprisingly, this notion puts the Deeps at odds with all religions—even “secular humanism”—which dare to place Man at the center of the universe, and award him “unique and supreme” value. From this it somehow follows that the “preservation of the wilderness is the fundamental issue”—it may sound kooky but, as Williamson demonstrates, such people are deadly serious about it all.

## INTRODUCTION

Nor is he entirely out of sympathy with these Deep Greens: if, as some “conservatives” fear, Greens have replaced Reds as a threat to “capitalism,” Williamson thinks it may be an *improvement*; after all, he argues, industrial capitalism is indeed destructive of the natural world.

We trust that our old friend Chilton won't mind if we confess disagreement with him on a good many points: the point is, we think you will find his arguments interesting. Likewise, we can't claim we agree with all that you will find in our next article but, again, Nicholas Davidson has plenty to say. Also, he is writing about this journal's principle concern—abortion. He thinks that the abortion debate “remains singularly impoverished” because the “pro-lifers” have got their arguments wrong: they insist it all comes down to “whether or not one favors killing babies” whereas the real evil is what abortion does to the idea of a “good society”—to *virtue* (echoes of Sobran?). And of course the basic component of any society is the *family*, which has been badly wounded by the abortion mentality. Indeed, he insists that “sound social analysis must consider *only* the family, not ‘individual’ rights.” It's strong stuff, and more good reading.

**I**t is our custom right about here to provide you with something quite different—a change of pace after so much weighty material. Father Paul Mankowski does that but, alas, it is not a *light-hearted* break. He reflects on the “discreet domesticity” of evil: we have “learned” to co-exist with the abortion holocaust much as the Germans managed to live their ordinary daily lives amidst the horrors of the Holocaust. He wonders whether, some day, we won't have to ask ourselves “in all honesty” how we managed *that*—especially if we are asked “Why?” by a post-abortion generation.

If you think that is a disturbing thought, read on: Thomas Molnar explains that “the symptoms of decadence” are nothing new; the satirist Juvenal did to Rome what some great writer could do to our society—the good news is, that satire is only possible because “there *are* better times and worse times,” hope springs eternal, we need not despair. Nor lose our sense of humor: when we dead-panned “Why not title it ‘Juvenal Delinquency?’” Molnar's face collapsed into laughter, then quickly sobered up—for a fleeting moment he wondered if we were *serious!* *No* no, not so, but it *would* have provided an amusing touch which, we regret to admit, is sadly missing in this issue—we'll try to do better next time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our usual appendices begin with an unusual one—for us: as everybody knows, the present Pope, John Paul II, has made himself the world's leading opponent of abortion—as he demonstrated yet again during his recent return to a free Poland. Now that we think of it, we're surprised that we haven't

reprinted his statements previously. Better late than never: in *Appendix A* you will find the text of his recent letter to all Catholic bishops concerning the meeting of Cardinals in Rome last April to discuss ways of fighting abortion and euthanasia—the majority called upon the Pope to issue an encyclical on the “inviolability” of human life. We will be *twice* surprised if he does not do exactly that, and soon. And if his letter is a preview, it should be quite a document?

In *Appendix B* we have a declaration from some prominent members of the United Methodist church (including, e.g., Prof. Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University) calling upon fellow members to oppose abortion. It too rates as unusual: most U.S. “mainline” protestant churches have either accepted abortion or become very ambiguous on the issue; you will find little ambiguity in this declaration, but rather a ringing challenge to the “mindset” that sustains “our abortion-conducive culture.”

It seems that a minority of Presbyterians think their church should go in the opposite direction; they recently recommended—as Mona Charen puts it (in *Appendix C*)—“that the church discard its traditional teachings on sexual morality and, well, loosen up.” Since she wrote, church leaders have overwhelmingly rejected that notion, but Mona’s column still makes most interesting reading, especially her “sad” (but amusing?) conclusion.

We aren’t quite through with “religion” yet. In *Appendix D*, Ray Kerrison (our favorite New York columnist) tells you what Cardinal John O’Connor had to say about the recent drop in the abortion rate, and speculates that a “turning point” may be near—he cites “a most dramatic media breakthrough” as evidence. Kerrison means the shocking report broadcast by CBS-TV on “60 Minutes” last April. Given the fact that the show has a huge national audience, Ray may be right—we *hope* so.

Which brings us neatly to no less than three appendices (*E*, *F* and *G*) by that redoubtable investigative reporter, Nat Hentoff, who takes the same “60 Minutes” segment as his starting point, and proceeds to do quite a job on the claim that abortion is now “legal and safe”—they can be anything *but* safe, says Hentoff, who as usual provides chapter and verse to prove his point. Regular readers will remember the many previous Hentoff pieces we’ve run in these pages; new readers are in for a rare treat—they don’t *make* journalists like Hentoff anymore—when he sinks his teeth into a story, the ink turns red.

Believe it or not, Hentoff writes these broadsides for his “home” paper, New York’s *Village Voice*, the prototype “ultra-liberal” weekly! It’s hard to imagine that the *Voice* has even *one* anti-abortion reader, and wonderful to speculate on what *effect* his honest-to-truth (*not* God, Nat’s an atheist still) stuff produces on those who otherwise revere him as the nation’s *premier* “civil-libertarian” spokesman. But of course Hentoff sees no contradiction: he’s come to believe (if he’ll pardon that word) that even the unborn have “rights”—we’re always

## INTRODUCTION

glad to provide him with readers who appreciate his “politically-incorrect” convictions.

We aren’t quite finished with scandalous matters either: in *Appendix H*, Suzanne Fields takes on the incredible reality that—like AIDS—abortion has become a politically-protected “venereal disease” (no kidding, a Carter-era government official actually called it that!). Just as standard “public-health” measures are not applied to AIDS victims, so are the rules suspended *in re* abortion—schools that wouldn’t *think* of dispensing aspirin or giving blood-pressure checks without “parental consent” evidently think nothing of *teaching* children “as young as 11 how to get an abortion without parental consent”—Fields can’t understand how anybody could be *for* this kind of thing but, as you will see, the great state of Michigan has *mandated* precisely that pedagogic perversion.

With *Appendix I*, we conclude what we trust is one of our more slam-bang issues (we can’t remember a more *diverse* one) with a reprint of our friend Charlotte Allen’s latest article on the highly-controversial “French abortion pill” known as RU-486—the great irony is, the “French” company that makes it is majority-owned by the successor to the German conglomerate that once produced the “chemicals” used in Hitler’s genocidal Holocaust—and the death-pill’s “inventor” is himself a Jew! It makes rather grim reading, but then Allen is a practitioner of the Hentoff Method—she too digs into a story in search of the *facts*. (Regular readers will recall that we ran her original RU-486 article in our *Winter*, 1990 issue.)

There you have it, plus some bitingly-funny cartoons, which *do* provide the touch of humor that—alas—our regular fare rarely provides. We’ll be back with more of the same next issue, Lord willing.

J.P. MCFADDEN  
EDITOR



## The Sign of the Crotch

Joseph Sobran

In one scene in *Truth or Dare*—a documentary, of sorts, of her recent “Blond Ambition” concert tour—Madonna phones her father in Michigan to ask if he’s coming to see her perform in Detroit. His voice is heard saying he understands her act is pretty “racy” and inquiring as to whether she’ll “tone it down” for him and the family. No, she answers; she won’t “compromise my artistic integrity.”

A few minutes later, we see that uncompromised artistic integrity as she lies on a bed onstage. The stage is dark, except for the bed. Standing beside her are two black male dancers wearing weird conical brassieres. As she sings “Like a Virgin,” she vigorously massages her crotch, moaning and arching her back spasmodically. There’s more, but you get the basic idea. The huge crowd goes wild.

Madonna is a genius at getting attention. Everything she does gets attention—her records, her videos, her movies, her marriage, her divorce, her amours (including a joke that she’d had a lesbian relationship with the comedienne Sandra Bernhard). When she showed up at the Cannes Film Festival with her hair dyed a new color, her face appeared on the front page of the New York *Daily News*. She has been on the cover of every magazine except *National Geographic*. Even *Forbes* has given her attention, reckoning her 1990 earnings at \$39 million.

How does she do it? As she admits, she’s not a great singer, a great dancer, or even—at least in repose—a great looker. She can’t act. Yet there’s no mystery about her success. She has the most flamboyantly theatrical personality since . . . well, who was the last one? Bette Davis? Joan Crawford? Tallulah Bankhead? Some people have what I can only call contagious vanity. You may even dislike them, but you can’t take your eyes off them. They make their every motion arresting. Madonna is like that. In a country where everyone wants to be liked (maybe even more ardently than they want to be loved), she dares you to hate her.

“Madonna is the true feminist,” writes Camille Paglia, herself a sort of anti-feminist feminist. “She exposes the puritanism and suffocating ideology of American feminism, which is stuck in an

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Joseph Sobran is our most faithful Contributing Editor.

adolescent whining mode. Madonna has taught young women to be fully female and sexual while still exercising total control over their lives. She shows girls how to be attractive, sensual, energetic, ambitious, aggressive, and funny—all at the same time.”

She’s undeniably magnetic, but it’s a calculating magnetism, a carefully constructed aura of kink and danger. If she seems to be shattering conventions, she’s also there to pick up the pieces. One of her steamier videos, “Like a Prayer,” shows her in a Catholic church adoring a statue of a black saint, who comes to life and kisses her passionately. She receives the stigmata, and there are burning crosses and things, and . . . well, again, you get the idea: a deliberate fusion of such hot-button themes as sex, race, and religion. These elements are combined in surreal montage, and the effect is eerie, shocking, Weimar-decadent.

An even more explicit video, “Justify My Love,” did succeed in outraging people, and even easy-going MTV refused to play it. “The video is pornographic,” Miss Paglia writes. “It’s decadent. And it’s fabulous. MTV was right to ban it.” But she chides Madonna for copping out on *Nightline* by pleading “her love of children, her social activism, and her condom endorsements.” If you want to shock people, go ahead and shock ’em. But don’t blame them for *being* shocked.

The trouble is that Madonna wants to have it both ways. (One problem in writing about her is that everything tends to sound like a double entendre.) She clearly knows what she’s doing, but wants to pretend she doesn’t. Her calculation is shown in one sequence in *Truth or Dare* when her tour arrives in Toronto and she is told that the police are prepared to arrest her if she does the masturbation bit. She asks what the penalty is. She learns she’ll probably just be booked, fined, and released. This, to her, is a cheap price to pay for the international front-page publicity she stands to get, so she goes ahead with it. The cops back down and do nothing. Never has the structure of incentives been so favorable to artistic martyrdom.

A similar event occurs in Italy, where she finds on her arrival that the Vatican has denounced her in advance. She holds a press conference, and says that as an Italian-American she resents this prejudicial treatment. Hers is no “conventional” rock act, but “a total theatrical experience.” The note of pique sounds sincere enough, but she also knows that in her terms the Vatican has done her a favor. Madonna has a keen sense of whom it’s profitable to offend

and whom it isn't. When the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles attacked her for including the phrase "synagogue of Satan" (from the Book of Revelation) in one of her songs, she apologized. She surrounds herself with blacks and homosexuals. (Most of her dancers are both.) She is heavy into AIDS education: "Next to Hitler, AIDS is the worst thing to happen in the twentieth century," she told *Vanity Fair* recently—a good, conventional, and convenient view to hold in her line of work.

In the film, one of her dancers worries that his scene of simulated sex with her will hurt his career. "In this country it works the other way around," she answers. "The more notorious you are, the more you are going to work! Don't you guys understand that?" Indeed. Nothing is more conventional than the daring. Throughout *Truth or Dare*, she flirts with the limits of the R rating—talks nonstop raunch, bares her breasts, uses a bottle of mineral water to demonstrate her oral sex technique, gets into bed with a naked dancer and whoops about the size of his organ (it's all right, he's gay), and much, much more.

Raised a Catholic by devout parents (her mother died when she was six), Madonna's target of choice is Catholicism. Her concert and video performances abound in crucifixes, dancers dressed as priests fondling her, and so forth. It's exciting. It's outrageous. It sells. On the principle that there's no such thing as bad publicity, she lets furious Catholics do much of her PR work for her. Naturally, much of her following consists of lapsed Catholics, typified by the columnist Pete Hamill, who calls her "a good Christian." ("The true object of her scorn is hypocrisy," etc.) You can write a Hamill column with your eyes closed: Jesus preferred Mary Magdalene to the Pharisees, drove the money-changers out of the Temple, hated prigs—a lot like Pete Hamill, come to think of it. This sort of approval (terribly smug, in its own way) infers that because Jesus forgave unchastity, he didn't regard it as a sin. Not only is this a *non sequitur*, it overlooks some very stern words ("Go, and sin no more") in the Gospels, sterner, in fact, than anything in St. Paul, the favorite scapegoat of lapsed Christians who want to insist that it's only the *Church* they object to—nothing against Jesus, you understand.

Charity is of course the supreme Christian virtue, and those who fail in chastity often insist that they make up for it in charity. But there is more than one way of being uncharitable, and self-serving

solicitude for today's accredited victims—"compassion," for short—doesn't necessarily cover a multitude of sins. In *Truth or Dare* we learn that Madonna leads her troupe in prayer before every performance. But the tone of her prayer is imperious and stagy. The viewer wonders if praying with the boss—or rather standing there submissively while *she* prays—is part of the job description of dancer. The question acquires a special urgency when the prayer turns into a chewing-out of some of those in the circle. She stops just short of demanding divine retribution against those who have offended her.

Madonna is even less charitable toward the Church itself. "I've always known that Catholicism is a completely sexist, repressed, sin and punishment-based religion," she told an interviewer for *Us Magazine*. She was even blunter to *Vanity Fair*: "I think it's disgusting. I think it's hypocritical. And it's unloving. It's not what God and Christianity are all about." Nearly every interview she gives includes bitter remarks about the Church and its "rules." It's the only subject, apart from herself, she regularly talks about.

But her father is still a faithful Catholic, and in *Truth or Dare* we see her fretting at the idea of his seeing her perform "Like a Virgin," notwithstanding her refusal to compromise her artistic integrity. In fact she *does* "tone it down" when he's in the audience, and she hauls him onto the stage to be introduced to the crowd. He seems a mild fellow, confusedly proud of his famous daughter. Her anxiety about being seen by him *in flagrante* is puzzling: she seems bent on offending everyone who believes in the things he believes in, but not *him*. Why this exemption? If she hates the faith she was raised in, why doesn't she blame the man who raised her?

Few celebrities have revelled in their celebrity (though she says, "I hate that word") as openly as Madonna. That's the real subject of *Truth or Dare*: Madonna talking about herself, showing herself off. Her concert performances are filmed in stunning color; the rest in black and white. And despite a few scattered points of interest, a more suffocatingly boring film has never been made.

"She doesn't want to live off-camera," jokes Warren Beatty, her beau at the time of the filming. "Why would you bother to say something if it's off-camera?" Because Madonna finds everything about Madonna absolutely fascinating, that's why. Imagine a film in which it's left to Warren Beatty to sound the note of mature common sense—you get the basic idea.

"I find myself drawn to emotional cripples," Madonna says, explaining

the odd assortment of characters she surrounds herself with. "I like to play mother." Oh. We see her visiting her own mother's grave (for the first time); naturally, she dresses in black for the occasion, brings a camera crew along, lies down and kisses the tombstone. We see her backstage, complaining about a mike failure to a hapless technician. We see her dining with friends. We see her shopping in Paris. We see her meeting an old schoolchum, who she tells us once did something naughty to her at a pajama party. (The schoolchum, now a mother of five, denies it when informed of it; she looks shocked by this ambush, having named a daughter Madonna.) We see her telling someone or other that her mission is to be "provocative" and "political." We see, in fact, two dreary hours of this carefully staged "spontaneity," and two hours trapped in a dark room with *that* ego feels like a week. On a stage, she is riveting, whatever else you think of her. In her informal moments, she is the incarnation of *ennui*. The camera crew is reported to have filmed her for a total of 250 hours, and couldn't get two good ones out of it.

Talking to *Vanity Fair* about the film, Madonna gets defensive: "People will say, 'She knows the camera is on, she's just acting.' But even if I *am* acting, there's a truth in my acting. . . . You could watch it and say, I still don't know Madonna, and *good*. Because you will never know the real me. Ever." You mean there's *more*?

Well, if we never know the real Madonna, we won't have Madonna to blame for it. She has already broken every record for self-exposure, and she's just getting started. She talks about herself volubly, incessantly, in interviews; she poses for photo stills dressed up as Marilyn Monroe and other sexpots. It's as if her privacy might unfairly deprive us of something. Or rather, as if she wanted to *become* all the fascinating women of the past, and reveal their mysteries to us. Instead she creates the disconcerting impression that all the mystery may have been bogus; maybe those women *were* like her: self-absorbed little tramps who talked in cliches about "art" and "truth," when they weren't talking about themselves. One would rather not know.

As for "truth," Madonna isn't interested in any that may inconvenience her. It never crosses her mind that there may be more to Catholicism than her spiteful parody of it, which is of an order of glibness that would embarrass Phil Donahue. For her there is no fundamental order in life, only arbitrary "rules." Do whatcha want, as long as you practice "safe sex," that mirage of those who think selfishness

and sensuality can be calculating and civic-minded even at the peak of ardor. It isn't just that she's hopelessly banal whenever she tries to share an insight. It's that she has reached that pitch of egomania at which celebrity supposes itself oracular—the it's-true-because-I-say-so stage, achievable only when you've been surrounded by too many flunkies too long. That's when you say things like "Power is a great aphrodisiac," and you think it sounds impressive. (We may note in passing that the Me Decade is now entering its third decade.)

And as for "art," well, philosophers differ. But it's widely believed by wise people that art and ego sit uneasily together. The true artist, even if his ego is as muscular as Beethoven's, creates something outside himself. Art is not "self-expression" in the sense that its focus of interest lies in its creator; rather, it is self-contained. Its value doesn't depend on our knowledge of the artist. *Hamlet* is a great play no matter who wrote it. *Parsifal* is a great opera even if Wagner did compose it.

But for Madonna, art is defined by the censors: it's whatever they don't like. So someone who gets the censors howling must be an artist.

Silly, but a lot of people agree with her, and they buy tickets, not only enriching her but validating her self-absorption. Their idolatry matches her vanity, and both are far out of proportion to her musical talent. Only an idolator could sit happily through *Truth or Dare*. But there seem to be plenty of them out there—people who somehow take pleasure with her in her sheer celebrity. Madonna offers something new under the sun: vicarious self-absorption. It takes a special kind of imagination to identify with a solipsist.

Madonna doesn't just glory in herself: she glories in her *self*. And *Truth or Dare* suggests a novel ambition: to make the self, even in its private moments, an object of universal attention. Who was the love of your life? someone asks her. "Sean," she murmurs, meaning her ex-husband Sean Penn (of whom it was said, by the way, that he had slugged every photographer except Karsh of Ottawa). Sean, she explained in yet another interview, was madly jealous and domineering, but "at least he paid attention." Better hostile attention than none at all.

Like most pop music, Madonna's songs are about love. But love is the subject about which she shows no understanding at all. She is the perfect expression of an age that has reduced the erotic to

the sensual: the gratification of the self rather than the yearning for union with another. "Lovers" become interchangeable and succeed each other quickly, each being merely instrumental to the self and its cravings. Real love is like art: it demands the subordination of the ego. But in Madonna's world, love between man and woman isn't essentially different from a homosexual liaison, and it makes sense for her to champion gays as she does. Kinky, exciting, shocking: these are the attributes of love as she conceives it. It would make no sense to tell her that sodomy is at best a stunted and misdirected form of eros, since heterosexual love, as she exemplifies it, has the same character. The purpose of love is neither permanent union nor procreation, but pleasure and ego-enhancement. For her, in fact, the erotic isn't all that different from the autoerotic, except that there happens to be another person present.

But the word "autoerotic" is self-contradictory. Being in love with yourself isn't love. And having sex with yourself hardly qualifies as sex. "Masturbation," Woody Allen has said, "is having sex with someone you love." When we watch Madonna doing "Like a Virgin," clutching her private parts (if they can be called private anymore), simulating ecstatic convulsions, we're seeing her having sex, as it were, with someone she loves, all right—maybe the only one she *can* love.

### III

The problem of sex and public life is addressed more soberly by the novelist James Carroll in an essay titled "The End of the Dream" in the June 24, 1991 edition of *The New Republic*. Reflecting on the role of Senator Edward Kennedy in the alleged rape of a young woman by his nephew, Mr. Carroll acknowledges that liberals like himself have too long "looked the other way" from the Kennedy's sexual transgressions. "Saddened liberals," he says, have been "practicing, in the language of twelve-step recovery programs, what can only be called a co-dependent's denial."

The admission is welcome and long overdue. But like a lecher's confession, Mr. Carroll's breast-beating comes suspiciously close to self-congratulation.

He sets out to answer the question *why* liberals have countenanced such flagrant misbehavior as the Kennedy brothers' over the years. And it seems that the explanation, as is so often the case, lies with the good intentions of liberals.

Mr. Carroll speaks for a generation of liberals “for whom the defining idea of politics was the New Frontier.” “Internationally and domestically,” he says, “the New Frontier gave us our first expectations of society, of government, and of ourselves, and they were profoundly hopeful. Despite three decades of steady disenchantment, these American liberals still recognize in themselves that visceral, dogged hope for their country and *all* its people, and know where it began.”

He adds that “the New Frontier would serve throughout our adult lives as an implicit standard against which we would measure all politics and all public ideals. The Kennedys, with their cosmopolitan style, their devotion to art and the intellect, enabled us to break not only with the Rotarianism of Ike and Nixon but also with the dull, earnest liberalism of Stevenson and Humphrey. . . . [T]he frontiers to be crossed were not only the oceans that had restricted us, but the parochial habits of mind that had until then kept America so small.”

Mr. Carroll traces the “originating myth of the Kennedy legend”: “John Kennedy’s assassination did not destroy our dream of the New Frontier. . . . Bobby rescued our hope in our country . . . Ted Kennedy enabled us to keep our faith. From 1968 on we belonged not to him precisely, but to the possible future he kept alive for us. . . . Ted Kennedy’s passion for justice and his ability to enshrine justice in legislation is real—and that is the main reason we have not only clung to him, but at times loved him.”

But, Mr. Carroll acknowledges, his generation of liberals, hypnotized by that myth, chose to ignore intimations of something darker in the Kennedys, manifested in their treatment—at first rumored, later notorious, and now part of the “legend” itself—of women: “The Kennedy mystique includes *as an essential note* from the grandfather to the sons and now, allegedly, to a grandson as well a commitment to the sophomoric—and sexist—idea of sexuality as conquest. [My emphasis.] The motive is not pleasure, but power. Women can seek conquest in sex, of course, but the concern here is with men. What is troubling when we detect such a pattern in the most politically powerful line of males of the century is the way in which, as a practical matter, it assumes the inferiority of women. It is profoundly, if implicitly, misogynist.”

Liberals, Mr. Carroll rightly observes, tended for a long time to dismiss the Kennedy brothers’ “womanizing” as a peccadillo, and



a rather admirable one at that—excesses of an uncontainable life-force, as it were. It's hard to recall now, but John Kennedy was widely associated in the popular mind with his favorite fictional character, James Bond—not exactly a liberal, by the way, nor an emblem of “devotion to art and the intellect.” JFK himself was much more strongly identified with the Cold War than with liberal causes while he lived: the “earnest” older liberals distrusted him, and it took the polemical efforts of his Harvard “Brain Trust” (led by John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.) to secure him a measure of respectability among liberals. It took Robert Kennedy's sharp turn to the left in 1968, a tactical move designed to enlist discontent with Lyndon Johnson for his own campaign, to make JFK seem liberal in retrospect. The process continued when Bobby was murdered, then eulogized by Ted in utopian-tinged rhetoric, and when Ted himself, after Chappaquiddick, assumed the mantle of liberalism. Today most people assume that Ted is the fulfillment of everything John stood for—an assumption implied in Mr. Carroll's description of Ted as the “custodian of his brothers' legacy.”

By now it is almost completely forgotten that John Kennedy's chief distinction while he lived was that he was the nation's first *Catholic* president, a fact Mr. Carroll—himself a former priest—nowhere mentions. And this was a role JFK himself emphasized, publicly playing the pious father and stressing his closeness to Boston's Archbishop Richard Cardinal Cushing, even as he privately carried on a life of such carnal abandon that a recent biographer, Thomas Reeves, concludes that had he lived, his administration would almost certainly have been destroyed by a scandal that would have dwarfed Watergate.

In short, John Kennedy was a hypocrite of the first order. And one of his great talents was for making accomplices of those who should have been his critics. Many journalists, among others, knew very well the sort of life he was actually leading, and kept his confidence in order to keep his friendship and, above all, their own access. To the Protestant ministers in Houston during the 1960 campaign, he half-dissociated himself from his Church; to Catholics, he emphasized his membership; and to his inner circle, he dissociated himself again, with winking sophistication.

The Kennedy “legacy” might actually be described as a gradual dissociation from Catholicism, in keeping with the secularization of American public life. So when Mr. Carroll remarks that Ted “is

in his public life one of the nation's greatest defenders of women," he is automatically including the senator's advocacy of legal and indeed publicly-funded abortion as part of his ostensible concern for women. For liberals, "women" and their concerns are defined by feminist ideology, and Catholic tradition is understood to be retrograde in its own understanding of the sexes and sexual morality. Today Ted Kennedy is completely identified with the liberal position, and it never occurs to anyone to identify him as a Catholic. The Kennedy "image" (how ironically apt this old vogue-word now seems!) has been completely *reversed* since 1960. To speak of a single, continuous Kennedy "legacy" is to obliterate memory and falsify the past.

But this is what Mr. Carroll's essay completely fails to come to grips with. He speaks vaguely of "the right wing" that "revels" in the Kennedy sex scandals because "what really appalls them is the Kennedys' powerful political agenda." Well, abortion on demand was never part of *John* Kennedy's agenda, or Bobby's, or even Ted's before 1973. What appalls conservatives is not only Ted's agenda, but what they feel is his own hypocrisy and betrayal. Many of them are people who voted for JFK in 1960, never dreaming that it would come to this. Knowing what they now know, they feel that the Kennedy brothers' treatment of women is morally contemptible, and they didn't need the feminist movement to tell them so.

Feminism, after all, is a recent codicil to the liberal agenda, a stopgap attempt to repair some of the wreckage of the "sexual revolution," which might be described as the secret New Frontier. Even in John Kennedy's day, liberalism was publicly making light of what used to be called "fornication"—a word that has become laughably quaint just when we have most need of it. Mr. Carroll rightly says that "womanizing" is really "a form of exploitation and abuse." Yes, and besides that it's *immoral*. But Mr. Carroll is stopped by his own liberalism from saying that. He can only condemn it insofar as it reduces women to a fashionable victim-group. And he is forced to fall back on feminist cant: "In fact, violence against women, particularly violence associated with depersonalized sex, is endemic in this country. . . . The rise of violent assault on women in this country is a symptom of a pervasive disorder." And violence against the unborn? Isn't that, too, a consequence of sexual levity? Few liberals dare to say so.

If Mr. Carroll can't bring himself to condemn abortion and "fornication," he does use one fine old-fashioned word: "Instead

of the great civilizing ideal of virtue as the main qualification for public office—integrity conceived as a wholeness between substance and appearance, between acts and intentions, between words and deeds—we have settled for a shoddy division between private life and public responsibility.” And that is the gap the Kennedys have occupied, with liberal complicity.

Joe Klein, the political columnist of *New York* magazine, bluntly terms Ted Kennedy “an extreme case of what the Cooper Union historian Fred Siegal has called ‘liberalism without virtue.’” Mr. Klein quotes E.J. Dionne’s book *Why Americans Hate Politics*: “Liberals are uncomfortable with the idea that a virtuous community requires virtuous individuals. . . . [They] defend the welfare state but are uneasy when asked what moral values the welfare state should promote—as if billions of federal dollars can be spent in a ‘value-free’ way.”

Mr. Klein goes on to observe that there has been a “subtle alliance” on the left “between the rich and poor in matters of personal morality.” The old middle-class virtues have been dismissed from above and below as “bourgeois” and “reactionary.” The results have been corrosive: “[M]oral relativism has been an utter disaster for liberalism and for the poor.” He even cites Adam Smith—yes, Mr. Laissez-Faire himself: “‘Wanton and even disorderly mirth, the pursuit of pleasure to some degree of intemperance [and] the breach of chastity’ don’t necessarily hurt the rich, but ‘the vices of levity are always ruinous to the common people, and a single week’s . . . dissipation is often sufficient to undo a poor workman forever.’”

Mr. Klein continues: “Kennedy’s personal behavior not only betrays a not-so-subtle contempt for middle-class values like sobriety and fidelity, it makes it impossible for him to demand *any* reasonable standard of morality from the poor. . . . His life is a tragedy. It is not for gloating. But its value as an object lesson is unavoidable: Liberalism without virtue leads to self-indulgence and disaster.”

True, and profound. If virtue didn’t exist, it would have to be invented. But can it be reinvented now, after so much debunking? Note that the word “chastity” has sneaked back into the discourse, *via* Adam Smith, who understood clearly that it’s a virtue of great *practical* consequence. The “new morality” has produced evils of the sort Mr. Carroll would call “pervasive” and “endemic”: disease, divorce, illegitimacy and abortion. Mr. Carroll, as I say, shuns the subject of abortion, and among the many evils he might have mentioned,

he names only AIDS—not as a sign of any lack of “virtue,” but merely, in conventional liberal style, as the affliction of an accredited victim-group, who of course mustn’t be held responsible for their own self-destructive behavior.

In fact he reserves his sharpest scorn not for the liberals who have followed the Kennedys in their rakes’ progress, but for conservatives who have never been touched by “the dream” at all. His essay is shot through with words like “dream,” “myth,” “legend,” “vision,” “ideals,” “hope,” and “possible future”—the threadbare rhetoric of political utopianism, which has everywhere succeeded only in destroying traditions and standards—including the notion of virtue—that sustain social life by keeping families together during periods of stress and temptation and sheer ennui. You might think conservatives would get a *little* credit for staying awake while others were dreaming.

Mr. Carroll’s essay attempts a solution, but it’s too much a part of the problem. It takes for granted the great distorting premise of recent politics: the idea of virtue has been replaced by the idea of victimhood. Universal standards of moral conduct, which can actually form consensus among people of different creeds and races, are now condemned as priggish attempts to “impose one’s views on others” (as if liberals have been bashful about imposing *their* views). One can only make demands on society *qua* member of a category of certified victims. Liberal opinion has even tended to treat violent criminals as a victim category. Sexual conduct, short of rape, has been placed beyond censure, no matter what its personal and social costs.

The terminus of this attitude is the real victimization of abortion. But here, supremely, liberalism has trapped itself in “a co-dependent’s denial.” Abortion has ceased to be a crime, or a sin, or a transgression against virtue, and has become instead a right, the prerogative of one special-interest group of official victims. And this is so because fornication had already been elevated by liberal opinion from a sin to a right. This, in turn, was possible because the idea of virtue had simply dropped out of public life in the era of liberal hegemony. Like many traditional values, virtue had been consigned to the realm of the subjective, the irrational, the theological. Its return in Mr. Carroll’s essay seems rather a pathetic bleat, unlikely to restrain the raging appetites of which the Kennedys have at last become our public symbols.

## Children Who Ask To Be Born

*Ellen Wilson Fielding*

SEVERAL YEARS AGO Antonia Fraser wrote a book about women in 17th century England called *The Weaker Vessel*. The relatively low-key feminism of the title and the text was more than compensated for by moving stories of life in the century of Cromwell and the English Civil War. I dwelt with special interest on the descriptions of pregnancy and childbirth. If we were suddenly transported to this pre-modern world, we would be startled by the large proportion of women of childbearing age who were in fact bearing children—their figures waxing and waning, year in and year out, with successive pregnancies. Even celebrated beauties and royal mistresses spent many of the years of their public acclaim manufacturing offspring, and a poet of the time could describe one of the phases of his beloved's beauty as "Diana in her crescent majesty."

Not all ages have treated childbearing with quite such public aplomb, if we are to believe stories of Victorian excesses in modesty. But even in more circumspect societies, most women in their childbearing years spent much of their time bearing children, and this is still the case in the Third World.

What must it have been like to live in that world so recently rendered alien and unfamiliar? How did people think about sex and marriage and babies? I know enough not to idealize this far-off world—infanticide was much too common, as were unscientific efforts at contraception and abortion. The children of the great were usually farmed out to wetnurses who might or might not be drunkards or neglectful or worse. The difference lies not in our ancestors' storybook performance as parents, but in their uncomplicated understanding of the interrelatedness of sexuality and procreation, maturity and motherhood.

It is easier to see what we have left behind by considering more critically than we usually do how we now think and behave. Today, fertile heterosexual couples are, by and large, either trying to achieve pregnancy or trying to avoid it. They may bring greater or lesser self-discipline to their efforts; they may have misgivings or disagreements. But with an ever more precise knowledge of the workings of the

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reproductive system, even those couples who refrain from using contraceptives for religious or philosophical or aesthetic reasons are aware of when they are more or less likely to conceive, and are caught up in a kind of “pro-choice” atmosphere that inclines them toward thinking explicitly about conceiving or not conceiving.

It is unlikely that 17th century women questioned one another about how many children they planned to have, or when they would begin or what they considered the optimum spacing between babies. However much Miss Manners rightly deplores them, today these questions are conversational commonplaces at the playground, at the supermarket, at dinner parties. But they would have had no point in earlier times. The questions assume options unavailable to less technologically adept ages.

**T**here were plenty of unwanted pregnancies in earlier times. But only today is an unwanted pregnancy an “unnatural” one. It is a mistake, a failure on someone or something’s part. It should have surprised no one that legalized abortion followed so closely on the invention of the Pill. If society grants you the right to choose which acts of intercourse will be open to new life and which will be closed, why should you feel constrained by human or technological error to live with what you have not chosen?

This is where anti-abortionists reluctantly split with those willing to accept any procedure offering infertile couples a chance to conceive. If a couple has such a comprehensive right *not* to conceive, and can enforce this right even in the case of unintentional conception, why shouldn’t they have an equally expansive right to conceive when they wish and how they wish? Whatever difficult dilemmas may ensue, the logical case for intervention seems clear enough.

Pregnancy before our contraceptive era was a natural though certainly not an inevitable result of intercourse. Today, it is either intended or not intended. A couple “trying” to achieve pregnancy finds the monthly mark of failure as unnatural as the couple striving to avoid pregnancy finds the positive results of a home pregnancy kit. For them, an unwanted pregnancy must feel like an invasion, an act of possession resembling the hijacking of the womb that pro-abortionists talk about. They think of the unborn baby as an aggressor, a trespasser, because that is what it feels like to people who have long since accepted the divorce of sex and procreation. It is as though one found oneself pregnant after playing tennis or attending a concert.

What, our emancipated modern couple must think, does the one thing have to do with the other?

Most pro-abortionists believe so strongly in a women's right not to bear children unless she means to bear them that they do not even address the argument that a couple's eggs and sperm may have other intentions, and that the logic of body parts suggests a connection between sex and babies that defies the idiosyncratic intentions of cohabiting couples. Here is a genuine mind/body split. What do you do if your mind intends mere fun and games while your body intends a baby? And whose intentions should be respected when the barriers between mind and body malfunction? To those who deny that biology is destiny, the "intellectual" approach is the winner. If in a secular age we all take on the role of little gods, then our goal is to create life when we will it—and not to create life when we don't will it. Our ideas must take on flesh; our sterile intentions must beget sterility.

This attitude underlies the pro-abortionists' uneasiness with adoption. Adoptive babies are the ones that got away. They are babies that were not intended, not planned—and not wiped out as good little mistakes should be. They are the answer to the argument that abortion kills unwanted babies, babies otherwise doomed to lovelessness and rejection. They are aggressors handled with appeasement rather than firm discipline.

And once adopted, they are out of the unwilling mother's control. Adoption presents pro-abortionists with too multifarious and independent a world for them to bear. Not only has a baby been conceived, unexpectedly, as though emerging from some process of spontaneous generation. But after a nine-month period of hibernation, it asserts its independence like a precocious adolescent and heads for a more hospitable home. If babies are allowed such license, how will you keep eggs and sperm confined?

Adoptive parents are a rebuke to those who anchor the abortion right to the right of children to be wanted. Pro-abortionists conflate "intended," "wanted" and "loved" to arrive at the historically unlikely assumption that "mistaken" pregnancies issue in children destined for abuse and neglect. Believers in a loving God know that every child conceived has been intended by God and loved by Him, and it is up to the child's parents primarily (and afterwards those he encounters in life) to transmit that love as best they can. Those

who cannot believe that life has transcendent meaning either submit, fatalistically, to what life brings them or rebel against the perceived tyranny of Life. The rebellion of pro-abortionists focuses on the perceived tyranny of a lower-case life.

The pre-modern era, with its appalling death rates, including a horrific number of deaths in childbirth and in the first year of life, invites pity and, inevitably, an unearned sense of superiority from us moderns. But ignorance is not the same as stupidity, and wisdom is different from, though not necessarily antithetical to, the practice of the scientific method.

Societies lacking the means of enforcing our tenuous sense of control over our environment more easily apprehended an inherent meaning in the world—one that didn't depend upon mankind's mental gymnastics, though it invited and inspired them. Today, pain and discomfort have been fought successfully on so many fronts that pleasure and the absence of pain are easily confused with the goal of life, the heart of its mystery. Removing sources of frustration—sometimes in the teeth of the “rights” of the frustrator—is a positive accomplishment. To accept a challenge merely because Life throws it to you is an affront to our modern sense of dignity; it is like asking a recently-promoted female executive to make the coffee. So we claim for ourselves a seemingly modest responsibility, and behold, it turns into a fount of Faustian hubris: we think we know what's good for us.

Within limits human beings *are* given responsibility for what we might call middle management of the world. And it is hardly perverse to wish to shun pain and pursue pleasure. But because we are middle managers and not CEOs or chairmen of the board, we must work within the givens of things. We cannot create a universe, and we cannot create the meaning of this one, or create serial meanings. It is enough—and more than enough—to apprehend meaning, and on a very basic level.

Anyone who looks at male and female, their biology, their history, their poetry, their millennia-long experience of life, their feelings of shame and of love, their inheritance from their parents and their debt to the children they beget, and who, looking at all this, condemns the unintended conception, the unwanted pregnancy, to annihilation is adept at focussing on pain and pleasure but is swimming the shallows of life. The difficulties that drive many women to abortion are serious enough to justify almost anything but abortion. But you cannot guarantee



your happiness (even if it were ever possible to guarantee happiness) at the cost of another's life. The argument for self-sacrifice lies not in the individual's insignificance, but in the significance of all individuals, and in the understanding that what we signify does not depend on our invention. We mean more than we know; this is the appropriate foundation of all pride and all humility.

If there are moral absolutes, they are as inexorable as gravity, and ignoring them or politely agreeing to disagree in order to lubricate the machinery of a pluralistic society will not work. Moral absolutes call attention to themselves by the havoc they wreak when they are ignored or defied. Pro-abortionists defy the moral absolute to spare innocent life, and to care for those who depend most desperately on their protection—their children. It is not very surprising to find, in the wake of mothers abandoning their unborn, husbands abandoning wives and families in record numbers, parents abandoning children to the care of strangers in day-care centers, and a landslide of child abuse cases. Children once felt secure enough to yell at their mothers, "I didn't ask to be born." Today counselors might well warn parents of such a child to be on the lookout for suicidal tendencies—who else but potential suicides and a few anachronistically secure children reared in pockets of traditionalism would risk asking not to be born?

Perhaps pro-abortion partisans do not hold a very high opinion even of their own lives, despite their desperately egotistical efforts to prevent their own lives from being "blighted" by an unwanted pregnancy. So many extras must be thrown in to make living palatable, like a standard appliance whose appeal lies mainly in its options. Life attended by its unpleasanter possibilities—poverty, illness, handicaps, infirm old age, perhaps even the relatively minor complaint of bickering children—is not tempting enough to be held onto, to be grateful for. We moderns are accustomed to being *bribed* into accepting life—with high incomes, travel, VCRs, careers, active retirements, and the escape hatch (for the sufferer and his relatives) of euthanasia.

Pain and all the other evils of our earthly condition are not small matters, and when they have us under siege, they take much to overcome. Still, it is surprising that so many people in our privileged modern Western world are so resistant to the appeal of life—to its force, its insistent presence. I think of Malcolm Muggeridge's anecdote about Mother Teresa, who was called upon to defend the significance of salvaging one tiny scrap of infant humanity from the slums of

Calcutta. Her reply—"Look at it, there's life in it"—must be nearly incomprehensible to those surfeited with life's less substantial but more distracting attributes: with febrile excitements and self-important challenges and the smug satisfactions of getting what one asks for.

When he was an agnostic, G. K. Chesterton experienced the frustration of being grateful for life without having anyone to thank for it. That sense of undeserving gratitude, that experience of gratuity, of life as a gift which has just happened, without being demanded or requested or earned, cuts across the thinking of today's true believers in choice. They wish they could believe in God so they would have someone to direct their complaints to.

**T**here are two kinds of presents. One gives you just what you asked for; the other gives you just what it hadn't even occurred to you to ask for, something that fulfills a need so deep you didn't realize it was there until it was satisfied. The joy the first kind of present offers does not necessarily direct your attention back to the giver, except in a perfunctory manner. The giver, however beloved, has been little more than your agent, however welcome his assistance.

But the joy the second kind of present gives could never come without a gift-giver who sees into your heart and soul. That kind of gift is a grace, unmerited and unmeritable, impossible to fit into a system of distributive justice. Rightly understood, life is like the second kind of gift. It does not come to us unimpaired, but it *is* good, and it is a gift. And it is not a gift we give to one another, so that, if we chose to, we could claim the right to exchange it for another sort of gift—death—or to withhold it altogether. It is something we only receive or pass on. If we attempt to withhold its delivery to another in order to give ourselves what we consider better lives, we are engaged in theft on a grand scale. We descend to the level of greedy children invited to a birthday party, who try to keep some of the presents for themselves. The impulse is natural, in this disordered world, but illicit, and unworthy of being dignified with the exalted vocabulary of "self-fulfillment" or a woman's right to choose.

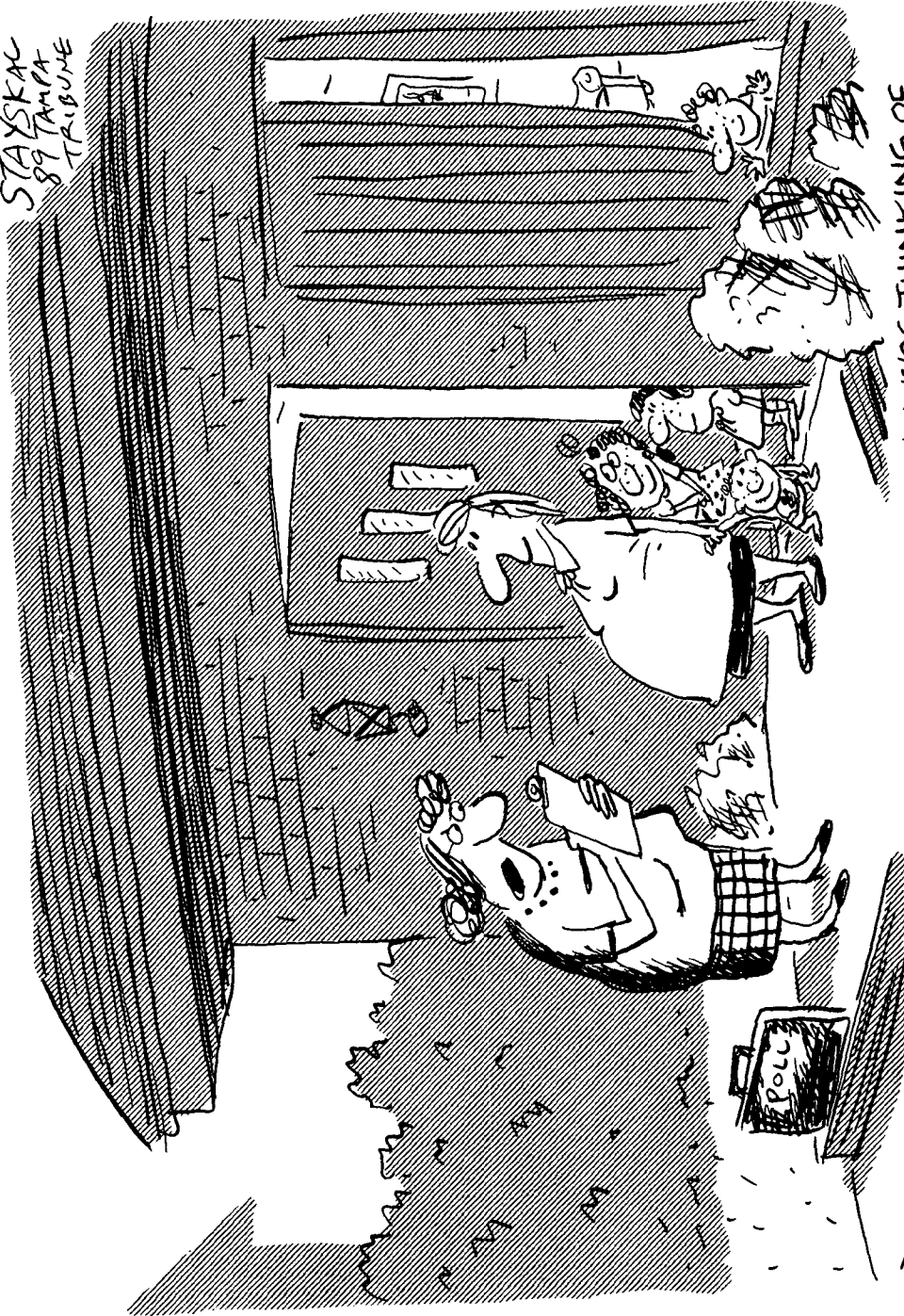
Children don't ask to be born because birth is a gift. It is a gift of the second kind, which at certain times and under some circumstances may seem a mixed blessing. A child or the adult a child grows into may at times wish he had never been born. But the second kind of gift is the one that wasn't asked for.

And the gift givers are not, ultimately, the parents. Chesterton

THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

even in his agnostic phase understood that. Practically speaking, parents may choose whether or not to pass on life, and how to treat that life. But they do not originate it. They do not, so to speak, buy the present and choose the wrappings. They can mar it but not make it. This is as true of their own lives as it is of their children's. A pro-abortionist who talks of lives not worth living and itemizes the conditions under which it would be acceptable to suffer life or to pass it on to another is the most grudging and ungracious of recipients.

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"I'M WITH THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN. WE'RE THINKING OF STARTING A 3RD POLITICAL PARTY BECAUSE ... OH, FORGET IT!"

Editorial cartoon by Wayne Stayskal (Tampa Tribune, 1989; reprinted with permission).

## Family Is as Family Does

Faith Abbott

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW what the *real* feminists are up to, it helps to see *Ms.* magazine now and then. I saw one recently—a friend recycled her boss’s copy to me—and it has a story about a lesbian “family” and this got me thinking about families in general and “non-traditional” ones in particular.

When I was growing up in my family, all my friends were growing up in theirs; and much as we might gripe about our parents and siblings, as all kids do, it never occurred to us that families could be abolished. They were a *fact*; we were a part of that fact: your family, simply, *was*.

Some generations later along came the radical feminists who thought the family *should* become a “was.” Well-versed in sociological vocabulary, they wrote books and articles and essays about the necessary demise of The Traditional Family, which was bad because it was based on patriarchy, which was bad for women. The family wage system—man as breadwinner, woman as housewife and mother with a bunch of kids—all that had to go. But the feminists knew the family couldn’t be eliminated just-like-that, so it had to be redefined, reinvented, and revised—the Three Rs of the anti-family radicals.

In the Introduction of his 1973 book *Sexual Suicide*, George Gilder mentions some popular books of the day—one of which he calls “a tract for lesbianism.” “Sappho Was a Right-on-Woman” was well-received, Gilder says, and “Again the [New York] *Times* led the way. In the past, it observed in its *Book Review*, lesbianism had been a burden for the women’s movement. But this book would change all that. In particular it would help overcome, in the words of the *Times* review, ‘the nuclear family, that cradle of evil.’ The *Times* did not explain why the nuclear family is a ‘cradle of evil.’”

When I first heard of The Nuclear Family, I thought it referred to a family in the nuclear age, or to a family’s survival-tactics during a nuclear war: I had this mental picture of a mother and a father and various children huddled together in a bomb shelter. (As humorist Dave Barry often says, “I am not making this up.” He usually is,

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Faith Abbott is our second most faithful Contributing Editor.

I'm *not*.) But I began to suspect that my notion was wrong, and so one day—curiosity having got the better of pride—I asked someone, casually, “By the way, what is a ‘nuclear family?’” My friend said it was the immediate, rather than the extended, family.

Oh.

The fact is, you can actually find those words in the dictionary now: our *Webster's* says “nuclear family n: a family group that consists of only a father, mother, and children.” (That must be one of the shortest definitions in the dictionary.)

When in 1960 my husband and I had our first child, we realized that we had suddenly become a family. This fact—obvious as it is—always seems to come as a surprise to new parents. I was thinking about that, just the other day, while looking through the April issue of *Life* magazine (*Life* is doing a year-long series on The American Family) and I did a double-take when I saw, next to a photograph of a couple with their newborn, this caption in large type: “Jim was overcome with the realization that they had become a family.” (*I couldn't have said it better, or more accurately.*)

When the baby who made Jim and me a family began elementary school, most of his classmates belonged to nuclear families. By the time our youngest child graduated from eighth grade, many—perhaps the majority—of her classmates lived with just one parent: evidently the nuclear family had detonated and gone into extensions. Parents had split up and some were remarried, so there were step-parents, step-grandparents, step- or half-brothers and sisters, step-aunts and uncles and assorted cousins. No wonder there was standing-room-only in the church for First Communion and Confirmations and graduations.

What *had* happened to the basic family unit during those years? Well, for one thing (and this is the *what*, not the *why*), the divorce rate, which had been inching upwards in the 20th century, suddenly *doubled* in the decade between the mid-sixties and the mid-seventies. But I didn't know about that then.

We had our five children in the decade of the 60s (exactly: 1960-1969). I was not totally unaware of what was going on in the *world* during that turbulent decade, but I didn't know what had begun to happen to *families* because I was too busy doing the things the books I wasn't reading said I shouldn't be happy *doing*. In 1963 our third child was born, and so was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, in which housework is described as a form of “indoor

loitering,” the home as “a comfortable concentration camp” and women as brainwashed by “femininity” and therefore not fully human. The American housewife was a Typhoid Mary whose misdirected energies were a toxin spreading outwards through the family to the nation.

I may have heard the name Betty Friedan during those days, but she had not become a household word and was certainly not a topic of discussion among my mother-friends: we didn’t know we were supposed to be having an identity crisis. Perhaps because we did not live in the suburbs, we were not *bored*: raising children in Manhattan apartments is challenging physically and mentally. We did not feel like weak, unfulfilled females slavishly dependent on our breadwinner spouses: we did *depend* on them, but that’s the way it was supposed to be, in families. We enjoyed our “role” as wife, mother, and homemaker and went about these full-time jobs unaware of Friedan’s scorn for “happy housewives”—in her view, we were “the sickest of all.” We women who were content with our lot had the longest road to travel; our “brainwashing” had been so effective that we’d lost the ability to even *resent* having been “denied the right to become fully human.” And so on.

Betty Friedan’s “detailed and sympathetic documentation of the malaise of the middle-class housewife . . . who had been educated to expect, if not a career, at least something more challenging than the search for a matching mitten” became a best-seller, a “ground-breaking” book: and “that obsolete, traditional family” was in trouble. Then in 1970 along came Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* and Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*. I didn’t have much time to read in the 70s, either (I was then busy matching up parochial-school socks, not mittens); it wasn’t until the 80s that I began to catch up on all the sociology I’d missed. If I was astonished by Friedan’s castigation of my role, I was quite horrified to read about Millett’s anti-family diatribes. The family, she wrote, is a “feudal institution” that reduces women to “chattel status.” But since the family is so ingrained as an institution, its elimination will demand an exceptional effort. There is, wrote Millett, no biological reason why the two central functions of the family—socialization and reproduction—need be inseparable or even take place within it:

Revolutionary or utopian efforts to remove these functions from the family have been so frustrated, so beset by difficulties, that most experiments so

far have involved a gradual return to tradition. This is strong evidence of how basic a form patriarchy is within all societies, and of how pervasive its effects upon family members.

You can't *abolish* children, though, so she suggests that it is "infinitely better" to leave the care of children to "the best trained practitioners of both sexes who have chosen it as a vocation." In her Marxist/feminist ideology, the family's function of providing care for children would be taken over by the state; universal day care would help to free women by hastening the dissolution of the family:

The collective professionalization (and consequent improvement) of the care of the young . . . would further *undermine family structure* while contributing to the freedom of women. (*Italics mine.*)

Germaine Greer also thought that parents were incompetent to raise their own children: men and women are bad for each other (Millett thinks that men are bad, period) and *motherhood* is bad for children. The family has already broken down, is disappearing as an institution; the housewife can and may abandon her family with no regrets. Greer called for "the undermining of our civilization" and proclaimed that "it is time for the demolition to begin." *The Female Eunuch* was the most widely read feminist book of the 70s—during which decade I was naively continuing to enjoy the remarkable union of a male breadwinner and a female homemaker and the fruit(s) of that union.

For a while there, things looked very bad for the family. Some radical feminists were saying the nuclear family had to *go*; others were saying it had to be *replaced*, but they didn't say with *what*. Then there was a flurry about a "moderate feminist agenda for the family" and Betty Friedan—who conceded that women do derive satisfaction from motherhood—caused dissension in the ranks. Now, in the 1990s, The Traditional Family seems to be making a comeback: "For the first time in almost 30 years, signs across the nation point to a turn-around in the long, painful decline of the American family," reports a Menlo Park, California, research group. But the redefiners of "family" are still hard at work, and stories about "different" families have been appearing in newspapers and magazines.

In *Ms.*, for instance. The *new Ms.*, I mean, which is ad-free: "Free at last," exults editor Robin Morgan, and on its way to finding a new sense of self. "If the magazine was to go on imitating its imitators, it was past its time. Now we're in a totally different place. *Ms.* will



go back to the cutting edge.” Morgan says *Ms.* is now not even a magazine—it’s a “magabook.” The March/April issue is certainly hefty: 96 pages, including six full pages of *letters*. There are nine pages of International News (“Sisterhood is Global”); a Special Report on Women in Hate Groups (mainly the Ku Klux Klan); a roundtable discussion (Young Feminists Speak for Themselves); National News (Abortion and War: Whose Choice is it Anyway?); something about “ecofeminism” and much, much more.

What riveted my attention was: “A Lesbian Family Revisited.” Revisited because it was *first* visited in the magazine’s fifteenth anniversary issue, in 1987. The child of this “family” is now five, and is “a very savvy little girl about the precisely calibrated degrees to which the many adults in her life fit into the larger scheme of things.” If you ask Sarah about her (extended) family, she will tick off, on her fingers, various grandmothers and cousins, her mother’s ex-lover and now “best friend,” and Richard—Sarah’s biological father’s new boyfriend, who isn’t “exactly in my family—yet.” This is Sarah’s “immediate” family: her mother Nancy, her (sperm-donor) father Doug, and Nancy’s lover Amy, who is a kind of nanny/mother and the primary caregiver, timewise. Sarah and Nancy and Amy and their two cats live in the Southwest in an adobe house: Doug lives down the street, with Richard. (Doug says “part of my getting together with Richard is about Sarah,” and Richard was talking seriously with a lesbian friend of Amy and Nancy about adding another child to the extended family.)

Doug insisted on helping with Sarah’s financial support, even though that wasn’t part of the original agreement. Nancy and Amy, who had interviewed a dozen sperm donors, both gay and straight, before they met Doug and this *then*-boyfriend, “unlike many lesbian couples” (says the author) had “no particular quarrel” with the notion that a parent of each gender is desirable. They weren’t really looking for anything “more enduring than a turkey baster deposit” but thought it would be good to have someone to point to when the child asked about “Daddy.” But something unexpected happened: “a flowering of feeling that turned the American Gothic nuclear family progression on its head. Instead of two people meeting, falling in love, and having a baby, four people met, had a baby and then became good friends.”

Nancy and Amy and Doug are “completely out of the closet” in their dealings with the straight community. But these are not their real names; they “grudgingly” allowed pseudonyms in the article

because Nancy's mother asked them to: she has told relatives that Sarah was born out of a liaison between Nancy and a married man. Nancy sighs: "Somehow that's better than being in a happy, committed, lesbian relationship." Well, yes, they surely do all look happy and gay in the large photograph on page two of the article: in the foreground there's Sarah on her tricycle ("Tyke with a trike") and, entwined around and part way up a mesquite tree there are Doug and Richard, Amy and Nancy. They all have open-mouth smiles as they gaze adoringly at Sarah, who has a cat-that-swallowed-the-canary grin on her face. It's an odd sort of family tree.

Doug says: "I think it behooves us to be out, and even to boast about it, to show that it can work." The adults like to deal with the gay issue "up front"—when it came time to get a pediatrician for Sarah, all three of them marched in. At interviews with elementary schools, their position was "This is our situation, and it's very important that Sarah get support on that if she needs it." At one school they got more than they asked for, when several faculty members discreetly "came out" to them. And lucky Sarah: there are several other children in her pre-school class who have gay parents. In one of these families, the non-biological mother is also named Amy: "Your Amy is here to pick you up," one of the kids will announce to Sarah or to Rex, depending on whose Amy gets there first.

There are some minor disagreements among Sarah's adults. Doug and Amy were in favor of a certain private school; Nancy objected to the dress code. (Girls in skirts?) A compromise was worked out with the administration: Sarah could wear a nice blouse and dressy pants. (In the photo, she's wearing a dress: she *likes* dresses. Doug says Sarah is very *femme*.) There is another picture: all four adults are holding Sarah lengthwise. The caption says: "The mamas and the papas, kidding around."

**O**f the "parents" in Sarah's life, the most vulnerable is Amy: she has no legal claim on Sarah, should she and Nancy break up. Nancy and Doug's wills specify that if they were to die, they would want Amy to have custody—but then what about the grandparents? "It's just too devastating to think about, so I don't," says Amy. Now and then she sits Sarah down "to make sure she's okay with this stuff. . . . Like recently I said to her, 'You know, I'm not your mother, but I'm sort of like your parent.' She nodded and said, 'Right, Mommy is my mother. But I *am* your daughter.'" The adults know that there

may be trouble later on, but only, they say, because most teenagers “find *something* about their parents that’s, like, totally gross.”

In the beginning, Nancy was a bit jealous of Doug’s bonding with Amy; after all, Nancy hardly *knew* him. Doug and Richard have sometimes hinted that Sarah gets away with too much at Nancy and Amy’s house; Nancy and Amy have occasional conflicts about child-raising but these are, we’re told, typical of those all parents encounter, and furthermore “there’s no ancient sexual bitterness between Sarah’s biological mother and father of the sort that mars so much postdivorce parental jockeying.”

Nancy teaches at a nearby college. Amy and Doug pooled their resources and opened a cafe: he does most of the cooking, she takes care of the business end. “It confuses the hell out of people,” Amy says cheerfully. “People come into the restaurant, and then they see this little kid running around after school relating to both of us. Not surprisingly they assume that Doug and I are married—which, of course, we both hate.” Usually Amy sits them down and just explains the story; some people don’t “get it” and Amy jokes that she is thinking of having palm cards made up—maybe like: “Good afternoon, you have entered a Strange Other World.”

\* \* \* \* \*

A *very* strange other world was featured last April 9th in the New York *Times*: “Polygamists Emerge from Secrecy, Seeking Not Just Peace but Respect.” It seems that in the small desert town of Colorado City, Arizona, polygamy has been practiced “quietly” for generations among fundamentalist Mormons (Mor-Moms?) whose church “officially” gave up polygamy a century ago. There has been an unwritten policy among law-enforcement officials to “leave them alone” but now the polygamists are “going public” and in fact have begun a public relations campaign “to achieve tolerance and respect and a greater following.” The women are speaking at university forums, granting interviews to reporters, and forming alliances with such unlikely groups as the American Civil Liberties Union, which has—in response to a request from its Utah chapter—adopted a policy resolution calling for the legalization of polygamy, so that it will become a “national cause” like gay and lesbian rights. (I wonder how the gays and lesbians welcome this competition?) In the Rocky Mountain states, about 50,000 people live in households made up of a man with two or more wives (mostly *more*) and experts say the number

of these households has been growing. Around Colorado City—a town of about 6,000—the population has roughly doubled in every decade since it was founded in the 1930s. The *Times*' subtitle is: "Households with multiple wives see themselves as normal people."

No doubt it helps when some of the "normal" fathers are also *mayors*. Colorado City's mayor (he has five wives) says: "In this liberal age, with all the alternative lifestyles that are condoned" it is "the height of folly to censure a man for having more than one family." Another mayor (and also a lawyer) is Alex Joseph of Big Water, Utah. The *Times* article included a large picture of him and his nine wives: it did not include their twenty children. One gathers some of the Mrs. Josephs are housewives, but others have careers; one is a lawyer, one a graphic designer, one a real estate broker. Only one of the nine Mrs. Josephs was raised in a polygamous family. As a child, she had always dreamed that she'd grow up to be a Third Wife, because "The first wife doesn't like it when the second wife comes along . . . And the second wife doesn't care for the wife who came first. So you can get some fighting and bad feeling. But the third wife, she's the tie that holds it all together." Sure enough, her dream came true.

The seventh Mrs. Joseph, the lawyer-wife, is quoted extensively in the article. Polygamy, she says, is the ideal way for a woman to have a career and children: "In our family, the women can help each other care for the children. Women in monogamous relationships don't have that luxury." Elizabeth Joseph had a lot *more* to say, though, so she wrote to the *Times* a few weeks later, and the paper published her piece as a two-column essay on the Op-Ed page (May 13) under the eye-catching title "My Husband's Nine Wives." Equally eye-catching is the first sentence: "I married a married man." She writes that plural marriage, as practiced by her family, does seem to be a paradox: "At first blush, it sounds like the ideal situation for the man and an oppressive one for the women," but for her "the opposite is true." Polygamists, she says, believe that the Old Testament mandates the practice of plural marriage, but there are also "compelling social reasons" that make the life style attractive to the modern career woman. She notes that women's magazines are full of articles about the problems of juggling career, motherhood, and marriage, and says that in a monogamous context, the only solutions are compromises. She is sure that in the challenge of "working through these compromises, satisfaction and success can be realized"

but asks: Why must women only embrace a marital arrangement that requires so many trade-offs? Polygamy, she assures us again, is ideal for the career woman with children. For example: when she leaves for her 60 mile commute to court at 7 A.M., her two-year-old daughter “is happily asleep in the bed of my husband’s wife.” Her (their) husband writes at night, so he gets up much later, and “while most of his wives are already at work, pursuing their careers, he can almost always find one who’s willing to chat over coffee.”

“Polygamy is good feminism,” the *Times* inserts in large type between paragraphs describing some of the logistics of this marital/familial lifestyle. Most nights, Elizabeth Joseph and another Mrs. Joseph and their combined kids have simple suppers in their house, but Monday nights are special. “The kids, excited that their father is coming to dinner, are on their best behavior. We often invite another wife or one of his [sic] children . . . It’s a special event because it only happens once a week.” (Alex, of course, has a Special Event *every* night: you get the impression that he is not underfed.)

You also get the impression that large appointment books are very important for him and his wives: marital visits require precise scheduling. The wives’ “private times” with their husband are based on the same system as the suppers, with some variations: “spontaneity” is not taboo, but basically they use the “appointment system.” Elizabeth Joseph explains: “If I want to spend Friday evening at his house, I make an appointment.” If he’s already ‘booked,’ I either request another night or if my schedule is inflexible, I talk to the other wife and we work out an arrangement.” (But I thought she didn’t approve of “trade-offs”?) Then she adds: “One thing we’ve all learned is that there is always another night.”

Elizabeth Joseph does say that plural marriage is not for everyone, but then she implies that it *is*. “It offers men the chance to escape from the traditional, confining roles that often isolate them from the surrounding world. More important, it enables women, who live in a society full of obstacles, to fully meet their career, mothering and marriage obligations. *Polygamy provides a whole solution. I believe American women would have invented it if it didn’t already exist.*” (Italics mine.)

When this seventh Mrs. Joseph mentioned women’s magazines, I wondered if these might include the likes of *Ms.* and *Mother Jones*.

If the *third* Mrs. Joseph, the one who grew up in a polygamous family, had seen the May/June issue of *Mother Jones*, she would have been interested in the one-page essay by someone named Paula Fomby—"Why I'm Glad I Grew Up in a Lesbian Family." I don't know how the poly-moms view the lesbian family style or *vice-versa* but—ideologically, at least—they both believe that, as Fomby wrote, "It is time for society to expand the definition of family." Fomby says that she's heard enough jokes and insults to know that people don't really believe the gay family exists in large numbers, or that it turns out healthy, well-balanced children. We don't know Paula's age, but we are told that she was thirteen when her mother "confessed" that the woman who had lived with them for four years was her lover. The women were still "in the closet" then, but Paula "accepted" her mother's lifestyle; "feeling comfortable with it has come more recently," now that they have "come out" and are involved in the gay community. They are, she says, wedded in everything but the legal sense and "Seeing them take pride in their relationship makes me proud to talk about them, and I have met people who say 'it's cool' to come from such a unique family."

Paula Fomby also writes that "being a woman raised by women, I've not had the problems in relating to my parents [*parents?*] that a man might have had." She has a point: there is a (very) young man who may indeed have problems "relating." He is the ten-year-old son of a woman identified as "Alison D." in—among other newspapers—the *New York Times* (May 3) headlined "Lesbian Loses a Ruling on Parent's Rights." Here is the scenario: Alison D. and Virginia M. met in 1977, and began living together in upstate New York in 1978. In 1980 they decided to have a child: Virginia would be the biological mother. Together they planned for the conception and birth of the child, and agreed to share all child-rearing responsibilities. But they didn't consider trying to have Alison adopt the baby boy because New York's law is not clear on whether a lesbian can adopt her partner's biological child. The little boy called both women "Mommy."

In 1983 the Mommies decided to split up. Virginia let Alison visit until 1986: then she cut off all contact, and Alison filed a lawsuit. A state Supreme Court judge refused to consider the case, because Alison was not a biological parent. The case then went to the New York Court of Appeals; and in the first ruling of its kind by any state's highest court, it was decided (on May 2) that a lesbian cannot

seek visitation rights to the child of her former partner. This court is regarded as a national trendsetter and its decisions are always expected to have “ripple effects” in other states; it had “broken ground” two years before by ruling, in a housing case, that a homosexual couple could fit the legal definition of a family. But alas, on May 2 it declined to expand the definition of parenthood to include what it called “biological strangers.”

The *Times* points out that because step-parents would also qualify as “biological strangers,” the significance of the ruling extends far beyond the gay community—nevertheless “It’s a fairly major setback for the gay and lesbian rights movement because it says that society does not recognize our relationships,” says Paula Ettelbrick, Alison D.’s representative, who is the legal director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund in New York City (Lambda is a gay-rights legal-affairs group.) The court rejected visiting rights by a six to one vote, and said that although the legislature had never explicitly defined the word “parent” it was not the judiciary’s role to expand the term beyond its traditional meaning.

This decision was indeed a blow to the gay-rights advocates, who ripped it as “out of touch” with modern social practices; and Ms. Ettelbrick said “the courts shouldn’t be applying a 1950s analysis of parent-child relationships in 1991.” Similar cases are in the courts in California, New Mexico, Wisconsin and Minnesota but so far no other high court has issued a decision. And there are, by Lambda’s estimate, about 10,000 children in the United States being reared by lesbians who conceived through donor insemination.

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Last year, both *Time* and *Newsweek* published Special Issues: *Time’s* (Fall 1990) was about “WOMEN: The Road Ahead” and *Newsweek* (Winter/Spring) had on its cover “The 21st Century FAMILY—Who We Will Be, How We Will Live.” One section in *Newsweek* was titled “Variations on a Theme—Gay and Lesbian Couples.” This is mainly about family re-definition, and begins: “The family tree of American society is sending forth a variety of new and fast-growing branches. Gay and lesbian couples (with or without children) and unmarried heterosexual couples are now commonplace. What’s surprising is not so much that these offshoots of the main trunk are flourishing but that the public seems more and more willing to recognize them as families.” We are told that earlier last year

the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company asked 1,200 randomly selected adults to define the word “family.” Presumably several definitions were offered; only 22 percent picked the “legalistic” one—“A group of people related by blood, marriage or adoption”—and almost three-quarters chose what *Newsweek* calls “a much broader and more emotional description,” which is “A group of people who love and care for each other.” This is supposed to mean that Americans are changing “old perceptions” faster than the courts are—but in many parts of the country, legislators and judges are finally “catching up,” and are forging efforts to reach an “all-inclusive understanding” of the family.

Some “experts” think a definition is no longer possible: “Family has become a fluid concept,” says Arthur Leonard, professor of law at New York Law School. Others fear that recognizing domestic partnerships will undermine the sanctity of the heterosexual nuclear family and will reduce it to a mere abstraction. But since (according to *Newsweek*) most American households today don’t consist of the “traditional” family, “The law must follow society and reflect reality,” says Mr. Leonard—who is also chairman of the New York City Bar Association’s Committee on Sex and Law. (I suppose he means that if a lot of people are doing something, that’s the reality the law must reflect, and protect—like abortion. Can “assisted suicide” be far behind?) What Mr. Leonard was pleased about was the “rights of domestic partners” legislation in various states. He can’t be happy about the recent custody cases.

It seems not to occur to many lawyers and judges that “reality” has to do with *children*. Or that children themselves might have some ideas about *family*. It did occur to some researchers, though: recently 1,500 schoolchildren were asked “What do you think makes a happy family?” It was expected that the kids would mention having material things, but—surprise—most of the kids had a simple answer: “Doing things together.”

There were some stories, in that *Newsweek* section, of Happy Gay Families. One set of “nontraditional parents”—Michael and Jonathan—live in suburban Sacramento with their adopted son and daughter. We are told that parenthood was always a compelling goal for both men; “they even discussed it on their second date.” (*Newsweek* thinks this is amusing.) The kids call one man Dad and the other Poppa; at the time of the article, Poppa and Dad were among fewer than a dozen gay couples in the United States who have been granted



“joint adoption.” Says Jonathan: “Our values really are the same as those of our parents . . . . We just happen to be two men.”

Then there’s Cindy and Margie and “their son Jonah,” who calls them Mommy and Mama. They are sort of wedded, because they had a “commitment ceremony” with rings and a cake. (Since “the law has been lagging about homosexual marriages,” Commitment Ceremonies are happening all over the place, and now many papers include them in their Society sections. I read about one in which the women partners wore white tuxedos and exchanged rings and vows in front of 100 guests. There was a wedding cake, too.)

In the Boston area, where Cindy and Margie and Jonah live, there are 50 lesbian “families” and they get together every Mother’s Day and three other times a year: this is known as a Supportive Community. *Newsweek* says there are more than 2 million gay mothers and fathers in the United States; *Time* estimates that 1.5 million U.S. lesbians are mothers. And *Time*’s Special Issue has a section on The Changing Family. We read in headline-size type: “Today’s parents are raising children in ways that little resemble their own youth. The question that haunts them: Will the kids be all right?” One writer asks “What are the risks of growing up without a stable nuclear family or any real community support?” In “The Lesbians Next Door” we read about Maria, who has an eight-year-old son from her former marriage (former *marriage*?) and who, with her lover Marie, is raising the boy, Erick. Both Maria and Marie attend parent-teacher conferences, support the boy financially, and tell his playmates that they are both “Erick’s Mom.” *Time* admits that this lifestyle *does* carry risk. Maria says: “People freak out when they see us interact as a family.” Neighbors have “escalated from hurling insults to flinging garbage to tossing firecrackers through an open window.” *Time* says: “As for the children, no one can yet say what the psychological consequences will be.” (One could hazard a guess, though?) If what makes a Happy Family is “doing things together,” would this include ducking garbage and firecrackers? Perhaps there’s material here for a sitcom. One doubts that young Erick would find it amusing, but then *The Odd Couple* had a long run—perhaps we should expect *The Odd Family*? We’ve already got *The Simpsons* . . .

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“It used to be Mommy, Daddy, and 3.2 children with a dog. Now that we’ve changed our lives to suit our hearts, will the law go along?”

That headline was over yet another article on families—this one in the April, 1990 issue of *Lear's* magazine. The author had probably read *Time* and *Newsweek's* Special Issues; she addresses many of the same questions but the main case described is more for the women's market—a “traditional” love-triangle custody case. But this author also brings in the “reality” issue: “Most people who favor broadening the concept of the family believe that change is necessary to accommodate reality—to bring the law in sync with the messy ways in which we live.” An associate judge of the New York Court of Appeals, in his opinion granting potential family status to that homosexual couple in July 1989, used the Reality word, too: “The term family,” he wrote, “should not be rigidly restricted to those people who have formalized their relationship by obtaining . . . a marriage certificate or an adoption order”—far *more* important than these “fictitious legal distinctions” is “the reality of family life.”

The *Lear's* article mentions Gary L. Bauer (president of the Family Research Council and former domestic policy adviser to President Reagan) who told the *New York Times* that “The fight is about whether or not the heterosexual family will continue to be the central and favored form of family life or whether we're going to use such a broad definition of the family that it will no longer have any significance.” The article continues: “Neither Bauer nor Justice Scalia [who wrote the Supreme Court's decision in favor of the father, rather than the husband, in the “messy” love-triangle case] shares the reformers' concern with ‘reality.’ To these conservatives the order guaranteed by law is far more important than the changing ways we live our lives . . .” (Now it's “changing” rather than “messy.”) *Lear's* predicts: “In the end, then, there will be little common ground between liberals and conservatives on the questions of the family.”

But wait. That was more than a year ago: now, in May, the *reality* is that liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, private institutions and even some feminists, are indeed finding common ground. The *New York Post* (on the day before Mother's Day) ran an editorial titled “Back to the traditional family” which began: “Suddenly in Washington there is a resurgence of respect for the traditional family.” Of course “family values” have long represented a key item on the conservative agenda, says the *Post*, “But so long as Democrats controlled most statehouses, state legislatures and the U.S. Congress, governmental ‘family policy’ leaned toward expanding the idea of family so as to render the very word meaningless.”

Politicians and private institutions wanted “non-traditional families” to receive all the benefits to which married couples and children were entitled; the message from government, as spelled out in financial incentives, was “Why struggle to bring up children when two homosexuals and their pet cat are also a ‘family’ deserving of financial support and public celebration?” But now, among both Democrats and Republicans, “there is a growing sense that real families—parents with children—are in trouble. And it’s clear that the collapse of the traditional family would have catastrophic moral and social consequences.” (*Would have?*)

The *Post* editorial lists some proposals which would make public assistance supportive rather than destructive of the two-parent family—proposals which, ten years ago, “might have struck many mainstream observers as old-fashioned notions irrelevant to contemporary realities. Today, with teen pregnancy on the rise—and a simultaneous recognition, even on the part of liberals, that single-parent families have an insidious effect on social stability—governmental support for the traditional family unit seems nothing other than sane.”

Could the pendulum really be swinging? There was a Roper poll last year, in which 2,000 people were asked for their definition of success. “Being a good wife and mother (or husband and father)” topped the list. Four years *earlier* the prime choice was “being true to yourself.” And now a Menlo Park, California, research group reports that “For the first time in almost 30 years, signs across the nation point to a turn-around in the long, painful decline of the American family.” *Life* magazine, as it began its yearlong look “at an institution tough and tender enough to see us through the turbulent 90s” tells us: “Families have been through a bad time in recent years . . . . But in this decade we seem to be witnessing a movement away from individualism and toward connection; families are essential in a world turned increasingly impersonal and harsh.” If you’ve ever wondered when families *began*, here is what *Life* says: the family “has endured in one form or another since we came down from the trees two million years ago.”

Whether we came down from trees or began in a garden, it seems that when human nature happened, so did families. But strident anti-family voices remain, however silly they sound: one is that of Judith Stacey, author of *Brave New Families: Stories of Domestic Upheaval in Late Twentieth Century America*. She claims that “The family

is *not* here to stay . . . . Nor should we wish it were. On the contrary, I believe that all democratic people, whatever their kinship preference, should work to hasten its demise.” As syndicated columnist Suzanne Fields pointed out in her review of the book for the *Washington Times* last October: “She is less clear about what will replace ‘the family’ beyond her attraction to ‘diverse patterns of intimacy’ forged by feminists, gay liberation activists and minority-rights organizations.”

Do these diverse patterns of intimacy reflect reality, or human nature? Or even *mother* nature? The social critic Midge Decter, annoyed by the “four standards” for a family (set by the New York Court of Appeals when it was deciding that domestic rights case) says “You can call homosexual households ‘families,’ and you can define ‘family’ any way you want to, but you can’t fool Mother Nature. A family is a mommy and a daddy and their children.”

“Broken families exact a fearful price from the health of American Society” was the title of an article in the *Miami Herald* last March. It quotes Karl Zinsmeister of the American Enterprise Institute, who says we talk about the drug crisis, the education crisis, the problems of teen pregnancy, and juvenile crime “but all these ills trace back predominantly to one source: broken families.” He’s considered a conservative, “but there are signs of ideological convergence on this issue.” And the article mentions a new liberal think tank, the Progressive Policy Institute, which—in a report issued last fall (“Putting Children First: A Progressive Family Policy for the 1990s”) took a strong stand “against the moral relativism that avoids making value judgments about family structure.” Suzanne Fields also noticed this new “convergence”—she writes that feminists are joining conservatives “in propounding a new rhetoric to influence public policy . . . Phyllis Schlafly, the conservative activist, and Rep. Pat Schroeder, the liberal Democrat from Colorado, are certainly an odd couple, but they’ve joined hands to push for a major overhaul of the federal tax deductions for children.”

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*Ms.* magazine—which in its new format is subtitled *THE WORLD OF WOMEN*—purports to reflect reality. In its story about the lesbian family (written by Lindsay Van Gelder, who says she’s a lesbian by *choice*, not biology) the reality is supposed to be that gay families work. “It behooves us to be out, and even to boast about it, to show that it can work.” Paula Fomby, in *Mother Jones*, says it works

because *she* turned out okay: for all we know, *she's* the only proof she has. The polygamists, and the single-mothers-by-choice, are also busy *proving*. So it seems that the one thing these "alternate families" have in common is the desire to prove their success. Could this be a bit premature? Most of the children involved in the current gay-custody cases are very young. And now that there are custodial wrangles for single "straight" women who *know* their "selected partners," other singles are opting for insemination with *anonymous* donors—but what, asked a psychologist, do you say when a child yearns to know who his or her father is? "They're not going to be happy being told their dad is No. 456." Quoting *Time* again: "As for the children, no one can yet say what the psychological consequences will be."

Sarah knows who her father is. Will she always have a happy family? Is it possible that when those school children defined "happy family" as "doing things together" what they really had in mind was *security*, and permanence? The family that plays together stays together—but what if some of the players leave the team? What if Mommy leaves Mama for another woman? I'm looking again at the picture of Sarah and Doug and Amy and Richard, and the Family Tree in the back yard, and I'm wondering if *Ms.* unwittingly reflected a *harsh* reality, at the end of the story:

Sarah's only recorded worry about the future is one she shared with Nancy one day when she was trying to figure out how she could be a doctor and stay home with her own sick child. Nancy assured her that such things were eminently do-able; she herself could baby-sit. Sarah sighed with relief, her grown-up life secured . . . . "But," she suddenly asked, "where will I find a Daddy and an Amy?"

As *Newsweek* said, "The family tree of American society is sending forth a variety of new and fast-growing branches . . ."

But "Will the children be all right?"



Editorial cartoon by Wayne Stayskal (Tampa Tribune, 1988; reprinted with permission).

## Eco-Feminists and Pagan Politics

*Kay Ebeling*

AT FIRST I THOUGHT I'D STUMBLED ACROSS *The Total Woman from Mars*. I was attending a workshop titled "Shamanic Womancraft" at a center for New Age practices in a northern California town. Women arrived in long print dresses with shawls and sat on mats in a circle on the floor. Many carried babies, and nursed them casually. The silver-haired Shaman woman in mystical clothing entered and set up a centerpiece for the circle, placing dolls, candles, and artifacts at precise angles. Among the little statues was a Madonna and an African goddess of fertility. As the woman laid out herbs with a thick aroma, her husband walked around the room waving incense, much like a priest, then exited.

Jeannine Parvati Baker then began the ritual, swaying to a chant that could have been American Indian. She called out, "Our goddesses who art in heaven and upon this earth, we celebrate the divine feminine within and without." She was in trance-like motion; "This is a perfect time to be on this planet, chosen to be the daughters at this changing time, to bring full and lasting peace to this glorious planet." She called out to Greek goddesses Artemis and Demeter. At one point she asked each woman to place some object that shows her sexuality on the altar-like centerpiece. Women carried in lipsticks, more little goddess statues, "encoding crystals." Baker continued her trance-like call, "We are sisters in a shining sun, remembering the ancient ones," she said. She used hand movements called mudras to "pull the senses back into the source," then proclaimed, "I am god . . . Shamanism . . . understand all. . . ."

At times Parvati Baker made the sound "Ho—!" and the women in the circle responded "—Mmm," creating the word "Home." She passed out medicine cards; she taught us rituals we can do in our own living rooms. As the third hour began, she asked the women to share the contents of their "sexuality bundles" which they'd packed for the workshop. First Baker reached into her own little bag, and pulled out a piece of cloth diaper, "the best things to use as menstrual pads, aren't they? Ho—" "Mmmm." Her cloth was "spotted with a pattern that shows the six bleeding hearts of my six children,"

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Kay Ebeling, a California freelance writer, is our occulational contributor.

she said with pride. I started to squirm. Baker then pulled out the umbilical cords of all her six children, and the room began to swirl. The next woman reached in her bundle and pulled out a picture with a baby's hand in a flame saying that it represented "how many of us were burned at the stake in past lifetimes," but I couldn't stay to hear the rest. I was losing my dinner in the ladies' room outside.

As weird as she is, Jeannine Parvati Baker is one of the more sane voices rising up under the aegis of "Ecofeminism," a nascent movement, part ecology, part self-made religion. At least Baker and her followers are monogamous, and say "Sex is not recreation—it's co-creation." In her latest book *Conscious Conception*, she called abortion "the ultimate child abuse"—a stand that caused her shame and rejection among her fellow "wiccans." Baker shares the religion but not the political passion of other ecofeminists, who say only a matriarchy can save the earth.

Mainline ecofeminists insist the ecology movement should be run by more women because, with our monthly biological cycles, we are somehow more in tune with the earth and the cosmos than men. They talk of a time, 5,000 years ago, when the earth was led by a matriarchy, and we had a thousand years with no war. Women, you see, are inherently peaceful. Ecofeminists say mankind's first act of rampant patriarchy was planting agriculture in rows, thus beginning the end of our ecological balance. For example, Rosemary Radford Ruether explains in her essay, "Toward an Ecological-Feminist Theology of Nature," that when humans started planting agriculture in lines, the plants became more vulnerable to disease. "Humans then compensate with chemical sprays . . . send a ripple effect of poison," she writes. And there you have it, the reason for the fall of mankind.

One radical ecofeminist, Judith Plant, has edited a collection of essays titled, *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, and the ideas expressed by the book's 30 contributors are so strange it is hard to believe this movement is really taking place; but it is—with workshops and training sessions around the country, with several dozen books on the topic, and a claim of followers numbering in the thousands. These essays are scary. "The seventies saw witchcraft begin a major growth spurt as feminists began searching for alternatives to the patriarchal mainstream religions," writes Starhawk (yes, that's her name, Starhawk). We need to develop, "a Pagan sense of integrity,"



she adds. In her piece "Sacred Land, Sacred Sex," Dolores LaChapelle, who teaches Tai Chi in Durango, Colorado, reveres ancient tribes because they moved into marginal areas, high mountains, deep jungles, and lived by rituals which acknowledged the sacredness of the land. Charlene Spretnak, in an excerpt from her book "The Politics of Women's Spirituality" speaks of the disappointing emptiness in Judeo-Christian tradition. As she searched for answers in ancient religions, she writes, "I began to meet other women who were making similar discoveries and who were quick to see the political implications. I knew we would never be lost again."

Ecofeminists are angry. Whether they realize it or not, they are following in the footsteps of the sixties and seventies feminists. In the anti-Vietnam war movement, many women got frustrated by their subjugated role in protest organizing and leadership. They did not want to run the offices and make coffee—in the feminist movement they could be leaders. When anti-war activities died down in the seventies, many "drop-outs" dropped even farther out. They took to communes in extreme rural areas, especially northern California and the Northwest. Still, even in the communes, there were the women, in the kitchen, literally barefoot and pregnant. As Americans learned more about the condition of the environment, these women found a common ground. Judith Plant writes: "Connecting feminism with environmentalism is an eye-opener for many . . . showing that both women and the earth have been regarded as the object of self-interested patriarchs. . . ."

Ecofeminists are even angrier at men than Germaine Greer or Gloria Steinem when they wrote in the sixties and seventies. Sharon Doubiago, who's been keeping a feminist-poet's eye on the subculture for the past decade, identifies "the irrefutable connection between misogyny and hatred of nature," then finally just lays it on the line, in her essay "Mama Coyote Talks to the Boys." She writes: "Ecofeminism. And your field, ecomasculinism. And to think, ecology is supposed to be about connections. Nowhere in the present is the male failure more apparent than in the exclusion of feminism from the ecology movement."

Indeed as I read more of these women's words, I never find a place for men to fit into their hierarchy. Instead the problems of today's planet are "western/patriarchal." We need "harmonious, matrifocal cultures." "Only the acceptance of a postpatriarchal, holistic

attitude toward life on Earth will bring about truly comprehensive change,” writes Charlene Spretnak. Only men who are willing to go along with this matriarchal pipedream are acceptable. There are no male contributors to Plant’s essay collection.

Ecofeminism is more than a political movement; it is the creation of a new religion, and a mandate to believe or perish. To define their new theology, these women reach handily into Buddhism, Hinduism, Native American and Greek mythology—it’s a kind of ABC approach to spirituality: Anything But Christian. They are especially preoccupied with Gaia, the earth goddess in Greek myths, and they identify with the Minoan Crete civilization which took place from about 3000 to 1200 BC. Ecofeminists know that they are God themselves. They pray, “All is One, all forms of existence are comprised on one continuous dance of matter/energy arising and falling away. . . . The union with the One has been called cosmic consciousness, God consciousness, knowing the One Mind” (more Spretnak). It’s an easygoing religion as Starhawk explains in “Feminist, Earth-based Spirituality and Ecofeminism,” her contribution to Plant’s book. “We have no dogma, no authorized texts or beliefs and no authoritative body to authorize anything; nor do we want one.” Would you want to live in a nation founded on these principles?

“We are called Witches,” states Starhawk. “Witches, (a word that means) to bend or shape. Witches were shamans—benders and shapers of reality. Today’s witches are faced with the task of reshaping western culture.” Starhawk’s books are published by a major publisher. She works with a “collective” in San Francisco, conducting “public rituals in the Old Religion of the Goddess, called Witchcraft,” says her biography.

One is reminded of the story in Genesis, when Eve is tempted by the serpent to eat forbidden fruit because it would make her like God. Now thousands of Eves are believing the same lie. They’ve been politico-spiritualizing for a good two decades, yet only recently have they been showing up in mainstream media, most remarkably in the *New York Times* in a Mother’s Day 1991 editorial. It described a goddess ritual with praise for the way it represented “motherhood itself.” Intoned the *Times*: “Some critics consider it so much New Age nonsense or a return to paganism. But if it appears flaky on the surface, it still warrants sympathy and respect.”

These women, and sometimes men, are radical pagans with a political agenda. Margot Adler, a reporter for National Public Radio, speaking

to the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in 1987, said that 100,000 people in America now call themselves Neo-Pagans. They are “searching among the archaic images of nature, among the ruins . . . in order to find, revive, and re-create the old polytheistic nature religions. The fascination with long dead pagan traditions is part of a search for cultural roots.” She claimed there are more than 100 newsletters published by neo-pagans, there are over 1,000 different groups, and over 50 local and national yearly gatherings.

Spirituality, yes, but . . .

“I have watched many of my yogini sisters procure abortions,” writes Parvati Baker. “They justified their actions with the confused philosophy of reincarnation and ‘free will.’ In other words they said that the soul knew ‘on some level’ what it was getting by choosing incarnation into a woman who did not want to be a mother just yet. Some yoginis have even had the false pride to state that their unwanted fetus was a ‘very advanced soul’ who only needed to be incarnated for a very short time to complete its karma here on this plane of existence.” Baker says yoginis and pagans claim abortion is an “extension of the natural ‘weaning mother,’” and calls that argument absurd. She finds it odd that yoginis will eat no meat out of compassion for animals, but will not apply that same compassion to unwanted babies.

“Yoga clearly considers abortion killing,” Baker continues. “My pagan sisters, I challenge the true wicca to display their ‘control’ and ‘power’ in not conceiving unwanted babies in the first place!” She devoted an entire chapter to “Pro-Life Feminism” in *Conscious Conception*.

I phoned her at her home in Utah. “This book hasn’t been embraced as much as my other books,” she said, “mainly because of the chapter on abortion.” Then she opened up more. “Another time I was writing in a magazine for people who believe in paganism [*Demeter’s Emerald*, published somewhere in northern California], and I talked about the contradiction of nature worshipers having high abortion rates.” She was shocked and alarmed at the response of her pagan sisters. The article angered so many radical ecofeminists that they wrote letters cancelling their subscriptions.

Ecofeminists’ claim to the Kingdom of Ecology is the female biological system, the cycle of the woman and its harmony with the universe; but somehow abortion is still okay. “When birth becomes our underlying

metaphor, the world shifts,” writes Starhawk. “We all participate, continually merging and emerging in rhythmic cycles.” Spretnak, the voice of “feminist spirituality,” proclaims that “women experience pregnancy, natural childbirth, and motherhood [so] they are ‘body parables’ of the profound oneness of all matter/energy.”

Then in the same essay Spretnak defends abortion: “Ethics of mutual respect would not allow coercion or domination, such as forcing someone to give birth or to kill.” Dolores LaChapelle, writing about her “ecosystem cultures” of the past, points out the remarkable similarities among tribes as far apart as the Arctic and the Southwestern desert. She seems to applaud them for their child-spacing and child-rearing practices, which she says included infanticide and abortion. “The quiet, ‘good’ children proved a continual source of amazement.” (Watching their siblings being killed, no wonder they were good children.)

Parvati Baker says that to keep the peace at pagan conferences today, she has had to tone down her message on abortion. The other ecofeminists, having intimidated her in a way only a force of angry females can, scared her into saying, “‘Abortion is painful.’ That’s it. Then I tell them I leave judgment on abortion to a Higher Power. They just can’t understand how I can be both an astrologer and pro-life.” Baker sounded a bit disenchanted with her fellow wiccans. She seems to be focusing now on her Hygieia College which she says is a mystery school in ancient tradition, a school without walls. Hygieia College students and teachers around the country work at “healing fertility,” a practice which includes counselling women who feel that the guilt and damage from past abortions are keeping them from getting pregnant today.

#### **Do It Yourself Religion, History**

A quick read through my yellowing Encyclopedia Britannica told me something about the Minoan Crete era, the thousand years of matriarchy, the only time in history in which there were no wars because women were the rulers, as an ecofeminist will tell you. Early Minoan I is dated as beginning around the year 3000 BC and Late Minoan ended around 1200 BC. The earliest Neolithic artifacts showed Crete was inhabited by immigrants mostly from Egypt.

There are signs the population of Crete in that era *did* live a female-dominated, goddess worshipping life. Archaeologists have found statuettes of goddesses; one is in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, portraying

a goddess holding gold snakes. Evidently no pictures of men or animals appeared on ceramics until the latest Minoan times. Other statuettes reveal the dress for the period. Men wore loincloths with tight belts. Women wore long voluminous skirts and left their breasts uncovered. As they entered the Late Minoan period men began wearing a short dress, or kilt. There is a shrine to a dove goddess. The large cave of Ida on Crete, the legendary birthplace of Zeus, did not become a sanctuary on the island until the Late Minoan period. (According to Greek mythology, Rhea, the mother of Zeus, fled to Crete because her husband Cronos was eating her babies. She gave birth to Zeus there, in a remote cave, then left the child with the Cretes so he could be nurtured into godhood, away from his carnivorous father.)

But I found no evidence that this was a period of female-generated peace. Digs in cemeteries from the Middle Minoan period bring up long iron swords. It is hard to find artifacts in any earlier graves, as they appear to have been pillaged by later tribes. The population left very little material behind (maybe they recycled) but engravings depict woodland places of worship. A ring signet shows a woman praying at a tall post to which a young god descends in answer to her prayer. But it is true that most of the religious artifacts show a reverence for goddesses and priestesses. Still, the king on a small vase from the Minoan Crete era wears bracelets, armlets, a triple necklace and a dagger in his belt (sort of a heavy metal look . . .). The archaeology of Crete does not present the geometric genius found in other parts of the world from that time. There are many remnants of mass graves, evidently left uncovered, which may mean they were nomadic—if a virus passed through a tribe, they'd bury their dead and move on to a new place. Or were they burying their dead from battle?

It struck me as humorous that so much of the Minoan Crete architecture relied on wood. Wide flights of steps lead from one level to another in structures, mainly palaces, on the island's mountainous terrain, each flight carried by wooden columns. Interior columns of walls were made of wood. Construction was basically brick and rubble reinforced with wood posts and beams. Ecofeminists in the western American continent tie their politics to the preservation of all trees, at all costs. Their quasi-religion and passive philosophy brings many wiccans and pagans to anti-timber-industry rallies and blockades. Judith Plant lives and works with a "publishing collective"

in British Columbia. She describes the peacefulness of their knoll overlooking a narrow valley, then gets angry as it is disrupted again by the roar of an 18-wheeler. They've moved into a timber industry corridor, a roadway between the forest and the sawmill, "a path beaten hard from the weight of dead trees," Plant laments.

"It is no accident that the Minister of Forests is a man," Plant writes with typical ecofeminist open-mindedness. "The logging company is owned and run by men, the logging truck driver is a man." Men are all "voraciously trying to control all that is natural, regarding nature as a resource to be exploited for the gain of a very few." Like most radical ecologists, the members of this movement give no credit to the changes in timber harvest practices that have taken place in the last ten years, as the timber industry has incorporated environmental concerns into its management practices. They hoot, hiss, and holler at rallies if a timber-industry representative tries to speak. Ecofeminists would rather look to ancient cultures and rituals for the answer to problems currently facing the earth. Plant reveres the Kung Bush People, who spent about 20 hours a week gathering and hunting food, so the rest of the day could be spent in leisure, "recreating their culture." Ecofeminists want to take man back to a tribal existence, where everyone hunts and forages for food that is not planted in disruptive rows but grows wild, as a gift from goddess Earth. Somehow this would bring an end to all wars as well as solve our environmental crisis.

I looked up the Greek Goddess Gaia (aka "Ge"); she was a female entity, sort of floating in space. She wanted a baby so badly that she got pregnant without needing to involve a male entity. She gave birth to her son Uranus and proceeded with him to have more children. They dispensed with the mutants and cyclopes in various ways, then parented the Titans and others. Meanwhile Gaia, the ultimate working mother, created the earth and all life on it. One of their children, the Titan Cronos, eventually helped Gaia get rid of Uranus. She seduced her son/husband into her room and Cronos castrated him viciously with a jagged stick. From his body parts on the ocean sprang Aphrodite—a kinder, gentler woman.

Gaia doesn't sound like a peaceful, loving goddess to me, but then I don't claim to be an expert in Greek mythology. I'm also no Biblical scholar, but I do know that ecofeminists, Earth First!, and other New Age weirdness is predicted in the Bible. For example, the apostle Paul writes in a letter to Timothy that, "In later times

## THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods.” (I Timothy 4:1-6)\* Sounds a lot like the New Age vegetarian ABC theological mystics who live near me. The first Book of Romans 1:22-23, says of an ancient culture, “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”

### Poets, Sculptors, and Politics

The following excerpt sounds like an ecofeminist poem, but it is not: “Before Heaven and Earth/There was something nebulous . . . /Tranquil . . . effortless/Permeating universally/Never tiring/Revolving Soundless/Fusion without mate/It may be regarded as the Mother of all organic forms. . . .” Those lines come from Timothy Leary’s book of “Psychedelic Prayers” published in 1966.

It is no mystery how a movement as bizarre as ecofeminism could thrive and grow in the Pacific Northwest, especially northern California, the region where the drop-outs went to drop farther out. The New Age Cafe in the town where I live only recently went out of business because no one could stand the taste of their politically-correct food.

Timothy Leary’s interpretation of the Tao and other psychedelic concepts permeate ecofeminist writings. “Breathe/Watch the flame/Listen to the voice of the story, the first story whispered in the secret heart of your encoded memories/Hear the story woman . . .” reads a poem by Starhawk. She later writes, “Goddess is embodied in the living world in the human animal, plant, and mineral communities and their interrelationships.” “The Goddess honors the cosmic dance, the eternally vibrating flux of matter/energy,” writes Charlene Stretnak. Like so many ecofeminist poems and essays, these words could have been said by Timothy Leary on one of his lecture tours, which leads me to wonder if perhaps radical ecologists and political pagans are people who have just taken too much acid.

It could be that early ecofeminist writers such as Dorothy Dinnerstein, a semi-retired psychologist at Rutgers and author of several early books on “fusing ecology and feminism,” do not realize what they have created. Both Dinnerstein and New York writer Ynestra King

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\*(New International Bible)

take what seems to be an academic approach to defining Ecofeminism. Dinnerstein writes that the only way to save the earth from ecological catastrophe is “a miraculous spurt of human growth and change.” She adds, “Feminism is a living movement, a movement honest with itself, only insofar as it embodies active radical try-to-put-the-fire-out hope.” Fellow founding-mother King describes “the beginnings of a theory of ecological feminism.” I believe she coined the word Ecofeminism. She writes, “We can consciously choose not to sever the woman-nature connection by joining male culture. [We can] create a different kind of culture and politics that integrates intuitive, spiritual, and rational forms, embracing both science and magic.” Reading this, I don’t believe these East Coast ecofeminists have any idea what happens to their theories once they are turned loose in the Wild West.

If ecofeminism were all innocent frolicking in the trees, it would not be so frightening. Ecofeminism in its original conception may have had only the highest of motives, a true concern for the future of the earth. But why reject everything American or Judeo-Christian? Why blame everything that’s wrong with the earth on men? The deification of everything female is to me dangerous. “This conversion will demand a new form of human intelligence,” writes Ruether. “Patterns of left-brain (i.e., masculine or linear) are, in many ways, ecologically dysfunctional. This rationality screens out much of reality as ‘irrelevant,’ ” Ruether continues, and she is serious.

Man-hating, like Gaia’s treatment of Uranus, permeates these writings. “This ‘man’s world’ is on the very edge of collapse, because there is no respect for the ‘other’ in patriarchal society,” writes Judith Plant. “The war of the sexes is done so brilliantly by ecofeminists,” writes Sharon Doubiago. Any reference to God as He or Him is followed by a (*sic*). All the world’s problems can be traced to the patriarchy, which rules in a dominating authoritative way, not harmoniously, as would a matriarchy.

Ecofeminists believe that women, left to run the world without any nettlesome patriarchal interference, would end nuclear power, nuclear weapons, any further development of the wilderness, military adventurism, industrial control over nature as it destroys the environment, racism, violence, and the wealth and greed that come inherently with business. There we’ll all be, merrily picking berries and nursing our babies, back in paradise.

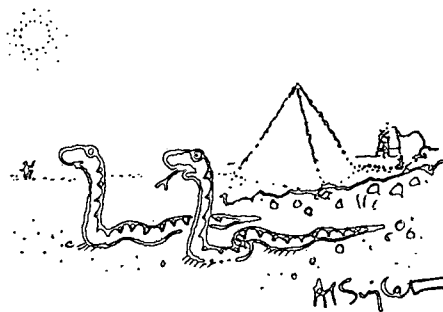
A news story from Emeryville, California, last May reported that



someone smashed a goddess statue to a pile of rubble. The sculptress had been on a television news show a few days earlier discussing her statue, titled "Reemergence of the Great Serpent Mother." The statue was 15 feet high, a crowned woman with fierce eyes, bare gallon-sized copper breasts and two snakes clutched over her head. It had been turning commuter heads in the Emeryville mudflats, where many artists display their work in the open air. The sculptress told the reporter that next semester she would work in steel, and that she realized her televised remarks "might have set off a woman-hater or someone opposed to goddess-worship."

I predict we'll be seeing more reactions such as the demolition of that Emeryville statue, as more people learn that ecofeminists are not fairy princesses with peace and harmony as their innocent goals. The ecofeminist movement can be dangerous and warrants close scrutiny. For one thing, I don't want to live in a world run by dominating women, where the men wear skirts.

Perhaps *Moses* was the most eloquent critic of the ecofeminist movement: he told the Jews in the desert (*Deuteronomy* 18:10-12): "Let no one be found among you who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or a spiritist or who consults the dead. The Lord your God will drive out those nations."



*'There's no such thing as a bad asp, just bad asp owners!'*

THE SPECTATOR 18 May 1991

# Of Presbyterians and Greens

by Chilton Williamson Jr.

Perhaps there is hope in the fact that the modern world is not always as crazy as at first glance it appears to be. In Baltimore, on June 8, the Commissioners of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) voted to add "A Brief Statement" to the Church's Book of Confessions which includes, among other documents, the Nicene Creed and the Heidelberg Catechism. The newest addendum, written in the form of a prayer of eighty lines addressed to issues of life and of human life, affirms that human beings are created "equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community," and identifies as sins against God the exploitation of "neighbor and nature," as well as threatening with "death . . . the planet entrusted to our care."

On Monday morning, June 10, while the Church Commissioners were reconvening to debate the endorsement of something called "justice-marriage" in place of the Christian concept of marriage by benefit of clergy between a man and a woman for life (the endorsement was eventually rejected), Gerry Spence, the nationally-renowned attorney from Jackson, Wyoming, and his defense team were gathered in U.S. District Court in Prescott, Arizona, for jury selection in the case of five environmentalists charged with damaging ski lifts, chain-sawing power poles, and conspiring to sabotage nuclear plants in three states. Among the defendants is Dave Foreman, founder of the radical Earth First! group and the author of the just-published book *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (Harmony: New York, 1991). Foreman, a proponent of "Deep Ecology," agreeing with the ecologist Raymond Dasmann that "World War III has already begun, and that it is the war of industrial humans against the Earth," advocates "monkeywrenching" and "ecotage" as defensible means of preventing "genocide" against grizzly bears and spotted owls, whose lives he believes have a value absolutely equal to that of human beings. On the subject of environmentalism, the Presbyterians will have to go some still to beat Dave Foreman and Earth First!

Plenty of people, both Christian and non-Christian, will regard

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the Commissioners' Statement—the environmentalist part of it in particular—as simply silly. Like most such bodies, the 203rd General Assembly in Baltimore probably considered itself to have perpetrated an act of progressive boldness and imagination; in fact, its action is the theological equivalent of an anti-abortion amendment to the Constitution of the United States, whose framers apparently thought it unnecessary to embellish their handiwork with a prohibition of murder by the new Federal government. Christ made it perfectly clear in His teaching that mankind is to be regarded as a single community (not in the present globalist sense, but in the sight of God), while theologians have taught for centuries that offering “death to the planet” is sinful. Adam’s sin, like all sins, was a sin of pride by which he sought to be as God, to act as arbiter in his own right between good and evil. The penalty paid was the corruption of his hitherto perfect human nature, but it was not paid by him alone. Man was expelled by God from Paradise where in his human perfection he had lived in perfect harmony with perfect nature, and by bringing death on himself he brought it upon nature likewise, which as St. Augustine wrote fell through and with him. Millennia before the smokestacks of the Industrial Revolution, before the “dark satanic mills,” and before the atom bomb, man had not only threatened nature with death, he had delivered it to her. The Presbyterian commissioners, with their healing mantras, are somewhat late in achieving ecological awareness, which may well have been inspired as much by politics as by theology. But this is not to say that their redundant and belated statement is contrary to canonical Christianity.

Similarly, Dave Foreman’s *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* is on the face of it a preposterous book. The author himself describes his work as being “a little bit like an ugly mongrel dog in which you can see the ears of one breed, the jowls of another, and so on”—which, in its tatterdemalion philosophy and structure, it certainly is. Foreman’s insistence that human beings are *not* the measure of all value on earth is morally, philosophically, and theologically absurd, and his indirect reminder that most of the fathers and grandfathers of the environmentalist movement in America were substantially in agreement with his position should discomfit those who share at least some of the concerns of environmentalism. There is, Foreman tells us, “another way to think about man’s relationship to the natural world, an insight pioneered by the nineteenth-century conservationist and mountaineer John Muir and later by the science of ecology.

This is the idea that all things are connected, interrelated, that human beings are merely one of the millions of species that have been shaped by the process of evolution for three and a half billion years.”

“Deep Ecology,” which originated with the contemporary Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, has become the Deep Wisdom of radical environmentalism. In Dave Foreman’s gloss, it holds that “all living creatures and communities possess intrinsic value, inherent worth. Natural things live for their own sake, which is another way of saying they have value. Other beings (both animal and plant) and even so-called ‘inanimate’ objects such as rivers and mountains are not placed here for the convenience of human beings.” (The Marquis de Sade, incidentally, anticipated Deep Ecology when he argued that men are not superior to animals, though he did not press his point by claiming human equality with minerals.) As one of millions or billions of equally-validated life-forms, man has no justification for using them, and the earth itself, to his own purposes: “Human beings must adjust to the planet; it is supreme arrogance to expect the planet and all it contains to adjust to the demands of humans. In everything human society does, the primary consideration should be for the long-term health and biological diversity of Earth. After that, we can consider the welfare of humans. We should be kind, compassionate, and caring with other people, but Earth comes first.”

**F**oreman’s—and Deep Ecology’s—quarrel with “Judeo-Christianity,” Islam, Marxism, scientism, and secular humanism is that, by placing man at the center of the universe, assuming a radical separation between him and nature, and assigning to him a value that is both unique and supreme, they are guilty of “anthropocentrism,” for which Foreman would substitute “biocentrism.” “The preservation of wilderness,” he says, “is the fundamental issue. Wilderness does not merely mean backpacking or scenery. It is the natural world, the arena for evolution, the caldron from which humans emerged, the home of others with whom we share this planet. Wilderness is the real world; our cities, our computers, our airplanes, our global business civilization all are but artificial and transient phenomena. . . . Issues directly affecting only humans pale in comparison.” Tragically, “eight millennia of Western civilization,” in addition to the environmental depredations of other non-“native” peoples, have produced a “Humanpox,” a “human cancer” that threatens to destroy the earth. Deep Ecologists believe that man has already accomplished enough

damage to render the abjuration of progress an obsolescent ideal. Not only must *Homo sapiens* forebear moving forward, he must work deliberately backward toward a simpler stage of society and technology if he and the earth that is his home are to survive.

Whatever else separates the Presbyterian Church and Earth First!, the two have in common the idea that man is the only agent in the world with the power to destroy the earth, and that he alone is capable of committing a wrong (or "sin") against it. The Presbyterians, however, have an explanation for the physical and moral centrality of man in his environment, while the Earth First! people have none beyond the "truth" of evolution, which only begs the question. While Foreman assures us that there is room for much "diversity" in "matters spiritual" within the organization; deplores the history of the United States as "a story of spiritual failure"; and describes the job of wilderness preservation as "a religious mandate" to rescue "sacred shrines" along with "what is sacred and right: the Great Dance of Life," he also believes that the human spirit is eternally extinguished after three-score years and ten and upbraids Christians and Buddhists for what he calls the "arrogance of enlightenment" that causes them to regard earth as "a mere way station in the eternal progress of their souls." "If you want heaven," he insists, "it is here." Eternal life means no more than returning your atoms and molecules to the earth; although, by some mystical and inexplicable process, those "warriors" who fight on behalf of the wilderness are already of it: "We are the wilderness defending itself."

Deep Ecology exemplifies the truth of the observation that the intervention of Christianity has made a return to what Chesterton called "the huge and healthy sadness" of classical paganism an impossibility. Foreman's is a paganism with neither gods nor goddesses, devoid as well of those demigods called men in whom the ancients recognized the potential for nobility as well as for ignominy and evil. Dave Foreman seems to have accepted the phrase "the universe of the wilderness" (coined by Bob Marshall, who founded the Wilderness Society in 1935 and devised the original plan for wilderness preservation later implemented by the U.S. Forest Service) as representing literal truth. With the infinitely greater imagination granted them by their Christian faith, the Presbyterians are able to conceive of a universe beyond the "universe of the wilderness": by means of the same imagination, they understand further that there is nothing more dangerous in creation than the fallen little-god that is man; that only he is

capable of sin; and that only he therefore may be held responsible for wrongdoing against *anything*. (Assuming that grizzly bears were the dominant species in North America and man the endangered one, would Foreman consider a grizzly guilty of “murder” by killing and eating a human being?)

The truth is that Dave Foreman and his comrades in Deep Ecology have their own equivalent of original sin, even if they fail to recognize it as such. When Foreman speaks of man’s “arrogance” in claiming that the earth is of no value except as it serves to meet his needs, he is really deploring in other terms the Faustian tendencies in man that have concerned Christian authors for centuries, and that have culminated beyond the revolt against the constraints of nature in the rebellion against God Himself. For the Presbyterian commissioners, man’s moral responsibility for the plight of nature is determined by his capacity for reverence for God and God’s Creation; for Dave Foreman, it is determined by his incomparably superior intellect by which, out of prudence and common sense, man should be able to assess the effects of his actions and cry, “Hold, enough!”—and more than enough.

It is, however, the quality, nature, and purpose of that intellect that Foreman, and so many other if not most environmentalists, fail entirely to comprehend. Like Bill McKibben, the former *New Yorker* editor whose book *The End of Nature* was widely discussed when it appeared a few years ago, Foreman wants mankind to choose what McKibben called “the humble path” by submerging its human intelligence in the generalized consciousness of nature. Not only would it be wrong for man to attempt such a thing, it is impossible for him to accomplish it. As co-creators with God, human beings are meant to transcend the natural world, of which only a part of them actually *is* a part. As a Faustian figure, man is both tragic and ridiculous (which is the same thing as saying he is sinful); as a Promethean one, he is simply the creature made in God’s image trying to do what his Creator created him to do.

(This role, by the way, has a purely biological equivalent in nature, where the separate species pursue “Promethean” ends at their own levels. It is not only man, Hilaire Belloc reminds us at the outset of *The Servile State*, but “every other organism” which “can only live by the transformation of his environment to his own use. He must transform his environment from a condition where it is less

to a condition where it is more subservient to his needs.” Each species, in other words, seeks to exploit its environment to its particular purposes. The idea of the various life forms knowing their “places” in nature, and staying put in them for the benefit of their differently made neighbors, is nothing more than an absurdly romantic and unscientific fallacy.)

Whether it suits the environmentalist agenda or not, it is truth that man is not just above, and greater than, nature; he is what matters most in the Creation, perhaps nearly to the exclusion of all else, nature being finally little more than the poignantly exquisite backdrop against which the transcendental drama of human salvation is played out. Nevertheless, the fact that nature is of at least substantially less importance than the human creature does not mean that the natural world is without value in its own right.

When Foreman insists that all living creatures and communities have “value, inherent worth” and that “natural things live for their own sake” he is merely stating the obvious, as when he argues that rivers, mountains, and other “inanimate” objects (those quotation marks *are* a puzzle) are not created for the (sole) convenience of human beings. We can and we should grant all of this without feeling obliged to follow Foreman in his wild leap to the conclusion that trees, ants, bears, and rocks have a value *equal* to that of human beings, and that they therefore have *rights* by which they ought to be immune from human domination and interference. “Rights” and “equal value” belong to the terminology of the deist and atheistic Enlightenment and post-enlightenment periods, not to the Christian centuries that preceded them. If in place of “rights” we substitute the more theologically oriented term “respect,” we ought to be able to see exactly what Dave Foreman is getting at. Ants and trees and rocks and grizzlies neither have nor are capable of having rights, but they *are* owed from man (from whom else?) the respect they deserve as God’s fellow creatures, placed by Him alongside us on earth. I forget who it was who said, when asked why God made the earth, “Because He knew we should enjoy it.” And since we are not—not supposed to be, anyway—children, we cannot be expected to enjoy the goods given us by wantonly destroying them. To do so is not just an act of ingratitude, but of blasphemy. The Presbyterian Church recognizes this truth concerning the natural relationship between life and human life, even if some of its members may still be confused about the nature of the ordained relationship between men and women.

Foreman describes himself as “not an anarchist or a Yippie. I am a conservationist”; and indeed *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* is “radical” only in its theoretical dimension. The larger part of the book is a sober assessment of the damage done by man to nature in America, of the bureaucratization of the mainstream environmental movement (The Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society), and mostly sensible suggestions for confronting these problems. (Foreman’s emphasis is on “restoration” of particular areas and on the “reintroduction of species,” which puts him in the company of such dangerous revolutionaries as the editors of *Chronicles*, who last summer published an issue outlining a conservative approach to environmentalism.)

**T**True, there are chapters in defense of monkeywrenching and ecotage—that is, deliberately damaging private property as a final resort in the attempt to prevent acts of destruction against the natural world. But whether defensible or not, monkeywrenching is no more “radical” in concept than attacks on abortion centers; while the vaunted notion of the “sanctity of private property” so vociferously appealed to by ranchers, timber and mining companies, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has been a dead letter in the United States since the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1913.

Foreman’s theorizing, finally, seems to strike even him as being not entirely real. “All of us,” he says,

toiling in the fields of environmental, peace, and justice causes need to take our philosophies, our worldviews, with a grain of salt. The path I follow—Deep Ecology . . . —is not a perfect, cast-in-concrete dogma. If it ever becomes that, it will be worthless—just another rigid gospel. Nonetheless, we absolutely need a mythology to guide us in our work. . . . But no matter how valid it is . . . we must constantly acknowledge that it is still an abstraction. It is a good, workable basis by which to operate. But it is not infallible scripture.

As Foreman’s treatise proceeds, it becomes less prescriptive, more descriptive, more political, more *man-centered*. Contradictions creep in: The author, earlier self-identified as beyond left and right, beyond even politics itself, now calls himself “a political activist.” The pretense of operating outside mere human reference slips, too: We catch Foreman insisting that he wants to see some animal population or other restored within his lifetime. And why should “modern equipment” be banned from his ideal wilderness preserve? Does the wilderness care whether



man enters it armed with a stone hammer or a high-powered rifle? Aesthetics are for human beings only. In instances such as these, one tends to notice the artificiality of the idea of wilderness in a world in which wilderness has to be deliberately preserved. If man is an animal—as Dave Foreman believes—like other animals, why aren't his tracks as valid an imprint in the wild as the footprints of bear and the hoofprints of elk? Unsurprisingly, Foreman mentions that he resigned a year or so ago from Earth First!, which he had apparently outgrown intellectually and which in any event was being taken over by Leftists and New Age types from California.

Recently there has been speculation on the part of worried “conservatives” that the Greens are going to replace the Reds in the next decade or so as the major threat to international industrial capitalism. If that is so, I would say that the development will represent not just a relative improvement in the world situation but an absolute one, since industrial consumerist capitalism has been at least as revolutionary a force in history as Communism, destructive of traditional ways of human life and the natural world on which those ways have been largely dependent. Granted that organized environmentalism tends toward immoderation and extremism, the fact remains that the system it opposes is in itself immoderate and extreme, requiring an opponent willing and able to raise it at the gaming table, and to match it at the bargaining one. Man's Promethean task is real, but it is to create a type of civilization, not an antitype; and the destruction of wilderness—and not just of wilderness but of the natural world in general—is more than an unrelated side-effect of Western affluence and technique. It is a manifestation of a deepseated evil in Western society that has produced as well the destruction of cohesive societies and of the family, of high culture and true learning, and of values; the death of God; and—abortion. The fruits of the Fall (pride, concupiscence, and death) have never been more apparent in the world than they are today, and their effects are apparent everywhere; no place more visibly than in nature, which perhaps has something to do with the ubiquity and popularity of the environmentalist movement in our time. (As Foreman reminds us, environmentalist issues were until the mid-70s almost exclusively the preserve of individuals in the Republican Party.)

I have just finished reading a provocative new book—*After Ideology: Recovering the Spiritual Foundations of Freedom*, by David Walsh—in which the author, a professor of political thought at Catholic

CHILTON WILLIAMSON, JR.

University of America, argues that modernity has now unfolded itself completely, that it has exhausted its possibilities and its promises, and that the world today is ready for something else. This “something else,” Walsh thinks, is “philosophical Christianity”—the ontological socio-political philosophy of the classical world, joined to the supernatural revelation of Christ for which the first was a secular preparation. Modern man, Walsh believes, is temperamentally incapable of accepting these truths as accepted dogma, but he may be able to receive them experientially, and in this way make them his own. Whether present-day environmentalists like Dave Foreman represent in context the final bearers of the totalitarian temptation or the intellectually-confused and theologically-ignorant vanguard of the post-ideological era—in which an understanding of human existence will be grounded again at last on traditional wisdom and Christian piety—is likely to be an open question for a long time yet.

I guess I'm not holding my breath.



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# Abortion and the Family

by Nicholas Davidson

After two decades of nonstop struggle, it seems that the abortion question must have been thoroughly explored. Complex metaphysical arguments have been constructed, arcane ethical byways charted, and thousands of activists on both sides of the question have poured their unstinting efforts into, it seems, every possible channel.

For all this, the abortion debate remains singularly impoverished. Many of the most fervent opponents of abortion insist that the only relevant question is whether or not one favors killing babies. This cannot be true. Moral actions have resonance phenomena. As Plato argued in the *Dialogues*, virtue is efficacious, and vice is evil for both the individual and society. Modern evolutionism arrives at a similar conclusion, though from the opposite direction: from the point of view of sociobiology, morality itself is a resonance phenomenon of social exigency, encoded in our very genes. Hence, regardless of whether our reference is metaphysics, modern science, or both, we are forced to the following conclusion: If abortion is wrong, it will destroy other things besides fetuses. This point of view, however, has not been developed in the context of the abortion debate.

Instead, the dominant paradigm in the critique of abortion is the individualistic one of "children's rights." Why is this objectionable? Two hundred years ago, Louis de Bonald, one of the founders of conservatism, set forth the following principle of social analysis in his work *On Divorce*:

It is a fertile source of error, when treating a question relative to society, to consider it by itself, with no *relationship* to other questions, because society itself is only a group of *relationships*.<sup>1</sup>

Society, in this view, is not made up of individuals, or even of men, women, and children, but rather of a set of necessary relationships: husband to wife, mother to child, and so on. For this reason, sound social analysis "considers only the family and never the individual."<sup>2</sup> To demand rights for the individual without reference to these relationships is to subvert the basis for social existence.

It follows that if abortion is a violation of nature, the reason cannot

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lie in “children’s rights.” It must be sought instead in the necessary relationships that constitute society. If abortion violates those relationships, it is socially corrosive; if it does not, no reasoned objection to it can be raised.

Sensing the inadequacy of an individualist analysis of abortion, some foes of abortion have presented the “slippery slope” argument. According to this argument, the tolerance of abortion will lead to the tolerance of euthanasia and eventually to a general disrespect for human life. This argument, whatever its intrinsic validity, is only a partial improvement on the individualistic one. For one thing, it is ineffective with liberals opposed to capital punishment, gun ownership, domestic violence, war, and so on. Such people may sincerely feel that they are the real pro-lifers. More fundamentally, the slippery slope argument, even if ultimately accurate, presents a merely secondary objection to abortion as if it were the primary one. The advocates of the slippery slope argument are correct in their intuition that abortion cannot be discussed apart from social phenomena in general. The problem with their approach, rather, is that euthanasia is the least of the problems raised by abortion.

To most feminists, abortion is a “women’s rights” issue. According to them, abortion is favored by women and opposed by men. This is nonsense, of course. It has been widely reported that the group most likely to favor abortion-on-demand is young, single men. It is easy to see why this should be the case. Although many young men will argue passionately for “a woman’s right to abortion,” that is not what most of them really have in mind. The real reason young men tend to favor abortion is that they don’t want to get stuck with the moral and financial responsibility for raising a child. Contrary to the currently fashionable railing against “male irresponsibility,” this is fundamentally a responsible attitude: most men want to have children, but would like to have them when they can give them the time and resources they deserve. This attitude, however, does not reflect an adequate understanding of the nature of abortion.

#### **Why Does Marriage Exist?**

Here it is helpful to take a detour into sociobiology—specifically, into parental investment theory. The guiding concept of sociobiology is that *animals behave as if their central concern were to ensure the survival of their genes*. Thus, individuals attempt to reproduce and to ensure the well-being of their offspring. The efforts they make

to protect and nurture their offspring are known as “parental investment.”

Offspring possess half of their mother’s genes and half of their father’s. Siblings too share half of each other’s genes. Uncles and nephews share one-quarter of each other’s genes; first cousins share one-eighth of each other’s genes; and so on. Sociobiological theory predicts that individuals will be most concerned with the well-being of their children and siblings, with whom they share half of their genes; somewhat less concerned with the well-being of their nephews and cousins; and less and less concerned with the well-being of individuals to whom they are less and less closely related.<sup>3</sup> (This indicates the epistemological inadequacy of the liberal presumption that, at the social level, man acts as a selfish individual.)

What is marriage? The functions of any universal social institution are multiple and complex, and some of them may be obscure almost beyond the reach of *a priori* reasoning. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the most central purpose of marriage is *to enlist men’s participation in childrearing*. A woman always knows that she is the mother of her children. A man must rely on his wife’s fidelity for the same end. Thus, the central purpose of marriage is to enable men to procreate legitimate children. From the viewpoint of parental investment theory, this guarantees that fathers will not waste their time preserving the genes of other men. Equally important, it enlists the services of the male most concerned with the well-being of his particular offspring.

The mother-child unit is thus expanded to include the father, giving rise to the family. The advantages of this arrangement are clear: the male’s concentration on food-providing activities, protection against predators, and territorial aggression expands the female’s capabilities for nurturance. The male accepts responsibility, the female accepts a limited sphere of activity, including sexual activity. The resulting division of labor frees female energies for more complex and prolonged rearing of the young, making possible the development of the complex traditions that anthropologists call “cultures.” Thus marriage is in its essence an unwritten contract that mutually benefits men, women, and children, and consequently benefits society as a whole.

Parental investment theory explains why monogamy and polygamy are common in human societies, while polyandry is extremely rare, arising only under special circumstances. Monogamy and polygamy guarantee to husband and wife alike that their genetic efforts are

not wasted—that the children they raise are actually their own. Polyandry, in contrast, requires husbands to bet that their titular children are in fact their genetic offspring—that from the standpoint of genetic survival they are not squandering their parenting efforts. Multiple-male arrangements thus reduce the male’s motivation to contribute to the well-being of the young. By the same token, they reduce the female’s ability to elicit sustained assistance from the male—with the net result of reducing the male’s overall contribution to society.

#### Strategies of Reproduction

Biologists have long observed that there are two distinct strategies of sexual reproduction in nature. These are known as “strategy r” and “strategy K.”<sup>4</sup> In strategy r, the object is to produce a large number of offspring, while giving each individual offspring very little attention. The creature is betting that at least some of the numerous but neglected offspring will survive. Salmon, for instance, lay vast quantities of eggs, most of which are eaten by predators or otherwise destroyed. But as long as slightly more than one descendant per individual survives, this is a good strategy for the species.

In strategy K, in contrast, the object is to produce a smaller number of offspring while investing more effort in each individual offspring. Birds that sit their nests have moved far in the direction of strategy K. Animals such as lions and bears, whose young stay with their mothers for a prolonged period and learn how to hunt or fish from them, have gone farther still in this direction.

Now, what is interesting in the present context is that *men seem to have adopted strategy r and women to have adopted strategy K*. This difference begins at the level of reproductive physiology. Men produce around 100 million sperm cells in each ejaculation. Women, in contrast, produce a single egg every 28 days. To produce a child, the female must invest nine months of pregnancy along with sustained nurturance afterwards, with the limited mobility and heavy investment of energy these entail.<sup>5</sup> As a result of this physiological difference, a man can produce literally thousands of descendants, while a woman, under the most favorable circumstances, can only produce about thirty.

This physiological difference underlies a pronounced difference in behavior. Considerable evidence suggests that, given a chance, men are more prone to sexual promiscuity than women. A famous

study of San Francisco homosexuals found that 75 percent of the men had had more than 100 partners, and 25 percent had had more than 1,000. Among the women, only 2 percent had had 100 partners, and none had had 1,000.<sup>6</sup> The young man's tendency to seek sexual adventures and his unwillingness to accept consequences from them are clearly manifestations of a strategy r approach. Conversely, women's tendencies to fantasize about marriage and babies and their sense of emotional vulnerability in sex are clearly manifestations of a strategy K approach.

#### Men's Dual Strategy

What I would like to suggest, though, is that in reality *men have a dual sexual strategy*. It is impossible to understand the nature and purpose of the fundamental institutions of human society without grasping this fact and its implications. The young man tends to seek adventures, but the mature man's motivations are more involved. With the establishment of a family—or the emergence of the desire to found one, which generally appears by the late 20s—men's primary strategy shifts from strategy r to strategy K. While there may be elements of strategy r (promiscuity) in the mature man, and elements of strategy K (nurturance) in the young man, the overall contrast is marked.

From the standpoint of genetic survival, this means that the human male attempts to benefit from both strategy r and strategy K. In youth, he attempts to spread his genes widely and recklessly. In maturity, he attempts to raise a few legitimate children, investing great amounts of energy in their upbringing, both directly, through instruction, and indirectly, by providing them with the means of life—whether through hunting, raiding, or working to support a family.

And so the time comes when men want to marry and have children. But suddenly, the man's viewpoint is totally changed. Before, he sought a maximum of sex without responsibility; now, sex itself has become a route to responsibility, through the procreation of children.

See here how abortion changes things. If a woman has an unlimited right to her own body, she is free to destroy the mutual child before birth. The husband has no comparable right to intervene. In the eyes of the law, the wife has absolute power of life and death over their mutual child. Since the central purpose of marriage is to enable

men to procreate legitimate children, abortion vitiates the marriage contract, in its unwritten and universal form. Young men who proclaim their support for “a woman’s right to control her body,” when what they really mean is their own desire for sexual adventures, will one day be unable to prevent their wives from aborting their mutual children.

Would many wives abort their children against their husbands’ wishes? One may be inclined to answer, “No.” But would many husbands refuse to allow their wives to abort by mutual consent? If we fear the answer to the second question may be “Yes,” we cannot consistently answer “No” to the first.

By violating the marriage contract, abortion undermines the position of the husband, whether that position is conceived of in terms of authority or simply of equality. Such being the case, on what grounds can we possibly justify an unlimited privilege of abortion? Abortion, if it is to be socially tolerable, requires a marital veto.

#### **Abortion and Infanticide**

Some conservatives have reasoned that abortion must be socially tolerable, since the ancient Romans practiced infanticide for centuries without any obvious ill-effects on their society. This question is significant, because an examination of ancient infanticide sheds a quite unexpected light on modern abortion. This question can most easily be approached by analogy with ancient repudiation and modern divorce.<sup>7</sup>

Among the peoples of the ancient Mediterranean from whom Western civilization arose, the husband had a right to repudiate his wife. The wife, however, had no reciprocal right over her husband. This institution of repudiation is found among the early Hebrews, early Greeks, and early Romans. The repudiating husband could subsequently remarry, but the repudiated wife in some cases could not.

This institution strikes us today as unspeakably barbaric. It must be considered, though, in the context of its times. The word “patriarchy,” although grossly abused in recent years, is in this case literally true, meaning “government by fathers.” The *paterfamilias* exercised not just a vague moral authority but sovereign political power. The husband’s right of repudiation was a necessary consequence of this power. Bonald points out in *On Divorce* that repudiation “was an act of jurisdiction, even when it was not an act of justice.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, a modern divorce court, duly authorized by political power, has



the legal authority to separate spouses and prescribe the conditions for their separation, even when it errs seriously in its dispositions.

What was the purpose of this power? Since the central purpose of marriage is to enable men to procreate legitimate children, adultery violates the marriage contract. It is vitally important to the well-being of society that there be a means to enforce female chastity. Repudiation provides such a means of enforcement. It represents, according to Bonald, "the natural power of the husband to judge the wife and condemn her to dismissal."<sup>9</sup>

Divorce is thus a fundamentally different institution from repudiation. The purpose of repudiation is to ensure the power of the husband over the wife; the purpose of divorce is to enable the wife to escape the power of the husband.

Certainly this was the view of the feminists who, in the nineteenth century, successfully campaigned for the establishment of divorce. As Aileen S. Kraditor, a leading historian of nineteenth-century feminism, writes: "Suffragists generally agreed that the number of divorces was rising in that period not because women were taking their marriage vows lightly, but because long-oppressed women were for the first time finding the financial and spiritual resources to dissolve intolerable unions."<sup>10</sup> Clearly, the underlying assumption was that divorce is essentially a means for the wife to escape her husband's power. Modern data confirm this assumption: despite contemporary mythology to the contrary, two-thirds of divorces are initiated by the wife,<sup>11</sup> almost always over the husband's objections.<sup>12</sup>

Along with the right of repudiation went the right of infanticide, as another attribute of sovereign power. Among the Romans, a child was placed at the feet of its father at birth. If the father took the child in his arms, it was permitted to live; if he left it on the ground, it was set out to die. This practice may have been an abuse of paternal authority; but the point here is that it was compatible with the existence of such authority.

The difference between infanticide and abortion is similar to the difference between repudiation and divorce. Infanticide, like repudiation, was an abuse of paternal power, while abortion, like divorce, is its annihilation.

An interesting conclusion emerges from this discussion. Abortion opponents often describe abortion as "infanticide"—which may seem like an attempt to depict abortion as worse than it really is. But ancient infanticide and modern abortion are fundamentally different

institutions. From society's point of view, abortion is worse than infanticide. Infanticide is an abuse of paternal power, while abortion is its annihilation. Abortion thus disrupts the natural relationships that constitute the family in a way that infanticide does not. That a civilization can survive the practice of infanticide does not mean that it can survive the practice of abortion.

#### **The Social Consequences of Single Motherhood**

The consequences of the ongoing decline of the institution of fatherhood are not merely symbolic. There is a fundamental difference between past and present social problems. The social problems of the past were largely the result of bad economics and primitive medicine. Feudal restrictions on commerce in grain subjected Western Europe to periodic famine as recently as 1740.<sup>13</sup> Before the nineteenth century, primitive midwifery and poor hygiene kept infant mortality around 50 percent.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, the social problems of the present—crime, drugs, and educational decline—are consequences of the decline of the family.

Such expressions as “the decline of the family,” “the broken home,” and, with its exquisite sex-neutrality, “the single-parent household” can in one respect be misleading. Close to nine out of ten “single-parent” households are really *female-headed* households. In 1988, 85.7 percent of households comprised of single parents and their children were headed by a woman.<sup>15</sup> The chief reality referred to by such expressions as “the decline of the family” and “the single-parent household” is the decline of fatherhood.<sup>16</sup>

The beginnings of this phenomenon can be traced back to the nineteenth century or even earlier. They only emerged with full force, however, in the single motherhood explosion that began in the 1960s. Between 1960 and 1988, the proportion of children living in fatherless homes more than doubled, from 11.3 percent<sup>17</sup> to 24.5 percent.<sup>18</sup> Among white children, father absence increased from 8.7 percent<sup>19</sup> to 18.2 percent;<sup>20</sup> among black children, it increased from 27.7 percent<sup>21</sup> to 58.4 percent.<sup>22</sup> (These figures are actually worse than they look, because they do not include children living with stepfathers.)

This development has major implications. As Daniel Amneus has shown in a massively documented work, *The Garbage Generation*:

Most criminals come from female-headed families. Most gang members come from female-headed families. Most addicts come from female-headed families.

## THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

Most rapists come from female-headed families. Most educational failures come from female-headed families. Most illegitimate births occur to females who themselves grew up in female-headed families.<sup>23</sup>

After examining various statistical measures, Amneus concludes that “*a child growing up in a single-parent home (usually female-headed) is seven times as likely to be delinquent*” as a child from an intact family.<sup>24</sup> Numerous studies have found that the negative effects of father absence persist even when income differences are taken into account.<sup>25</sup>

Consequently, the current efforts to hire more police, pass tougher laws, and build more prisons are fundamentally misplaced. If we were to transfer *100 percent* of these efforts to an effort to eliminate single motherhood, we would achieve far better results. There is nothing natural or universal about the need for ever-increasing numbers of police, courts, and prisons. Prior to the end of the eighteenth century, not a single European city had a police force.

The failure of the liberal War on Poverty suggests why the conservative War on Crime stands no better chance of success. Before the War on Poverty began in the mid-1960s, young women and children were no more likely to be poor than most other segments of the population.<sup>26</sup> Today, in contrast, 52 percent of America's poor are single mothers and their children.<sup>27</sup> Female-headed households are six-and-a-half times as likely to be poor as intact families.<sup>28</sup>

This poverty is predictable. By breaking the immemorial contract of human society, in which female chastity elicits male assistance in childrearing, single motherhood is inherently a condition of poverty—emotional and moral as well as monetary. Thus, welfare programs that subsidize single motherhood increase poverty at the same time they decrease it. The result: despite vast growth in the sums spent to combat poverty, the proportion of children living below the poverty line has actually been increasing.<sup>29</sup>

One might argue that a nation as wealthy as America can well afford to spend a few billion dollars a year on social programs, even if they prove to be ineffective. AFDC and related programs, however, amount to around 4 percent of the annual GNP, not an insignificant figure.<sup>30</sup>

Nor are we simply throwing good money after bad. All societies experience some crime. In most societies, however, crime is an anomaly, and criminality never attains the status of a major social problem.

In a remarkable 1988 article in the *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, Douglas A. Smith and G. Roger Jarjoura presented an analysis of victimization data on over 11,000 individuals in three different urban areas (Rochester, New York; Tampa-St. Petersburg, Florida; and St. Louis, Missouri). Smith and Jarjoura discovered an extraordinary fact: The proportion of single-parent households in a community is an accurate predictor of its rates of violent crime and burglary, but the community's poverty level is not. "[N]ot all poor areas," Smith and Jarjoura observe, "have high rates of violent crime." However, "areas with higher percentages of single-parent households also have higher rates of violent crime." Similarly, once the proportion of single-parent households in a community is taken into account, "The effect of poverty on burglary rates becomes insignificant and slightly negative."<sup>31</sup> In other words, *poverty does not cause crime*. Widespread criminality, instead, is a consequence of family breakdown—more precisely, of father absence or single motherhood, which are different terms for the same phenomenon.

#### **The Case for Adoption**

If single motherhood has any social justification, it can only be to provide babies for adoption. One cannot help feeling deeply for the girl who gives up her baby for adoption and the adopted child who may someday search desperately for its genetic parents. But out-of-wedlock birth requires a choice of the lesser of two evils. As has been pointed out in *The Family in America*, "Children placed through adoption enjoy a number of well-documented advantages over children reared by their unwed mothers."<sup>32</sup>

Adoption is also better for unwed mothers themselves. A 1988 study by Steven D. McLaughlin, Diane L. Manninen, and Linda D. Wings for the Battelle Health and Population Center found that, among unwed mothers who gave up their babies for adoption, 70 percent went on to complete high school. In contrast, among unwed mothers who kept their babies, only 48 percent completed high school.

Regardless of whether or not they keep their babies, unwed mothers suffer a variety of psychological consequences. The Battelle researchers note that "both relinquishers and child rearers are deprived relative to their never-pregnant peers." But, the researchers found, "relinquishment offers a number of important, measurable advantages to pregnant adolescents."<sup>33</sup>

The solution to out-of-wedlock birth is not single motherhood

but adoption. Instead of subsidizing single motherhood, we should develop the cultural, legal, and administrative means needed to discourage single motherhood and encourage adoption.

Such means are virtually nonexistent at the present time. Typically, when an unmarried woman gives birth, she is visited in the hospital by welfare caseworkers, who lay out the benefits she can receive if she keeps her child. I have heard at least one young welfare mother say that a visit of this sort changed her initial intention to give up her baby for adoption.

William Pierce, president of the National Committee for Adoption, is critical of "the erroneous assumption of many pregnancy counselors . . . that 'only a few girls are the least bit interested' in adoption." He cites a study by Edmund Mech of the University of Illinois, which found that "most teens did want to discuss adoption." "However," continues Pierce, "the majority of counselors assumed they did not and were themselves unfamiliar with adoption and therefore did not address it in counseling."<sup>34</sup>

A number of groups opposed to abortion have established centers that attempt to care for the financial and emotional needs of unwed pregnant women. When these centers provide assistance with adoption, they are providing an extremely valuable service. But when such centers promote or legitimize single motherhood, they commit the same error as AFDC-style welfare programs. For the benefit of all concerned, unwed mothers should be encouraged, not to keep their babies, but to give them up for adoption.

Furthermore, there is reason to doubt that an attempt to discourage abortion by encouraging single motherhood can succeed even in its own terms. According to the Battelle researchers, unwed mothers who keep their babies are "more likely to become pregnant again sooner and to resolve subsequent pregnancies by abortion."<sup>35</sup> Pregnant white women are almost 30 times more likely to have abortions if they are single than if they are married.<sup>36</sup> Among blacks, this ratio is lower but still impressive.<sup>37</sup> Overall, more than 80 percent of abortions are performed on single women.<sup>38</sup> To fight abortion with single motherhood is to fight fire with gasoline.

#### The Need for a Parental Veto

From this perspective, the question of parental consent to abortion emerges in a new light. It is clear that parents should have a veto over abortions by their minor daughters. Any other approach ignores

the right and duty of parents to control their daughters' sexuality. In general, youth finds sex irresistible in the absence of a constraining social structure. Parents therefore have a natural right to such control and to the power required to achieve it.

It would be absurd to make the drastic measure of abortion available to minors while denying them the lesser measure of contraception. It would also probably be infeasible: as in Japan, abortion can itself be used as a means of contraception. To make abortion available to minors therefore implies making contraception available. In turn, to make contraception available requires the existence of a network of birth-control centers, along with counselors to staff them. By the very nature of their position, these counselors compete with parents as teenagers' source of moral authority on sexuality. Abortion-on-demand for teenagers thus entails a culture in which adolescent sexuality is removed from parental influence. So, paradoxical though it may seem at first, to allow teenage girls to procure abortions by themselves tends to *increase* the incidence of single motherhood, by promoting a culture of freedom from parental control.

When Planned Parenthood begins sex education classes in a community's schools, pregnancy rates soar. Sociologist William Donohue has noted "the correlation between the expansion of sex education and unwanted teenage pregnancies: the more we have of the former, the more we have of the latter."<sup>39</sup> In a study covering fifteen states, Susan Roylance found that those states that spent the most on family planning also experienced the largest increases in abortion and illegitimacy during the 1970s.<sup>40</sup> According to one careful study, 14-year-old girls who have received "prior contraceptive education" are 40 percent more likely to engage in sex than those who have not.<sup>41</sup> Other studies in this area have reached similar conclusions.<sup>42</sup> Many people favor abortion in the hope that abortion will reduce illegitimacy. In reality, abortion-on-demand for teenagers tends to increase the incidence of illegitimate birth.

Recent parental notification statutes have provided further data on this subject. In 1983, Utah passed a law requiring parental consent for dispensing contraceptives to minors. In the following year, the number of visits by teenagers to family-planning clinics declined. During the same period, the pregnancy, abortion, and birth rates for girls ages 15 to 17 also fell.<sup>43</sup>

In 1981, Minnesota introduced one of the first laws in the nation requiring parental notification in cases of abortion. By 1985, the

pregnancy rate of Minnesota 15-to-17-year-olds had fallen 15 percent, the abortion rate 21 percent, and the birth rate 9 percent from their 1980 levels.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, when Massachusetts passed a parental notification law on abortion, the pregnancy rate among girls under 18 fell 15 percent within two years.<sup>45</sup> If these statutes, which merely require parental notification, were strengthened to include parental consent, it is reasonable to suppose that these declines would be even more dramatic.

Empirical grounds exist for questioning whether unlimited premarital sex is in young people's best interests. A 1988 study by John O. G. Billy of the Battelle Human Affairs Research Centers found that the grades of white male students fall when they begin to have intercourse. Among girls, this effect is less pronounced, but the onset of sexual activity appears to lower their academic aspirations for the future.<sup>46</sup> The latter point may not be critical to most women's success in life. More disquieting, sexually transmitted disease is a major cause of sterility—of which more in a moment.

Cohabitation before marriage has been repeatedly linked to subsequent marital failure. One recent American study found that the proportion of marriages ending in separation or divorce is "a third higher among those who lived together before marriage than among those who did not."<sup>47</sup> Similar phenomena have been found abroad. In Sweden, divorce rates are reportedly 80 percent higher for couples that cohabit before marriage than for those that do not. Furthermore, this effect increases over time: the longer couples have cohabited before marriage, the higher their chances of divorcing. Even brief cohabitation before marriage, however, is associated with a higher incidence of divorce.<sup>48</sup>

The male nurturance predicted by parental investment theory extends to aiding one's children to set up viable households: one's children are the best bet to perpetuate one's genes. Thus, it can be predicted that fathers will take a generally dim view of their daughters' engaging in premarital sexual activity, given the linkage between such activity and difficulties later in life. Siblings have a similar motivation: just as fathers share half their genes with their daughters, so do brothers and sisters. As a rule, if families do not control their daughters' sexuality, nobody will. Presumably it is not coincidental that those opposed to premarital sex tend to favor a parental veto on abortion, while those who view premarital sex as a positive good tend to oppose such a veto.

In the case of minor daughters, this veto should, ideally, be held either by the father alone or by both parents jointly. If one parent alone can authorize an abortion, a new possibility of marital conflict is created, which must conflict with either paternal authority or spousal harmony. Parental consent—whether vested in the father, the mother, or both parents jointly—introduces a previously nonexistent possibility of conflict into the family. As a result, parental consent, though a necessary reform, is less than an ideal solution.

#### **An Assault on Family Living**

In addition to a veto on abortion, parents should be empowered to give up their minor daughters' illegitimate babies for adoption. Adoption is clearly in the best interests of the mother, the child, and society as a whole.

Would there be a demand for babies to adopt? Indeed there would be. Every year, there are about two million couples seeking to adopt, from a pool of about 40,000 available infants per year. An additional 10,000 children are imported each year from abroad, around 60 percent of them from South Korea, to compensate for the dearth of American infants to adopt, giving a total of about 50,000 adoptions per year. In contrast, the annual number of abortions is approximately 1.5 million. This means that for every adoption there are currently around 30 abortions.<sup>49</sup>

However, it would be too simple to conclude that abortion reduces adoption in any direct way. Pregnancy rates have climbed since the sexual revolution. However, so have abortion rates. The introduction of abortion has kept the rate of illegitimate birth to roughly its pre-sexual revolution level. The key change is that the overwhelming majority of unwed mothers now keep their babies—between 93 and 97 percent of unwed mothers, by various estimates.<sup>50</sup> The role of abortion in causing the adoption dearth is an indirect one: by the part abortion plays in a culture of sexual permissiveness, oriented against the family, abortion tends to encourage single motherhood.

See here how the various elements of morality and social structure are interlinked. The incidence of sterility in women rises sharply between the late teens and early 30s. In consequence, infertility has radically increased as a result of the feminist revolution, which led many women to neglect childbearing to the last possible moment. The number of infertile couples has also radically increased as a result of the sexual revolution, which has produced epidemic rates



of sexually transmitted diseases. Two of the most common STDs, gonorrhea and chlamydia, although rarely fatal, often cause sterility. The rate of infertility among American wives in their early twenties *tripled* between 1965 and 1982, from 3.6 percent to 10.6 percent of wives ages 20 to 24. As a report from the U.S. Congress's Office of Technology Assessment suggests, "this increase may be linked to the rate of gonorrhea in the same age group," which also tripled over approximately the same period (between 1960 and 1977).<sup>51</sup> This is human tragedy on a vast scale. As a result of these various developments, large numbers of Americans are being prevented from following the traditional pattern of family life, thus further seducing the centrality of the family in the American social landscape.

#### The Right to Control One's Body

Thus, husbands should have a veto over their wives' abortions and parents should have a veto over their daughters' abortions. This leaves the case of single adult women. Such women are in no sense under *coverture* to a husband or parent. If any women have "a right to control their own bodies," it is these.

Where does the concept of "a woman's right to control her own body" come from? The source of this concept clearly lies in the natural rights philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, epitomized by John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*. In a famous chapter, Locke writes:

Though the Earth, and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person. This nobody has any right to but himself. The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.<sup>52</sup>

Locke points out that this principle, which initially arises from manual labor on the land, applies to labor for income as well. Money makes possible the exchange of otherwise perishable goods, enabling mankind to proceed beyond a subsistence existence.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the principle that individuals have a right to control their bodies also means that men have a right to control their incomes.

Writing from a progressive perspective, men's-rights advocate Herb Goldberg draws a provocative conclusion from this:

Now that women are no longer victims of oppressive laws that denied abortions to them, paternal responsibility without the consent of the father is a sexist relic.

Now, the woman retains the ultimate legal right to decide on all matters of childbirth. If she becomes unexpectedly pregnant and wants to have the baby he cannot say “no,” and demand an abortion. In spite of this lack of decision power, he still retains paternal responsibility financially and legally.

On the other hand, if the father wants the baby and the woman wants to have an abortion he again cannot impose his will, even if he agrees to assume full responsibility for the child.

I propose that any couple intending to have a child sign a contract formalizing this mutual desire. In the absence of such a contract the male must be given the prerogative of demanding an abortion unless he is released from any financial or legal responsibility if the woman insists she wants the child despite his request to terminate the pregnancy.<sup>54</sup>

Goldberg’s solution may seem outrageous. It would allow either parent to destroy the child but neither to protect it. But this is a necessary consequence of granting women rights to both abortion and child support. The woman’s child and the man’s income are both products of their bodies. If women have a right to *their* bodies, then men have a right to *their* bodies. Consequently, if the woman has a claim on the man’s income, the man has a claim on the woman’s child. The only reasonable way to reconcile these claims is to abolish abortion or to abolish child support.

Indeed, from the perspective of individual rights, a man’s right to retain his income is stronger than a woman’s right to dispose of her fetus. For the most fervent partisan of abortion cannot plausibly deny that the fetus possesses at least some of the attributes of a separate individual, unlike a bank account or a stock certificate. As such, the fetus’s rights deserve at least some consideration.

It may be asserted that, by engaging in intercourse, the father has implicitly accepted responsibility for its potential consequences. This is true as far as it goes. To combine abortion with child support, though, divorces rights and responsibilities: the woman has the rights, the man has the responsibilities. The woman is free to use contraception, abort the child, or relinquish it for adoption. From conception on, virtually nothing constrains her to take any responsibility for the child against her will. To enable the mother to reduce the father to an indentured servant, without giving him any authority over the child or any claim on the mother’s reciprocal services, clearly violates the principles of free choice and equal rights—and without these principles the liberal case for abortion vanishes into thin air. Yet to give the unwed father authority over the child and a claim

to the mother's services would amount to instituting polygamy. This in turn would impair women's ability to contract reliably monogamous marriages.

Toward a Truly Conservative Position

What would a position that is not merely endorsed by some "conservatives" but actually conservative of society entail? If abortion is banned, the logic of mandatory child support becomes consistent. Each party is then held responsible for its own actions—provided that we make the crucial assumption that the mother will actually keep the child. But does anyone plan to *force* her to keep the child? That would clearly be inadvisable.

For the larger question here is whether society should tolerate single motherhood. It is clearly best for all concerned that the child be placed with a married couple for adoption, assuming that the parents are single and do not wish to marry. If the child is adopted by a married couple, the issue of child support is moot.

This approach may appear to let unwed fathers off the hook too easily. The unwed mother is already enjoined by her pregnancy. Consequently, the unwed father should pay a one-time fine of, say, five to fifty thousand dollars, scaled to his income, to defray the costs of adoption services.

Single parents of either sex should be allowed to keep their children only if they marry, so demonstrating that they are capable of providing their children with a complete family environment in which to grow up.

The courts would still occasionally have to make custody determinations—for example, when both unwed parents marry third parties and file for adoption. However, the number of such cases would be minute, on the order of a few thousand a year, in contrast to the current millions of husbandless mothers, fatherless children, and familyless men.

Therefore, I conclude that *the appropriate solution to out-of-wedlock pregnancy is to abolish abortion for single women and encourage adoption*. No other policy can be reconciled with social order, and, for that matter, with equal liberty.

Hard Cases Make Bad Law

Once we have established the undesirability of granting women an unlimited privilege of abortion, the case for total abolition becomes overwhelming. A partial ban poses major enforcement problems.

Although minor girls are often physically identifiable as such, married women are not. Consequently, as long as abortion is available to many women *de jure*, it will be available to most women *de facto*. The Planned Parenthood activists who staff many birth control centers are not going to look more closely than they have to at the signature on a consent form.

More stringent enforcement measures would create more problems than they solve. It is neither possible nor desirable to totally control the actions of individuals at every step. That is why society has general rules, called laws, that maximize overall good, despite the inconvenience they necessarily cause to individuals in a minority of cases.

Therefore, given the inconveniences of abortion itself—its incompatibility with the central reason for marriage, its inseparability from a culture of adolescent freedom from parental control, its resulting implication in a downward spiral of criminality and social decline—it is justifiable, and in the final analysis socially necessary, to outlaw abortion altogether, with the sole exception of danger to the life of the mother. That exception includes the cases of small girls victimized by rape or incest. There may be a case for permitting abortion in instances of severe fetal defects. But further exceptions should be strictly limited.

We may dismiss other cases of rape and incest on the general principle that laws cannot sacrifice the rule to the exception. This principle is sometimes stated as “Hard cases make bad law.”<sup>55</sup> In Joseph de Maistre’s words:

One must be careful, when dealing with abuses, to judge political institutions by their constant effects, rather than by those collateral inconveniences that easily dominate weak viewpoints and prevent them from seeing the whole. Since the inconveniences of an institution good in itself are merely the inevitable dissonances of a well-tempered instrument, how can institutions be judged on the basis of their inconveniences?<sup>56</sup>

Some things must simply be borne. It is not kindness but cruelty, even to those whom one seeks to help, if the remedies to abuse deprive people of a functioning society.

#### **Conclusion**

I believe we are now in a position to better understand the horror with which abortion opponents view the destruction of the fetus. This horror does not merely reflect their conscious revulsion at the destruction of an innocent human life. Instead, the horror they feel

## THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

arises, at least in part, from their deepseated and largely unformulated sense that abortion is the destruction of society itself, through the undermining of the relationships that constitute the family.

To liberals, the fundamental unit of society is the individual; to conservatives, it is the family. If the latter view is correct, then measures that undermine the family also undermine society. Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger<sup>57</sup> once described contraception as “a force for civilization”: be that as it may, abortion is clearly just the opposite.

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NICHOLAS DAVIDSON

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# Abortion and the Discreet Domesticity of Evil

Paul Mankowski

TEN YEARS AGO I WAS IN southern Germany—in Munich to be precise—ostensibly studying the language and trying in my spare time to acquaint myself with the history of Bavaria.

One afternoon I took a trip to a suburb of Munich, to a town no farther from the city center than, say, Waltham is from Boston. Getting off the commuter train, I was struck by what a pretty town it was: quiet streets with an abundance of trees and rosebushes, well-kept homes and lawns and gardens carefully tended by their owners. After perhaps a three-quarter mile stroll from the station one turns a corner onto a large grassy area where one might expect to find a community college or the like. But there, in the midst of all this bowery suburbia, is the *Konzentrationslager Dachau*—Dachau Concentration Camp.

There is no need for me to describe the camp in detail. We all know the shudder that comes over us when we see photographs of the barbed-wire, the guard towers, the abnormally-large eyes of the inmates, and of course those sinister but functional brick buildings at the “business end” of the installation. After a visit of several hours I walked back from the camp to the suburban train station numb with the shock of what I had just seen.

Before I had been to Dachau I imagined that every concentration camp (and the rest of the Nazi machinery for dealing with the “Jewish Question”) was located out of sight of the citizenry: way off in frozen, desolate, remote areas of unused farmland. The uniquely disturbing aspect of Dachau, one which still gives me the occasional nightmares, is the fact that it was so obviously, so undeniably *there* in the middle of a perfectly ordinary small town. As I passed the sixty and seventy-year old Dachau townfolk quietly weeding and pruning in their back yards, I had an urge to hoist them up by the straps of their overalls and shout: “Why didn’t you *see*? Why didn’t you *do* something?”

I believe I’m in a position today to answer my own question. We can surmise that the greater number of the residents of the suburb of Dachau were out of sympathy with what they knew (to some

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degree) to be going on inside the camp. Most of the townsfolk were not spectacularly wicked human beings. Yet the crimes within the camp took place not only because a few people perpetrated evil but also because the overwhelming majority *tolerated* it. And the tragically bitter irony is that the security and ordinariness of small-town life—the very thing that might have made it the last place to locate a concentration camp—helped rather than hindered this toleration of evil. Disruption, not wickedness, is the threat which is chiefly intolerable to peaceful community life, and it was precisely the normality—what Hannah Arendt called the “banality”—of this evil which made it a tolerable one to the grocers and housewives and upright businessmen of Dachau.

Of course the camp had a horrible purpose, of course most good citizens would have wished it away. Yet the fact is that no fire and brimstone rained down from heaven; the sun rose and set as usual, winter was followed by spring, young people got married, old folks died, babies were born, children sent to school.

For the law-abiding citizens of suburban Munich, the enormous Business of Ordinary Life seemed much more insistent and demanding than did any crime. One murder is a tragedy; a million murders is a statistic. The evil which reveals itself as a statistic, but not a disruption, is one to which these ordinary people were appallingly adaptable.

Those who have to some extent “gone public” in their opposition to abortion are familiar with open hostility. But I want to suggest that the experience of Dachau teaches us that the real adversary, the opponent most to be reckoned with, is not the person spitting and shrieking across a picket line, nor the brutal policeman, nor even the stalwart pro-abortion politicians. The single biggest obstacle we face is the *normality* of the abortion part of our lives.

One abortion is a tragedy; a million and a half abortions is a statistic; and every year a million and a half unborn children become another statistic for the Department of Public Health, which it reports with no more fanfare than issuing a phone book. Unpleasant, yes, but part of everyday business all the same. No fire and brimstone has rained down from heaven; the sun rises and sets as usual, winter is followed by spring, young people get married, old folks die, babies (sometimes) are born, children sent to school. It’s worthy of reflection that, for every college student in America today, the local abortion clinic has been a constant from the time of his first memories, as



much a part of city real estate as a branch bank or a 7-Eleven, and *more* venerable than such recent developments as the video rental store or the tanning salon.

What clue does, say, an eighteen-year-old have that something is radically wrong with our public life? It is in the nature of banality of this evil that he should have none. For example, because the very mention of the words "concentration camp" makes our flesh crawl, I think we forget that this expression was once a euphemism—a minor masterpiece of bureaucratic newspeak. The word was intended to soothe, not to terrify, originally suggesting nothing more sinister than relocation of displaced persons.

By the same token, the language of the "reproductive health center" and the "women's pavilion" is deliberately designed to obscure the reality; it allows us to pretend that nothing *disruptive* is happening inside these sinister, functional buildings. I believe that today every eighteen-year-old in Brookline (Massachusetts' abortion capital) has a good idea of what goes on in PreTerm, just as every eighteen-year-old in Dachau in 1941 had a good idea of what went on behind the barbed-wire. The language doesn't really *deceive*, but it somehow gives permission to those who want to keep up the charade, to make-believe that the incinerators are only burning garbage, to make-believe that the people in white coats are in the business of healing, not killing. What the young person learns from this use of language is that there are some truths which ought not to be spoken, that some lies are necessary to propriety. He is schooled in an etiquette of mendacity which is in its own way as strict as any morality.

We are sometimes told that the prevalence of abortion in our country is an example of moral callousness. I don't think this tells the whole story. Callousness suggests insensitivity to moral questions, but I believe the residents of Brookline (like those of Dachau before them) have a conscience as tender as a sunburned neck (to pilfer a line from Flannery O'Connor). Yet the pain which makes them shriek in outrage is provoked not by the evil itself but by those who call attention to it. Their strategy, their moral survival technique is, in the words of C. S. Lewis, "to let sleeping worms lie," to make a mutual co-existence treaty with evil: you stay off my conscience; I'll stay off your incinerators. You leave my security and normality alone; I'll leave your suction machines and forceps intact. You keep to your lab coats and discreet professional buildings; I'll stay quiet

in my living room. The one thing which neither party to the contract wants is that someone should call a spade a spade.

And that, of course, is our own task. To give things their proper names. To replace euphemism with the stark truth. To speak about what goes on inside those brick walls. To call evil evil—no matter how foolish or awkward it makes us appear, no matter how chilly or furious our fellow citizens become. And, above all, to work with every resource at our disposal to hinder, frustrate, and bring to a standstill the engines of human destruction.

Twenty, thirty, forty years from now, perhaps a young woman will keep a rather gruesome appointment with American moral history by taking the train to the Abortion Remembrance Museum in Brookline. Will she feel a knot in her stomach as she passes through the doorway through which, on every business day—week after week, month after month, year after year—fifty human beings entered, and only twenty-five came out again alive? Will she shake her head with stunned disbelief as she looks through the literature on display: pamphlets and posters which refer to abortion as “interruption of pregnancy,” or “evacuation of the product of conception,” or most cruelly of all, “an option in reproductive health”—literature which the museum guide explains was the standard parlance in the days when abortion was the law? Will she be horrified as the various instruments of dilation, suction, compression and curettage are explained to her, with the barely comprehensible statistics of how often they were employed?

I can imagine this young woman, after leaving the clinic on Beacon Street (even the word “clinic” makes her shudder), going for a long, rambling walk to wear off her shock. And I can imagine men I know—twenty, thirty, forty years from now—quite old by this time, puffing down the driveway to put out the trash when this woman walks by.

Will she have the same look in her eye as she pauses in front of their houses as I had after Dachau? Will she desperately want to ask you the same questions I had? What answer, in all honesty, from your heart of hearts, would you not be ashamed to give her?

## Juvenal's Satire, Our Decadence

Thomas Molnar

THE ROMAN POET Juvenal holds a distinguished place among the greatest satirists—with Aristophanes, Molière, Swift—and others who were not writers but caricaturists of an epoch, like Hogarth and Daumier. Satirists all, tongue-lashing their contemporaries and enjoying a permanent posthumous career as experts in spotting and castigating the symptoms of decadence. Their similarity of inspiration through the ages testifies both to their scalpel-like judgment and the eternally-same foibles, crimes, obscenities and horrors of every century and generation, although their art requires them to paint “the good old times,” the “golden age,” as a contrasting background for the repugnance they felt for the always-present state of immorality.

But this distinction between the past paradise and the present decay is not a mere literary device: there *are* better times and worse times. Forty-some years ago when I came to New York (Juvenal's Rome, the Athens of Aristophanes, Molière's Versailles) there was hypocrisy and shallowness, self-righteousness and naiveté, but these things were not comparable to pornography in kiosks, abortion not just on demand but imposed by the current mores, art shows with sex-organs displayed, pederasts invading cathedrals. Men and women *are* sinners, dissimulators and hypocrites, but not in every age do we find so much impudence and beastliness. This would be denied by many psycho-and socio-experts—even our judges—but is confirmed by Juvenal, one of those who knew his city and knew how to describe its decadence, although Juvenal called his work merely *Satires*.

The very word decadence has become associated with Rome, precisely through Juvenal's work, perhaps because another, forever anonymous, expert in decay, the one of Sodom, perished in the fire and brimstone. For more than a thousand years, our author was the model satirist for Christians, and for centuries great writers were brought up on his strictures: the concise indictments, the short, superb descriptions, like sharply-focused photographs, of a hedonistic society rushing toward dissolution.

Let us briefly situate him. Born around 65 A.D. when Nero's excesses scandalized the empire, he died around 140, under Hadrian's reign.

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He wrote during the period that historians of Rome regard as the best of times, in those of Trajan and Hadrian, when the empire was strong, respected, stable, and more widely extended than any time before and after. Yet, Juvenal's descriptions must be truthful, which shows that even under good rulers civil society can be rotten and morality abject. Three centuries before our writer, the historian Polybius, a Greek, a friend of the Scipios (as Americans might say, "of the Cabot Lodges"), predicted it all: democracy and wealth had introduced corrupt politics: any expense was justified to get votes for public office, and the best families vied for luxury, display, and power.

Juvenal observed what Polybius had foreseen. Let us, in turn, read him on decadence while we observe ours—and let us consider whether the similarities are purely a matter of coincidence.

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What were the kinds of conduct—so numerous in private that they amounted to public conduct—did Juvenal consider as symptoms of moral and social decay? Let's pay some attention to the historical background, and Juvenal's own as well. He was the son of a freed slave, but so well integrated and so loyal to Rome that he could admire the City's glorious ancestors and a sterner morality, and deplore the ostentatiousness of the *nouveaux riches*, the arrogance of slaves, the uninhibited behavior of matrons, the advance of pederasty, the cruelty, the superstitions, the reckless gambling—the universal corruption. How do you criticize, pillory, and curse such a generalized evil? The great satirists usually took a representative sin, a grotesque attitude, a striking case of hypocrisy, and put it in a play, a poem, an essay, a narrative, a series of tableaux. Juvenal's method embraced all at once—a difficult enterprise—but he proceeded with the help of sharply-contoured episodes, brief sketches, miniature plays, making them concrete and credible by specifying the moment and naming the protagonists. All this in the form of conversations, serio-comical confessions, tearful but grotesque confidences, gossip, or indeed transporting the "camera" to this or that household, and "video-taping" a dinner gathering or the secrets of a bedchamber.

Take, for example, the twenty superb lines in which he accompanies, so to speak, the empress Messalina, Claudius's young wife, to the lupanar at night where the never-satisfied woman submits, naked and in a blond wig (the sign, in dark-haired Rome, of prostitutes) to clients. "In the early dawn, having had enough of men but still

burning, dissatisfied, she steals back to her august husband's bed."

Not only the empress. Adultery, notes Juvenal, is the oldest of all crimes, confirming what all ages have known, that dissolution begins at home and is, first of all, sexual in character. Messalina's was, after all, not such an unusual case, it was repeated a few years ago in New York when a society lady became a madame for a call-girl network. Juvenal cites many cases of sexual license: women marrying eunuchs so as to avoid having children; lovers hired by husbands to impregnate their wives (surrogate fathers?); young men no longer finding virgins to marry; wives pining for gladiators (sports heroes of the day) so that the saying went around that many a newborn was "like such and such a gladiator's portrait!" The lady Eppia abandoned her small children to follow a troop of gladiators to Egypt; and so on and on goes the description of the new ways made possible, according to our author, by the emancipation of women.

Other illustrations: daughters of good families fighting in the circus like men, sexual freedoms claimed by wives and granted also to the husband; women watching explicit scenes in the theater.

Sex was not the last word of decadence. Immorality is a general loosening of the rules of decency, discipline, restraint. Juvenal is inexhaustible—and always colorful and amusing—on the *nouveaux riches*, their absurd spending and displays. Back in Nero's time, Petronius left us an immortal picture of get-rich-fast Trimalchio and his banquet-orgies. Two generations later we have Juvenal's rich man boasting that he has slaves to carry him to his seat in the circus, that he throws out widows and orphans from wretched huts around his country villa, hires painters and goldsmiths to execute his wishes, and visits "ladies who scratch their head with one finger for fear of undoing their stylish coiffure."

Wealth seems, in Juvenal's estimation, the twin of sexual license; both offer innumerable occasions to inspire other abuses and excesses. Cruelty, for example: ladies having hired executioners at hand to whip slave girls not quick enough to obey, or to crucify other slaves for work badly done. The story went that Augustus, dinner guest at a very rich man's house, got indignant when his host wanted to throw his slave to murderous fish in the pond. The emperor saved the slave and confiscated his friend's fortune. But such acts of clemency may have been rare, until about the third century when the outlook softened (Christianity, stoicism, and certain mystery cults played

a decisive role in this) and slaves were no longer considered mere "live tools."

On the other hand, Juvenal disliked the growing influence of slaves in many households. Emperor Claudius had slaves (they became practically his cabinet ministers) who amassed fabulous fortunes and built homes and palaces more marble-bedecked than public buildings. Slaves become lovers of the master's wife or daughter; they turned into family studs "having relations [Juvenal uses a more down-to-earth expression] with the master's young son as well as with the grandmother." They were tyrannizing banquets, aware that the host's reputation depended on the art of the meatcarver, the gracefulness of the wine-pourer, the speed with which a third slave brought to drunken guests "boiling water just then cooled with fresh snow from the mountains."

Other slaves were priceless for the way they handled diners according to social merit. To the prominent, they brought in Syrian dancing girls or Jewish fortune-tellers ("for a few pennies they promise you heaven"); to the poor clients of the family they served "bones and a wine worse than detergent," while at the head couches they lavished "sophisticatedly prepared antelope meat, flamingo tongue, and North African goat."

**T**hus the grotesque competes with the repulsive, the perverse with the monstrous. Reading Juvenal, our own homosexual problem seems only average. Phalanxes of pederasts cater to other phalanxes, every bed is a battlefield. The satirist meets a friend: "I must leave you soon, a [male] friend of mine has finally found a husband [*sic!*]. They are getting married at noon." And then Greek actors dressed like women, "you would swear their male member is missing, replaced by a vagina."

A powerful factor in the promotion of things obscene was the circus, the television of the day. In a letter, Seneca warned his young friend—a generation before Juvenal—not to become an aficionado (today we would say not to be glued to the screen all day) because the scenes of permanent horror, heavy sexuality, and cruel butchering (sex plus violence?) cause addiction and harden the heart. Our own experts in sexology—and school-district bosses who prescribe condoms in classrooms—ought to read Seneca and Juvenal to understand that the mythological sex scenes—let's say Zeus mating with Leda—performed in the circus, led a few years later to the public rape

of Christian women on the same stage, and to martyrs being thrown before lions, bears and maddened bulls. Or is it again a case of “it can’t happen here?”

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In spite of Juvenal’s “modernity” there runs through his work a spirit which is alien to us, due to a number of civilizational givens and institutions nurtured by paganism. The one ubiquitous institution without which ancient pagan society cannot be imagined and described was of course *slavery*. Juvenal, like all other authors and thinkers, even the Stoics, took it for granted that, for example, slaves laboring in the fields have chains attached to their legs and that they are emaciated for lack of food. At rich men’s urban residences they suffer other injustices. Yet, as we have seen, their impudence also gives them privileges, so that their masters, who find them indispensable, literally fear them. Slavery as such needed however no justification and, conversely, it occurred to no one to attack its basic assumption; without it society simply “wouldn’t work.”

The satirist is closer to us in his condemnation of *abortion*. No, in his eyes it is not a sin, the fact of slavery blunted his society’s grasp of the sanctity of human life—just as ideology blunts ours. But abortion *is* a symptom of dissolute morality, and Juvenal castigates Julia’s repeated abortions, a consequence of her liaison with her uncle, the emperor Domitian.

It is clear, however, that Juvenal’s indignation was provoked more by the incest in the case than by abortion, since the number one issue is the integrity of the family, the foundation of Rome and its greatness. Thus he also mentions the exposure of newborn babies abandoned on dungheaps, and their recovery by childless households. But he mentions it not in the rubric of immorality, rather as a sarcastic comment about prestigious public figures who had been picked up from street garbage. It has an anecdotal interest.

Where Juvenal joins today’s conservatives is in his nostalgic praise for the rustic way of life. This is, of course, a favorite theme—and general justification—in most satires, a *genre* where moral blame is coupled with historical or pseudo-historical comparisons. Thus the *past* had to be better than the *present*, and may again be a model for the *future*. Juvenal was right, Roman power had been based on a citizen/peasant army and its simple virtues. But this had ended by the second century B.C.; in fact the empire came into existence

mostly for the reason of curbing the wealthy capitalist depredations and confiscations of the property of small landholders. Augustan policy was to recreate a landed peasant class as the foundation of a new military force. The policy was only half-successful: appetites by then were too sharp, the legions were filled with mercenaries and foreigners who hardly spoke Latin. Juvenal was born into this situation of incipient imperial decay, even though precisely under Trajan, Hadrian, and then Marcus Aurelius, the stoic sage, the Roman elite (for example, Tacitus, Pliny) thought the decay might be halted. This explains why Juvenal paints so complete a picture of his age: the lament over the horrible and the grotesque, yet also some optimism that it is still not too late. Isn't this ambivalent feeling exactly that of our western elites also?

Except perhaps that our society *appears* less crude because it is more self-camouflaged and hypocritical, and also because it is not dependent on slaves but on technology, to the ukases of which— isn't it "scientific," thus not to be contradicted?—it unquestioningly submits. It is also true that many issues in Rome were settled by assassination, poisoning, the elimination of rich fathers by hired murderers, or of old husbands by lovers of their wives. Typically, a friend of Juvenal ponders ways of getting rich: "Shall I become a pimp? Or assassinate the father of some girl with means? Shall I fool credulous people by reading their fortune in the entrails of frogs?"

Economic exploitation (of the provinces by ex-Senators, and by the so-called "knights," that is speculators) was more blatant than today when organized resistance to it is taken for granted. But at least nighttime mugging on the streets was not much different. One victim cries out: "Leave me at least a few teeth!" The wealthy alone were safe. They had armed escorts with torch-bearing slaves running ahead. (Empress Messalina, for obvious reasons, was accompanied by only a slave woman on her nocturnal escapades.)

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The one, overarching conclusion is that Juvenal is our contemporary, his complaints being for all times. He records the same foibles, temptations, crimes, looseness, hypocrisies and repugnant behavior—and the opportunities of getting away with them if one is sufficiently impudent, unscrupulous and aggressive. Or if one has good connections, or money, or that special skill to cheat without being caught, to



rob and play on people's naiveté—as in the Savings and Loans scandal.

What stands out is Juvenal's indirect message to our feminists. He grasped the fact (although at no point does he theorize, which would kill his verve and neutralize the effect of his verbal snapshots) that women's capacity and vocation to hold families together is just as important as manly virtues are in politics and on the battlefield. The decadence of the state begins with the loosening of women's conduct, their surrender to luxury, to eager seducers to the gradually-acquired habit of watching sexually explicit shows, even the use of four-letter words. The corrupt woman is of a pivotal importance in Juvenal's judgment, the more so because Rome used to be puritanical—like New England.

The second thing that stands out in Juvenal's portrait of Roman society around 110-130 A.D., that is at the zenith of prosperity and power, is the ubiquitous homosexuality. No, imperial Rome did not pass grotesque laws enforcing the presence of pederast teachers in the classroom or homosexual couples in rent-controlled apartments; it did the near-equivalent, open toleration. But here too, the main fault is women's. Their imitation-male behavior, contempt for marriage and family—their presence at cruel and obscene circus games—weakened men's self-image, tempted them to favor the company of other men, then of boys and transvestites. True, on the other hand, that slavery offered an abject, all-round temptation: slave boys and girls were treated as sex-objects, and the general interest of slaves was to corrupt their masters by making them dependent on the services only slaves provided.

Juvenal's was a cry in the desert, because societies do not learn, from others, or from their own defects. When the hour of the satirist strikes, conditions have so deteriorated that the satire can merely record symptoms: the causes are buried, the remedies not even envisaged.

In any case, the satirist's vocation is not to offer remedies: he does not go around asking, like our quacks, "What can we do about it?" His vocation is to chronicle a certain phase of social decomposition which, as Plato tells us, is a continuous process. Yet the satirist is not a neutral bystander. He is not a sociologist, a statistician, a demographer, and least of all a programmer of the future. And he is by no means a utopian. He has a built-in moral standard, a well-developed capacity for indignation. Nobody better than the satirist shows the enormous distance between what is *done* and what *ought* to be done, and he does so laughing, laughing bitterly, with

tears. *Ridendo dicere verum*, said the Romans of their satirists: "They tell the truth while they laugh." Take away the laughter—there remains the prophet.

The question would be legitimate: Why don't we have great satirists in our time? Why do we have, only here and there, a timid passage, a muffled lament, an indirectly critical theatre play? The answer is extremely simple: We no longer believe in virtue. Both our praiseworthy and our immoral acts are explained away by a multitude of scientific theories, calls for "therapy," endless "social" projects, arguments from situation ethics. Virtue and sin are relative to circumstance, background, psychic stability or whatever.

Who then fills, in our century, the always-indispensable function of social critic? The names include Y.I. Zamyatin, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, and some lesser-known witnesses. It is extremely significant to examine what they satirize: the mechanized society and its dehumanized robots. *Not* hypocrisies and excesses at the expense of virtue and morality. The reason is that Huxley, Orwell *et al.*, see dehumanization as the overwhelming danger, beyond good and evil, beyond history itself. Or, let's put it this way, dehumanization is today the true evil and the source of evil, next to which the things that Juvenal attacks are indeed repulsive, but at least human. Individual incontinence like gluttony, avarice, or sexual excess is dwarfed by abortion in legalized, *mechanized* killing factories. The ordinary sinner's risk-taking is somehow more tolerable—even likeable—compared to the production, elimination, and medical/experimental use of test-tube babies.

Anti-utopian writings of the Orwell or Y.I. Zamyatin kind, and before them Aristophanes' *The Birds* and Swift's "Laputa," are a more sombre and devastating literary *genre* than Juvenal's satire, which at least vibrates with flesh-and-blood humanity. But the former, intellectualist as they are, fulfill the same function as the latter: they remind us that the possibilities of evil are myriad, and inexhaustible, and can attack us on all fronts. It is part of the human baggage we carry.

## APPENDIX A

*[The following is the text of a letter sent by Pope John Paul II to Catholic bishops worldwide; dated May 19, it was released by the Vatican on June 21.]*

### Of Life and Death

*Pope John Paul II*

The recent extraordinary consistory of cardinals, held April 4-7 in the Vatican, included a broad and detailed discussion on the threats to human life, and concluded with a unanimous vote: the cardinals asked the pope to “solemnly reaffirm in a document (the majority of cardinals proposed an encyclical) the value of human life and its inviolability in the light of present circumstances and the attacks which threaten it today.”

As you will note from the summary which will be sent to you by the pro-secretary of state, a striking picture emerged from the reports and the work of the consistory. In the context of the numerous and violent attacks against human life today, especially when it is weakest and most defenseless, statistical data point to a veritable “slaughter of the innocents” on a worldwide scale. A source of particular concern, however, is the fact that people’s moral conscience appears frighteningly confused and they find it increasingly difficult to perceive the clear and definite distinction between good and evil in matters concerning the fundamental value of human life.

However serious and disturbing the phenomenon of the widespread destruction of so many human lives, either in the womb or in old age, no less serious and disturbing is the blunting of the moral sensitivity of people’s consciences. Laws and civil ordinances not only reflect this confusion but they also contribute to it. When legislative bodies enact laws that authorize putting innocent people to death and states allow their resources and structures to be used for these crimes, individual consciences, often poorly formed, are all the more easily led into error. In order to break this vicious circle, it seems more urgent than ever that we should forcefully reaffirm our common teaching, based on sacred Scripture and tradition, with regard to the inviolability of innocent human life.

The centenary of the encyclical “*Rerum Novarum*” which the Church is celebrating this year suggests an analogy to which I would like to draw everyone’s attention. Just as a century ago it was the working classes which were oppressed in their fundamental rights, and the Church very courageously came to their defense by proclaiming the sacrosanct rights of the worker as a person, so now, when another category of persons is being oppressed in the fundamental right to life, the Church feels in duty bound to speak out with the same courage on behalf of those who have no voice. Hers is always the evangelical cry in defense of the world’s poor, those who are threatened and despised and whose human rights are violated.

## APPENDIX A

The Church intends not only to reaffirm the right to life—the violation of which is an offense against the human person and against God the Creator and Father, the loving source of all life—but she also intends to devote herself ever more fully to the concrete defense and promotion of this right.

The Church feels called to this by her Lord. From Christ she receives the “Gospel of life” and feels responsible for its proclamation to every creature. Even at the price of going against the trend, she must proclaim that Gospel courageously and fearlessly, in word and deed, to individuals, peoples and states.

It is precisely this fidelity to Christ the Lord which in this area too is the Church’s law and her strength. The new evangelization, which is a fundamental pastoral necessity in today’s world, cannot neglect the proclamation of the inviolable right to life which belongs to every person from the moment of conception until life’s natural end.

At the same time the Church also feels called to express, through this proclamation and active witness, her esteem and love for man. She addresses herself to the heart of every person—non-believer as well as believer—because she realizes that the gift of life is such a fundamental value that anyone can understand and appreciate its significance, even in the light of reason alone.

In the recent encyclical “Centesimus Annus,” I recalled the Church’s esteem for the democratic system, which enables all citizens to participate in political life, but I also insisted that a true democracy can only be established on the basis of a consistent recognition of the rights of each individual (cf. 46-47).

Having meditated and prayed to the Lord, I have decided to write to you personally, my dear brother bishop, in order to share with you the concern caused by this major problem, and above all in order to ask for your help and cooperation, in a spirit of episcopal collegiality, in facing the serious challenge constituted by the present threats and attacks against human life.

All of us, as pastors of the Lord’s flock, have a grave responsibility to promote respect for human life in our dioceses. In addition to making public declarations at every opportunity, we must exercise particular vigilance with regard to the teaching being given in our seminaries and in Catholic schools and universities. As pastors we must be watchful in ensuring that practices followed in Catholic hospitals and clinics are fully consonant with the nature of such institutions. As our means permit, we must also support projects such as those which seek to offer practical help to women or families experiencing difficulties or to assist the suffering and especially the dying. Moreover, we must encourage scientific reflection and legislative or political initiatives which would counter the prevalent “death mentality.”

Through the coordinated action of all the bishops and the renewed pastoral commitment which will result, the Church intends to contribute, through the civilization of truth and love, to an ever fuller and more radical establishment of the “culture of life” which constitutes the essential prerequisite for the humanization of our society.

THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

May the Holy Spirit, "the Lord and giver of life," fill us with His gifts, and may Mary, the Virgin Mother who gave birth to the Author of Life, be at our side in this responsibility.

*James P. ...*

## APPENDIX B

*[The following declaration was formulated by a group of Methodist clergy and lay people at a meeting in Durham, North Carolina, earlier this year; the 30 original signers have since been joined by several hundred more. (Anyone interested in further information may contact Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth, Creswell United Methodist Church, Route 1, Box 272A, Creswell, NC 27928.)]*

### **The Durham Declaration: To United Methodists on Our Church & Abortion**

United Methodists, abortion is testing our church. Abortion is testing our church today as deeply as slavery tested our church in the 19th century. Abortion is stirring up great confusion and exposing deep conflicts in our community of faith. This condition continues, in part, because The United Methodist Church has not addressed the problem of abortion theologically. Our church has been content to debate abortion with the merely political terms that American society has made available. This is an insufficient response to an historic test.

The time has come to call The United Methodist Church to a scriptural, theological, and pastoral approach to abortion. This we will attempt to do. As United Methodists addressing United Methodists on abortion, we hereby declare our beliefs, confess our sins, and pledge ourselves to a new life together.

Contemporary culture insists that we own our bodies and that we have a right to do with them whatever we want. However, we United Methodist Christians declare that this is false.

We believe that we are not our own (I Cor. 6:19). We do not own our selves or our bodies. God owns us. "It is he that made us, and we are his" (Ps. 100:3). Furthermore, it is God who "bought [us] with a price" (I Cor. 6:20), with the life of Jesus sacrificed on the Cross. And it is God who sanctifies us to be "temple[s] of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 6:19).

We believe that, through faith in Christ and baptism into His Body, God has made us "members of Christ" (I Cor. 6:15). That is, we are incorporated into the Body of Christ, the Church. "So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). Partaking of the Bread and the Cup, we as members of the Body of Christ demonstrate that we are not accountable merely to ourselves. We are accountable to God and to one another. That means we care and provide for one another as brothers and sisters.

We believe that caring and providing for one another includes welcoming children into the family of the Church. As members of the Body of Christ, we know that children—those who are hidden in the womb and those who are held by the hand, those who are labeled "unwanted" and those who are called "wanted"—are gifts from God. In this we follow the example of our

## THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

Lord, who, during His earthly ministry and in the face of opposition, welcomed children to His side (Matthew 19: 13-15). And we conform to the example of the early Church, which, though living in the midst of a pagan empire that casually practiced abortion and abandoned children (usually to slavery, prostitution, or death), helped to provide refuge for unwanted little ones and their needy parents.<sup>1</sup>

We believe that God welcomes us through the outstretched arms of His Son on the Cross: “The arms of love that compass me/Would all mankind embrace”.<sup>2</sup> Because this God has welcomed us into the Church, we can likewise welcome the little ones.

We confess that we have rebelled against God. We have rejected the light of Christ and turned to the darkness of the world. We have denied—by thought, word, and deed—that we belong to God.

We confess that we have often compromised the Gospel by submitting to the seductions of society. We have exchanged the message of salvation in Jesus Christ for a false message about human potential. We have capitulated to extreme self-involvement and self-interest. Neglecting the call to discipleship, we have treated matters related to marriage, sex, and children as if they were merely lifestyle questions. We have lived as if the church is simply another voluntary association of autonomous individuals. We have lived as if the church is not the Body of Christ in which we “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2). We have lived as if we are our own, not God’s.

We confess that, as part of the People of God, we have not honestly confronted the problem of abortion. Fearing division, we have removed abortion from the concerns of our church’s mission. Thereby our church has reduced the abortion problem to private choice and to just another issue for partisan politics. Therefore, in our churches we have selectively applied the truths of God’s ownership of us and God’s gift of children. We have neglected our sister who is in a difficult pregnancy and offered her no alternatives to abortion. Rarely have we offered, through our ministries, the forgiving love of Christ to the woman who has aborted. Nor have we hospitably welcomed the so-called “unwanted child” into our churches and families. Nor have we challenged or worked to alter the mindset and social realities that sustain our abortion-conducive culture.

1. We pledge, with God’s help, to become a church that unapologetically proclaims the message of salvation in Jesus Christ to a world that is usually apathetic and sometimes antagonistic.

2. We pledge, with God’s help, to practice and to teach a sexual ethic that adorns the Gospel. Christian discipline includes, though is not limited to, the ordering of God’s gift of sexuality. Sexual discipline requires, at minimum, “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness”.<sup>3</sup> According to biblical teaching, sexual relations outside the boundaries of “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness” are manifestations of sin that call for repentance and reconciliation.

## APPENDIX B

This ordering is a part of the excellent way of Christian discipleship. It stands over against the jungle of modern sexuality, which is most evident in our society's inability to hold men sexually accountable.

Biblically-based sexual discipline should be directly and consistently advocated—by our church's bishops, district superintendents, clergy, parents, church schools, publishing programs, colleges and universities, hospitals, children's homes, boards, and agencies—among United Methodist children, youth, and adults. In addition, the church should teach the responsibilities for men and women that accompany sex. The church should strongly condemn sexual promiscuity.

3. We pledge, with God's help, to teach our churches that the unborn child is created in the image of God and is one for whom the Son of God died. This child is God's child. This child is part of God's world. So the life of this child is not ours to take. Therefore, it is sin to take this child's life for reasons whether of birth control, gender selection, convenience, or avoidance of embarrassment.

4. We pledge, as people of a community whose sins are forgiven by God, to offer the hope of God's mercy and forgiveness to the woman who has obtained an elective abortion. God's forgiveness and healing are also to be offered to those who have assisted a woman in aborting and now repent.

5. We pledge, with God's help, to become a church that hospitably provides safe refuge for the so-called "unwanted child" and mother. We will joyfully welcome and generously support—with prayer, friendship, and material resources—both child and mother. This support includes strong encouragement for the biological father to be a father, in deed, to his child.

6. We pledge, with God's help, to honor the woman who has, under difficult circumstances, carried her child to term.

7. We pledge, with God's help, to call our church's boards and agencies to end their support of prochoice political advocacy and also to develop ministries that support women in difficult pregnancies.<sup>4</sup>

8. We pledge, with God's help, to encourage United Methodist-related hospitals to adopt medical ethics guidelines which are protective of the unborn child and mother.

9. We pledge, with God's help, to consider how our church should best apply discipline to her members who reap profits, small and large, from the advocacy and performance of elective abortion.

In a society that is so obsessed with material success and pleasure that it wantonly destroys over 1.5 million of its unborn children every year, we United Methodists hear the words of our Lord, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them" (Mt. 19:14). We heed these words of Jesus by ordering our life together so that we can joyfully receive the children.

To accomplish this task, to meet the massive test that abortion now poses to The United Methodist Church, we rely upon Christ until His Kingdom comes.



## THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

It is Christ who promises, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (II Cor. 12:9). He, above all else, is to be trusted.

### NOTES

1. Drawing from James Tunstead Burtchaell's "Opening Statement in Debate" [*Commonweal* 114 (November 20, 1987), p. 663], L. Gregory Jones notes, "The new Christian faith [of the early church] set four prophetic imperatives before those who would live in the Spirit and fire of Christ, four disconcerting duties that would distance them from Jews and Romans alike. . . . The fourth imperative was that in addition to those children orphaned by their parents' deaths, they were to protect the infant—unborn or newborn. This imperative is expressed in *The Didache, The Instruction of the Twelve Apostles* (the oldest Christian document we possess outside the New Testament): ' . . . you shall not murder a child by abortion, or kill a newborn. . . .'" [from "Christian Communities and Biomedical Technologies" in *Bioethics and the Beginning of Life*, edited by Roman J. Miller and Beryl H. Brubaker (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990), p. 116]. Furthermore, the primitive church's firm opposition to abortion is expressed in some two dozen early Christian documents.

Second and third-century sources on the Christian refusal to abandon children and the Christian imperative to rescue the abandoned include: *Epistle to Diognetus* 5, *Aristedes Apology* 15, *Who is the Rich Man that is Saved?* by Clement of Alexandria, *Apology* 39 by Tertullian, *Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians* 6:1, and *Ignatius to the Smyrneans* 6:2.

Also, see Michael J. Gorman's "Historical Perspectives" in Miller and Brubaker. Gorman writes: "Beginning in the late fourth century under the leadership of both bishops and monks, orphanages and foundling homes (for abandoned and exposed children) were established throughout the Christian world. From its birth the Christian church had been characterized by its compassion for children. Even the earliest Christians frequently rescued abandoned children and raised them in a Christian family. The foundling homes became visible symbols of Christian compassion for unwanted children in the communities of Europe and the East" (p. 136).

2. Charles Wesley, "Jesus! The Name High over All," *The Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1966), no. 341.

3. This wording appears in the chapter on ordained ministry in *The Book of Discipline* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1988), par. 404.4e and several other locations. The Christian's fidelity in marriage or celibacy in singleness is best understood as a manifestation of divine grace that is given for the good of the church, the family, and the man/woman.

4. Charles W. Hubbard's challenge—that the United Methodist Church secure \$50 million to build and support regional crisis pregnancy centers across the U.S.—should be taken seriously by our church [see *Christian Social Action* (April 1990), pp. 28-30]. Our boards and agencies should be much more serious about supporting and/or providing adoption services as well.

## APPENDIX C

*[The following column first appeared in the Washington Times (April, 25, 1991) and is reprinted here with permission of the author and Creators Syndicate.]*

### **Sexing up their faith?**

*Mona Charen*

There is a school of thought that says the solution to America's worst social ills—rising violence accompanied by a total lack of conscience among criminals, unwed motherhood and infant mortality, poverty and drugs—is a return to religion. For a sickness of the soul, nothing less than a spiritual cure will do.

But what if the churches aren't there to go back to? The question is prompted by news this week that a national committee of the Presbyterian Church has issued a recommendation that the church discard its traditional teachings on sexual morality and, well, loosen up.

The committee "chair," John J. Carey, told *The Washington Post*, "The history of Christianity is to regard anything from the waist down, 'the stirring of the loins,' as demonic. That's all baloney. We think it is time to affirm the eros."

That is both unhistorical and ridiculous. But these eros-affirming Presbyterians are messianic. Mr. Carey's group would have the Presbyterian Church, once the vehicle of Calvinist theology, toss away its preoccupation with marriage. "Rather than inquiring whether sexual activity is premarital, marital or postmarital," the report advises, "we should be asking whether the relation is responsible, the dynamics genuinely mutual and the loving full of joyful caring."

This report is full of something, but it ain't joyful caring. For teenagers, the Presbyterian committee offers that "maturity," not marriage, should be the guide to whether sexual intercourse is appropriate. But in any case masturbation and "petting" come highly recommended. If the report's recommendations were adopted, homosexuals—both gay men and lesbians—would be ordained into the ministry, and homosexual couples with adopted children would be considered every bit as much a family as the traditional heterosexual version.

The hip Presbyterians don't think adultery has been given its day in court. Provided the relationship is mutually satisfying and not exploitative, the new dispensation would permit and possibly even encourage it. (Don't ask about the exploitation of the spouse.)

To suggest that what America needs right now are looser standards of sexual morality is like saying the Kennedy family is altogether too strait-laced. Come on. Where do these people live?

In my America, thousands of teen-age girls are walking around pregnant—potentially ruining two lives at once—precisely because no one taught them that premarital sex was morally wrong. And where I live, millions of couples have divorced, spinning the lives of their children out of control, often because

## THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

one or both parents elected to have a “joyful relation” with someone else.

This is a culture where it seems at least half of all television talk shows, magazine covers and best-selling books are about sex. These hip Presbyterians may think they’re revolutionaries, but in fact they are reactionaries. Sexual permissiveness is the norm. Did they sleep through the sexual revolution of the past 30 years? Has the AIDS epidemic gone unnoticed? Are they unaware of 1.5 million yearly abortions?

But here’s the real point: The churches make a fatal error when they assume that in order to staunch the hemorrhaging of members (the Presbyterian Church has lost 1 million adherents in the past 20 years), they must sex up their message.

People don’t leave churches because the rules are too strict. They both need and expect those standards to remain firm. Particularly in a fast-paced, transient society, only a church that remains true to its principles can provide solace and meaning for people’s lives.

The reason people are leaving the churches in droves is precisely because of reports like this one. The mainline Protestant churches, reform Judaism and liberal Catholicism have all attempted to transcend the merely religious role of their churches to become politically “relevant.” On the way, they’ve reinterpreted the Ten Commandments as the Ten Suggestions.

But as libertines, churchmen can never compete with the pros. Why do we need Presbyterian advice on “Christian sexuality” when we’ve already got the Playboy philosopher? The sad part is that if these trends continue, and the churches contort themselves beyond recognition in pursuit of elusive “relevance,” there will someday be no standards left to repair to when the society at large has tired of license.

## APPENDIX D

*[The following column appeared in the New York Post (April 28) and is reprinted here with the author's permission]*

### A Shot in the Arm

*Ray Kerrison*

John Cardinal O'Connor looked out over the crowded ballroom of the Roosevelt Hotel Saturday and did a little arithmetic. According to the Guttmacher Institute, a subsidiary of Planned Parenthood, he said, the number of abortions in the United States between 1980 and 1987 fell by 6 percent.

"What's 6 percent against 94 percent?" he asked. "Well, 6 percent of 1.6 million abortions is 96,000 babies . . . 96,000 mothers . . . 96,000 fathers."

He paused, then hit the home run. "And you're not doing anything? You're not accomplishing anything? If anyone of us climbed into a burning building or dove into an icy river and saved one life, we'd be given a life-saving award and have our names in the newspapers. How many lives have you saved? You don't even begin to know."

The ballroom rocked with applause. The 400 men and women needed a shot in the arm, for this was the annual convention of the New York State Right to Life Committee, an organization struggling against overwhelming odds for the noblest of causes.

The pro-life movement is taking a ferocious bashing in the public arena. Politicians, including Republicans, are running out, the courts are so biased they don't even pretend to be impartial, the cops have declared open season, much of the clergy is tepid and the media is monolithic in their opposition. Where are the pro-lifers' friends?

Well, here was an important one standing before them, telling them some home truths. "Your courage sustains me," the cardinal said. "Every time I begin to feel sorry for myself, every time I protest or read an attack in the media and I begin to mourn, and feel melancholy and ask if it's worth it, I'm instantly ashamed of myself because I think of people like you—people who have gone to jail, who have suffered every kind of indignity, been spat upon, ridiculed and called fanatics for the crime of wanting to save a human life."

That is the absurdity of it all. Planned Parenthood in 1988 performed 111,189 abortions. At an average fee of \$250, PP has a \$27-million-a-year abortion business. Pro-lifers sacrifice for no personal gain—the ultimate act of altruism.

Affirming the sanctity of human life is so basic that a rational world would not question it. So the cardinal asked, "Isn't it tragic that it has become virtually un-American to fight for the protection and enhancement of human life? You are the counter-culture."

But the turning point may be near. A week ago, the pro-life movement scored its most dramatic media breakthrough yet when CBS's "60 Minutes," one of

THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

the highest-rated TV shows in the nation, examined the case of a botched abortion in Baltimore.

It's the first time to my knowledge that a major TV network has spotlighted the ugly, callous, money-driven underside of the abortion industry.

Meredith Viera told the story of Suzanne Long, a 33-year-old waitress, who entered the Hill View Clinic for an abortion and emerged completely paralyzed, her brain so damaged she will never speak again.

"She was given general anesthesia," said Viera. "Minutes later, according to her attorney, Patrick Malone, she stopped breathing . . . The emergency equipment was broken, causing Suzanne's brain to go without oxygen for 12 minutes."

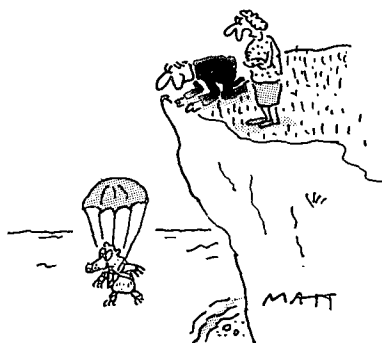
The clinic's operator, Barbara Lofton, has a shocking record. She has been indicted for Medicaid fraud in Washington, and authorities closed her abortion clinic because she operated without a license. So she simply moved her clinic two miles across the state line into Maryland, where there are no laws regulating abortion clinics.

She called herself Dr. Lofton, and forged prescriptions. One patient almost bled to death. Another, age 19, died. Now Suzanne Long is paralyzed.

Said Viera, "Many pro-choice leaders knew about Hill View's problems but didn't want them publicized. National Abortion Federation head Barbara Radford admitted she was just hoping we would go away."

Abortion activists actually fight against clinic regulation. Said attorney Malone: "In Maryland, you have to be licensed to open a junkyard but you don't have to be licensed to open an abortion clinic."

That's why the pro-life movement will ultimately prevail. When the American public finally grasps the full horror of the abortion racket, its end will be swift.



*'You spoil that lemming.'*

THE SPECTATOR 27 April 1991

## APPENDIX E

[The following column appeared in the Village Voice on June 18, 1991, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.]

### Covering Up Destructive Abortions

*Nat Hentoff*

“Sunlight,” said Louis Brandeis, “is the best disinfectant.” And that is what journalism is supposedly all about. Compelling proof of the value of this kind of sunlight was a piece, “Abortion Clinic,” on the April 21 edition of *60 Minutes*.

Reporter Meredith Vieira and producer Jane Stone provided a rather rare look at a scandal with national implications—abortions that are legal (under *Roe v. Wade*) but are not safe, and can be deadly. Also central to the *60 Minutes* story, and others like it around the country, is the refusal of certain pro-choice leaders to sound the alarm about dangerous abortion clinics lest bad publicity hurt the pro-choice cause.

Meredith Vieira began her report with Suzanne Logan who now “lives in a Baltimore nursing home. She is almost completely paralyzed. Her brain is so damaged she will never speak again. She is now 33, and will spend the rest of her life never understanding what happened to her.”

Suzanne Logan is in this condition, Vieira explained, because she went to “what she believed to be a reputable clinic where she could get a legal, safe abortion.” That was two years ago when, working as a waitress, she found out she was pregnant.

For the abortion, she went to the Hillview Women’s Medical Surgical Center in Suitland, Maryland. The fee: \$400. Shortly after she was given general anesthesia, Logan—according to her attorney Patrick Malone—stopped breathing. There was no anesthesiologist present, so there had been no monitoring.

Responding to a 911 call, paramedics—Vieira reported—found “the clinic in chaos. Hillview workers lacked the right medicine to reverse the effect of the anesthesia. Their emergency equipment was broken, causing Suzanne’s brain to go without oxygen for 12 minutes.”

The owner of this abortion clinic is Barbara Lofton. She is described by *60 Minutes*:

“For years, Lofton posed as a psychologist and ran mental health clinics until the District of Columbia shut her down for submitting phony Medicaid bills, and letting unqualified employees dispense medicine. Undeterred, Lofton went into the abortion business. But D.C. investigators again shut her down, this time for operating without a license.

“A few months later, she moved the clinic two miles across the state line to Maryland, *where there are no laws regulating abortion clinics.*” (Emphasis

added.)

Indeed, in only 11 (!) states are there statutes regulating abortion clinics. A few other states supposedly oversee the clinics administratively. In fact, whether by statute or administrative regulations, rules for abortion clinics are not, by and large, carefully enforced in many of those states. And in the great majority of states, the clinics are not regulated.

I do not recall hearing Kate Michelman, Faye Wattleton, or leaders of NOW urgently calling for the states to ensure that abortions in clinics are safe. Such a campaign would get in the way of their continual contrast between pre-1973 back-alley and coat-hanger abortions and how assuredly safe women are when they now go for abortions.

Back at Hillview, Barbara Lofton, who is not a doctor, nonetheless—according to Tony Moore, who used to work at the clinic—wore an expensive stethoscope and introduced herself as Dr. Lofton.

When the licensed physicians—who performed up to 25 abortions a day—were not around, Lofton took their place. Says Brenda Davis, who also used to work at the clinic, Lofton performed such medical procedures as “pelvic exams, cultures, [and she] prescribed medicine.”

Also on *60 Minutes* was “Elizabeth,” who asked that her identity be disguised. She is suing the clinic for a botched abortion. So may Linda Brown. Her companion, Herb Polcher, tells what happened when he came to pick her up at the clinic. “Dr.” Lofton was waiting for him:

“She said, ‘We have problems, accidentally hit an artery.’ So I went in the back, and they had the sheet wrapped around her bottom, like a baby diaper, and she was just . . . blood everywhere. . . . She was just laying there in her own blood.”

By the time she was in a hospital, Linda Brown had almost bled to death. “To save her life”—Meredith Vieira told the 30,000,000 viewers of *60 Minutes*—“doctors performed an emergency hysterectomy. She was 19.”

She will never be able to have a child.

Barbara Lofton’s response was: “No matter how good you are, accidents occur.”

In a deposition, shown on the program, Suzanne Logan’s attorney, Patrick Malone, asked the proprietor of this caring institution if there had been “accidents” before the one that befell Linda Brown.

“One,” said Lofton.

“And that involved a death, did it not?”

“It did, in fact,” said Lofton.

The dead woman was Debra Gray. Says her sister, Pam:

“The outcome was just like a back-alley abortion.”

Debra Gray paid \$200 extra to be put to sleep, under general anesthesia. While under anesthesia, her heart stopped, and she never awakened.

Not surprisingly, Barbara Lofton would not talk to Meredith Vieira. But, dig

## APPENDIX E

this:

“Initially, neither did any of the abortion-rights activists we contacted.” Vieira continued: “As a reporter, *I found that many pro-choice leaders knew about problems at Hillview, but didn’t want them publicized.*” (Emphasis added.)

(By the way, Hillview is still operating and is performing abortions as late as the 28th week. Women come from all over, CBS producer Jane Stone told me.)

At last, Barbara Radford, head of the National Abortion Federation—the professional association for the abortion industry—did go on camera, and she said:

“Well, I think your first reaction from us was this is the last thing we need. *We had hoped that it wouldn’t get national publicity because of the political nature of all of this.*” (Emphasis added.)

What Radford stressed was “the political nature” of the publicity coming from this terrifyingly unsafe abortion clinic. Not a word about the possible dangers to some women who—if it had not been for *60 Minutes*—would have gone to Hillview.

For that matter, not everybody watched *60 Minutes*, and one would think that a responsible, caring pro-choice leadership would try as hard as it could to get the news about this clinic spread as widely as possible. As well as the news about other such clinics in other states. For instance, appalling abortion clinic practices and conditions in Florida, Missouri, and Illinois, among other states.

And, as a vital way of safeguarding women who go for abortions in the future, one would think the pro-choice leadership would be mobilizing press and legislative support around the country for meaningful regulation of abortion clinics.

Yet, despite what they know about the Hillview clinic in Maryland, and other such clinics elsewhere, pro-choice paladins are not using their considerable clout to persistently demand *safe*, legal abortion.

Says Meredith Vieira: “Pro-choice activists worry that clinics like Hillview will be used against them in the bitter political battle over abortion. They fear bad publicity will prompt state legislators to start regulating clinics, and that the pro-lifers will then use those regulations as a backdoor way to stop abortions. *So even though those laws could make clinics safer, [the pro-choicers] usually fight them.*” (Emphasis added.)

There is a state senator in Maryland, Mary Boergers. She is pro-choice and she is also a strong advocate of regulating abortion clinics. That position, Vieira notes, “has lost her support among her pro-choice colleagues. Those colleagues, says Boergers, treat her as if she’s “the enemy.”

Meanwhile, a national pro-choice leader, Barbara Radford, told Meredith Vieira that regulations aren’t necessary because—watch this curve—the state has enough power to discipline doctors who work at abortion clinics.



Sure, Meredith Vieira responded, “The state can investigate individual physicians. But when one doctor gets into trouble at Hillview, Lofton simply hires another one. *The state can’t touch Lofton or her clinic.*”

There has to be some legislation, Senator Boergers insists, “if we really care about all the women of this state.

*“When we say what we’re trying to do is guarantee safe abortions, and eliminate back-alley unsafe abortions, and yet you can demonstrate that there’s a woman who died, and another woman who’s paralyzed, then not only that argument, but all arguments from the pro-choice community can become suspect.”*

And what does Barbara Radford say? “We want to make sure that women have choices when it comes to abortion services. And if you regulate it too strictly, you then deny women the access to service.”

Even if the service leads right into the grave.

Meanwhile, the Maryland legislature, in its recently passed abortion bill, gave explicit protection—not to women but to physicians who perform abortions:

*“The physician is not liable for civil damages or subject to a criminal penalty for a decision to perform an abortion . . . made in good faith and in the physician’s best medical judgment in accordance with accepted standards of medical practice.”*

All kinds of “accidents” can occur when a physician performs an abortion in “good faith” and “under accepted standards of medical practice.” As Pat Groves, a nurse in Maryland, points out, this exemption means, in effect, an exemption from liability for just about any harm done during an abortion.

Meanwhile, a bill to regulate Maryland abortion clinics—supported by Mary Boergers—failed again this year. If pro-choice organizations had supported it, the bill might well have passed.

Remember the completely paralyzed Suzanne Logan? As Meredith Vieira says, it is too late for any regulations of abortion clinics that will help Suzanne. “She spends most of her days alone in the nursing home. She rarely has visitors.”

And Barbara Radford, head of the National Abortion Federation, tells the nation on *60 Minutes* that “we had hoped [this story] would not get national publicity.”

As Gandhi said: “Truth never damages a cause that is just.”

## APPENDIX F

[The following column appeared in the Village Voice on June 25, 1991, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.]

### Today's Back-Alley Abortions

*Nat Hentoff*

*Please join us in our campaign to keep abortion safe and legal. Don't wait until women are dying again.*

—Faye Wattleton, president of Planned Parenthood

*Even in the days of legal abortion, the back-alley persists—on a commercial street, in a medical building, with a front door, and sometimes even with a state license. . . .*

*The stigma of abortion is still so painful that many women—even those with private gynecologists—opt for the anonymity of a clinic chosen from the phone book. They don't shop around. They want it cheap. They want it fast. And they want it over.*

*Embarrassed and sometimes ashamed, many women will tolerate a low standard of care without complaint. Unless severely injured, most are reluctant to file lawsuits.*

—Debbie Sontag, *Miami Herald*, September 17, 1989.

As she told me recently, Debbie Sontag is “strongly pro-choice.” She is also a persistent, careful journalist. Some of her most powerful reporting has resulted in the exposure of dangerous abortion clinics so that fewer women will be the victims of today’s “back alley” abortions. *Roe v. Wade* made abortions legal, but the Supreme Court does not have the means to make them safe.

That’s the job of city and state legislatures and public-health departments. Many of them do not take that job seriously. Only 11 states, for instance, have statutory regulation of abortion clinics. There are, of course, a considerable number of responsible, well-regulated clinics. But many advocates of abortion rights avert their eyes from what goes on in the sleazy operations where women can be badly hurt, and some do die.

Moreover, the decent abortion clinics, as Debbie Sontag writes, “are loathe to report” the indecent clinics. “They fear the adverse publicity will reflect badly on all [abortion clinics] at a politically inopportune time.”

After all, she notes, there is the militant anti-abortion movement eager to spread the word about incompetent physicians at slimy clinics—and that would be bad for the cause of abortion rights.

Still, I wonder about the morality—no matter what the political context—of not blowing the whistle on places that endanger patients, and sometimes cause

their deaths. That's not morality; it's *Realpolitik*, Henry Kissinger-style.

Two years ago, Debbie Sontag wrote in the *Miami Herald* about a horrifying series of botched abortions. A 21-year-old teacher's aide, for example, picked up the phone book, and looked under A for abortion. She was married, had two children, and she and her husband figured they couldn't afford a third.

Three ads had the same phone number—Abortion Access Center, Abortion Clinic-Hospital Center, Abortion Information Center. Confidentiality guaranteed; cheap; safe; and in a affluent area. Bring cash. \$175.

From Sontag's *Miami Herald* story:

Dr. Robert Kast, a graduate of the University of Guadalajara School of Medicine, estimated that she was 16 weeks pregnant. He performed the abortion and sent her home to Florida City, declaring the procedure "complete and uneventful." . . .

That night . . . she began to bleed. Heavily. By the time the ambulance came to take her to James Archer Smith Hospital in Homestead, she was unconscious.

An X-ray exposed a dead fetus, five months old.

Later, Kast would tell hospital doctors that he knew the abortion had been incomplete, that he had expected the patient to "pass" the fetus naturally. He would claim he had followed normal, accepted clinical procedures. . . .

Surgeons performed a Caesarean section. They removed a mutilated, foot-long male fetus that weighed about four-fifths of a pound.

Dr. Charles Marshall House, then the hospital's chief of staff, told Debbie Sontag that he was "shocked and outraged" at what had happened to the patient. As for the male fetus, it looked, said Dr. House, "like the baby had been half-eaten by a dog."

The "*baby*"? *Babies* are aborted?

Then there was one of the Dadeland Family Planning Center cases, reported by Debbie Sontag:

Ellen Lorena Williams was 38 years old, and she had a good job as a personnel manager for the Dade County School Board. Married, with two kids, she had no place in her life for another child. So when she realized she was pregnant, she called Dadeland Family Planning.

Williams was a big woman, six feet tall and nearly 300 pounds. Dr. Chatoor Bisal Singh, a graduate of the University of the West Indies medical school, could not tell exactly how pregnant she was. He sent her to get a sonogram and estimated from the results that Williams was 13 weeks along. . . .

Singh performed a suction abortion on Williams, after she signed a consent form stating she was aware that "complications from abortion are uncommon in the hands of trained medical personnel; however, they sometimes occur."

Two days later, accompanied by her husband, Walter, a mechanic, she returned to the clinic. . . . holding her arms across her stomach and rocking back and forth, she said the pain was nearly unbearable.

Dr. Singh was called, and arrived four hours later. In an examining room, he performed a second suctioning, assisted by "Dr. Nabil Ghali, whose medical

## APPENDIX F

license, while active in Florida, had been revoked in Kentucky after he was convicted for having sexual intercourse with a 13-year-old girl.

“Williams was discharged with a bottle of antibiotics.” The next morning, the clinic “took a sample of Williams’ blood to a laboratory for analysis, but the lab refused to run a culture because the clinic had not protected the specimen in a sterile container. At about the same time, Williams was being rushed by ambulance to Coral Reef Hospital, where she underwent emergency surgery. The surgery was too late. Her uterus and bowel had been perforated during the first abortion and the infection was acute.

“Williams died the next morning.”

This very place, the Dadeland Family Planning Center, had a visit from Operation Rescue: 138 demonstrators were arrested for blocking the entrance to the clinic.

“It was a major media event,” wrote Debbie Sontag in the *Miami Herald*, “and pro-choice activists believed it demanded a counter-demonstration. [They felt] they really should be there on behalf of the issue, not the individual clinic. But it made them queasy.

“Says pro-choice activist Lynn Rosenthal: ‘We’re committed to protecting access to abortion care, but to go and defend that place. . . .’

“*Still, they went.*” (Emphasis added.)

Sontag, later in her *Miami Herald* article, noted that dangerous abortion clinics “put Florida’s pro-choice advocates in a difficult ethical position.

“‘In my gut,’ says Janis Compton-Carr, full-time Florida pro-choice activist, ‘I am completely aghast at what goes on at [the Dadeland Family Planning Center]. *But I staunchly oppose anything that would correct this situation in law.*’

“*That is: Greater state regulation of abortion clinics.* [Emphasis added.]

“Regulation has been a political battle since the day abortion was legalized. The lines are clearly drawn: The anti-abortion people want them, and the pro-choice people don’t.

“Regulations, pro-choice people say, are harassment, government interference in a private matter. In practice, they would not protect women but rather make it more difficult for them to obtain an abortion—which is their right.”

And if, without regulations, some women are placed in great danger? Well, says those pro-choicers, only a very few die.

What’s the acceptable number?

During the events at the Dadeland Family Planning Center, by the way, a state official was quoted by the Associated Press as saying that veterinary clinics in Florida were under more stringent regulations than abortion centers.

Recently, I asked Debbie Sontag what reactions there had been from Florida pro-choicers to her stories about destructive abortion clinics.

“I was viciously attacked,” she said. “They didn’t understand where I was coming from. Also, the then executive editor of the *Miami Herald*—she had

done a lot of work with women's groups—was leaned on to hold my story indefinitely.”

In the two years since the stories ran, there have been no new, stricter regulations of Florida's abortion clinics. The state has closed the Dadeland Family Planning Center. But a woman wanting an abortion can still take her life in her hands when she starts looking under A in the phone book.

Nationally, according to the May 1 *Washington Post*, “roughly 8000 physicians performed most of the 1.6 million abortions in the United States last year, but their ranks are shrinking. . . . Roughly 70 per cent of these abortions are performed at 300 clinics catering to women's health needs.”

As the *60 Minutes* program on the frightening abortion clinic in Maryland indicated, national abortion-rights leaders, not only those in Florida, do not make a point of fighting for stronger regulations to guarantee *safe*, legal abortions at clinics.

Bizarrely, these pro-choice leaders do not realize that politically, their cause will be strengthened if they're seen to be deeply and continually concerned with the safety of those women who choose to have an abortion.

Conversely, as more Americans come to realize that these pro-abortion-rights leaders prefer to play politics with women's lives by downplaying the need for stronger regulations, the pro-lifers will gain.

Most of the people I know are pro-choice. I'm pro-life. But I was struck by how many pro-choice foot soldiers were repelled by the anti-regulation stance of pro-choice leaders on the *60 Minutes* program about the Maryland clinic. The leaders showed themselves willing to sacrifice individual women for maximum, easy access to abortion for all. But they never tell you that in their fundraising ads and letters.

## APPENDIX G

[The following column appeared in the *Village Voice* on July 2, 1991, and is reprinted here with the author's permission.]

### **Since Abortions Are Legal, Why Can't They Be Safe?**

*Nat Hentoff*

Considering the annual number of abortions in this country (1.6 million), deaths in abortion clinics are few. But each one is, of course, traumatic, to say the least, to the families and friends of the deceased. And the number of women who suffer injuries because of mishandled abortions cannot be accurately determined because, as Debbie Sontag of the *Miami Herald* points out, "Embarrassed and sometimes ashamed, many women will tolerate a low standard of care without complaint."

Most of the deaths and the injuries could be prevented if abortion clinics—where 70 per cent of abortions take place—were firmly and closely regulated. But abortion-rights groups often do not press for strong regulations because, they say, such regulations would make it more difficult for women to get abortions.

On the other hand, if these groups—the National Organization for Women, the National Abortion Rights Action League, the National Abortion Federation, Planned Parenthood, the ACLU—were to use their considerable clout to make "safe, legal abortions" more than a slogan, they could greatly diminish the number of women who suffer from current post-*Roe v. Wade* "back alley" abortions. And they could have protected many of those for whom any help is now too late.

Stacy Ruckman, for instance. The January 24, 1991, *Springfield News-Ledger* in Missouri reported:

"Dr. Scott Barrett Jr., abortionist at the Central Health Center for Women in Springfield, did 35-40 abortions per day for \$300 each. Barrett was able to process women so quickly in part due to his use of excessive doses of lidocaine anesthetic; a former nurse testified that two or three patients each day would go into convulsions in reaction to the high dosage.

"Stacy Ruckman did not only convulse; she died. Her parents have been awarded \$330,000 in actual damages and \$25 million in aggravated damages. . . . He is still doing abortions two days per week."

From the December 11, 1990 *New York Daily News*:

"The family of a 13-year old Queens girl [Dawn Ravenell] who died following a legal abortion has been awarded \$1.225 million—believed the largest award ever in the state involving an abortion death due to negligence.

"'Her parents never knew about the pregnancy,' said family attorney Thomas Principe. 'It was a horrible situation. Here you have a frightened kid in what

was really an abortion factory. She was treated like a piece on an assembly line.' . . .

"According to statements made before the jury [nurse Robert] Augent gave Ravenell only enough anesthesia for half of the 15-minute operation. . . . Clinic records show that Ravenell awoke mid-operation and began gagging and choking on her vomit. . . .

"[Dr. Allen J.] Klein placed a plastic airway in the girl's throat and she stabilized. Ravenell was again sedated, the abortion was completed and she was left unattended in the recovery room, where she awoke and began gagging on the unremoved airway.

"Ravenell went into cardiac collapse before a passing attendant noticed the girl's condition and had her rushed to St. Luke's, where she later died."

In the January 7, 1971, New York *Post*, the Ravenell family's lawyer, Thomas Principe said:

"A 13-year old child is in no position to make such a momentous decision as to have an abortion. I'll never forget, in cross-examining the doctor, I asked whether Dawn's age attracted his attention and he said, '*Oh no, I've done 13-year-olds before. When they're 10, maybe I'll notice.*'" (Emphasis added.)

Would the abortion-rights groups—to whom parental-consent laws are anathema—make an exception for 13-year-olds? For 10-year-olds?

In its March 12, 1988, edition, the Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner* reported that three young women—18, 20, and 22—had died within 18 months at the Her Medical Clinic, which operates as a doctor's office.

On February 22, the *Herald-Examiner* told what had happened to the three patients. One was Donna K. Heim, a preschool teacher, who was five and a half months pregnant. "Planned Parenthood had turned her away because she was too far along," but the Her Clinic did not, and she waited there "on bus station benches in a crowded, frenetic room."

When she was called, Donna Heim "wrote several times" on the medical forms that she had asthma. This was also noted and underlined on the medical history taken from her.

According to medical records subpoenaed by a lawyer for the family and obtained by the *Herald Examiner*, "approximately 10 minutes into the 15-minute procedure, the nurse-anesthetist had trouble getting oxygen to Heim's lungs.

"She reported this to the doctor performing the abortion, Dr. Mahlon Cannon, but the report states that he continued the abortion procedure for five minutes, before helping the nurse, who was still trying to get Heim to breathe.

"Cannon then applied the Heimlich maneuver and performed an emergency tracheostomy, cutting a hole in Heim's throat to get her breathing again. Still, nothing worked."

Having suffered a cardiac arrest, Donna Heim was rushed to California Medical Center and died the following day.

According to the coroner's office, her death was a "therapeutic accident."

## APPENDIX G

It was caused “by lack of oxygen after anesthesia, complicated by bronchial asthma and allergy.”

But the clinic knew she had asthma.

Richard Heim, father of the dead young woman, has a logical question:

“The nurse told the doctor she was having problems, that her heart was stopping. Why didn’t he stop then and do something?”

The family filed a wrongful-death suit against the Her Medical Clinic. The clinic’s lawyer, Alan Freedman—according to the Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner*—“said Donna Heim was to blame for failing to care for her own safety. . . . She was aware of the hazards of undergoing an abortion.”

I wonder if Donna Heim saw any of those ads by abortion-rights groups saying that now that abortion is legal, the days of the coat hangers and the back-alley doctors are gone. The ads saying now that abortions are legal, they’re safe.

With regard to protecting women who want an abortion, some pro-lifers are also culpable for putting women in danger. I mean those fake “clinics” that advertise “abortion information and services.”

The intent of these places is to persuade women *not* to have an abortion, but first they have to get women into the “clinic,” and they do that by lying about the purpose of the clinic.

In the May 6 issue of *American Medical News*, there is a report of a lawsuit brought by a woman who “went to a clinic that advertised ‘abortion information and services.’ She was shown slides of dismembered fetuses and abortions performed with crude instruments.”

The cause of action for the suit—according to a federal circuit court in Missouri—is that “there was a conspiracy to prevent her from obtaining a legal abortion.”

This is how the scam works.

“The woman said that when she first called the clinic, a staff member stated they would ‘help her all they could.’ When the woman arrived, she was asked for a urine specimen for a pregnancy test. She was then taken to a room for the slide show.

“When the woman expressed her distress, a clinic staff member told her to rely on religious faith. The staff member finally agreed to make an appointment for an abortion at a hospital.”

“When the woman went to the hospital, she discovered it was a Roman Catholic institution *and the physicians did not perform abortions*. She obtained an abortion elsewhere. [Emphasis added.]

“About a month later, the clinic staff member phoned the woman to ask when the baby was due.”

The woman’s conspiracy charge against the clinic was based on its depriving her of “the equal protection of the law through denial of her constitutional rights of privacy, autonomy, personhood, and liberty in making a choice as to



whether to continue her pregnancy.”

She is asking for actual damages of \$150,000 and punitive damages of up to \$10 million.

Her suit was dismissed below, but the case has been sent back to the lower court for further proceedings. (For those interested, it's *Lewis v. Pearson Foundation, Inc.*, 908 F. 2d 318 [C.A. 8. Mo., July 10, 1990].)

Not only is a cruel deception involved in this kind of scam, but the woman can be at very serious risk. Only a small percentage of abortions are performed because the pregnancy is actually dangerous to the woman's life or puts her health in serious peril. But there are such cases, and if a woman in that condition is delayed in getting an abortion by one of these bunco setups, she could die.

The fact that such fake clinics exist does not at all lessen the burden of responsibility on abortion-rights groups to insist that actual abortion clinics be carefully regulated.

In a 1989 interview with Debbie Sontag of the *Miami Herald*, Barbara Radford, head of the National Abortion Federation, said: “Let's face it. Abortion attracted undesirable operators when it was illegal. And it has not been legal that long. In some areas, there is still a feeling that providing abortions is something quasi-legal.”

Radford went on to say that the anti-abortion forces, by putting various pressures on abortion clinics, diminish the number of qualified doctors who will perform abortions because “they think it's not worth the hassle.”

According to Radford, “all of this makes it easier for places that take advantage of women to exist. And we just can't allow this. We can't allow the other side to dictate the terms of debate. We shouldn't speak in whispers and we shouldn't be cowed. If we are advocates for women, we have to protect women.”

But this year, when *60 Minutes* exposed a dreadful abortion clinic in Maryland, the very same Barbara Radford told reporter Meredith Vieira: “We had hoped it wouldn't get national publicity because of the political nature of all of this.” And Radford opposed strict regulations of abortion clinics.

## APPENDIX H

[*The following column appeared in the Washington Times (March 19, 1991) and is reprinted here with the author's permission.*]

### **In loco parentis, emphasis on loco**

*Suzanne Fields*

Some schools don't have enough problems trying to engage the good will and participation of parents, so they're being asked to set up an antagonism between student and parent, even when it may not be there.

This is what's happening in Michigan over the abortion issue, already one of the most divisive issues in the land today, where public school administrators are required to tell children as young as 11 how to get an abortion without parental consent. Starting in the sixth grade, children must be told how to petition a probate court. Telephone numbers are supplied.

How this information will be distributed is not quite clear, but we can imagine several scenarios. A school counselor invites several little girls into her office to ask what they would do to get an abortion. They drop their eyes, fidget with their pencils, giggle and squirm, while Teach writes the judge's telephone numbers in large numerals.

"If you get in trouble," she reminds them, "call a judge."

If individual conferences consume too much time, the public address system could be enlisted to give instructions:

"In a family way?" an obliging announcer asks. "Not getting along at home with Mom? You can kill two birds with one stone: Get an abortion with the permission of a judge, and Mom will never know."

But why should we stop with abortions? Couldn't we suggest that since parents are a pain in the neck about permissions—whether for going out with boys, getting excused from class, or getting an aspirin from the school nurse, for which most schools require parental permission—a judge could be standing by for similar surrogacy?

What's at issue here is not the abortion itself, which is legal most of the time in most of the places in America, but the way this law intrudes between a parent and child, casting suspicion on family ties, needlessly intensifying the vulnerability of a frightened child who particularly needs a parent's support.

The Michigan law has a kindly intent. It was enacted to protect children in violent homes, where parents can be brutal, not understanding, when a daughter gets pregnant.

But this is law based on a worst-case scenario, not the norm. Do we really want schools to be the instruments of information based on the worst-case scenarios?

Such a notion tilts dramatically in the wrong direction—insidiously suggesting to a child, even a child who needs no rescue, that she cannot trust her parents.

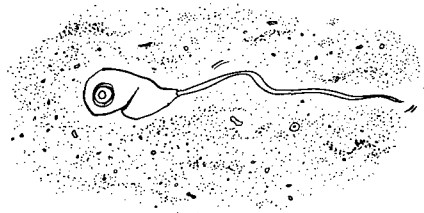
THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

At least 14 states have provisions in the law to protect children from brutal and unworthy parents, but only Michigan pits teachers against the parents.

In Minnesota, where the effect of parental-consent laws has been studied, pregnancies and abortions have decreased among teenagers. But what can't be measured is the way these laws may have encouraged, rather than discouraged, a sensitive rapport between daughter and parents.

Raging hormones dictate radical mood changes in girls, just as they keep boys close to the boiling point, and they need all the parental support they can get when they must deal with their volatile emotions. Schools can't force children to communicate with their parents, but they can encourage them, especially when they're hurting.

Pro-choice advocates sometimes compare abortion to a tonsillectomy. That may or may not be a ludicrous characterization, but it's worth noting that a tonsillectomy requires a note from home.



ROBERT  
THOMPSON.

*'All I want is a womb somewhere.'*

THE SPECTATOR 15 June 1991

## APPENDIX I

[*The following article appeared in the American Spectator (July 1991) and is reprinted here with permission.*]

### **The French Correction**

*Charlotte Allen*

In October 1989, I wrote an article for this magazine chronicling the wishful hype surrounding the French abortion pill, RU-486: It was a “morning-after” remedy. It was painless. It was harmless. It could be taken in the privacy of one’s home (no more demonstrators!). It would solve the Third World’s population problems. It was a quick, non-traumatic way for a woman to rid herself of pregnancy with the help of a glass of water.

I pointed out that in France—the only country where it is available to the general public—taking RU-486 required three to four visits to an abortion hospital and careful medical supervision in a sophisticated First World setting, that heavy bleeding was a near-certain side effect, and that the chief aim of RU-486’s promoters was to get the drug onto the U.S. market fast, bypassing the Food and Drug Administration’s decade-long approval process.

Because RU-486 is a powerful steroid (it causes the uterine lining to dissolve, flushing out the embryo) with long-term effects that may include birth defects if the abortion fails, the campaign had all the earmarks of the first stage of a medical and litigational disaster on the order of those accompanying the first generation of birth-control pills and the Dalkon Shield. Nonetheless, practically every time you opened a newspaper in 1989, you could read Molly Yard or Eleanor Smeal or a house editorialist direly predicting a widespread “black market” in RU-486 if the FDA did not approve the drug for general use *immediately*.

When the article appeared here and in reprint in the *Wall Street Journal*, I was roundly ridiculed in letters to the editor. That fall, Dr. Etienne-Emile Baulieu, the French physician who invented the pill in 1982, won the prestigious Lasker prize for developments in medicine. Rumored to have his eyes on the Nobel Prize as well, Baulieu published an explanatory article simultaneously in *Science* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. About 2,000 Frenchwomen a month had been procuring abortions via RU-486 since October 1988. As 1989 drew to a close, the pill crested in repute.

True, Smeal, Yard, and others were unable to find a U.S. drug manufacturer willing to produce or apply for FDA approval of RU-486, despite a vigorous campaign. In June 1989, the Food and Drug Administration, apparently taking those threats of a black market seriously, issued an “import alert” barring admission of the drug into this country for personal use, while allowing it for research purposes, including clinical trials. But in California, then-Attorney General John D. van de Kamp offered the entire state to RU-486’s

manufacturer, Roussel-Uclaf, as an abortion-pill laboratory, with the drug to be available to all takers. (The New Hampshire legislature recently followed suit with a similar offer.)

Since then, my 1989 observations about the less pleasant aspects of RU-486 seem to have crept into the press vocabulary. Encomia to the ease and privacy of taking RU-486 are rare these days. About the only old-style burler still on the scene is Mark Green, commissioner of consumer affairs for New York Mayor David Dinkins, who is trying to spearhead a mayors' crusade to bring the pill to the nation's large cities, along with an "education" campaign to bombard Americans with favorable propaganda. In a January interview with *New York Newsday*, Green characterized the heavy bleeding that RU-486 induces—about nine days' worth on average, with about one percent of recipients needing transfusions—as "just like menstruation." (Green did not return my calls.)

The media now routinely note that the drug, when used alone, is only 60 to 80 percent effective in producing a complete abortion, far less efficient than the most common form of surgical abortion, vacuum aspiration, which has a 98 percent success rate. Even when used with the labor-inducing abortifacient prostaglandin, as Roussel-Uclaf's protocols require in France, the drug has a 5 percent failure rate. Prostaglandin has too many adverse side effects to be used alone, but it lessens the risk of hemorrhage that RU-486 seems to entail.

Roussel-Uclaf's protocols require RU-486 to be administered at a hospital, where the woman is supposed to be carefully screened as a likely candidate: healthy, middle-class, and committed enough to her abortion plans not to change her mind. She has a pregnancy test. A week later—because France has a week-long waiting period for abortions—she goes back to the clinic to take the pill, then returns in forty-eight hours for another test. If she has not aborted, she gets a shot of prostaglandin and stays in the hospital another two days or so until an abortion occurs or she has to have a surgical procedure. Besides bleeding, common side-effects include pain, vomiting, diarrhea, and—in about 5 percent of the cases—an incomplete abortion or failure to expel the placenta, which also necessitates surgery. The European press has reported at least two instances of heart failure, and in April a Frenchwoman died, apparently in response to the prostaglandin.

The media now also note that RU-486 is effective only during the brief window between when a woman suspects she is pregnant and the seventh week after her last menstrual period. Finally, independent studies in France indicate that the lengthiness and complexity of an RU-486 procedure can exact an emotional toll on the woman, who has to see the  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-long embryo so that she will know she has aborted. In French clinics, the women reportedly meet in support groups while they wait the long hours for the prostaglandin to work. As Roussel president Edouard Sakiz himself says, a pill-induced abortion is "an appalling psychological ordeal."

## APPENDIX I

Now, however, there is a new round of RU-486 hype, and it's taking the exact opposite tack of the campaign two years ago predicting a black market for the drug. Today, promoters claim that, because Roussel monitors the drug so carefully, there's no black market in RU-486 whatever and not likely to be one in the future.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, proponents no longer tout RU-486 as a "miracle" abortifacient; instead, they hail it as a "miracle" cure for a variety of afflictions having nothing to do with pregnancy: breast cancer, Cushing's syndrome, endometriosis, and AIDS. The purpose of the new hype is to force the FDA to drop its import alert.

It should be noted at the outset that neither the FDA nor any other federal agency forbids research on RU-486. Although the Department of Health and Human Services bans federal funding of abortion research, the FDA does allow RU-486 into the country for privately funded research, both abortion and non-abortion related. The import alert applies only to personal use of the pill. Needless to say, non-abortion related research on RU-486 in the U.S.—about ten ongoing projects—and abroad has been sparse and the published results inconclusive. A three-month study of twenty-two postmenopausal women with breast cancer published in 1986 in the *Bulletin of Cancer*, a French journal, showed improvement or stabilization in twelve of the women after six weeks, but by the end of the study eight of those had suffered a relapse. A study published in 1985 in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* of a single patient with Cushing's syndrome—an endocrine disorder that afflicts mostly women and brings on osteoporosis, loss of memory and strength, and other indicia of premature old age—showed remarkable improvement after nine weeks on RU-486. But a study of seven more patients published in the same journal the next year led to such equivocal results that researchers concluded the drug was not yet a "routine" treatment for Cushing's patients.

Laboratory studies of human cells, rats, and mice indicate that RU-486 and others in its steroid family could be useful therapies for tumors and immunosuppressive diseases such as AIDS, but they have not been followed by published clinical studies. There appears to be no published work at all on RU-486 and endometriosis, the uterine-lining overgrowth that makes menstruation painful for many women, although there apparently have been some small trials. As medical ethicist Arthur Caplan told *Business Week*, RU-486 "would be just another interesting substance" were it not for the abortion controversy.

If the FDA's alert does not apply to RU-486 imports for worthy research projects, what is the problem? The problem is Roussel-Uclaf. Since December 1988, the French company has refused to allow the export of the drug for any purpose to any country that does not meet four rigid criteria: (1) availability of prostaglandin, (2) tight control of distribution, (3) the woman's signing a form binding herself to a surgical abortion if the RU-486 does not work, and,

most crucially, (4) an atmosphere in which abortion is not only legal but “accepted by public opinion.” Roussel has decided that American attitudes toward abortion are not acceptable. Scientists, physicians, and pro-choicers have been flying to France in droves to beg for the drug for more than two years, but Roussel has not budged. Part of the problem may be that the National Right to Life Committee has threatened to boycott the chemical and industrial products of two U.S. subsidiaries of Roussel’s German parent company, Hoechst, A.G., if RU-486 comes to this country as an abortifacient.

The aim of the RU-486 proponents is to persuade Roussel that this chaotic scene somehow means that the whole country is almost 100 percent pro-choice, ready to elect Molly Yard president, except for a microscopic percentage of “lonely hecklers,” as Dinkins calls them. The right-to-lifers may look numerous with all their churches, but there really aren’t more than one or two of them, maybe five or six.

The proponents of RU-486 have constructed a Rube Goldberg chain of causation: The right-to-lifers persuade the Food and Drug Administration to slap an import alert onto the drug. This, in turn, “sends a signal” to Roussel that the right-to-lifers have more power than they actually have, and Roussel refuses to export the drug to America for any reason, including scientific ones not covered by the import alert. So if your sister dies of breast cancer, you know who’s to blame.

There have been plenty of physicians and patients ready to play their roles in an elaborate pantomime of finger-pointing. Writing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* last September, Dr. William Regelson, an oncologist on the faculty of the Virginia Medical College, accused right-to-lifers and the FDA of colluding to impede basic scientific research on life-threatening diseases. Similar charges began to appear in the popular press. Rep. Ron Wyden, the strongly pro-choice Oregon Democrat who leads the House Small Business Committee’s subcommittee on regulation, called a hearing on November 19 to investigate the need for legislation to address this matter, subpoenaing countless FDA documents and summoning the personal presence of Ronald Chesemore, the agency’s associate commissioner for regulatory affairs, and two associates.

Although Wyden was the sole subcommittee member present, the hearing proceeded like all congressional hearings presided over by Democrats when a Republican administration is in power. Wyden hectored the FDA officials as if they were on trial for their lives, all the while preaching that the FDA should consult scientists, not “politics.” Sure enough, one of the witnesses produced a petition from 1,000 scientists begging the FDA to lift the ban. In January, Wyden introduced a bill that would specifically forbid the FDA from barring the import of RU-486. The aim of the bill, Wyden’s press secretary Wendy Horwitz informed me, is to “send a signal” to Roussel that American public opinion supports the drug. An op-ed piece signed by Wyden appeared in the *New York Times* on April 10, touting his bill and complaining once again that

## APPENDIX I

politics was getting in the way of “unfettered scientific research.” The timing of the article was not good. The same day, the *Times* reported on the first death from RU-486 in France. Roussel blamed the death on the prostaglandin and immediately switched to a different brand for its French protocol. The French government tightened its restrictions on who can take the pill.

Still, Wyden’s marshaling of researchers and cancer patients to fight the pro-choicers’ import lobbying battle has paid off with sympathetic newspaper reports and a coast-to-coast slew of editorials. Some reporters, however, have been more skeptical this time around; *Business Week’s* John Carey and the *New Republic’s* Dorothy Wickenden declined to take at face value the extravagant non-abortion therapeutical claims proponents are making for RU-486. But the drug’s supporters seem to expect, even demand, sympathetic press coverage. When I asked Wyden’s press secretary Horwitz whether the feminists’ prediction of a black market didn’t make it logical for the FDA to issue the import alert, her temper flared. “You sound like you’re on the other side,” she declared. And RU-486 lobbyist Marie Bass refused to speak to me, complaining about my 1989 story: “You made me look as though I didn’t care about women’s health.”

Wyden was also unable to get full support from the medical community. Embarrassingly, the American Medical Association, strongly pro-choice and on the record as favoring the legal availability of RU-486 for research, took the position that the FDA “acted responsibly in issuing import restrictions” for the drug. AMA trustee P. John Seward testified, “We do not believe that there has been adequate research to establish that this drug is a safe and effective therapeutic modality.”

When I spoke with Regelson, he complained vociferously about FDA bureaucracy and about the right-to-lifers, who, he said, “are against sex for fun.” Then he launched into a tirade against what seemed to be the real source of his annoyance, Roussel, whose representatives he has been unsuccessfully lobbying for cancer research funding. “I can’t understand their philosophy. Their strategic approach to this drug is bizarre. Abortion is not where it’s at. We need good contraception,” he said, noting some research indicating that RU-486 can function as an ovulation inhibitor. “For population control, you need contraception, not abortion.”

Roussel, not right-to-lifers, holds the key to the stand-off, and some observers have suggested that the threatened boycott has nothing to do with Roussel’s intransigence. Hoechst’s chairman, Wolfgang Hilger, is a devout Roman Catholic, and there is evidence that Hoechst made the decision not to market RU-486 in the United States long before the threat of a boycott. Indeed, Roussel started marketing the drug in France in October 1988 only under orders from the French government, which owns a 36 percent interest in the company.

The other hypothesis is that Roussel is playing hardball, holding out for a specific assurance from the U.S. government that RU-486 can be offered some protection from liability in any lawsuits that arise. After all, that dead woman



## THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

in France would have an estate worth millions in the litigious United States.

The liability issue is likely to be the core of the next round of hype. The RU-486 promoters have been among the supporters of federal product-liability reform bills, which would strictly limit a drug manufacturer's financial exposure in injury suits. An interest in product-liability reform would under normal circumstances leave the pill's supporters on a collision course with consumer groups, usually their natural allies.

Mark Green, who voiced his support for liability limits in the *Newsday* interview, worked five years for Ralph Nader, whose Public Citizen consumer organization has categorically opposed any liability limits whatsoever. But Public Citizen is lying low in the battle over RU-486, as is the Consumer Federation of America. So is the Women's Health Network, which a few years ago raised questions about the drug. Meredith Turshen, a Rutgers University psychology professor who heads the network's New Jersey division, voiced concerns about the drug's side effects at a panel discussion sponsored by the American Public Health Association. Now she says that a report of her remarks published in the *AMA News* misquoted her. "I support abortion," she told me.

For RU-486 has come to be viewed by almost everyone, supporters and critics alike, as largely symbolic, its value rooted in nothing having to do with concrete experience—not ease of administration, not women's health, not the well-being of Cushing's and cancer sufferers. Its value is strictly abstract, like the "right" to an abortion, the most abstract of all rights anyone has ever read into the Constitution.

## NOTES

1. No one mentions the black market nowadays except the hapless Mark Green, who declared in his *Newsday* interview: "If it stays on a blacklist in the U.S., it will inevitably lead to a black market here. That means wealthy women will have access, but the poor 16-year-old will not, or worse, may use it without adequate medical supervision." Dinkins's administration had earlier announced it was considering offering Roussel the use of New York's public hospitals for RU-486 clinical studies, but rejected the idea when it realized that the main users of those hospitals are poor blacks and Hispanics.



STAYSKAL  
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TRIBUNE

"I SUGGEST WE LIMIT OUR REPORT NOW TO JUST DOING AWAY WITH ALL SEXUAL TABOOS... WE CAN ALWAYS GET RID OF GOD NEXT YEAR!"

Editorial cartoon by Wayne Stayskal (Tampa Tribune, 1991; reprinted with permission).

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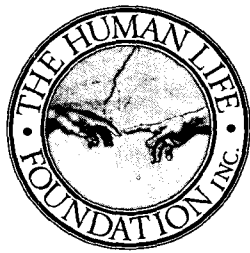
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**Special Notice:** we also have available copies of *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation* by President Ronald Reagan, which has been published in a hardcover book by Thomas Nelson Publishers. The book includes the complete text of the President's essay (which first appeared in the Spring, 1983, issue of this review). To order send \$7.95 per postpaid copy.

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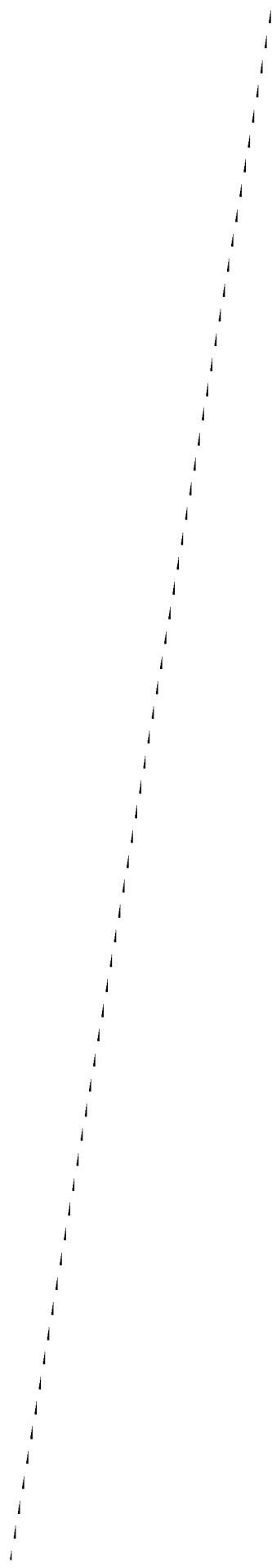
**Index**

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# Index: The Human Life Review, Volume XVII, 1991

The code for all references is: *W* (Winter), *Sp* (Spring), *S* (Summer), *F* (Fall) issues followed by the page number for that issue. Titles in **bold face** indicate articles which appeared in this *Review*.

## A

### A President's Tears

Gary Bauer, *W*, 33-44

### A Quiet Holocaust

J.J. Maloney, *Sp*, 95-97

### A Shot in the Arm

Ray Kerrison, *S*, 106-107

Abbey, Edward, *W*, 66

Abbott, Faith

**The Engulfing War**, *Sp*, 7-18

**Family Is as Family Does**, *S*, 27-43

**Silence is Death**, *F*, 55-73

**When the Tea Was Strong**, *W*, 88-94

abortion, *W*, 28-32, 53, 56-57; *Sp*, 7-18, 87-89, 110-112; *S*, 18, 19-25, 65-66, 69-70, 81-83; *F*, 111-128

and adoption, *S*, 21-22, 74-75, 78; *F*, 43-44, 52

and alternatives to, *F*, 30-54

and cases of rape or incest, *S*, 82; *F*, 41

and "Christian conscience", *W*, 13

and clinic regulations, *S*, 107-116, 119; *F*, 57, 63, 67-68

and dangers associated with, *W*, 108-110; *Sp*, 13-15; *S*, 106, 119; *F*, 34-35, 56-60, 62-65, 67-68, 72-73, 107-110

and ecofeminism, *S*, 46, 49-50

and economic implications, *Sp*, 59-64

and fatherhood, *F*, 83-98

and feminism, *Sp*, 43-48; *S*, 16

and historical media treatment, *W*, 68-80

and the holocaust, *W*, 7-16, *S*, 85-88

and infanticide, *S*, 70-72

and legality of promoting acceptance, *W*, 18-26; *S*, 97

and the media, *W*, 17

and parental consent, *Sp*, 100-101; *S*, 75-77, 120-121; *F*, 37-39

and prenatal testing, *F*, 101-106

and procedures, *Sp*, 49-58

and the Roman Empire, *S*, 93

and sex selection, *W*, 36-37; *Sp*, 44

and slavery, *W*, 33-36

and United Methodist Church, *S*, 100-103

and women's right to know of dangers, *F*, 34-35

in Britain, *Sp*, 49-58

in India, *Sp*, 44

in Japan, *S*, 76

### Abort Patient's Naivete Leads to Another Death

Ray Kerrison, *F*, 107-108

### Abortion and the Compromise of Fatherhood

Stella Morabito, *F*, 83-100

### Abortion and the Discreet Domesticity of Evil

Paul Mankowski, *S*, 85-88

### Abortion and the Family

Nicholas Davidson, *S*, 65-84

### Abortion: Demanding and getting some real choices

Michelle A. Cretella, *W*, 108-110

### Abortion in the News

Phyllis Zagano, *W*, 68-80

abstinence (sexual), *Sp*, 102-109

ACLU, *W*, 111-112; *Sp*, 98-99; *S*, 33; *F*, 118

ACT-UP, *F*, 55, 66

Adams, Ansel, *W*, 58-59

Adkins, Janet, *W*, 48-49, 51-53; *F*, 11

Adler, Margot, *S*, 48-49

adoption, *F*, 42-43

Agee, Mary Cunningham, *F*, 32-33

**Practical Compassion**, *F*, 48-54

AIDS, *S*, 102-104; *S*, 18, 124; *F*, 55-66

Alan Guttmacher Institute, *F*, 66

Alexander, Dr. Leo, *W*, 12, 37

Allen, Charlotte

**The French Correction**, *S*, 122-127

alpha-fetoprotein testing, *F*, 105-106

Alvarez, A. *W*, 48-49

and *The Savage God*, *W*, 48

American Hospital Association, *F*, 14

*American Journal of Public Health*, *F*, 39

American Medical Association, *S*, 126-127

*American Medical News*, *S*, 118

American Public Health Association, *S*, 127

*American Spectator*, *F*, 127

Americans Against Human Suffering, *F*, 25

Amneus, Daniel

and *The Garbage Generation*, *S*, 72-73

amniocentesis, *F*, 105

Andes, Katherine

**Why are Some Good Smart Nice People Pro-Choice?** *F*, 114-117

Angell, Marcia, *W*, 38

Animal Rights Activists, *F*, 63-64

Aristotle, *S*, 21

Associated Press, *S*, 114

---

**B**

---

Baby Doe, *W*, 36, 43  
 Baker, Jeannine Parvati, *S*, 45-46, 49-50  
 Barnard, Dr. Christian, *W*, 7, 8-10  
   and *One Life*, *W*, 8-9  
 Barr, Judge Jerry, *F*, 15  
 Barrett, Dr. Scott Jr., *S*, 116  
 Bass, Marie, *S*, 126  
 Bauer, Gary, *S*, 40  
   A President's Tears, *W*, 33-44  
 Baulieu, Dr. Etienne-Emile, *S*, 122  
 BBC, *W*, 7, 10, 84, 88, 97-98  
 Beethoven, *W*, 11  
 Bell, Becky, *F*, 38  
 Belloc, Hilaire  
   and *The Servile State*, *S*, 60  
 Bennett, James Gordon, *W*, 70-73, 75  
 Bergalis, Kimberly, *F*, 66  
 Bethany Christian Services, *F*, 33  
 Binding, Karl (co-author)  
   and *The Release of the Destruction of Life Devoid  
   of Value*, *W*, 12-13; *S*, 88  
 Birthright, Inc., *F*, 32  
 Blackmun, Justice Harry, *W*, 35  
 Blake, Judith, *W*, 110; *F*, 88  
 Bodine, Maria, *W*, 72-74  
 Boergers, Mary, *S*, 110-111; *F*, 67  
 Brainard, Larrie, *Sp*, 98  
 Brett, George, *F*, 83  
 Brewer, Colin, *F*, 20-21  
 Brief Encounter, The  
   James P. McFadden, *W*, 95-102  
 Brookheiser, Richard, *W*, 58-59  
 Brown, Linda, *S*, 109  
 Buckley, William F. Jr., *W*, 86, 95  
   How To Reason on Clarence Thomas, *F*, 127-  
   128  
   Malcolm Muggeridge, R.I.P., *W*, 103-104  
 Buchanan, Pat, *F*, 118-119, 124-126  
 Busalacchi, Christine, *Sp*, 95; *F*, 11-13  
 Bush, George, *Sp*, 19-20, *F*, 66  
*Business Week*, *S*, 124, 126

---

**C**

---

Califa, Tony, *W*, 112  
*California Medicine*, *F*, 7  
 Callahan, Dr. Daniel  
   and *Setting Limits*, *W*, 38  
 Camus, Albert, *W*, 55  
 Cantor, Dr. Harvey, *F*, 12-13  
 Caplan, Arthur, *S*, 124; *F*, 16  
 Caplan, Dr. Howard, *F*, 17  
 Carey, John J., *S*, 104, 126  
 Carillo, Charles, *F*, 107  
 Carroll, James, *S*, 13-17

Cartesianism, *Sp*, 75, 77-78, 80, 82, 87, 90-91  
 Catholic Church, *Sp*, 31  
   and abortion, *S*, 16, 97-98  
   and contraception, *F*, 41  
   and Euthanasia, *Sp*, 8  
   and warfare, *Sp*, 30  
 Catholic University, *S*, 63-64  
 Center for Disease Control (abortion surveillance),  
   *Sp*, 11  
*Centesimus Annus* (encyclical) *S*, 98  
 Central Health Center for Women, *S*, 116; *F*, 65  
 Chambers, Whittaker  
   and *Witness*, *W*, 33  
 Chanteur, Professor Janine, *Sp*, 65-72  
   and *Les petits-enfants de Job*, *Sp*, 66-67  
 Charen, Mona  
   Families Cast as Culprits, *Sp*, 100-101  
   Sexing Up Their Faith *S*, 104-105  
 Chesterton, G.K., *Sp*, 22; *S* 24-25, 59  
*Chicago Sun-Times*, *F*, 71-73  
 Children Who Ask To Be Born  
   Ellen Wilson Fielding, *S*, 19-25  
 Christian Action Council, *F*, 32  
 Christian Bureau for the Handicapped, *Sp*, 70  
 Christianity, *S*, 20-33  
   and environmentalism, *W*, 61-67, *S*, 58-62, 64  
   and views on value of life, *W*, 8, 10-11, 13-  
   14  
   in the Soviet Union, *W*, 98  
*Chronicles*, *S*, 62  
 CNN, *Sp*, 7  
 Colby, William, *F*, 11  
*Commentary*, *W*, 56  
 communism, *W*, 33, 98-100, *S*, 63  
 Comstock, Anthony, *W*, 77  
 conservatism (and environmentalism), *W*, 60  
 Consumer Federation of America, *S*, 127  
 contraception, *S*, 20, 122; *F*, 40-42, 51  
 Couchman, Geri Coppennoll, *W*, 54-55  
 Covering Up Destructive Abortions  
   Nat Hentoff, *S*, 108-111  
 Craig, Amanda  
   Poor Woman, Poor Potential Human, *Sp*,  
   49-58  
 Cranford, Dr. Ronald, *F*, 11-13, 16-17  
 Creating a Master Race  
   Nat Hentoff, *F*, 101-104  
 Cretella, Michele A.  
   Abortion: Demanding and Getting Some Real  
   Choices *W*, 108-110  
*Crisis*, *Sp*, 75-76, 78-79, 87-88  
*Crossfire* (transcript of CNN TV program)  
   It's the Law in Louisiana, *F*, 118-126  
 Cruzan, Nancy, *Sp*, 8-9, 95-97; *F*, 11

---

**D**

---

Dachau Concentraation Camp, *S*, 85-88



- Dadeland Family Planning Center, *S*, 113-115,  
*F*, 63
- Daily News*, *Sp*, 13
- "Dark Ages," *Sp*, 20-22; *W*, 45
- Dasmann, Raymond, *S*, 56
- Davidson, Nicholas  
    **Abortion and the Family**, *S*, 65-84
- Davies, Jean, *F*, 20
- de Bonald, Luis  
    and *On Divorce*, *S*, 65, 70-71
- de Corte, Marcel, *Sp*, 68
- de Maistre, Joseph, *S*, 82
- De Crow, Karen, *F*, 92
- De Smet, Fr. Pierre-Jean, *W*, 63, 65
- Declaration of Independence *W*, 33-35, 39; *F*,  
127
- Decter, Midge, *S*, 42
- Deep Ecology, *S*, 56, 58-62
- Department of Health and Human Services, *S*,  
124; *F*, 19
- Dershowitz, Professor Alan, *W*, 112
- Descartes, *Sp*, 80
- Dinkins, David, *S*, 123, 125
- Dinnerstein, Dorothy, *S*, 53
- Dionne, E.J.  
    and *Why Americans Hate Politics*, *S*, 17
- Disability Rag*, *F*, 101, 104
- divorce, *S*, 28, 70-71
- Donohue, William, *S*, 76
- Dostoevsky, *W*, 15-16, 48, 98
- Doubiago, Sharon, *S*, 47, 54
- Doughty, Charles Montagu, *W*, 61-63
- Douglas, Justice William O., *W*, 25; *Sp*, 85-86
- Dred Scott case, *W*, 34-35; *F*, 127
- Durham Declaration, The  
    **To United Methodists on Our Church &  
    Abortion**, *S*, 100-103

---

## E

---

- Earth First!, *W*, 60; *S*, 52, 56, 59, 63
- Eastern Women's Center, *Sp*, 13-15; *F*, 56-59,  
71, 107-110
- eating disorders, *F*, 81-82
- Ebeling, Kay, *F*, 82  
    **Eco-Feminists and Pagan Politics**, *S*, 45-55  
    **Feminists Are Not Funny**, *Sp*, 33-42  
    **The Failure of Feminism**, *W*, 105-107
- ecofeminism, *S*, 45-55; *F*, 82
- Edwards, Don, *F*, 104
- Ehrenreich, Barbara, *Sp*, 46
- Elliot, Donald, *F*, 102
- Engulfing War*, the  
    Faith Abbott, *Sp*, 7-18
- environmentalism, *W*, 58-61; *S*, 56-64  
    and christianity, *W*, 58-67
- Esquire*, *Sp*, 89; *F*, 91

- ethicists, in medicine, *F*, 14-15
- Ettelbrick, Paula, *S*, 37
- euthanasia, *W*, 48-52, 53; *Sp*, 85-87  
    and government finances, *W*, 14  
    and handicapped newborns, *W*, 35-36, 42-44  
    and the elderly, *W*, 14; *Sp*, 63-64  
    and the terminally or seriously ill, *W*, 49; *Sp*,  
8-9, 95-97; *F*, 8-14
- in Europe, *F*, 19-21  
    in Weimar Germany, *W*, 11-13, 37; *Sp*, 87  
    in the Netherlands, *W*, 38-39
- Everett, Carol, *F*, 65, 72

---

## F

---

- Fables of Alienation**  
    John Wauck, *Sp*, 73-94
- Factoring Out Abortion**  
    John S. Payne, *Sp*, 59-64
- Failure of Feminism, The**  
    Kay Ebeling, *W*, 105-107
- Families Cast as Culprits**  
    Mona Charen, *Sp*, 100-101
- families, "non-traditional", *S*, 27-43
- Family Is as Family Does**  
    Faith Abbott, *S*, 27-43
- Family Research Council, *W*, 37
- Family Support Act of 1988, *W*, 24; *F*, 97
- Farrell, Warren, *F*, 95-96
- F.D.A., *S*, 122, 124-126
- Federman, Daniel, *W*, 38
- feminism, *S*, 7-8  
    and abortion, *W*, 26; *Sp*, 37-40  
    and family, *S*, 27-30, 34-35, 37, 42-43  
    and paganism, *F*, 75-82  
    "failure" of, *W*, 105-107; *Sp*, 33-42
- Feminists Are Not Funny**  
    Kay Ebeling, *Sp*, 33-42
- fetal development, *W*, 108; *Sp*, 51-52
- Fieger, Geoff, *W*, 53
- Fielding, Ellen Wilson  
    **Children Who Ask To Be Born**, *S*, 19-25
- Fields, Suzanne, *S*, 42  
    **In loco parentis, emphasis on loco**, *S*, 120-  
121
- Finger, Anne, *F*, 101, 103-104
- First Amendment, *Sp*, 98
- Flesh, George,  
    **Why I No Longer Do Abortions**, *F*, 111-113
- Fletcher, Joseph, *W*, 38
- Fomby, Paula, *S*, 36, 42-43
- Forbes*, *S*, 7
- Foreman, Dave, *S*, 58-64  
    and *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, *S*, 56-57
- Franke, Linda Bird  
    and *The Ambivalence of Abortion*, *Sp*, 15-16

- Fraser, Antonia  
 and *The Weaker Vessel*, *S*, 19-20  
 Freedom of Choice Act, *F*, 104  
**French Correction, the**  
 Charlotte Allen, *S*, 122-127  
**French Scientist's Findings Create Abortion  
 Dilemma**  
 Robert P. George & William C. Porth, *Sp*, 110-  
 112  
 Friedan, Betty  
 and *The Feminine Mystique*, *S*, 28-30  
 Fussell, Paul  
 and *Wartime*, *Sp*, 29

---

**G**

---

- Gandhi, Mahatma, *S*, 111  
 Gay and Lesbian Alliance, *F*, 65  
 Gentles, Ian  
 and *A Time to Choose Life*, *Sp*, 17  
 George, Robert P. and Porth, William C.  
**French Scientists Findings Create Abortion  
 Dilemma, Sp**, 110-112  
 Gilder, George  
 and *Sexual Suicide*, *S*, 27  
*Glamour*, *F*, 68-70, 73  
 Goldberg, Herb, *S*, 79-80  
 Goodman, Ellen, *F*, 11  
 Gordon, General Charles George, *W*, 61-62  
 Gould, Joan  
**The Virtues of Virtue, Sp**, 105-107  
 Graeco-Roman Civilization, *Sp*, 20-22  
**Grandchildren of Job, The**  
 Thomas Molnar, *Sp*, 65-72  
 Greely, Horace, *W*, 70-73  
 Green, Mark, *S*, 123, 127  
 Greene, Graham, *W*, 93, 96  
 Greer, Germaine, *S*, 47  
 and *The Female Eunuch*, *S*, 29-30  
 Grimes, Dr. David A., *F*, 68  
 Gulf war, *Sp*, 7-9, 17-19, 28-30

---

**H**

---

- handicapped (children), *W*, 36, 41-44; *Sp*, 66-  
 72  
 Harper, Virginia Lee, and Bertram, *F*, 21-22  
*Harpers*, *F*, 75  
 Harrison, Dr. Michelle  
 and *A Woman in Residence*, *W*, 110.  
 Hefner, Hugh, *W*, 110  
 Hemlock Society, *W*, 48-49, 51-52, 56; *F*, 9, 21-  
 25  
 Hentoff, Nat, *W*, 111; *F*, 56, 63, 67-68  
**Covering Up Destructive Abortions, S**, 108-111

- Creating a Master Race, F**, 101-104  
**Since Abortions Are Legal, Why Can't They  
 Be Safe?, S**, 116-119  
**Today's Back Alley Abortions, S**, 112-115  
 Her Medical Clinic, *S*, 117-118  
 Heritage Foundation, *F*, 127-128  
 Hilger, Wolfgang, *S*, 126  
 Hillview Women's Medical Surgical Center, *S*,  
 107-111  
 Hippocratic Oath, *F*, 7-8  
 Hitler, Adolph, *W*, 12-13  
 Hoche, Alfred & Karl Binding  
 and *The Release of the Destruction of Life Devoid  
 of Value*, *W*, 12-13  
 Hodes, Dr. Herbert C., *F*, 69  
 holocaust, *W*, 11-13, 37; *Sp*, 86, 97; *S*, 85-88;  
*F*, 104  
 House, Dr. Charles Marshall, *S*, 113  
**How To Reason on Clarence Thomas**  
 William F. Buckley Jr., *F*, 127-128  
 Hubbard, Ruth, *F*, 104  
 Hughes, Archbishop John, *W*, 77  
*Human Life Review*, *W*, 86-87, 95; *Sp*, 44-46  
**Humane Holocaust, The**  
 Malcolm Muggeridge, *W*, 7-16  
 Humphry, Ann & Jean, *F*, 24-25  
 Humphry, Derek, *F*, 24-25  
 and *Let Me Die Before I Wake*, *F*, 23; *W*, 49  
 and *Final Exit*, *F*, 7, 22-23  
 Hunter, Ian  
**Malcolm Muggeridge Remembered, W**, 82-  
 85  
 Huxley, Adlous, *S*, 96  
 Hyde, Henry, *Sp*, 9.

---

**I**

---

- In loco parentis, emphasis on loco**  
 Suzanne Fields, *S*, 120-121  
 infertility, *S*, 78-79  
**Into the Dark Age**  
 Joseph Sobran, *Sp*, 19-31  
*It's a Wonderful Life*, *W*, 41-42  
**It's the Law in Louisiana**  
*Crossfire* transcript, June 20, 1991, *F*, 118-  
 126

---

**J**

---

- Jenkins, Rep. Woody, *F*, 118-126  
 Job (biblical), *Sp*, 67-72  
 Johnson, Dr. Timothy, *F*, 9  
 Joseph, Alex, *S*, 34-36  
*Journal of the American Medical Association*,  
*W*, 38; *S*, 122, 125; *F*, 8, 10  
 and "It's Over, Debbie" *W*, 38; *F*, 10

Justice Department, *W*, 37  
 Juvenal  
 and *Satires*, *S*, 89-96  
**Juvenal's Satire, Our Decadence**  
 Thomas Molnar, *S*, 89-96

---

## K

---

Kansas City *Star*, *Sp*, 97  
 Kendrick, Deborah  
**Less Than "Perfect" Babies Deserve a Chance**  
 at *Life*, *F*, 105-106

Kennedy, Bobby, *S*, 14-16  
 Kennedy, Senator Edward, *S*, 13  
 Kennedy, John F. *S*, 14-16  
 Kennedy, Teddy, *S*, 14-17  
 Kerrison, Ray, *F*, 56, 59, 62, 64-65, 68  
**A Shot in the Arm**, *S*, 106-107  
**Abort Patient's Naivete Leads to Another**  
**Death**, *F*, 107-108  
**Women Also Die From Legal Abortions**, *F*,  
 109-110

Kevorkian, "Doctor Death" Jack, *W*, 48-49, 52-  
 53; *F*, 10-11

King, Ynestra, *S*, 53-54  
 Kinsley, Mike, *F*, 118-126  
 Klein, Dr. Allen J., *S*, 117  
 Knox, Msgr. Ronald, *W*, 96  
 Koop, Surgeon General C. Everett, *F*, 66  
 Kraditor, Aileen, *S*, 71  
 Krutch, Joseph Wood  
 and *The Desert Year*, *W*, 66-67

---

## L

---

La Chapelle, Dolores, *S*, 47, 50  
 Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, *S*,  
 37

Lamkins, Donald, *F*, 12-13  
 Landau, Dr. William, *F*, 13  
 Lawrance, Sue Anne, *F*, 15-17  
 Lawrence, D.H., *W*, 61  
 Lejeune, Dr. Jerome, *F*, 120, 123  
*Lears*, *S*, 40  
 Lehrman, Lewis, *F*, 127  
 Leo, John  
**One watchdog missing in action**, *W*, 111-112  
 Leonard, Arthur, *S*, 38  
**Less Than "Perfect" Babies Deserve a Chance**  
 at *Life*  
 Deborah Kendrick, *F*, 105-106  
 Levatino, Dr. Anthony, *F*, 70  
 Lewis, C.S., *Sp*, 19; *S*, 87  
*Lewis v. Pearson Foundation Inc.*, *S*, 119  
 Liberalism, *W*, 52-53, 58; *S*, 13-18

**Liberty and Justice for Some**  
 Brendan Patrick Murphy, *Sp*, 98-99  
*Life*, *S*, 28, 41; *F*, 355  
 Lincoln, Abraham, *W*, 34-35; *F*, 127  
**Living with *Roe v. Wade***  
 Margaret Liu McConnell, *W*, 17-26  
 Locke, John  
 and *Two Treatises of Government*, *S*, 79  
 Lofton, Barbara, *S*, 107-109  
 Logan, Suzanne, *S*, 107-109, 111  
 London *Guardian*, *Sp*, 17  
 London *Spectator*, *Sp*, 53-58  
 London *Times*, *W*, 89, 92-94; *Sp*, 17  
 Long, Suzanne, *S*, 107-109, 111  
 Los Angeles *Herald-Examiner*, *S*, 117-118  
 Los Angeles *Times*, *F*, 24  
 Lowell, Robert, *W*, 48-49  
 Luce, Clare Booth, *W*, 97-98  
 Lytle, Andrew  
 and *At the Moon's Inn*, *W*, 64, 66

---

## M

---

Madonna, *S*, 7-13; *F*, 75, 82  
**Malcolm Muggeridge Remembered**  
 Ian Hunter, *W*, 82-85  
**Malcolm Muggeridge, R.I.P.**  
 William F. Buckley, Jr., *W*, 103-104  
 Malone, Patrick, *S*, 107-109  
 Maloney, J.J.  
**A Quiet Holocaust**, *Sp*, 95-97  
 Mankowski, Paul  
**Abortion and the Discreet Domesticity of**  
*Evil*, *S*, 85-88

Mann, Nancyjo, *W*, 110  
 Marchese, Janet, *F*, 43  
 Marker, Rita L.  
**"No Sting" Death: The Final Taboo**, *F*, 7-  
 29

Marquis de Sade, *S*, 58  
 marriage, *S*, 67-70  
 Marshall, Bob, *S*, 59  
 Marxism, *W*, 98-99  
 Mathewes-Green, Frederica  
**Unplanned Parenthood: Easing the pain of**  
**Crisis Pregnancy**, *F*, 30-47

Mathieu, Marie-Hélène, *Sp*, 70  
 McConnell, Margaret Liu, *W*, 56-57  
**Living with *Roe v. Wade***, *W*, 17-26  
 McFadden, J.P.  
**The Brief Encounter**, *W*, 95-102  
 McFadden, Maria  
**Pagan Queens: The Power of Woman**, *F*, 75-82  
**Suicide—The Next Choice**, *W*, 45-57  
**The Story of the Bottle**, *W*, 86-87  
 McGowan, Jo  
**No More 'Personally Opposed'**, *Sp*, 43-48

McKibben, Bill  
 and *The End of Nature*, *S*, 60  
 Mead, Margaret, *F*, 7, 84-98  
 Mech, Edmund, *S*, 75  
 media (and sexuality), *W*, 19; *Sp*, 103  
*Medical Ethics Advisor*, *F*, 9  
*Men and Abortion: Lessons, Losses and Love*,  
*F*, 91  
 Miami *Herald*, *S*, 42, 112, 114, 116  
 Michelman, Kate, *F*, 61, 93-94, 118-120  
 Mill, John Stuart, *Sp*, 26  
 Millett, Kate  
 and *Sexual Politics*, *S*, 29-30  
 Minoan Crete era, *S*, 48, 50-51  
 Molnar, Thomas  
*Juvenal's Satire, Our Decadence*, *S*, 89-96  
*The Grandchildren of Job*, *Sp*, 65-72  
 Morabito, Stella  
*Abortion and the Compromise of Fatherhood*,  
*F*, 83-100  
 Morgan, Robin, *S*, 30-31  
*Mother Jones*, *S*, 35-36, 42  
*Mothering*, *F*, 106  
 Mother Teresa, *W*, 14, 65-66, 83-84, 92, 96-97;  
*Sp*, 87; *S*, 23-24  
 Mountain and the Plain, the  
 Chilton Williamson, Jr., *W*, 58-67  
*Ms.*, *Sp*, 8; *S*, 27, 30-31, 35, 42-43  
 Muggerridge, John & Anne, *W*, 92, 102  
 Muggerridge, Kitty, *W*, 15, 86-87, 89-90, 92-93,  
 102, 104  
 Muggerridge, Malcolm, *W*, 39-40, 55-56, 82-104;  
*F*, 7  
*The Humane Holocaust*, *W*, 7-16  
 Murphy, Brendan Patrick  
*Liberty and Justice for Some*, *Sp*, 98-99  
 Mylott, Ray, *F*, 107-108

---

## N

---

Nader, Ralph, *S*, 127  
 Naess, Anne, *S*, 58  
 National Abortion Federation, *S*, 107-110; *F*, 56  
 National Abortion Rights Action League, *F*, 61  
*National Catholic Reporter*, *Sp*, 45  
 National Down Syndrome Adoption Exchange;  
*F*, 43  
 National Family Planning Program, *Sp*, 63  
 National Health Association, *F*, 17  
 National Organization for Women, *W*, 37, 112;  
*Sp*, 45; *S*, 109; *F*, 25  
*National Review*, *W*, 58; *F*, 127  
 National Right to Life Committee, *S*, 125  
 Nazi Germany, *W*, 12-13, 37; *Sp*, 86-87, 97; *F*,  
 101  
 Neuharth, Al, *F*, 22  
 Neuhaus, Richard John, *F*, 14

*New Dimensions*, *F*, 65, 70, 72  
*New England Journal of Medicine*, *W*, 37-38; *F*,  
 8-9, 14  
*New Republic*, *The*, *S*, 13, 126  
 "new world order," *Sp*, 19-20  
*New York*, *S*, 17; *F*, 75-76  
*New York Daily News*, *S*, 7, 116; *F*, 64  
*New York Herald*, *W*, 68-71, 73-75  
*New York Newsday*, *W*, 42; *S*, 123  
*New York Post*, *S*, 40, 117; *F*, 56, 63-64  
 New York State Department of Health, *F*, 10,  
 58-59  
 New York State Right to Life Committee, *S*,  
 106  
 New York State Supreme Court, *S*, 36-37  
*New York Sun*, *W*, 69-71, 73-74  
*New York Times*, *W*, 77-78, 88-89, 92-93, 99;  
*Sp*, 7, 17-18, 46-47, 88; *S*, 27, 33-37, 40, 48,  
 125-126; *F*, 15, 22, 60, 75, 77  
*New York Tribune*, *W*, 70, 72-73, 75  
*New York Woman*, *Sp*, 13-15; *F*, 71  
 Newman, Cardinal John, *W*, 96  
*Newsweek*, *W*, 54; *Sp*, 33-34, 36, 43-44; *S*, 37-  
 40, 43  
*Nightline*, *S*, 8  
 Niven, David, *W*, 103  
 Noble, Robert C.  
 "There Is No Safe Sex," *Sp*, 102-104  
 Nock, Albert Jay, *Sp*, 20  
 Noddings, Nell,  
 and *Women and Evil*, *F*, 79  
 NOEL House, *F*, 33  
 No More 'Personally Opposed'  
 Jo McGowan, *Sp*, 43-48  
 "No-Sting" Death: The Final Taboo  
 Rita L. Marker, *F*, 7-29  
 Nuremberg, *W*, 12, 37  
 Nurturing Network, *F*, 32-33, 47, 48-54

---

## O

---

O'Connor, Flannery, *W*, 60-61; *Sp*, 73, 85; *S*,  
 87  
 O'Connor, John Cardinal, *W*, 63, *Sp*, 8; *S*, 106  
 O'Meara, Archbishop Edward T., *F*, 16  
 O'Rourke, Fr. Kevin, *F*, 13  
**Of Life and Death**  
 Pope John Paul II, *S*, 97-99  
**Of Presbyterians and Greens**  
 Chilton Williamson Jr., *S*, 56-64  
 Olasky, Susan, *F*, 46  
**One watchdog missing in action**  
 John Leo, *W*, 111-112  
 Operation Rescue, *W*, 112; *Sp*, 98; *S*, 114; *F*,  
 61-62  
 Orwell, George  
 and *1984*, *Sp*, 23; *S*, 96

---

**P**

---

**Pagan Queens: The Power of Woman**

- Maria McFadden, *F*, 75-82  
 Paglia, Camille  
     and *Sexual Personae*, *S*, 7-8; *F*, 75-79, 82  
 Pagnozzi, Amy, *W*, 52-53  
 Paintin, David, *Sp*, 49-53, 55, 58  
 Paltrow, Lynn, *W*, 112  
 parenthood, *W*, 23-25; *F*, 35-37  
 Pascal, Blaisé, *W*, 94  
 Patient Self-Determination Act, *F*, 18-19  
 Payne, John S.  
     **Factoring Out Abortion**, *Sp*, 59-64  
 Pearson Centers, *F*, 32  
 Pease, Sibyl  
     **The Writing on the Wall**, *W*, 27-32  
 Percy, Walker, *Sp*, 73-94  
 Percy, William Alexander, *Sp*, 73  
 Peterzell, Marc, L., *F*, 17  
 Pierce, William, *S*, 75  
 Planned Parenthood, *Sp*, 11, 16, 63, 100-101;  
     *S*, 76, 82-83, 106, 117; *F*, 32, 58, 87-88, 90, 97  
 Plant, Judith, *S*, 51-52, 54  
     and *Healing the Wounds—The Promise of*  
     *Ecofeminism* *S*, 46-48  
 Plato, *F*, 79  
     and *Dialogues*, *S*, 65  
*Playboy*, *F*, 87, 97  
 Plum, Dr. Fred, *F*, 13  
 Pollitt, Katha, *Sp*, 47  
 polygamy, *S*, 33-36, 67-68  
 Pompidou, Alain, *F*, 19  
**Poor Woman, Poor Potential Human**  
     Amanda Craig, *Sp*, 49-58  
 Pope John Paul II, *W*, 99, 101, 103; *Sp*, 19  
     of *Life and Death*, *S*, 97-99  
 Pope Paul VI, *W*, 98-99, 103  
 population, American, *Sp*, 60-64  
 pornography, *Sp*, 81-82  
 post-abortion syndrome, *F*, 33  
 Postman, Neil, *F*, 75  
**Practical Compassion**  
     Mary Cunningham Agee, *F*, 48-54  
 premarital sex, *S*, 77-78  
 prenatal drug use, *W*, 25  
 Presbyterian Church, *S*, 56-57, 59-61, 104-105  
 Principe, Thomas, *S*, 116-117  
 Pro-choice rhetoric, *W*, 18; *S*, 20, 110-112, 114;  
     *F*, 56, 122, 125  
 Progressive Policy Institute, *S*, 42

---

**Q**

---

- “quality of life”, *W*, 10-12, 14, 33, 36-41, 43-  
     44; *Sp*, 85; *F*, 13-14, 16

- Quill, Dr. Timothy, *F*, 8-11  
 Quindlen, Anna, *Sp*, 7-8, 10, 17-18

---

**R**

---

- Radford, Barbara, *S*, 107, 110-111, 119; *F*, 56,  
     67-70  
 Ratzinger, Cardinal Josef, *F*, 55  
 Ravenell, Dawn, *Sp*, 13-16, *S*, 116-117; *F*, 38,  
     58  
 Reagan, Ronald, *W*, 42-44  
 Regelson, Dr. William, *S*, 125-126  
 Relman, Dr. Arnold, *S*, *F*, 9-10  
*Rerum Novarum* (encyclical), *S*, 97  
 Restell, Madame (a.k.a. Caroline Ann Trow  
     Lohman) *W*, 68-80  
 RICO, *W*, 111-112  
 Ricouer, Paul, *Sp*, 80  
 “right to die”, *W*, 49-57; *F*, 8-9, 17  
*Roe v. Wade*, *W*, 18-20, 22-26, 35, 56-57, 109;  
     *Sp*, 8-9, 60; *F*, 58, 97, 118, 119  
 Roemer, Buddy, *F*, 118  
 Rogers, Professor James, *Sp*, 100-101  
 Roman Empire, *S*, 89-96  
 Ross, Helen Klein, *F*, 106  
 Roussel-Uclaf, *S*, 123-126  
 RU-486, *S*, 122-127  
 Ruether, Rosemary Radford, *S*, 46, 54

---

**S**

---

- Sakiz, Edward, *S*, 123  
 Samaritan Hospital (NHS-England), *Sp*, 49-50  
 Samaritans, *W*, 46-47, 50-52  
 “sanctity of life”, *W*, 8, 10-15, 36, 38, 39-40,  
     44, *Sp*, 8, 88  
 Sanger, Margaret, *S*, 83  
 Scalia, Justice Antonin, *S*, 40  
 Schisla, Chuck, *F*, 16  
 Schwartz, Harry, *F*, 15  
 Schwartzberg, Leon, *F*, 19-20  
*Science*, *S*, 122  
 Scully, Dr. Thomas J., *F*, 19  
*Seven Days*, *Sp*, 14  
 Seward, P. John, *S*, 126  
**Sexing up their faith**  
     Mona Charen, *S*, 104-105  
 sexually transmitted diseases, *S*, 78-79  
 Sheed, Frank, *W*, 61  
 Sheen, Archbishop Fulton, *W*, 91, 95-101; *F*, 49  
 Shostak, Arthur  
     and *Men and Abortion*, *F*, 96-97  
 Shragis, Steven, *F*, 23  
**Sign of the Crotch, the**  
     Joseph Sobran, *S*, 7-18

**Silence is Death**

Faith Abbott, *F*, 55-73  
 Simon Wiesenthal Center, *S*, 9  
**Since Abortions Are Legal, Why Can't They Be Safe?**

Nat Hentoff, *S*, 116-119  
 single motherhood, *S*, 72-74; *F*, 46, 85, 98  
*Sixty Minutes*, *S*, 106-111, 115, 119; *F*, 56, 64, 67

Smeal, Eleanor, *S*, 122  
 Smith, Adam, *S*, 17  
 Sobran, Joseph,  
     **Into the Dark Age**, *Sp*, 19-31  
     **The Sign of the Crotch**, *S*, 7-18  
 Society for the Right to Die, *W*, 37; *F*, 18  
 sociobiology (parental investment theory), *S*, 66-70

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, *W*, 98  
 Sontag, Debbie, *S*, 112-116, 119; *F*, 62-63, 67  
 Sorbonne University, *Sp*, 65  
 spina bifida, *W*, 44  
 Spretnak, Charlene, *S*, 47-48, 50, 53  
 St. Anthony, *W*, 65  
 St. Augustine, *W*, 45; *S*, 57  
 St. Paul of Tarsus, *W*, 66; *S*, 9  
 St. Paul of Thebes, *W*, 65, 97  
 St. Teresa of Avila, *W*, 96  
 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sp*, 73-74  
 St. Thomas More, *Sp*, 78  
 St. Vincent's Hospital and Health Care Center,  
     *F*, 15-16

Stacey, Judith  
     and *Brave New Families*, *S*, 41-42  
 Stalin, Joseph, *W*, 98; *Sp*, 86  
 Starhawk (ecofeminist writer), *S*, 46-48, 50, 53  
 Steinem, Gloria, *S*, 47  
 Stith, Richard, *F*, 103  
 Stone, Jane, *S*, 108, 110  
**Story of the Bottle, The**  
     Maria McFadden, *W*, 86-87  
 suicide, *W*, 45-57; *Sp*, 86  
     and religious beliefs, *W*, 45, 47, 56-57  
     historical attitudes to, *W*, 45-46  
**Suicide—The Next Choice**  
     Maria McFadden, *W*, 45-57  
 Supreme Court, *W*, 18, 24, 34-35, 39, 109; *Sp*,  
     8; *F*, 39, 57, 118-119, 127  
 Swift, Jonathan, *S*, 96

**T**

Taney, Chief Justice Roger B., *W*, 34  
**There Is No Safe Sex**  
     Robert C. Noble, *Sp*, 102-104  
 Thomas, Judge Clarence, *F*, 127-128  
 Thompson, Richard, *W*, 48  
 Thompson, Governor Tommy, *F*, 46

Thoreau, Henry David, *W*, 64-65  
*Time*, *W*, 92-93; *Sp*, 7, 29; *S*, 37, 39-40, 43; *F*,  
 115

**To Save the Black Family, the Young Must Abstain**

L. Douglas Wilder, *Sp*, 108-109  
 Tocqueville, Alexis de, *Sp*, 77  
**Today's Back-Alley Abortions**  
     Nat Hentoff, *S*, 112-115  
 Tolstoy, Leo, *W*, 85, 98  
 Tribe, Laurence,  
     and *Abortion: The Clash of Absolutes*, *F*, 94-95  
 Trumbull, Patricia Dianne, *F*, 10  
 Turshen, Meredith, *S*, 127

**U**

United Methodist Church, *S*, 100-103  
 University of Edinburgh (and contraception) *W*,  
     103-104  
**Unplanned Parenthood: Easing the Pain of Crisis Pregnancy**  
     Frederica Mathewes-Green, *F*, 30-47  
*Us*, *S*, 10

**V**

"value of life", *W*, 25-26, 47-48, 52-57  
 van de Kamp, General John D., *S*, 122-123  
*Vanity Fair*, *S*, 9-11  
 Vatican, *S*, 8, 97  
 Viera, Meredith, *S*, 107-111, 119  
**Virtues of Virtue, The**  
     Joan Gould, *Sp*, 105-107 *W*, 109  
*Vital Statistics of the United States*, *W*, 109  
 Voltaire, *Sp*, 98

**W**

*Wall Street Journal*, *W*, 93-94; *S*, 122; *F*, 23  
 Walsh, David, *S*, 63-64  
 Wanzer, Dr. Sidney  
     and "The Physician's Responsibility Toward  
         Hopelessly Ill Patients", *W*, 37-38  
*Washington Post*, *Sp*, 85, 89; *S*, 104, 115  
*Washington Times*, *S*, 42  
 Wattleton, Faye, *S*, 112; *F*, 58, 114  
 Wauck, John  
     **Fables of Alienation**, *Sp*, 73-94  
 Waugh, Evelyn, *W*, 61, 96  
 Weimar Germany, *W*, 11-13, *Sp*, 88-89  
 Weinstein, Dr. Louis, *F*, 8

Wertham, Frederick  
and *A Sign for Cain*, *W*, 13  
**When the Tea Was Strong**  
Faith Abbott, *W*, 88-94  
Whitehead, Alfred North, *Sp*, 19  
**Why are Some Good Smart Nice People Pro Choice**  
Katherine, Andes, *F*, 114-117  
**Why I No Longer Do Abortions**  
George Flesh, *F*, 111-113  
Wickendon, Dorothy, *S*, 126  
Wilder, L. Douglas  
    **To Save the Black Family, the Young Must**  
    **Abstain**, *Sp*, 108-109  
Williams, Ellen Lorena, *S*, 113-114  
Williams, John (Deputy D.A. San Diego), *Sp*,  
98  
Williamson, Chilton  
and "The Environmentalism of Abortion", *W*,  
58  
    **Of Presbyterians and Greens**, *S*, 56-64  
    **The Mountain and the Plain**, *W*, 58-67  
Willis, Ellen, *Sp*, 47

**Women Also Die From Legal Abortions**  
Ray Kerrison, *F*, 109-110  
Women Exploited by Abortion, *F*, 89, 91  
Women's Health Network, *S*, 127  
Working Mothers, *W*, 106  
**Writing on the Wall, The**  
Sibyl Pease, *W*, 27-32  
Wyden, Representative Ron, *S*, 125-126

---

## Y

---

Yard, Molly, *W*, 37; *S*, 122

---

## Z

---

Zagano, Phyllis  
    **Abortion in the News**, *W*, 68-80  
Zal, Cyruz, *Sp*, 98-99  
Zinsmeister, Karl, *S*, 42

