

# THE HUMAN LIFE REVIEW



VOLUME XLV No. 4 ♦ FALL 2019

## ♦ FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE ♦

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*HLR Interview:* John Grondelski/Pastor Clenard Childress, Jr.

*Booknotes:* Christopher White reviews Charles Camosy's *Resisting Throwaway Culture*

Maria McFadden Maffucci reviews Dawn Eden Goldstein's *Sunday Will Never Be the Same*

*Appendices:* Hadley Arkes • Kevin C. Walsh • Clarke D. Forsythe

Stefano Gennarini • Maria McFadden Maffucci

. . . Readers who like to start at the back will find a special reward: “Remembering Faith,” our editor’s poignant reflection on the eight-year anniversary of her mother’s death (page 96). Faith Abbott McFadden, a founding editor of this journal, was beloved by everyone here, but as you will read, Maria has a unique relationship with her, forged not just by love and DNA but by something called microchimerism, “the bidirectional transfer of cells between mother and fetus during pregnancy, a fascinating biological bonding.” The death of a parent is also the subject of “Letting Weeping Spend the Night” (page 82), Tara Jernigan’s meditation on her father’s long-ago passing in which she observes that “over the years, grieving slowly becomes part of the fabric of our lives, but at some point it turns itself inside out and becomes rejoicing.” And Brian Caulfield, a long-time contributor, movingly recounts “a week of highs and lows that was redeemed by the grace of Mom’s peaceful, expected, yet strangely untimely death” (“Diary of an Unwitting Orphan,” page 37). While our primary focus is on abortion and its deadly cultural wreckage, these pieces ponder the meaning of individual lives, and remind us of the huge potential for relationship that abortion so callously cuts off.

Four new contributors help make this issue a worthy cap to our 45th year of publishing. Michael Kuiper, a psychologist practicing in California, considers how gender confusion is wreaking havoc in the lives of young people (“What the Ancients Understood,” page 45). David Talcott, a philosophy professor at The King’s College in New York City, discusses why the pro-life movement must embrace marriage and fertility as well as renounce abortion (“Building a Culture of Life,” page 53). We hear from a student, Dominique Cognetti, now in her senior year at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, about what it’s like to navigate conversations with family members who don’t share her traditional stance (“Talking to Myself,” page 83). And we have another long-time contributor, John Grondelski, to thank for introducing Pastor Clenard Childress, Jr., president of the Life Education and Resource Network (L.E.A.R.N.) to these pages (*HLR Interview*, page 73).

Speaking of thanks, we also are grateful to our friend Hadley Arkes, founder of the James Wilson Institute in Washington, D.C., for permission to include his moving tribute to another founding editor of the *Review*, Michael Uhlmann, who died Oct. 8. (*Appendix A*, page 86). *First Things* permitted us to reprint Kevin Walsh’s “A Chance to Challenge *Roe*?” (*Appendix B*, page 89), and Stefano Gennarini’s “Trump Administration Doubles Down at UN,” which originally appeared in C-Fam’s *Friday Fax*, is also reprinted here with permission (*Appendix D*, page 94). Lest I forget, another friend, Clarke Forsythe, sent his *Wall Street Journal* op-ed (*Appendix C*, page 92).

Finally, thanks to the inimitable Nick Downes, who ponders the meaning of life in humor, and always gives us a lift.

ANNE CONLON  
MANAGING EDITOR



# the HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

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## INTRODUCTION

*How did we get here?* I asked myself repeatedly in August, when one 24-hour stretch brought the awful news of not one but two mass shootings (in El Paso, TX, and Dayton, Ohio). *What is wrong with us?* While, thankfully, the pro-life movement is making some important steps forward, how do we understand such displays of utter disregard for the lives of others, or the despairing conclusion that life itself has no meaning, evident in a steadily rising suicide rate? The causes singled out—mental illness, guns, racism, hate speech—don’t seem to get to the root of what ails us. But in our lead essay, Senior Editor William Murchison draws on the insights of a new book that provides a “new and valuable diagnosis” of our fraught times.

*Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics*, by author and cultural critic Mary Eberstadt, concludes that deep confusion about who we are and to whom we belong lies at the root of our malaise. The “engine of this transformation” was the sexual revolution, which led to “rising and sometimes skyrocketing rates of abortion, fatherless homes, family shrinkage, and family breakup” and to a search for identity. Murchison describes Eberstadt’s thesis further:

“Identity politics,” she writes, “is not so much politics as a primal scream.” It results from what she calls “the Great Scattering,” meaning the dispersion of the human communities whose suppositions and assumptions gave life its shape—starting with the family. The scream we hear—akin to the wail of a coyote separated from its pack—is, to the author, “the collective human howl of our time, sent up by inescapably communal creatures trying desperately to identify their own.”

We used to know the answer to “‘who am I anyway?’ It was, I am a child of God.” Murchison agrees that secularization and the sexual revolution unmoored us from crucial religious and familial bearings—but he traces the origins of these back further, to “softness at the core of mid-1950s civilization,” as you will read in his thoughtful and illuminating essay (“*Primal Screams: What Begat Identity Politics*”).

We turn now to the troubled political scene concerning the life issues. While it is true that President Trump has kept his campaign promises to the pro-life movement—a rarity in itself—and that the Democrats have completely abandoned those vulnerable to the culture of death, it is also true that the allegiance of many Americans to the pro-life position as the deciding determiner of their vote is sorely tested by other agenda items and questions of character. In “Must a Prolifer Be a Single-Issue Voter?” Nicholas Frankovich presents the options as: an “unconflicted vote for a Republican, a conflicted vote for a Republican, or a conflicted vote for a Democrat.” Acknowledging that “We are quicker to announce the conclusions we have reached than to show our work, to explain how we arrived at our decision,” he then walks us through the reasoning that lies behind each decision to help us better understand our own rationale and those of

prolifers who pull a different lever in the voting booth.

Next, Senior Editor Mary Meehan points out that, while support for abortion in the U.S. is seen as a women's issue, "most of today's national pro-life leaders are women." In "The Women Who Lead the Pro-Life Movement" she interviews eleven leaders from across the political—and religious—spectrum. Among these are Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List and a staunch supporter of Republicans; Kristen Day, president of Democrats for Life of America; Kelsey Hazzard, a young lawyer who leads Secular Pro-Life; and Rachel McNair, of the Consistent Life Network, whose activism is grounded in her Quaker faith and commitment to nonviolence. Meehan asks her subjects "what might be done to win more Democrats to the pro-life cause?"

It's hard to answer that without pointing out, as Caitlin Smith Gilson does, the illogical and linguistically deceitful arguments used to support abortion. In "The Language Game of Choice Part 2," Gilson continues down the list she started in our Summer issue; this time she discusses an additional seven standard abortion defenses. She refutes the dominant rationales for abortion that saturate our media and politics, like rape and incest, disability, poverty, and—the disturbing idea *du jour*—the notion that abortion is "merciful population control to alleviate environmental and social stresses." Gilson responds: "This is not only a disingenuous argument but contradictory to its core. . . . How could life be protected by its own destruction and by the annihilation of the most innocent of lives? . . . Such faulty reasoning is on par with the deadly illogic of Nazi Germany." With respect for the earth, writes Gilson, comes a "living respect for all life."

We not only respect but treasure the lives of our loved ones, and when they leave us, the grief can challenge our expectations, as was brought home to contributor Brian Caulfield at the death of his beloved mother. In "Diary of an Unwitting Orphan," Caulfield shares an intimate glimpse into his mother's final days and how the realities of grief and responsibility affected him with powerful, and sometimes perplexing, complexity. After making it through his father's death four years earlier, he says, the loss of his mother introduced him to the new and powerful grief of being left an orphan. Intertwined with this new awareness are lovely memories of his mother's life and love.

Life, love, loss: These are what it means to be human, and yet so much of our human reality seems to be challenged in the absurd confusions of the culture. We welcome a new contributor next, Michael Kuiper, who reminds us of the great and wonderful reality of male and female complementarity and romantic love in: "Male and Female Together: What the Ancients Understood." "Love. What happened to it? The feeling of discovery and joy. That feeling when Adam first glimpsed Eve and erupted with something like 'Yes! This is what I've been waiting for!'" Kuiper, a psychologist, is struck by the young people he sees in his practice who cannot see their way to such a connection. Gender confusion, promiscuity, pornography, divorce, and an emphasis on autonomy have blinded people to the truth of God's intentional creation of male and female. True unity of the sexes rests precisely on "a foundation of differentiation. . . . With the mystery of the other who is different comes the possibility of surprise, joy, and challenge, in such complementarity, love grows." Redirecting the culture back to

the joys of marriage and family is also the subject of another new contributor, David Talcott. “Building a Culture of Life,” he writes, involves more than just eliminating abortion. “We must extend the range of our efforts to include promoting fertility and marriage,” not in “expansive governmental programs” but by creating “cultural and economic conditions in which more children will be welcomed into the world.” As he points out, we are at an alarmingly low fertility rate, with “delaying marriage a significant factor.” We need to find ways to nurture relationships and provide good examples, to “recover marriage as a formative institution”—not one that is “a capstone to be placed only once we are fully formed.”

The formation of children was a key concern of the American icon Fred Rogers, of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, whose stature, writes William Doyno in our final article, has been growing exponentially since his death in 2003 (he is the subject of a new biography, a hugely successful documentary, and an upcoming Hollywood movie starring Tom Hanks). Doyno asserts, however, that “ideologues on both the Left and the Right, for different reasons,” have attacked Rogers’ memory by claiming things about his motives and character that simply are not true. In his wonderful “Rescuing Mister Rogers,” Doyno defends him by studying his upbringing and faith, highlighting all the elements which made Rogers the exceptional man he became.

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Also featured in this issue is John Grondelski’s interview with Pastor Clenard Childress, Jr., president of the Life Education and Resource Network (L.E.A.R.N.) and founder of the website Blackgenocide.org. “Booknotes” includes Christopher White’s review of Professor Charles Camosy’s *Resisting Throwaway Culture: How a Consistent Life Ethic Can Unite a Fractured People*; and my own review of Dawn Eden Goldstein’s *Sunday Will Never be the Same: A Rock and Roll Journalist Opens Her Ears to God*. Tara Jernigan’s moving “Letting Weeping Spend the Night” leads “From the Website,” followed by college student Dominique Cognetti’s thoughtful reflection “Talking to Myself.”

Our appendices begin with Hadley Arkes’ tribute to a great man, a founding editor of our *Review*, and a tireless champion for the cause of human life, Michael Uhlmann, who died on October 8, leaving scores of friends and colleagues bereft. Next is law professor Kevin Walsh on managing pro-life expectations as a Louisiana court case goes to the Supreme Court, followed by Clarke Forsythe’s opinion of Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg’s “cosmic question” remark about when life begins. In *Appendix D*, Stefano Gennarini writes about the marvelous declaration (made at the UN by head of the HHS Alex M. Azar III) that there is “no international right to abortion.” And finally, my own brief reflection on my dear mother’s death—in 2011—and how the bonds of motherhood are eternal. May motherhood once again be cherished!

MARIA McFADDEN MAFFUCCI  
EDITOR



# *Primal Screams: What Begat Identity Politics*

William Murchison

I'm traveling in a few days to my 60th high-school reunion. I know what you're thinking: *Sixty?!!* Why, someone as handsome and virile as you—30's got to be more like it!

Thanks, but 60 is right. And for all the pain of the admission, that stark pair of numerals highlights the point on which this narrative turns; namely, that a whole lot has happened to these United States in the past six decades, altering more than the surface appearance of life; changing, in important respects, the very ways in which we look at things. The what-happened-ness I encounter in emails and observations from classmates is a consequence of developments hardly imaginable when we got our diplomas, 60 years ago, in an age still learning to accommodate Elvis.

Yes, I know—geezers are famous for head-shakes and looks of wonderment when it comes to surveying the deeds and thought patterns of successor generations. As Paul Lynde sang in *Bye Bye Birdie*, half a century ago, “What’s the matter with kids today?!” There’s some of that, undoubtedly, in our present perplexities. But there’s more. What’s the matter with acknowledging the sex that God assigned to you during your tenure in the womb? What’s the matter, furthermore, with saying “sex” instead of “gender”—a word formerly applied mainly when speaking of grammar? At a still more fundamental level, why shouldn’t you want to acknowledge God’s action in our creation? Because it’s unfashionable to believe in a God who seems connected to human affairs? If He exists at all? As a “He” or a “She” or a God Knows What?

This business of cultural accommodation gets complicated. I could go down, one by one, the list of mind-boggling notions to which our culture has assented or attached itself, sometimes over voluble protest, sometimes with a shrug of “Oh, well, can’t fight Progress.” Instead, more constructively, I yield to Mary Eberstadt, author and social critic, who in a new and valuable book comes to a new and valuable diagnosis. The book is *Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics* (Templeton Press, 179 pp.). She says: “[The question *Who am I?* is now one of the most fraught of our time.” I interrupt to say, yes, Ma’am, that’s putting it mildly. She goes on: “It has become like a second skin—something that can’t be sloughed off, or even scratched without

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excruciating pain to the subject. Why?”

And we are off to the races. From the stands where sit people of many ages—not just my own contemporaries—the look of things is odd-to-distressing. Certain things that *are*, or used to be regarded thus, now look like things that were. “The engine of this transformation,” Mrs. Eberstadt writes,

is the sexual revolution, meaning the widespread social changes that followed the technological shock of the birth control pill and related devices delivering reliable contraception en masse for the first time. Not only in the United States, but around many parts of the world, the revolution has included the de-stigmatization of nonmarital sex in all its varieties, and a sharp rise in behaviors that were formerly rare or stigmatized or both. That list of particulars includes but is not limited to rising and sometimes skyrocketing rates of abortion, fatherless homes, family shrinkage, family breakup, and other phenomena that have become commonplace in the world since the 1960s.

What a lot of territory—the territory of life, as it happens. Life itself is changing, at least in the ways we think about it and impose new premises upon our understanding of it. Mrs. Eberstadt is rightly disturbed at the notion of identity politics—the demand for political recognition of internalized claims to autonomy. “Identity politics,” she writes, “is not so much politics as a primal scream.” It results from what she calls “the Great Scattering,” meaning the dispersion of the human communities whose suppositions and assumptions gave life its shape—starting with the family. The scream we hear—akin to the wail of a coyote separated from its pack—is, to the author, “the collective human howl of our time, sent up by inescapably communal creatures trying desperately to identify their own.”

Anyone who hears the wail—and who can avoid it these days?—hears the sorrow it bears: the tears, the strangled sobs, the unconcealed resentments. Ever meet a happy man-hater? An exultant one, maybe; an unregenerately spiteful one; just not a happy one. That would be in large part because males, the other half of the human race, and much exposed these days to censure and ridicule, have as a sex been ousted from their historic role as protectors, leaving the agents of their ouster as quarry.

“[M]any women,” Mrs. Eberstadt writes, “have been left vulnerable and frustrated. The furious, swaggering, foul-mouthed rhetoric of feminism promises women what many can’t find elsewhere: *protection*. It promises to constrain men in a world that no longer constrains them in traditional ways.” Ho, ho, try *that* one out on Catharine MacKinnon some day when you find her looking unusually placid.

It has not been amusing to watch the various #MeToo controversies arise and soak up so much of the culture’s emotional energy via #MeToo politics: the politics of identity; the politics of I’m-a-victim. There are evidently a lot of victims in our time, and no wonder. The origin of #MeToo isn’t the busy hands of



Harvey Weinstein and Charlie Rose. It's more than anything else the dissolution of careful arrangements requiring behaviors indicative of the respective natures of men and women and of the need to make their joint relationship work for the common as well as the individual good.

The requirements weren't always followed, needless to say, but their value lay partly in just the remembered knowledge of *How Things Were Supposed to Be*. Women at fraternity parties sure didn't go there planning to get blotto drunk—a point with which the hosts at the time were well conversant. They knew better, one and all. They knew that things, left to run any old way people want, tend to spiral downward, to general disadvantage and mishaps of one kind and another. I see I'm talking 1959 stuff. Must be my class-reunion mood. But it's what Mary Eberstadt is talking, in essence, and it's worth listening to.

Yes, “Who am I anyway?” It was in the old days as in these new times a good and dispositive question. The answer, Mrs. Eberstadt notes, was traditionally supplied from the deep well of religious understanding. It was, I'm a child of God. The reply came easily enough from the mouths of children and adults normatively furnished with knowledge of the Bible and the traditions of the Church: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Who was in charge around here? God was in effective charge, for all that he declined the duties of a conscientious federal regulator: Do this, do that, don't even think about what you're thinking about, much less do it. The earth was the Lord's and the fullness thereof. That pretty well summed it up.

She says in specific terms—nor do I care how rusty they sound or seem—“Secularization . . . means that many people no longer experience the opposite sex as those with a religious background are instructed to do—as figurative sisters and brothers, united in fellowship.” They're all just autonomous units today, lacking mutual responsibilities. See where all this social slovenliness gets started—this carelessness with the welfare of others? When the walls of community fall, the local tenants, deprived of protections and guidelines, start circling each other warily, wolf-like.

There's no sense to be made of it. Mrs. Eberstadt underlines “the irrational tone in public life—especially among the young.” It shouldn't take a psychiatrist to prove things aren't normal. Nevertheless, scientists and doctors of one sort and another point directly to what looks like a mental-health crisis on campus. “[T]he psychological state of young America, in particular, looks rockier than has ever been recorded before. It comes from disassociation with cultural and religious norms that served to explain exactly who we were and what, accordingly, we were to do about it.”

Well? Do we just wait for the nervous breakdown? Anyone who follows public affairs closely has the sense that we're breaking down already. Look at the

impeachment furor consuming all sorts and conditions: none with any notion I can discern as to how we escape without the infliction of further damage to national comity, such as it is; with the means of coalescing on some basis or another, in order that we might live together.

You will know if you spend much time in bookstores that publishers generally require authors or PR staffs to rig up problem/answer dropdowns for main titles not sufficiently alluring on their own: “The Tuna Fish Crisis,” “Homeless in Poughkeepsie,” “Vaping Made Too Easy,” that sort of stuff; nearly always accompanied by the teaser, “And What You Can Do About It.” A book of my own appeared with such a dropdown: not at my own instance, but what are you going to do? Americans want to fix things that need fixing. It is part of our heritage.

Mrs. Eberstadt’s emphasis is on how things got where they are, not what to do about them before further harm occurs. She confesses she is not prescribing. “Identity,” she says, “has become a forever war whose combatants now habitually turn on their own in a spiral of scapegoating and social destruction that no one seems to know how to stop.” We all sense the danger of putting our hands near a buzz saw with an inoperative off-switch. Mrs. Eberstadt has given us a first-rate, literate analysis, and that should be enough. Her readers can work solo or in concert at rediscovering the answer to the who-am-I question, so that the offensive howling and screaming may die away. That is the task at hand.

I would suggest—without suggesting a “what you can do about it”—that we consider how this business got started. It wasn’t suddenly, well, it’s no longer 1959: time for a good howl at the moon. If truth be known, something about 1959 must have been amiss—whether my classmates and I knew it or not—creating the conditions for radical overhaul of existing beliefs and thought processes. Our convictions, our arrangements must have been . . . weak; flaccid; dried-out surface things; unable to resist the mildest breeze.

One reason I say this is that I can’t recall, as one who was there when the new gusts began to stir formerly settled arrangements, that I noticed significant objection from universities and churches and other supposed guardians of the permanent things. What I mainly observed was puzzlement. Huh? What’s going on here? When a smirking Abbie Hoffman instructed members of the counter-culture to “kill their parents,” we smiled. Aw, it was just rhetoric—as indeed was the case, except that no one bestowed upon it the rebuke it obviously merited for transgression of truth.

The softness at the core of mid-1950s civilization, so to call it, diminished the usefulness of tradition and prescription as guides along the weed-covered way. I would suggest that religious precepts deteriorated faster and more tellingly than did other linked markers of civilized wisdom. That would be in part, I imagine, on account of the ooey-gooley, be-nice-now-boys-and-girls manner

in which religious training too often took place in the 20th century. The sky was supposed to be blue—all the time—and Jesus was our friend, certainly not our judge, with behavioral standards that got in the way of personal expression.

The sexual revolution faced comparatively few crucifix-toting exponents of the need for intelligence, not to say care, in appreciation of the divine gift of sexual difference. There was so much “me” in the revolutionary spirit! Desires were born. Once born, they required fulfillment. Right? Short-term fulfillment sufficed: as in the quick expulsion of undesired life from the womb. To the long term—the long, long, rock-strewn term, rife with mutual pledges and sacrifices, and the handing over of desires—less attention got paid. You weren’t likely to have a good time through sacrifice! In any case, the point of the thing wasn’t clear. Explain to me, please, how handing over desires and goals and aspirations to someone else is likely to make me a more satisfied person! It turned out that few cultural authorities were desirous of venturing explanations. They might have looked purse-lipped and prudish.

The sexual revolution knocked Humpty Dumpty from his perch; nor has anyone figured out the means of repairing him without alienating whole generations accustomed to seeing their whims, their desires, their instincts affirmed both by government and all the best thinkers of the day. We should not wonder that Mary Eberstadt refrains from devising and promoting a rescue mission. Her readers can surmise if they are so minded what is to be done, and by whom. In what she so intelligently gives us there is one hint. It is that howls of loneliness against the darkened sky can put into lonely minds the wish for something better. For the renewed unity of human hearts, drawn together in love? For jointness of aspiration and belief against challenge and suffering? For protective walls in place of the fenceless, unconstrained outdoors hardly anyone prior to our own time saw as natural or for that matter endurable?

It could be that big changes are advancing, unseen, even as we stew over changes none of us, in 1959 or earlier, could have foretold. Life, as we seem to learn daily, never sits still. It teems with surprises: some pleasant, some sad; not one of them inconsistent with the instruments of real and lasting joy. By that I mean love of neighbor. I mean love of the God who gave us neighbors to love.

# Must a Prolifer Be a Single-Issue Voter?

*Nicholas Frankovich*

**I**f your knowledge of what happens to unwanted unborn children troubles your conscience, the persistence of abortion as a political issue complicates your decision about which parties and candidates to support or oppose. Some may be right about abortion but wrong about much else, and vice versa. Because intuition tends to be fast and easy, we are liable to intuit how we should vote rather than think it through. Let's try to think it through.

Your decision is easy if you have decided that abortion is the only political issue that will determine your electoral preference—or if, by some miracle, the most pro-life candidate in every race in which you vote also demonstrates, in your estimation, unimpeachable character and espouses a full-spectrum agenda that you deem better, in each of its particulars, than that of his or her opponents. If you're an American and vote only for Republicans in national, state, and local elections because their party is pledged to restrict and someday end abortion, it's possible that you vote for them without reservation or second thoughts. It's *not* possible, if you oppose abortion, to be so single-minded when you vote for Democrats, even for those rare specimens who are pro-life: In supporting them, you contribute to the progress of the party that, at the national level, works to preserve what you regard as a grave injustice. Still, you conclude, certain Democrats, despite their party's indifference to the right to life between conception and birth, would serve the common good better than their opponents would.

In America, in every general election, every vote that a pro-life citizen casts for the nominee of either of the two major political parties can be fitted into one of three categories: It is an unconflicted vote for a Republican, a conflicted vote for a Republican, or a conflicted vote for a Democrat. Many of us are mystified or even angered by the electoral decisions of friends, peers, colleagues, and family members who, as far as we can tell, share our exact moral opposition to abortion but arrive at different decisions about whom to vote into public office. Let's look at the rationale for each of the three kinds of vote.

## **Unconflicted Republican Pro-life Voters**

You belong to this category if you agree with the GOP platform and approve of the character and varying emphases of each of its nominees up and down the ticket. In national elections, you agree with the foreign as well as domestic policies that the party and the nominees represent. Or you have quibbles at the

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**Nicholas Frankovich** is an editor at *National Review*.

margins but no objections to the core of the platform.

Note that both the domestic and the foreign policies of the national Republican Party have changed in recent years. For example, it neither preaches nor practices fiscal conservatism any longer, as Mark Sanford reminds us, and it's grown cooler toward NATO and warmer toward Russia. Unless his or her own views have changed accordingly, the pro-life citizen who voted for John McCain in 2008 and then for Donald Trump in 2016 cannot have done so without being opposed, or at least indifferent, to parts of what one or the other of the candidacies represented.

Few pro-life voters admit to being single-issue voters, unconcerned about political issues other than abortion. They may be ready to offer justifications of the GOP's stand on all the issues, even when a current position represents a reversal of the one that the party advocated only a few years earlier. From Ronald Reagan through George W. Bush, the party's reputation for muscular foreign policy attracted voters who put an emphasis on national security. Donald Trump, both as a candidate in 2015–16 and then as president, sounds the opposite note, non-intervention, echoing the sentiments of such earlier Republicans as the paleo-conservative Pat Buchanan, who himself echoed Robert Taft and an earlier generation of GOP isolationists.

Republican voters whose views on foreign policy have changed in tandem with those of the party can point to reasons for the change. The most glaring is the failure of the costly U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to achieve lasting regional stability. Victory in Iraq in 2003 was short-lived, and observers were quick to condemn the invasion as a blunder conceived and launched without adequate foresight. Voters took note and changed their minds. The party changed direction on foreign policy in part because they did.

With respect to NATO and the transatlantic alliance in general, Republican loyalists can maintain that the GOP has not formally renounced NATO and that President Trump's rhetorical jabs at it must be interpreted gingerly. They may stress the reasonableness of his recurring complaint about the small defense budgets of NATO members in Europe. U.S. presidents have been urging NATO members to spend more on defense ever since enough time had elapsed after World War II for most people to judge that Germany could be trusted to maintain a serious army again. What distinguishes the current president from his predecessors in this regard, his critics object, is that he has not supplemented that message with ample reassurance of the United States' commitment to NATO but instead has used the opportunity to suggest that the alliance is a bad investment for America.

"Why should my son go to Montenegro to defend it from attack?" Tucker Carlson asked President Trump in a TV interview in July 2018. Trump vacillated, calling Montenegrins "very aggressive people" who could start "World War

III” and suggesting that, in such a hypothetical scenario, he might disregard the famous Article 5 of the NATO treaty and oppose intervention to defend an ally.

McCain was quick to respond. “The people of #Montenegro boldly withstood pressure from #Putin’s Russia to embrace democracy,” he tweeted. “The Senate voted 97-2 supporting its accession to #NATO. By attacking Montenegro & questioning our obligations under NATO, the President is playing right into Putin’s hands.”

Wesley Clark also took to Twitter: “As former NATO Allied Commander, I know NATO’s Article 5 exists to PREVENT war. That’s why it’s only been invoked once—after 9/11. Montenegro is still sending troops to Afghanistan, for us. Worrying to hear Trump use Russian talking points with Tucker Carlson, about Montenegro.”

Earlier that week, at a joint press conference with Vladimir Putin at a summit in Helsinki, Trump sided with the Russian president against the U.S. intelligence community. Since the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump’s criticisms of NATO have been of a piece with his expressions of admiration for the Russian leader. The geopolitical implications are obvious. Russia regards both NATO and the European Union with suspicion and supports populist, nationalist parties that work to fracture and weaken Moscow’s collective adversary to the west. The foreign-policy scandal that McCain and Clark were alluding to was Trump’s lending hope to the Russian dream that the transatlantic alliance would dissolve and that Moscow would then establish itself as the hub of a Eurasian security alliance that would supplant Washington and replace NATO as Europe’s sword and shield.

To many Republicans, though, it was no scandal. The week before Helsinki and the Carlson interview, Gallup released a poll on Americans’ attitudes toward Russia. Is it an ally of, or friendly toward, the United States? In 2014, 22 percent of Republicans answered yes. In 2018, a year and a half into the Trump presidency, that figure had risen to 40 percent.

Until now, the aggregate opinion of Democrats and of Republicans had tracked each other on this question, more or less, since 2000, when post-Soviet Russia was still widely assumed to be an aspiring liberal democracy. That consensus peaked in 2006, when 80 percent of Democrats and 68 percent of Republicans told Gallup that they regarded Russia as a U.S. ally. As recently as 2012, President Obama mocked Mitt Romney for identifying Russia as the greatest geopolitical threat facing America. “The 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back,” Obama remarked in their third televised debate. “The Cold War’s been over for twenty years.” Romney turned out to be ahead of public opinion. From 2013 to 2014, the percentages of Democrats and Republicans alike who called Russia an ally plummeted from the high 50s to the 20s. Presumably the sharp change in American public opinion was largely driven by the Russian



invasion of Ukraine in the spring of 2014. Meanwhile, Putin's reputation for corruption only grew, along with suspicion about the rate at which journalists and his political opponents were dying under clouded circumstances.

Insofar as the spike in Russia's favorability rating among Republicans in recent years can be attributed at least in part to an impression that Putin and President Trump are mutually supportive of each other's political aspirations, the cause-and-effect relationship is striking, though familiar. "Political scientists have found that, rather than choose a candidate whose views match their own, voters often change their views to align with the candidates they've chosen," as Emily Ekins of the Cato Institute, writing in *National Review*, summed up the phenomenon during the 2016 campaign.

And so the Republican rank and file who came to the party for its position on abortion end up staying through its ostensible retreat on crucial foreign-policy questions. (I call the retreat ostensible because the president's foreign-policy statements are sometimes implicitly contradicted by his administration's cabinet members and other officials. That is, President Trump's foreign policy and that of the Trump administration have been to some extent at odds.)

Remember, we are concerned here with voters whose most fundamental political objective is to protect the unborn child. They have an incentive to follow a serpentine but understandable route from anti-abortion sentiment to loyalty to the Republican Party and, from there, to loyalty to the GOP's de facto head, President Trump, and then to his perceived foreign policy.

How large a segment of the Republican base do such voters represent? It's hard to say. In August 2019, PRRI (the Public Religion Research Institute) found that 60 percent of Republicans thought that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases. Of that subset of Republicans (albeit a large subset, three-fifths), 34 percent said that they would vote only for a candidate who shared their views on abortion. That means that about 20 percent of Republicans are possibly single-issue pro-life voters. I say "possibly" because among that 20 percent could be some (or many, or a few) who have, in theory, arrived at all of their positions on all of the issues independently, stipulated to themselves that a candidate's support of abortion rights would be a deal-breaker, consulted the party platforms and candidate profiles, and discovered that, voilà, the GOP represents the full range of their political positions to a T.

Now add any such theoretical Republican pro-life voters to those who, on issue after issue, have to make some effort to conform their views to those of the party and candidates who are most likely to advance the cause of stopping abortion. To a voter whose pro-life conviction is strong but whose opinions on other issues are weak or unformed, at least initially, a pro-life candidate can serve as a compass. You know you can trust him to defend the unborn; his reliability on that issue leads you to trust his judgment on other issues as well.

### **Conflicted Republican Pro-life Voters**

Most Republican pro-life voters probably belong to this category. They disagree with some of the party's agenda or find the character of an occasional nominee to be objectionable, but in their electoral decision-making they have elevated the pro-life position to the status of the non-negotiable. If it's the only such item on their checklist of criteria that they want an elected representative to meet, they are, in effect, single-issue voters: Once they have identified which man or woman running for the office in question is most pro-life, their work is done, because nothing else they discovered could be more unacceptable to them than a failure to recognize the moral necessity of ensuring the right to life of an entire class of human beings. Such Republican voters are conflicted but minimally, and you could argue that they should be grouped with the unconflicted, described above.

Other voters in this category land in the same place but with greater ambivalence. Their heart is heavy as they cast their vote. They lack enthusiasm. From one conflicted voter to the next, the reasons vary. It's not uncommon for a voter to wonder whether the character defects of the candidate who is most pro-life cross a threshold of unacceptability.

Consider the dilemma that Roy Moore posed for pro-life Americans. Support him? Support his opponent, who backs abortion rights? Support neither candidate and remain neutral? We ask the questions because, for the most part, the ballots we cast consist of the names of men and women, not descriptions of policies they promise or of philosophies that they represent. We don't expect our elected officials to be profiles in courage or any other virtue. If their sins are many but venial, as it were, not mortal, we give them a pass.

What causes us to sit up on occasion, take notice, and rule a candidate out for his or her lowness of character changes from generation to generation. Back in the day, political observers wondered whether Nelson Rockefeller (who was always either running for president or assumed to be plotting his path to the White House) could be viable in a national race after he divorced his first wife in 1962 and remarried the next year. Gary Hart's campaign for president in 1988 did not withstand rumors of an extramarital affair. A decade later, by which time the public was more inured to news of all manner of extramarital affairs and misadventures of the powerful and famous, news of Bill Clinton's serial infidelity and of his sexual encounters with an intern in the Oval Office failed to affect his popularity much.

The indignation that the scandals provoked came primarily from the right. "Like a boat, whose wake can capsize other boats, sin leaves a wake," Franklin Graham wrote at the time. "Just look at how many have already been pulled under by the wake of the president's sin." He argued against those "who present King

David . . . as an example as they call on us to forgive and forget the president's moral failings." The president's "sin can be forgiven," Graham concluded, "but he must start by admitting to it. . . . A repentant spirit that says, 'I'm sorry. I was wrong. I won't do it again. I ask for your forgiveness,' would go a long way toward personal and national healing."

By 2018, he had softened his tone. In an interview with MSNBC, he noted that President Trump denied allegations of sexual misconduct. Graham said he believed him, drawing, moreover, a distinction between the recency of the misconduct when the Clinton scandals broke and the historical nature of the misconduct alleged against President Trump. Later, in an interview with MSNBC, he indicated that he had changed his mind about what the appropriate response to the Clinton scandals should have been. It was "a great mistake" for the country, he said, and for Republicans in particular, to have attacked President Clinton over his sexual misconduct, "and I think the same with Stormy Daniels and so forth."

The right might be said to have "evolved" in this regard. The left has evolved, too, though in a different direction. If one of the parties caught in a scandal suggests that he or she did not consent to the sex, the left is now especially quick to assume that the accused is guilty and to try to shame him.

Voters can shift their goal posts. If pro-life Republicans in, say, 1989 could have entered a time machine and been shown the party and the president who would be the vehicle of the pro-life cause in mainstream American politics as we entered the third decade of the twenty-first century, they might have demurred. In hindsight we can better discern the outlines of the GOP as it was until a few years ago. Call it center-right. It partook of the same approximate philosophy that informs the Christian Democratic parties of Europe. The Republican Party is more nationalist and populist today than five years ago and is now torn, to stick with the European analogy, between the spirit of Le Pen and that of Merkel and Macron. Pro-life Republicans who preferred Pat Buchanan to George H. W. Bush, or Mike Huckabee to John McCain, may well be delighted by the transformation of the GOP from center-right to nationalist-populist. They have reason to celebrate.

Others, who back in the time machine saw the Republican Party of 2019 and were appalled, stay with the party *because of* its position on abortion but *despite* the populism and nationalism. In addition, while they might wish that the party fought for a stronger vision of social conservatism, they rally behind the GOP's defense of their right to their sincerely held religious beliefs. Their alternative, after all, would be the Democratic Party, which tends toward skepticism of some exercises of religious liberty. Republican lawmakers are far more likely to affirm and fight for religious exemptions from a law or regulation that would require people of faith to violate their conscience. Republican voters who like

the party's position on social issues but disagree with other facets of its domestic policy, or with its foreign policy, are of two minds. If their other mind gains the upper hand, they begin to drift toward the ranks of . . .

### **Conflicted Democratic Pro-life Voters**

Earlier this year, Gallup reported that 29 percent of Americans who identify as Democrats also identify as pro-life. (PRRI reported that 20 percent of Democrats who think that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases would vote only for candidates who shared that view—a mysterious finding, given the vanishing number of pro-life Democrats at any level and their utter disappearance from the national leadership. Apparently some Americans who call themselves Democrats either misunderstand the party's position on abortion or, despite their stated party affiliation, vote for Republicans or minor-party or independent candidates.) From a quick back-of-the-envelope calculation, I estimate that the population of this category, conflicted Democratic pro-life voters, could be as high as 18 million, which would be greater than one-fourth the number of votes that Hillary Clinton received in the 2016 general election.

Why would a pro-life voter support Democrats? Perhaps, on his list of issues ranked according to importance, abortion is not at the top. Or maybe he has no such list in the first place, because he perceives a party or a candidate to be a gestalt, an organism whose parts can be understood only in relation to one another.

We sometimes hear that, despite their commitment to abortion rights, Democrats end up serving the pro-life cause by promoting social spending that reduces the economic pressure on women to abort. The degree to which that claim is true is contested, but we can accept it at least as an illustration of the layered reasoning that keeps many pro-life voters loyal to the Democratic Party and leads some, though probably not many, away from the GOP, whose larger problems for social conservatism have been rehearsed often by critics in recent years. Some social conservatives, such as Russell Moore and Peter Wehner, argue forcefully that the political culture of the Republican Party in the Trump era is not compatible with the culture of life, even though the GOP commitment to passing laws to restrict access to abortion has lately been solid.

It's only a half-truth that culture is upstream of politics. To a large extent political culture influences mass culture, into which flows an increasing amount of toxic waste from both major parties. To allow the Republican Party under President Trump to represent the anti-abortion cause makes tactical, short-term sense. Pro-life Americans who worry about the long-term, strategic risk may wonder whether working to stop the GOP until it reforms itself would be less harmful to their cause in the long run.

Pro-life Americans who, for various reasons, reject the party that has been more effective than any other at advancing the anti-abortion cause in American

politics are sometimes said to have a merely “aesthetic” objection to the GOP, the implication being that they would have babies die for the sake of decorum, but let’s examine the assumption that more babies would live if only more Republicans were elected to office. To paraphrase Nietzsche: There are no certainties, only probabilities.

Between your vote for an anti-abortion politician and the prevention of even a single abortion stands a series of necessary events, all of which would have to go your way if the final outcome you seek were to be realized. Once in office, the politician you helped to vote in may nominate a putatively pro-life judge to whom an abortion-related case may wend its way—or not. If it does, you would need him to remain true to the principles that you assumed would guide him to decisions whose consequences would include a reduction in the number of abortions. But it could happen that the judge remains true to the principles while following them to an inconvenient conclusion that no one anticipated. Or he may change his mind about the whole business. Or he may come to the right conclusion, as you see it, but on a panel of judges who outvote him.

You may vote for a pro-life Republican as a purely defensive measure, to prevent a pro-choice Democrat from taking office and passing laws or instituting measures that would loosen restrictions on abortion, rendering the unborn more vulnerable. Like the pro-life Republican elected to office, the pro-choice Democrat would accomplish his objective only if a series of events all went his way, but he wouldn’t if one of them didn’t. What are the odds? You try to calculate.

Meanwhile, other issues follow a course that has been influenced by the Republican who nominated the presumably pro-life judge. On questions relating to immigrants or refugees, for example, events are set in motion, either approaching a stated goal or drifting toward unintended consequences that pro-life Democrats may have foreseen and warned against. They may have judged, and warned, that even the stated goal of a particular course of action would be harmful.

In foreign policy, pro-life Democrats are more likely than pro-life Republicans to oppose the trend toward nationalism, populism, and what they regard as authoritarianism in India, Turkey, and spots in Europe. A Republican might respond that his party is a more reliable foe of authoritarianism in, for example, China, Venezuela, and Cuba. A pro-life argument against allowing our focus to be so diverted, from abortion to geopolitics, is that the former necessarily entails the taking of human life whereas the latter could turn out to entail that but we don’t know. The counterargument, as laid out above, begins with the observation that the election of a politician who opposes abortion but is lenient toward authoritarianism abroad *could* result in a reduction of abortion but . . . we don’t know.

Then there’s this: At the heart of the argument that the pro-life cause trumps

all others is the assumption that the moral imperative to protect the right to life is greater than the moral imperative to protect the array of basic freedoms that we call human rights. And at the heart of that assumption is a radical pacifism that is difficult to defend, although a few people do, but that in any case most pro-life advocates would probably reject. Nations go to war sometimes to protect the lives of their citizens but more often to preserve their autonomy and honor.

Many of us who oppose abortion but aren't pacifists make a distinction between innocent and non-innocent life, stipulating that we may take the latter but not the former. If we classify as "not innocent" the soldier wearing the uniform of an enemy army, we'll conclude that we may and perhaps should take his life, for a greater good, although a bald statement of our moral reasoning may prove disconcerting. If the enemy soldier is a conscript, he may bear no personal animus against our well-being. He threatens it all the same. So the abortion-rights advocate says of the unborn child. If we should go to war, if necessary, to defend liberal democracy, taking the lives of foreign soldiers and risking the lives of civilians, should we tolerate domestic threats to NATO's survival as long as they're accompanied by a pledge to protect the lives of unborn children? If you answer no, you've entered the mind of the conflicted Democratic pro-life voter.

In 2004, in a letter to the Catholic archbishop of Washington, D.C., Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who was then the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, wrote that "when a Catholic does not share a candidate's stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted in the presence of proportionate reasons." Don't be intimidated by "material cooperation," a term of art meaning, in this case, that your vote for a pro-choice candidate would be in part a concession to, not an affirmation of, the candidate's support for abortion (and/or euthanasia).

The concession is "permitted in the presence of proportionate reasons." What reasons could be considered proportionate, and what reasons could not? I have debated the question with my coreligionists in recent years and will probably have occasion to do so in the future. We reason differently from one another. Our shared assumption that abortion is a grave injustice is a constant in all our different moral calculations. We disagree about what the variables should be, how they should relate to and affect one another, and how they should relate to and affect the constant, the one element we do agree on. We are quicker to announce the conclusions we have reached than to show our work, to explain how we arrived at our decision, whether it's to vote for the Republican, to vote for the Democrat, or to vote for neither. The foregoing is an effort to show our work.



# The Women Who Lead the Pro-Life Movement

Mary Meehan

Support for abortion in the United States is often seen as a key feature of the “women’s movement.” Yet the *opposition* to abortion is also led mainly by women. These leaders include Carol Tobias, who heads the 50-state National Right to Life Committee; Marjorie Dannenfelser, who raises money for pro-life political candidates through the Susan B. Anthony List; Jeanne Mancini, who runs the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C.; and many others. Men do run several major pro-life groups, including Care Net, the Knights of Columbus, and Priests for Life. However most of today’s national pro-life leaders are women.

In recent interviews, I asked key women leaders about their work and what they see as the pro-life movement’s greatest strengths and weaknesses. I also asked what might be done to win more Democrats to the pro-life cause. The interviewees are presented here in alphabetical order according to their last names. It should be noted that, in addition to their academic and professional credentials, most of them are mothers.

**Marjorie Dannenfelser** leads the Susan B. Anthony List, which has developed major political clout since its founding in 1993. While the organization was started in order to support pro-life women candidates, it now backs many male candidates as well. Dannenfelser remarked, “We want there to be a strong female center of the movement,” but added that the women who lead it realize that men also have “a very *strong* reason to be involved . . . no child is created without man and woman. They both have something to say.”

Dannenfelser contrasted the value of running a pro-life advertisement with that of electing a pro-life woman to public office. If you pay a million dollars for an ad, she suggested, it may not have much effect. But if you elect a woman to office, you may gain “a lifetime of leadership totaling the equivalent of millions” in public-relations dollars. She cautioned, though, against some proliferators’ assumption that other people will “do the political work” and the failure of some to understand that politics “is integrated with every other part of our culture.” She added: “Politics *is* culture. It’s at the center of culture. It’s an expression of culture.”<sup>1</sup>

**Kristen Day**, who leads Democrats for Life of America (DFLA), had some reason for optimism when she wrote *Democrats for Life* (New Leaf Press,

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2006). Now, though, she has what a farmer would call a very “tough row to hoe” because of the long and bitter fight over Obamacare in recent years. Democrats for Life supported former President Barack Obama’s general plan for health care. They called for excluding abortion coverage from that plan, but they eventually accepted what other pro-life groups called an insufficient ban. This was an executive order by President Obama that barred abortion funding by Obamacare in most cases—instead of a ban in federal law. The promise of the executive order won enough votes from congressional pro-life Democrats to pass the Obamacare bill. President Obama did sign an executive order barring the use of government funds for abortion except in cases of rape, incest, or danger to the mother’s life (the three exceptions in the longstanding Hyde Amendment).<sup>2</sup> His executive order is still in effect. Today, though, the Democratic Party establishment is so pro-abortion that trying to win any concessions from it is a truly daunting enterprise. And many pro-life leaders are so tied to the Republican Party that they have little interest in working with pro-life Democrats. Partly because of the Obamacare battle, Kristen Day said, she was “told I was no longer welcome” to attend quarterly meetings of major pro-life groups in Washington.

She soldiers on, though, and her group recently held a small national conference in Michigan. Day and other Democrats for Life are especially interested in Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards of Louisiana, who has a strong pro-life record. He is now running for re-election as governor, and Day would like to see him run for the presidency later. She also believes that proliferators can and should work with abortion supporters on issues such as domestic violence and childcare for working parents. She remarked that the “pro-life movement tends to not want to focus on some of those issues. But the pro-life Democrats do.”<sup>3</sup>

**Catherine Glenn Foster** is president of Americans United for Life (AUL), a group of attorneys who defend unborn children in courts throughout the country. She has a degree from Georgetown University’s law school and much experience in litigation on abortion and euthanasia. She said she is “optimistic” about the current U.S. Supreme Court, although she doubts “we’re all the way there yet” on life issues that reach the high court. But she is pleased with recent appointments of “good, originalist jurists . . . who recognize that their highest calling and duty is to the U.S. Constitution.”<sup>4</sup> AUL says its strategy is to use education, legislation, and litigation “to protect life through the law.” Its website highlights Mississippi, which has passed fifteen pro-life laws in fifteen years, and notes that “abortions in the state have decreased by nearly 60 percent” and that “six out of seven abortion clinics have closed—leaving only one embattled abortion clinic in the entire state.”<sup>5</sup>

When Foster was in college, she “very unexpectedly found myself pregnant.

I had no idea what to do. No idea where to turn. . . . I was just in a panic.” She decided on abortion but, after clinic staff refused to show her an ultrasound they had taken, she “tried to get up; but in the end they held me down and forcibly aborted my child.” She later told her mother about the abortion, and her mother helped her find counseling at a pregnancy center. Foster felt that God was telling her to “go get the help you need to be able to defend other moms, other women and girls, other children . . .”

Regaining pro-life strength among Democrats, Foster said, “is a critical element” for the movement. She knows many proliferers “who would like to be able to vote for members of the Democratic Party and yet feel that they can’t right now.” She said that “this is an area where I think there’s tremendous opportunity if we can just build on the numbers of pro-life Democrats that we do currently have in office. . . . I certainly hope that at some point we can turn that around. But it’s not going to be a quick or an easy fix.” She also said, though, that every “pro-life law that we pass is saving lives” and “changing hearts and minds.”<sup>6</sup>

**Serrin Foster** has led Feminists for Life of America (FFLA) for 25 years, building it into a strong voice for pro-life feminists, especially those on college campuses. The group stresses the pro-life views of early American feminists—Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and many others—as well as today’s feminist proliferers. Foster said that it sends its magazine, *The American Feminist*, “to thousands of professors across the country.” FFLA has done much to publicize and expand assistance to pregnant college students. It provides speakers for campus pregnancy-resource forums, bringing students and administrators together to discuss existing resources and new ones that are needed. The needs range from diaper-changing stations in student restrooms to campus housing for single mothers and for married students and their children.

On some issues, Foster said, Feminists for Life used to “work with other women’s groups with whom we disagreed . . . you know, very strongly, about abortion.” But those days are over. “People took us off certain lists . . . But we’re still willing to talk and work with anybody, you know? Still happy to do that.” She also noted, though, that the anti-feminist pronouncements of some proliferers are harmful to her work. She suggested a friendly approach to people on the other side. When she sees protesters at Feminists for Life events, she walks over and tells them, “You are welcome here.” She said “We work with people rather than yelling at people,” and called the positive approach “really much more productive.”<sup>7</sup>

**Kristan Hawkins** leads Students for Life of America. She and her husband have four children, and two of the children have cystic fibrosis. She said that “they’re doing well. We only had one hospitalization this winter.” Her organization

is also doing well, with over 1,200 groups in colleges and high schools around the country. But she said there are “more First-Amendment cases in the high schools right now . . . where the administrators really don’t understand that the Constitution applies to high-school students.”

When Hawkins was growing up, her family “was never very political,” and her introduction to the pro-life movement was volunteer work in a pregnancy center. Asked about the movement’s greatest strengths, she said that “we have grit and determination to get the job done”; “we haven’t stopped fighting”; and “we’ve never shut up about abortion.” She also noted that “financially, the movement seems to do pretty well.”

She said, though, that some people ask: “Why can’t you all just organize under one banner? Why do I have to get so many mailings and requests for help? And why can’t I just give to one Prolife, Inc.—and you-all distribute the money where you see fit?” Hawkins thinks such a system would have some merit, but also “a lot of disadvantages.” She said of her group that “this success we’re seeing is because we were able to set out and say, ‘We’re spending a *hundred* percent of the time, a *hundred* percent of our money doing this—impacting the culture right where it’s formed, on the college and high-school campuses.” She and others at Students for Life have written an interesting book about their work: *Courageous: Students Abolishing Abortion in this Lifetime* (SFLA, 2012).

Asked about the movement’s greatest weakness, Hawkins replied, “That can be a long list . . . I think a lot of times we’ve been our own worst enemy.” She added that “we had a prime opportunity in the 1980s,” when Ronald Reagan was president, “to end abortion before it really took hold” of American culture. “And we squandered that opportunity,” she said, attributing the failure largely to “infighting on strategy and personalities.” She believes that, “especially with this generation, the unity has been increasing.” Still, she stressed, “we’re going to need all cylinders firing at a hundred percent to get the job done.”<sup>8</sup>

**Kelsey Hazzard** is the young attorney who leads Secular Pro-Life, a group for proliferators who are atheists, agnostics, or just not involved in religion. She believes the pro-life movement’s “greatest strength is just its cussedness.” She said that “we have a strength of conviction that comes from this not being a mere *political* difference. . . . We recognize that it’s a life-and-death issue . . . We won’t quit.” And the movement’s greatest weakness? “We definitely have very well-funded powers lined up against us.” The media, she added, are “not friendly to us. . . . And by latching onto the alternative and conservative media, we run the risk of limiting our audience and being shoe-horned into a sort of Religious-Right box . . .” But she also noted that many pro-life leaders “have seen the wisdom of a broad-based, human-rights approach.”

Hazzard said the Democrats “may need to lose an election” and realize that the loss “was based on their abortion extremism.” She added: “That may be the

only way” to make the Democrats change, “because the abortion industry has a lot of money, and they’re spending it on Democratic candidates.” She “absolutely” thinks proliferators should recruit and financially support pro-life Democrats in primary elections. Louisiana, she said, “is the best example of that,” since they “have a strong pro-life presence in both parties” and a Democratic governor (John Bel Edwards) who recently signed a bill to challenge *Roe v. Wade*.<sup>9</sup>

**Abby Johnson**, the Texan who heads a group called And Then There Were None, made a splash recently with a movie called *Unplanned*. Based on Johnson’s 2010 book about her decision to leave the Planned Parenthood clinic she once ran, the film is having an impact both in the United States and abroad. Johnson has worked for nearly ten years to aid other people who want to leave Planned Parenthood. Her goal of closing all abortion clinics is stressed by her group’s name: And Then There Were None (ATTWN). It gives transitional financial aid to workers who leave, as well as help in finding other work and emotional and spiritual support. On its website, the group notes that it “has helped almost 500 workers leave the abortion industry.”<sup>10</sup>

When she was interviewed in July 2019, Johnson said the film based on *Unplanned* had done very well in the U.S. and Canada and was headed for showings in Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, the Philippines, and Pakistan. Originally released in English and Spanish, it has been translated into other languages as well. Johnson remarked that the pro-life movement includes many people “who have been converted on this issue,” including women who have had abortions (she had two before her own conversion), as well as “men who were involved, people who used to support abortion, people who used to work at abortion clinics.” She added that, “when people say, you know, ‘Well, you just don’t understand’ . . . we can say, ‘No, we *do*. We *completely* understand where you’re coming from. . . . We used to have those same beliefs. And here’s what changed my mind . . .’”

Asked about the pro-life movement’s greatest weaknesses, Johnson said, “I think that we struggle with pride” and with “wanting credit . . . instead of just wanting what’s best for the movement.” She added that recognizing pride “is the most important thing, so that we can know how to fight it off and how to move forward with humility.” She also warned against people who “put all their eggs in the politics basket.”<sup>11</sup>

**Alveda King** is a niece of the great civil-rights leader, the late Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. She describes herself as a nondenominational Christian, and she works for Priests for Life as executive director of civil rights for the unborn. She has the King family talent in public speaking, and she is not afraid to talk about her two abortions. She has done this on many occasions, including the “Silent No More” gathering at the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. King has six living children. Her books include *Sons of Thunder: The King*

*Family Legacy and How Can the Dream Survive If We Murder the Children?* She believes that the pro-life movement's greatest strength is in "our prayers, our numbers, and our unity." Its greatest weakness, she suggested, is its limited "access to social media." She said that Priests for Life staff do use such media, but their messages "are often blocked or censored." King believes the pro-life movement must always be "consistent and persistent." She also said that, "with God, all things are possible" and that "we just need to keep educating everybody."

Asked to give the closing prayer at the 2019 March for Life, King asked for blessings upon "the womb house, the church house, the White House, the school house, the bank house, the poor house, the jail house, the sick and elderly, those oppressed in slavery and human trafficking." She continued: "Lord, please bring an end to all crimes against humanity. And, Lord, please bless every home, every house, every person everywhere, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever . . . Amen."<sup>12</sup>

**Rachel MacNair**, who is based in Kansas City, Mo., is a Friend (Quaker) with a deep background in both peace and pro-life work. She has a Ph.D. in psychology and sociology; and she has written several books, including *Gaining Peace of Mind: Why Violence Happens and How to Stop It*. She also co-edited a book called *Consistently Opposing Killing*. She was president of Feminists for Life in its early years, and has been a key activist in the Consistent Life Network for a long time. MacNair is disappointed that the consistency group has not received much media coverage. She noted, though, that a similar and younger group, Rehumanize International, "does tend to get more media," partly because "they just hopped right in as young people. They didn't know that this was supposed to be a discouraging thing to do. So they *did* it."

MacNair believes that the pro-life movement's greatest strength is its grass roots, which she called "just phenomenal." She believes that: "Planned Parenthood has the money, and we have the grass roots. And that makes them stronger in the short term, and it makes us stronger in the long term." She is backing a program that urges women to use community health centers (which do not do abortions) instead of Planned Parenthood for gynecology care. And she is quite impressed by the way Abby Johnson helps people who want to leave their work in Planned Parenthood clinics.<sup>13</sup>

**Jeanne Mancini**, President of the March for Life, leads the staff of eight people who run the huge annual march in Washington, D.C., every January. They also do year-round educational and lobbying work in Washington. Mancini's background includes work in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Family Research Council. In leading the March staff, she does "a lot of media, a lot of public speaking" and some fundraising. She and her colleagues have a big mission on their hands, since the



March for Life is the most important yearly event for U.S. proliferers. Besides building morale, it steadily expands what is already a large and powerful movement.

Mancini believes that the March's "single greatest strength is that we're on the side of truth, on the side of life." She also said March staff have "worked very, very hard" to encourage pro-life Democrats. U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski and Louisiana state representative Katrina Jackson, both Democrats, spoke at the 2019 March for Life. "It's so important that we do everything possible to buoy the spirits of these pro-life Democrats," Mancini said, "because they're attacked so much within their party. And I see that as a huge problem." She also remarked that the pro-life movement's biggest weakness is not understanding the nature of politics and that "we don't see that politics is one aspect of culture—and not separate from it."<sup>14</sup>

**Carol Tobias**, president of the 50-state National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), said that her parents were active in North Dakota Right to Life and that there was always pro-life literature "around the house." Tobias herself became active locally and eventually served as executive director at the state level. Then she served at the national level, first as NRLC political director and now as president. She believes that her group's greatest strength is the dedication of its activists. But she also noted that "the other side has so much more money" because of super-wealthy donors such as George Soros and Warren Buffett.

Tobias said that most NRLC state affiliates have "at least one or two full-time staff," adding that "some of our stronger groups, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan" have larger teams. The state groups also rely heavily on volunteers. NRLC has a strong lobbying presence in Washington, D.C., led by Douglas Johnson, and state affiliates lobby their state legislators. Grassroots people around the country, Tobias declared, "just aren't going to give up."<sup>15</sup>

As we approach another presidential-election year, proliferers should be asking: "Why is there no champion of unborn children in the huge group of Democratic presidential candidates?" It would be easy to find a good candidate among the pro-life women leaders. They are deeply committed; they have much experience in public speaking; and many have good executive experience. There should be a strong pro-life candidate in Democratic primaries in *every* presidential election, and each campaign should be used to build an ever-growing base of support for the next one. Unless this is done, we will continue to see great danger for unborn children whenever the Democrats regain power. If it *is* done, there will be a real chance, first, of preventing the Democratic Party from becoming even worse than it is now, and second, of building a strong pro-life force in that party. This work is crucial, and it cannot be done by the faint-hearted. To borrow a phrase from the late President John F. Kennedy,<sup>16</sup> it requires profiles in courage.

## NOTES

1. Writer's interview with Marjorie Dannenfelser, 25 July 2019.
2. Writer's interview with Kristen Day, 31 May 2019. For a report on the 2019 DFLA conference, see Don Clemmer, "Pro-life Democrats Reimagine Future of Their Movement, Party," *National Catholic Reporter* (ncronline.org/news/people/pro-life-democrats-reimagine-future-their-movement-party), 2 Aug. 2019.
3. The President [Barack Obama], Executive Order 13535, "Ensuring Enforcement and Implementation of Abortion Restrictions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act," *Federal Register*, vol. 75, no. 59, 29 March 2010, 15599-15600.
4. Writer's interview with Catherine Glenn Foster, 23 July 2019.
5. See [aul.org/about/leadership](http://aul.org/about/leadership); click on Foster photo for EWTN Pro-Life Weekly video on "Catherine Glenn Foster's Journey to the Pro-Life Movement."
6. Catherine Glenn Foster interview (n. 4).
7. Catherine Glenn Foster video (n. 5).
8. Writer's interview with Serrin Foster, 5 June 2019.
9. Writer's interview with Kristan Hawkins, 4 June 2019.
10. Writer's interview with Kelsey Hazzard, 8 June 2019.
11. "How We Help?" [abortionworker.com/how-we-help/](http://abortionworker.com/how-we-help/)
12. Writer's interview with Abby Johnson, 23 July 2019.
13. Writer's interview with Carol Tobias, 24 July 2019.
14. Writer's interview with Jeanne Mancini, 2 July 2019.
15. Writer's interview with Carol Tobias, 24 July 2019.
16. John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (New York: Harper, 1956).



*"Isn't that cute? He's begging for you to leave."*

## The Language Game of Choice (Part 2)

Caitlin Smith Gilson

The first part of my discussion on common arguments for abortion that depend on distorted language and meaning appeared in the Summer 2019 issue of the *Human Life Review*. There I delved into logical and linguistic errors of six statements representing common defenses of abortion. I now address an additional seven defenses of abortion.

7. The child is not “wanted.” How is it fair to let it live?

There are so many hidden dangers in using the language of wanted and unwanted. Desires by their nature change all the time. How often do we assert that we want something, believe it was essential for our happiness, and then find this was partially true, not true at all, or one of our biggest regrets? In part this is because we are free beings who must grow into our natures. The tree is treelike, it has a fixed nature we can all grasp. But our human natures are measured not only by growth and decay, not by materiality like the tree, but by knowledge and, therefore, by wisdom, which takes time, patience, and understanding to cultivate. The drug addict desires peace, and peace is a good desire, but *how* he locates and pursues that desire through a quick fix is not good at all. If judgment rests on desires and whims that change all the time, we will have chaos and, more than that, deep unhappiness.

There is another ground of opposition to this argument. When we begin to value human beings by their worth, by their attributes, by certain qualities which we deem more desirable than others, we set out on a route similar to that Nazi Germany took in invoking the language of “wanted” and “unwanted” as prime motivation for their actions. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, argued that eugenics required the segregation and compulsory sterilization of undesirables such as those with Down syndrome, welfare minorities, homosexuals, and those with diminished IQs. One may claim that I am invoking a “guilt by association” fallacy. After all, just because the founder of Planned Parenthood supported eugenics does not mean the abortion industry is enveloped by that same ideology. However, both eugenics and abortion share the child’s “unwantedness” as the prime motivating factor for the majority of

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abortions. In pursuit of a “greater good,” there are 3,000 abortions on average in the United States per day, 321,384 abortions were performed by Planned Parenthood alone in 2016, and 56 million on average occur per year worldwide.

The language of the “unwanted” child harbors all sorts of dangers, and, while some scenarios for not wanting the child merit real sympathy, the hierarchical order of goods must be clarified.

*a. I cannot afford a child.*

This is a serious concern, and what a situation to be in: poor, struggling, and without support. But turning to abortion in such circumstances only plays into the eugenic ideology. Pro-life advocates should be proliferers, meaning they should work to support the good of the whole person each step of the way throughout life. Although being poor is a serious concern, in the order of things, as a state of existence, it is always better than non-existence. There are ways to improve quality of life; there are no ways to bring someone back from death. The “I cannot afford a child” argument only truly works *before* conception; otherwise it supports the problematic ideology of eugenics stemming from dependency and “unwanted” attributes. For example, if the mother also has a toddler, why not kill the toddler rather than the unborn child? If the argument depends on whether the mother can afford the child, then the toddler in need of childcare and more substantial food and clothing is much more expensive right now than the baby. The response may be that the mother has bonded with the toddler and therefore “wants” the toddler. But this returns us to the preference argument and demonstrates that desire cannot and should not be the foundation for judgment. How can the mother know whether she will love or want the unborn child? How can she make a judgment about life on something as mercurial and changing as desire? How is that fair to herself and to the separate life inside her?<sup>4</sup>

*b. The child has Down syndrome, it's better to abort.*

In England, screenings and subsequent abortions on demand for children with Down syndrome have caused this population to fall into sharp decline. This decline is no medical triumph, however. Abortion is not a cure for Down syndrome: It is a message to that community that their lives are not worthwhile. But none of us is the ideal human being, whatever that may mean. None of us lack undesirable characteristics, whether these are addiction, dyslexia, Down syndrome, overweight, underweight—and on and on. We must also ask when intelligence became the fundamental identity of the human person. The scientists who created the concentration camps were genius-level IQs, as were the creators of the atom bomb. But intelligence is not genuinely intelligent if it is merely the ability to process a preponderance of data in a moral vacuum. Intelligence should *serve* the truth, which is good and beautiful. However, unlike wisdom, intelligence is often at the service of death and disease rather than life.

This may be called “progress,” but in reality it is barreling towards a dead end. Wisdom is cultivated when we reflect on our surroundings and uncover what brings about life, and not death. Thus, if our nature as rational animal is understood in the context of the unpacking of wisdom within our relations with others, then the child with Down syndrome has just as great a capacity for wisdom, reflecting on life, and prompting our own reflections on life and wisdom. When we destroy others, destroy the environment, propagate lies, build cities and institutions that are ugly and geared towards death, we obscure and even lose our own access to what it means to be human. How then is the killing of a baby with Down syndrome the way to understand our human nature, if we understand ourselves *only* in our *living* context with others? Killing the marginalized is both tyrannical by nature and destructive of the killer’s humanity.

There are more arguments for infanticide and for euthanizing those who are a burden on society. Did these arguments populate the culture out of nowhere, or are they the product of an abortion mindset? It is one thing to argue for a system of triage care, where care should be allocated first to those in most need or most likely to survive treatment and then work down from there; it is quite another thing to refuse care based on the concept that the value of a life depends primarily upon external attributes, such as whether someone is wanted or whether someone contributes to society.

It is surprisingly easy to forget the Good and find oneself a participant in death. Has not history repeatedly taught us this lesson? If we accept the logic of abortion, we accept a culture where life is valuable only because of what that life can “produce,” what so-called “progress” can be made by that intellect. If the language of “wanted” and “unwanted,” which cuts across all genders, all sexual orientations, and all races, is permissible in abortion, then how is it not a scarily perfect introduction to refusing care to the elderly, to supporting the infanticide of the toddler who has Down syndrome, to the murder of a child just not living up to his or her potential? There are many pro-abortion scholars who advocate infanticide<sup>5</sup> and also a “merciful” or “dignified” euthanasia for those judged unable to contribute to society in a meaningful way. Richard Dawkins and Peter Singer, both pro-abortion and pro-infanticide, rightly recognize the failed logic of abortion. If the abortion is defended on grounds of location—i.e., inside the womb—how can this hold up as an appropriate criterion? The child outside the womb, unwanted and helpless, is effectively the same as the one still inside the birth canal. What is permissible today will become mandatory tomorrow.

Let us not forget that the question of life is bound up in the question of death. We learn in the natural process of life and also in the natural process of death. But abortion masks both life and death; preventing both from unfolding their meaning.

8. Some will argue that being pro-choice is more inclusive of homosexual, transgender, non-binary people. The argument proceeds as follows: Abortions reflect a more inclusive approach for those who do not identify themselves in traditional family roles. Because abortions reshape the way we understand family as well as the meaning of sexuality as divorced from procreation, it therefore plays the architectural role in helping along the inclusivity of such minorities.

Hillary Clinton once asked Mother Teresa why there hadn't been a woman President, to which Mother Teresa responded: Probably because she had been aborted.<sup>6</sup> With 40-50 million unborn children aborted each year, largely from minority populations that struggle with making ends meet, we can see how true Mother Teresa's response is. Eighty percent of abortion clinics are in minority neighborhoods. *If that does not reek of eugenics, what does?* A whole generation that could have dialogued about these issues has been decimated. Should not society be concerned about defending minorities, those that are defenseless? Are not the unborn, especially the unborn of so many minorities and groups on the fringe, the most defenseless?

9. What about rape and incest?

It is telling that this argument occurs repeatedly in abortion discussions, when most abortions do not take place because of these two crimes. In 2004 1.5 percent of abortions were performed because of rape and/or incest.<sup>7</sup> Without minimizing the seriousness and heartbreak of such situations, we must *still* ask ourselves: Because we have been victimized, do we really have the right to victimize others? Again, the child is someone other, genetically and anthropologically. We do not combat crime with crime. It is not fair to be a victim, but it is far worse to become the victimizer. If it is permissible for the victim to become the victimizer, then the world can have no legal system, no moral code but destruction.

10. What about the life or health of the mother?

Like rape and incest, this is the camel's nose under the tent. It is an argument from the extreme rather than the mean, which is suspect not only in law but in daily life. Most abortions draw their defense from the arguments from *preference* and *want*. Apart from that, while the endangered life of the mother is a serious situation requiring love, support and patience, we must ask ourselves, again out of fairness, whether it is justifiable for one to die without consent for the life of another<sup>8</sup>

To use another analogy, do we arrest a person on the *potential* that he or she may commit a crime? Do we execute someone on the *possibility* that he or she may commit a murder? No. Then why is the "health of the mother" defense so often presented as an argument for the death of the child in cases where there is only the possibility that the unborn child may adversely affect the mother's



health? For the “health of the mother” argument has also been extended to cover the psychological health of the mother, i.e., the fact that she does not “want” the baby. And thus we return to *that* dangerous ideology...

11. If there are spontaneous abortions, why not artificial abortions?

Spontaneous and accidental deaths also occur after birth, such as an undiagnosed heart defect causing the death of a young athlete at the prime of his life. If we follow the logic of permitting planned abortions because there are spontaneous abortions, then I can justifiably affirm this absurd example: If there are spontaneous deaths, why not artificial deaths such as murder, death from torture, death from abuse, death from systematic starvation, death from death camps, death from child neglect, death from euthanasia, death from abortion?

12. Pro-Abortion Argument: It is merciful population control to alleviate environmental and social stresses.

This is not only a disingenuous argument but contradictory to its core. The claim that abortion is a “green” solution lowering carbon emissions because it is an effective form of population control is an infirm argument from the start. How could life be protected by its own destruction and by the annihilation of the most innocent of lives? Such faulty reasoning is on par with the deadly illogic of Nazi Germany. The idea of an ideal community opposed to any horrific agenda is in and of itself an intelligible goal. But when mass extermination is presented as necessary for the preservation of such an ideal community, it is abundantly clear that such a programmatic evil cannot issue from or effect an ideal community. Thus, the desire for and effective implementation of a greener planet, as echoed in Pope Francis’s *Laudato Si*, is connaturally united to a living respect for *all* life and a recognition of the interior family unit that first and continually evokes civilizational meaning.<sup>9</sup>

Perpetuating the myth that a large population is wholly at odds with economic development and is the primary cause of famines, conflicts, and poor environmental situations ignores the reality that human life itself—indeed the life of the proto-innocent—does not cause environmental degradation. The absurdist correlation between environmental friendliness and abortions-for-population-control demonstrates the same missteps as the current gun control arguments. No amount of gun control law will prevent catastrophes like the one in Columbine. For all the progressivist mocking of our bourgeois mid-20th century culture<sup>10</sup> there quite simply was not a gun problem or a drug problem or a sexual violence problem within schools. A constant tinkering with laws shows a corruption within the soul of the society<sup>11</sup>; it indicates that laws are merely prescriptive, reflecting our defecting conditions rather than revealing the good of our natures. It is natural that a culture that believes it is not only permissible but

laudable to kill unborn children would also produce such violence against the already born. Evils are never self-contained, ideas have consequences, and the civilization of death that begins at the womb permeates whatever life remains.<sup>12</sup> Columbine and Parkland are the heartrending examples of the abortive culture. A culture that kills the unborn promotes the protracted death and/or suicide of those fortunate enough to survive. What is the point of a greener environment if we are destroying the very generations that should enjoy the rewards of a more pristine earth? Demanding such a vicious solution amounts to Kierkegaard's untruth cloaked in velvet—"velvet-clad mercenary souls."<sup>13</sup> Are we really to believe, after centuries of innovation and creative *techne*, that the problems of famine and pollution require mass extermination?

The world's food problem does not arise from any physical limitation on potential output or any danger of unduly stressing the environment. The limitations on abundance are to be found in the social and political structures of nations. The unexploited global food resource is there, between Cancer and Capricorn. The successful husbandry of that resource depends upon the will and actions of men.<sup>14</sup>

We must make the case that a growth in population is precisely what the culture and the environment need in order to encourage a better quality of life in all registers—from physical, sociological, and societal to moral and spiritual. A much-needed growth in population does not inevitably cause unmanageable stress on vital resources, but can instead encourage more people to develop new and innovative solutions to the problems confronting humanity. Population growth thus ultimately can encourage the creation, replenishment, and recycling of more resources.<sup>15</sup>

If China is to be the litmus test of population control, one should take heed of the evil towards unborn children evidenced in its long-time practice of forced abortions, an evil more glaring than our own culture of abortion, but no different in its effects on the unborn, for both are homicidal in act and red in tooth and claw.

The parents were hunted down and the mother injected with poison to induce an abortion. The report said after "the baby was 'pulled out inhumanly like a piece of meat,' it was still alive and began to cry before doctors slung the defenseless child into a bucket [of water to drown] and left it to die."<sup>16</sup>

The slippery slope may be a logical fallacy, but it is not a moral or existential one. The assertion that widespread contraceptive use would cause abortion rates to decline almost to zero may make some form of superficial logical sense, but the existential reality is that not only do abortion rates rise, so too does the incidence of STDs.<sup>17</sup> Far from respecting the sanctity of life, contraception divorces the sexual act from its purpose as *pro*-creative; it is not going to nourish a sudden regard for the very same sanctity of life it banished! When the unwanted

pregnancy arises, the contraceptive mentality *becomes* the abortive. The contraceptive culture *is* the abortive culture of death, and a culture that destroys its own members from within is no culture at all.

13. *Arguments that claim abortion tinkers with the natural order just do not work.* We have adopted medicine and technology that “tinkers with the natural order”—antibiotics, vaccines, and anesthesia, for example—to which we don’t give a second thought. We prolong life beyond what the “natural order” would permit and allow it to happen where it otherwise wouldn’t (in vitro fertilization, for example). Abortion might be bad, but arguing that it changes the natural order as evidence of its evil is an insufficient argument.

Let’s begin to answer this question *with* a question, or a number of them, because such a question takes us beyond the confines of a simple answer.

We speak of technology, of scientific advancement, of technological determinism, and without much thought see the following terms as synonymous: “progress,” “advancement,” and “goodness.” Every advance is considered to be good in and of itself, as if, against the order of existence, the good of technology is good regardless of consequences. There is also the theory of historicism, a bedfellow of relativism, which claims that all human beings are bound by their own time and place and that, when we imagine in our arts and culture and history books another time period, it is a *reimagining* in which we indoctrinate the past with our cultural sensitivities and peculiarities. Time is passing, and we cannot lay hold of the past but only reimagine it in the fleeting present. As such we are products of our time and place. To condemn or praise our time and place as worse or better than another historical period is a fruitless exercise, for we haven’t the power to emancipate ourselves from our limited cultural and temporal restrictions to gain true sight of another cultural epoch. This would be true, except for the fact that we *do* recognize other times and places, and these other times and places communicate to us, which would be impossible if no time or place could exceed its own time and place but was locked from within. Yet the idea that we do reimagine and indoctrinate the past and future with our perspectives and agendas is one of the unseemly realities of the human condition.

The question of technology is very much the question of the natural order; together the two reveal the human participation in the natural order that is the specific *historical* order. Human beings who have the capacity to think and to know are *alone* historical beings. There are animals and plants throughout history, but only humans who reflect on the order of time and the moral exigencies of existence are *historical* beings.

Let us ask a laughable but serious question, one which brings us back to the ire of the gods at Prometheus for bringing man fire and, through fire, technology. If electricity was a necessity for the creating of the gas chambers in which 8 million died, is it worth it? If electricity is a necessity for the abortion industry, which kills over 50 million per year, is this advancement worth it? We

can cite all the good electricity makes possible, of course, and the creation of most things is first good and then perverted for evil. But let us be aware that advancement is a risky business. What advances us in relation to some good also advances us into separation and loss. We are to some real extent products of our time and place, and we are products of a world populated by electricity, by internet and paved roads, and lights that illuminate stores open at all hours, and hospitals with life-giving machines all in need of power. We cannot imagine a world without the technology that shapes us. Technology throws us forward into undreamt-of situations, and when we act on desire, then we must be aware that the technology may not be reined in and may “cause” great evil. When Hitler’s final solution switched from trucks barreling through the streets shooting off guns to gas chambers—that was an “advancement” in killing effectively. But that example of technological progress was not good, but a deadly advancement disengaged from the conserving stance of the good.

So, how can we argue that abortion tinkers with nature and is thus a defecation, an evil, when historical existence, indeed human existence itself, has always been a tinkering with nature? The manifestation of specifically *human* existence was, for the Greeks, the manifestation of *techne*, the root word of technology. *Techne* means “making” and reflects our freedom, that unlike the animals we can reflect and construct and imitate our unique natures through technology. From fire, to the wheel, to bridges, to the construction of towns and communities and cities, the manifestations of technology befit our free nature because, as companions to free will, they invoke responsibility and consequences. That *tinkering* is not itself contrary to our natures but is how our free nature freely acts out our natures. But freely acting out our natures must occur in a way that respects nature rather than violates it, as abortion clearly does. When 40-50 million are killed each year, that is 40-50 million persons unable to place on existence their unique imprint or tinkering or enacting of their natures. We speak of goodness in two ways, goodness which is called *simpliciter* and goodness which is called *secundum quid*. The first means simply good in itself, and the latter means good but only according to something. The cat burglar who can get into Fort Knox is a “good” burglar, but that is goodness *secundum quid*—according to effective breaking and entering—not goodness *simpliciter*, for it is not good to steal. So many advancements are only good *secundum quid*, as the construction of the hydrogen bomb was a certain good—*secundum quid*—according to the efficiency of bomb making. The argument that defends abortion because medicines also tinker with nature, and thus both are good, commits the logical fallacy of collapsing the distinction between *secundum quid* and *simpliciter*. In truth, the end does not justify the means, it specifies the means. And a good end requires good means.

Our discussion about electricity and technology hit at something deeper and

truer. What humans create and tinker with are not inessential attributes but the defining characteristics of human nature. Thus, when we reflect on advancements and progress, we must ask ourselves: Are these advancements and is this progress according to the good itself or only good according to some view, some ideology, some desire or some whim that will not (because it cannot) better us, but only destroy us before we have the eyes to see what is lost?

It is *always* and *only* in the relationship with otherness that knowledge and love begin to find us, revealing ourselves in the other. This is the Angelic Doctor's famous *longer way* of life and time, and it is the only meaningful inheritance passed down from person to person. The very incarnation of otherness is the unborn child. The denial of that otherness is also, and therefore, the denial of ourselves at its deepest root. It is not only sin (which it is); it is the suicide of the soul and the suicide of civilization.

## NOTES

1. See John Rogers' (Democratic Representative of Alabama) ruthless ipsedixitism: "Some kids are unwanted . . . So you kill them now or you kill them later. You bring them into the world unwanted, unloved, then send them to the electric chair. So you kill them now or kill them later." See sage commentary by A. Descantis, "Democratic State Rep. Makes Horrifying Pro-Abortion Comment," *National Review* (2019).
2. "2016-2017 Annual Report" [https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer\\_public/d4/50/d450c016-a6a9-4455-bf7f-711067db5ff7/20171229\\_ar16-17\\_p01\\_lowres.pdf](https://www.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer_public/d4/50/d450c016-a6a9-4455-bf7f-711067db5ff7/20171229_ar16-17_p01_lowres.pdf).
3. S. Singh et al., "Abortion Worldwide 2017," *Guttmacher Institute* (2018).
4. As a society, we need to be pro-life *throughout* the entirety of the stages on life's way, otherwise we undermine the culture of life. Cultivating effective adoption advocacy may be difficult but it is essential, see: <https://humanlifereview.com/national-adoption-awareness/>
5. Peter Singer, Michael Tooley, Francesca Minerva, Richard Dawkins, and Stephen Kershner, to name a few. For a defense, albeit brief, for infanticide see, "Richard Dawkins interviews Peter Singer," *The Genius of Charles Darwin* (2008).
6. See S. Fitzpatrick, "Marching for Life, Mother Teresa, and Mrs. Clinton," *Crisis Magazine* (2016). See also, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "Whatever You Did Unto One of the Least, You Did Unto Me." (1994).
7. L.B. Finer et al. "Reasons US Women have Abortions," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 37, 3 (2013) 110–1. See Also, T. Lewin, "Rape and Incest: Just 1% of All Abortions," *The New York Times* (1989).
8. We must indeed draw the line that divides truth from falsehood, and it must be held, even and especially through the painful purgations which unfold alongside the exigencies of a human life. The line must be held especially because we are being eased, in all avenues of the culture, into justifying the unjustifiable, and seeing. This is done through the conflation of causation and possibility, easing one into seeing abortion as the *only* choice, a necessary evil that transforms itself into an essential good. This in turn prompts a dangerous civilizational view, dangerous universally, both secularly and religiously—namely the holding of our own lives higher than the life of the Other. This view is the etiology of historical, political, social, and spiritual decline. Again, the line must be held, and it is difficult and seemingly impossible, but it is the foundation of any meaningful life. If we disregard this most fundamental of laws, and do so in the most fundamental of situations—the protection of the proto-innocent—we unhinge the communal bonds that create a society which transcends a mere collection of competing private desires. Having a law against abortion does not *ipso facto* deny the exigencies of human situations. If anything, having abortion-on-demand is its root denial. It appeals to emotions unhinged from their orienting *habitus*, malforming the true public good into a collection of private agreements which may masquerade as the public good, but only when it suits the ego.
9. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, §155.
10. For a defense of bourgeois values see A. Wax & L. Alexander, "Paying the price for breakdown of the country's bourgeois culture," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (8/09/2017). This article, only controversial to

ideologues, and genuinely color-blind, was met with progressivist vitriol. Rather than examine its issues and talking points seriously, the hurling of fashionable victimization terms from “a white male dominated patriarchy” to “cultural appropriation,” was in full gear.

11. *Republic*, 338a-339a.

12. The abortive culture is most certainly reflected in the gun, drug, and pornographic sexual exploitative problems that have marred the youth of our generation. Each of these problems is causally linked to death, both bodily and spiritually.

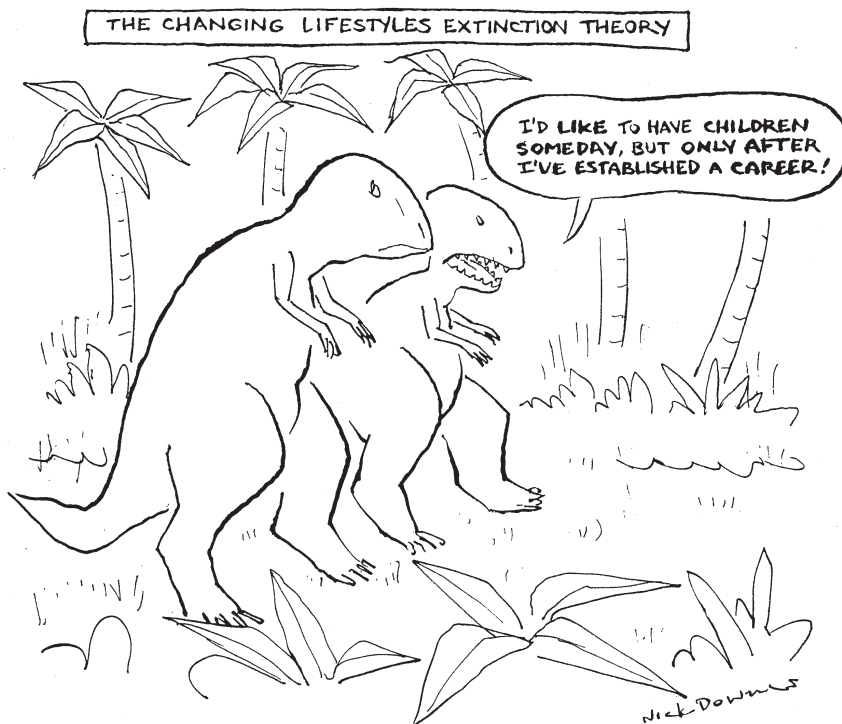
13. S. Kierkegaard, *The Moment and Late Writings*, 44.

14. W.D. Hopper, “The Development of Agriculture in Developing Countries,” *Scientific American* (09/1976) 202. See also J.R. Kasum, *The War against Population: The Economics and Ideology of World Population*; S.W. Mosher, “Too Many People? Not by a Long Shot!” *Population Research Institute Review* 7, 2 (1997).

15. Cf. J.L. Simon, “Part Two: Population Growth’s Effect Upon Our Resources and Living Standard,” *The Ultimate Resource* 2, 311-512.

16. K. Nikolas, “Outrage over Picture of Chinese Forced Abortion at Nine Months,” *Digital Journal* (2012).

17. See “Use of Contraception and Use of Family Planning Services in the United States: 1982-2002,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Advance Data No. 350 (12/10/2004). Also see, “Greater Access to Contraception Does Not Reduce Abortions,” *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/contraception/fact-sheets/greater-access-to-contraception-does-not-reduce-abortions.cfm>. For the clear link between STDs, abortion and contraceptive usage, see J. Klick & T. Stratmann, “The Effect of Abortion Legalization on Sexual Behavior: Evidence from Sexually Transmitted Diseases,” *Journal of Legal Studies* 32, 2 (2003) 407-33.





# Diary of an Unwitting Orphan

*Brian Caulfield*

**G**rief is a force of its own. It will pound pleadingly at the heart, exposing hidden fears of death, regret, and remembrance, then retreat seemingly sated, only to rally again at the oddest moments to demand doubt, sadness, and tears. It will wake you with bursts of nerves and activity, depleting a once reliable reserve of energy, and cast askew that delicate balance of “me to the world” by raking up old wounds of early hurts and feelings.

It will make love stand as the one thing that matters in the cruelest of worlds, as well as the loneliest emotion in the face of a loved one lost. When that loved one is your mother, the grief is more pressing.

This is one son’s diary of the last days of his mother’s life, covering a week of highs and lows redeemed by the grace of Mom’s peaceful, expected, yet strangely untimely death. I had made it through my father’s death nearly four years before, so it didn’t occur to me why the news of her passing left me feeling so bereft, until a priest repeated for me the words that the late John Cardinal O’Connor shared touchingly with those who had lost their parents: “Well, you’re an orphan now.” It is with the perspective of a 62-year-old orphan that I write.

**Wednesday, July 10**

This will not be easy. The weight of a difficult decision races my heart and leadens my legs. I am my mother’s health care proxy and have arranged to take the New Haven train to meet the hospice nurse this morning at my mom’s Manhattan apartment. Tracking the signs of a weak and declining heart, her cardiologist has been recommending hospice for a while, but my two brothers and I have resisted. It seemed like giving up on Mom, someone who had never given up on us through every trouble and heartache we gave her over the years. But after more than a week of her steep decline, we finally agreed.

Mom is not incompetent, but she needs help, guidance, and reminders with most things. A walker to get around the apartment; a commode beside her adjustable bed; a few key words to remember things like names, places, and what she was just about to do. She has been losing short-term memory for years, but her memories of times long past are sharp and incisive. These are the stories she has been telling herself and us since we were young, yet they now have a rosy

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tinge that her three sons fail to see when looking back. “Everyone tried their best, I suppose,” she concludes after recounting such things as her parents’ divorce (a thing not spoken of among Catholics then) or the meddling of relatives early in her own marriage. I say often to my brothers and to anyone who asks, “She doesn’t remember much, but what she does remember is always good.” I realize she had a choice to make in late age: either to grow bitter or move ahead with acceptance and peace. My mother chose the better part, and no one will take it from her.

She’s been diagnosed with “early-onset” for years, yet has come no nearer to Alzheimer’s, even as she moved past 88 and halfway to 89. At her age, she says, every half-year counts, just as with an infant. She still has a sense of humor, and says things that seem perfectly sensible to her but draw a laugh from others. I smile to myself as the train reaches New York. Having grown up in the city, its sights, sounds, and smells are ground into my DNA and bring back memories. Each street, each building is etched with meaning. Though so much has changed, urban New York retains an essential prototypical quality, and likely always will.

I reach the apartment that we, a family of five, moved into during the summer of ’71, when the complex called Southbridge Towers (south of Brooklyn Bridge) was opened and we became the first tenants—homesteaders, in an unfamiliar sector of Manhattan, steps from the then-dank, porous boards of the South Street Seaport, and a short walk to Wall Street and South Ferry. We claimed the narrow, winding, horse-cart streets of this New World as our own, and reveled in the weekend silence that descended when the capital of capital closed, even as the Twin Towers rose in shiny glass and steel on the western, landfilled edge of our realm.

The 70s. There was not much room for death in our minds in those years, when Philippe Petit walked on wire between the buildings, and we three boys went off to high school and college. But in 2001 the Towers came down with a horrible loss of life, struck by those who hated the very notion of our nation. I cannot walk from the subway to the apartment without reliving in short scenes the fatal upheaval of 9/11, when my strong, determined mom helped my wife and infant hastily leave our 17th-floor apartment and move to the apartment where she and my dad then lived as empty nesters. It was to familiar #4D that I eventually made my way from work late that day, walking the final mile through the ankle-deep soot of immolated buildings. This history weighs on me along with the task at hand as I unlock the door where my mom now lives with alternating summer caretakers, a sweet Irish home aide and my brother’s teenage daughter.

I meet the hospice nurse from Calvary Hospital, the world-famous institution that pioneered comfort care according to Catholic principles. She is young,

bright, compassionate, professional. Dealing with death every day, she is somehow not crushed by the routine of placing the existential facts of life in front of loved ones in the form of medical contracts and DNRs. Fascinated by her job, I sit in the wheelchair my dad had used, and ask her one question after another, taking her by surprise, since she has a folder full of questions for me. Yet she is unrushed, open and composed, and I realize that she is there for me, the loving son on the brink of grief, as much as for my mother. Talking with her, I get the sense that death is an art, not an accident of time or age. An intensely personal moment, it can yet be shared, and is better and less forbidding when it is.

The nurse hands me a cache of papers and we go through them, one by one. I am happy to find that this is not a death sentence and is far from giving up on Mom. Under hospice, any “medical event” will be treated with comfort care, not emergency care. There will be no attempt to resuscitate, but every effort to ease Mom’s pain, discomfort, anxiety, or labored breathing. Yet we can call 911 at any time, and my mom will go off hospice and into the care of the emergency medical team.

Mom moves with her walker into the living room, and the home aide helps her to the couch. I sit next to her, take her hand as she starts talking in an animated fashion that I haven’t seen in weeks. She goes on about the weather, what she had for breakfast, how she slept, anything that comes to mind. The nurse takes her hand and my mom speaks with her. She seems stronger, more alert, exuding a vital force. I sense the nurse thinking what I am: Is she really ready for hospice? But the cardiologist’s report is definite, stating that Mom has 10 to 14 days to live and recommending admittance to the hospice facility, not just home hospice. I meet the nurse’s eyes as Mom sits between us, and she says, “We review our cases every two months, and, if appropriate, your mom can come off hospice at that time.”

I sign the papers for Calvary and Medicare, and then the DNR form faces me. Do I need to sign this to get Mom on hospice? The answer is “no,” but it’s recommended. I go into the bedroom and call my brothers separately, to confirm that this is our decision. We all agree that performing CPR in her frail condition would probably do more harm. There was little expected benefit, and it would be best to let her heart and breathing stop in the normal course of death. I take a deep breath, walk back outside, sign the DNR, and post it on the refrigerator, where any medical professional could see it.

Mom is still on the couch, lost in thought. I want her to know exactly what we are doing. I show and describe each form and explain that the nice nurse would be visiting her twice a week; if there were any problems, a nurse was available by phone any time day or night, and if needed this nice nurse would come in person; a social worker would visit on a regular basis to make sure she was adapting to her new situation; a new home aide would come a few hours

a day during the week to clean, cook, change sheets, and do laundry, but we would still pay for her overnight aides; a priest is on call to visit for counseling, the sacrament of Confession, the Sacrament of Anointing, or simply to talk; she would be getting a small oxygen tank to help with breathing when needed. Mom nods at each form and explanation, and, ever practical, asks, "Who is paying for all this?" The nurse gives a slight smile at her still sharp mind. "Except for our own home aides, Medicare will pay for it all," I say. "You've paid into the system all these years, and these are your benefits." "Well, it's about time, then," she says, in one of those statements that seems sensible to her but draws a laugh from others.

"I also signed a DNR, Mom, do not resuscitate." I left this one for last. "That means if you have some serious incident, like your heart stops or you stop breathing, and it looks like God may be ready to take you, no one will call 911 for emergency help. We'll just let nature take its course. Is that okay?" "Oh, yes," she says, "you did the right thing." I walk her to the refrigerator to show her the DNR document.

We sit back on the couch, holding hands. She is thin, frighteningly frail for a woman who worried about her weight for most of her life. I can feel her bones as I put my arm around her and she rests her head on my shoulder. We breathe together for a minute. The nurse packs up quietly. I feel an anxious thought stir through my mom's body as I hold her, and she lifts her head to look into my eyes. "You're my son, aren't you?" she says, expecting my gentle "yes" in response. "Good," she says, resting her head again on my shoulder. "I thought so."

### **Saturday, July 13**

Life goes on with my own family, two hours away in Connecticut. My older son is home from college for the summer, working, honing his driving skills, making career plans. My younger son finished eighth grade last month and is preparing to enter the Catholic high school his brother graduated from. My wife is away, far away for two weeks, visiting her parents and siblings in the Philippines.

So I am a "married bachelor," a "single dad" for a few more days. I'd like to visit my mom this weekend, but my boys need me. I tell them about the days long ago when my mom was out for a "girls' night" and my dad would boil hot dogs, heat up sauerkraut and beans, and eat "navy style" with us on the living room rug. He had served as a teen in the Atlantic near the end of World War II, working in the ship's bakery. We would sit on the oriental rug in our first apartment in midtown, listening to him tell story after story about how he burned the bread, or made a mess of the mess hall, or wound up with so many biscuits they had to feed some to the gulls. Even at that age, I knew exaggeration when

I heard it, but we laughed and loved it all the same, especially if we got to put off homework.

There was a sense of family in all this that sustains us brothers to this day. Yes, our parents fought, and I remember clearly the night my mom walked out of the apartment while Dad sat quiet and disconsolate by the light of the silent TV. I never asked where she went, or for how long, but she was there in the morning to wake the three of us for school, with never a hint of anything wrong. She came from a family of drinkers, and my dad's dad, who died soon after I was born, owned a bar at one time, before he lost it all. When we speak of past generations as great, we often forget the wounds, the hidden addictions, the broken families, and the separate spousal beds. My dad and mom loved one another, were loyal to one another, and were Catholic to one another, by which I mean they believed beyond the present pain. There was always Saturday Confession, Sunday Mass, scrubbed faces and fresh clothes, Jesus and the Blessed Mother. Something essential and beyond us all—grace.

My mother would sing lullabies to me as she sat at the edge of my bed by the window that looked out on the dark, high-rising, twinkling city of the 60s. We would pray the Hail Mary together, and she'd say that whenever there were problems, especially with her sons, she went to the Blessed Mother, "because she's a mother like me, and understands." The intimacy, the immediacy, the simple fact of her faith, wondrous and without doubt, is still impressed upon my soul. She told me moral stories, real to life, about how she had lunch once with a Protestant boy and he mocked her for ordering a grilled cheese sandwich on Friday to observe the Church's rule against meat. "Well, that was the end of him!" she declared.

Boys would call her up evening after evening, but she brushed them off with a polite, "I must go now. My ice cream is melting." Classic 1940s style. But when Buddy Caulfield called, her ice cream was never melting. He was a Navy veteran and a gentleman.

It all comes back to me as I heat up frozen meatballs in a pan of bottled tomato sauce on the stove for me and my boys. I tell them Mom's stories in the way she told them to me, hoping to pass on the tradition to a third generation.

#### **Monday, July 15**

My son is driving with me along I-84, amid the rush-hour trucks, when I see "212" come in on my cell phone. Normally I would ignore an unknown number, but a New York area code makes me think about my mom.

"Brian, I was just with your mother, she's fine, she's doing well, but I think she got scared when I started to anoint her. She's a beautiful woman, from the old school, who thinks that when the priest comes to anoint, it means the end."

It's the hospice chaplain. I recognize his voice as the same priest who had

anointed my dad almost daily on demand at the in-hospice facility. I mention my father and his death. “I remember your dad. Very kind and wonderful man. So this is his widow?” Yes, I tell him, they were married for 64 years.

“That was the hospice chaplain,” I tell my son, who’s concentrating on the road. “He anointed grandma.” He nodded. Stephen is 19 and gives every evidence of a strong faith. I figure that moments like this one, when a priest calls in the middle of the day as we go about our ordinary chores, have a deepening effect upon his view of the Church. There is something urgent yet timeless about a cell phone discussion on the sacrament that is designed to get us to heaven.

#### **Tuesday, July 16**

My eldest brother turns 67 today, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. I send him a “Happy Birthday” text in the morning, but we both have Mom in mind. This marks the day when she first gave birth, at the age of 21. The way she told it, bringing three boys into the world by natural childbirth were her finest moments, with each baby weighing in at around 10 lbs. We were her three crowning achievements: the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Williamsburg bridges. No builder of the pyramids or Michelangelo’s David could match that. During one delivery, the doctor asked if she would object to medical students watching from the observatory. Spread out on the table, with my dad pacing in the distant waiting room, she announced, “I don’t care if the pope himself is watching!”

Mom had a way. She could be obsessively nervous, overly protective, quick to judge, and too sure of her conclusions, but she could always laugh, rarely at others, often at herself. She had famous stories yet was a good listener, with a keen ear, a mind’s eye for detail, and an innate sense of justice. When she was sure, especially in matters concerning her sons, no mama bear was fiercer. No nun, priest, bishop, or pope; no policeman, mayor, governor, or president—no one except God himself and Mother Mary—took precedence over her maternal intuition. We suffered sometimes under her excesses, but we knew we were safe and loved.

At night, I text my wife that things look good so far with Mom. She knew when her plane took off from JFK, a minute after midnight July 4, that she might be called from visiting her family to come back for the funeral with my family. It’s 9 p.m. in Connecticut, 9 a.m. the next day in Manila. The same sun that faded into a summer’s night here has already risen over my wife’s homeland. Time and distance expand with my heart on both sides of the world.

My phone rings around 10 p.m. My eldest brother, in upstate New York, got a call from the kind Irish aide that Mom is agitated. She lies down to sleep, gets up, has trouble breathing, lies down to find that one comfortable spot, and gets up again, not sure where she is. It doesn’t sound especially worrisome to us, but maybe the aide knows more than she’s telling. I would take the train to the city



but don't want to leave my sons alone. I call the home aide and tell her I'll be down in the morning, and thank her for taking care of Mom.

**Wednesday, July 17**

I rise early with plans to work a bit at the office and then walk to the New Haven station. At 8:40, I see my brother's number on my phone and brace myself, thinking perhaps Mom has had a "medical event" and I'll have to decide whether to call 911 or let her go. My brother's voice is slow and soft, and I know this is not an emergency. It's the end. The home aide had called him to say she passed away at about 8:20. I thought I'd be ready for the news, that's what hospice is for, but I slam my desk, and say no way. She was rallying back. Even the nurse who visited just yesterday said she was strong. It was less than a week since I signed the papers. How could this happen?

On the train to the city, I text my wife. It is Wednesday night there. She is with her parents, siblings, nieces, and nephews. I wait a few minutes for her to respond to my "hi" text before breaking the news that she senses is coming. "Mom passed away this morning. I am on the train heading into the city." She quickly arranges to take the next possible flight back to JFK, where I will meet her on Friday.

I call a priest friend who's a pastor in the Bronx. He had offered his own father's funeral a few years ago and gave a deeply moving eulogy. He gets my tone immediately over the phone and offers a prayer, and then relates the "you're an orphan now" story of Cardinal O'Connor, words that echo in my heart. The young woman sitting next to me hears my conversation, and I can sense her interest. Not usually one to overshare with strangers, I tell her my mom just passed away. Death at this moment is not a separation but a common bond between us. She introduces me to her husband. They are teachers on summer vacation, heading to JFK for a flight to France to visit a friend who just gave birth. Married seven years, they aren't ready for a baby yet, they tell me. "Don't wait too long to have a child," I say, and tell them about my mother's joy over her sons, her three city bridges.

I arrive first. One brother is coming from upstate, the other is on vacation with his family in the Poconos, waiting for the morning traffic to abate. The sweet Irish lady meets me at the #4D door to offer her condolences. I stand in the living room amid familiar surroundings, where my mom had lived for the past 48 years. What do I do now? What is the proper etiquette or legal procedure when your mom lies dead in the next room and no one knows about it except your brothers, an Irish lady who held her hand at the last breath, your wife and in-laws half a world away, a priest in the Bronx, and a childless couple flying to France? And also, as I now learn, the hospice nurse, who'd already come to fill out the death certificate. One advantage of home hospice, she had said a week

ago, when it seemed a faraway fact, was that when a person dies there is no need for a medical examiner or doctor to determine the cause of death, no need for police or an autopsy. Home hospice takes care of it all. We are free to call the funeral home, which is legally allowed now to pick up the body.

As I struggle to place everything in perspective, I realize that my next step is my own. I decline the Irish aide's offer of tea and walk to the bedroom. I stop at the doorway, see my mother lying peacefully in bed, head elevated a bit, hands folded on her chest, a faint smile on her lips. My instinct tells me that everyone is wrong. She is sleeping. I hesitate to walk into the room so as not to wake her. "Mom," I say, stepping closer. I kneel beside the bed, feel her forehead, still slightly warm after three hours. "Mom." I feel somewhat like I did in the delivery room with my first son, when the nurse handed the beautiful bundle to me and I held him like a football. I don't know how to do this, I thought. Shouldn't we leave this newborn baby stuff to the medical professionals? So now, I thought, how do I approach the lifeless body of my mother? How do I touch or embrace it? This is a busy city, with children in the playground outside the window, sirens blaring from the hospital across the street, traffic booming over the Brooklyn Bridge, and a million people and more within a half-mile radius of the small dot of the apartment where I kiss the forehead of my mom, an orphan alone.

My brothers arrive, the home aide leaves, her job complete. We three spend personal time with Mom. I go to St. Peter's Church, near the World Trade Center, and ask a priest to come and bless the body. The heat is over 100 degrees, but he happily walks with me the half mile and recites the prayers of the Church. I offer a glass of water and tell the story the Irish aide told us. Mom woke, got out of bed herself and went to the bathroom. Saying she wouldn't need breakfast, she went back to bed. The aide sat by her, took her right hand. Mom said, without distress, "Is this what it's like? Am I dying?" A short while later, she asked with a touch of wonder, "What's happening?" Her left side tensed in spasm for a moment, then she relaxed for good. That was it. "A peaceful death such as that is a great blessing," the priest says. "We should all pray for it."

My brother calls the same funeral home that cared for my dad. They remember us and have most of the information they need. Mom will have a funeral Mass, as my dad did, in the Lady Chapel of St. Patrick's Cathedral, where they were married, and she'll be buried in the veteran's cemetery on Long Island with my dad. A certain order and symmetry are taking shape, and I sense the hand of God. The Mass and burial will be on July 22, the feast of St. Mary Magdalene, the day 62 years ago when Mom brought me into the world, her third bridge. After so many celebrations of my birth, I am pleased to give the day to her.

## Male and Female Together:

# What the Ancients Understood

*Michael Kuiper*

*It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper fit for him.— Genesis 2:18*

*You have made my heart beat faster.—Song of Songs 4:9*

**T**he father of the 22-year-old had hoped that by bringing him to a psychologist, something could be done. His son had no driver's license, job, or plans for school. No girlfriend either, a solitary man content to play video games. I could find no mental disorder such as social anxiety or depression. Nor could I uncover any goals. Bored with my attempt to connect, he himself saw no reason to be talking to me.

The story of this isolated, unmotivated male is matched by an equally sad experience I find in my consulting room. After I lamely observed that I was sure there were suitable men for her, Beth asked, "So where are they!?" I had no good answer. Although she was successful in her career, her biological clock was ticking. She wanted people in her future—a husband and children.

Love. What happened to it? That feeling of discovery and joy. That feeling when Adam first glimpsed Eve and erupted with something like, "Yes! This is what I've been waiting for!" The Bible depicts romantic love as something wonderful, an ecstatic sense of union—two separate beings, mysterious to one another, now finding themselves crazy for that "other," that "bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh."

Two becoming one. Today we might be forgiven if we think such a notion quaint or naïve. We see fewer couples walking arm in arm. Instead, we find comparison and mistrust. Add to that growing confusion about gender and sex roles. Sexuality—designed from a Judeo-Christian perspective to bring joy, satisfaction, and union—has become the nexus of disunion.

A competitive and divided world was never God's intention. Prior to disobeying the prohibition not to bring the conflict of good and evil into their world, the first humans lived in perfect harmony—with themselves, each other, and their Creator. Reflecting God's nature, the man and woman were to function not in solitary pursuits, but in communion, mutuality, and shared goals. Together they

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were given the mandate to populate and subdue the earth (Genesis 1:28). Male and female, different but “one flesh,” designed to operate in complementarity, harmony, and mutual benefit. A polarity of reciprocity.

Such communion rested on a foundation of differentiation. According to theologian Ray Anderson, that which is “totally other” constitutes the basis for real intimacy.<sup>1</sup> In responding to the first man’s loneliness, God does not make another man. Rather, he designs an *ezer kenegdo*, a helper or counterpart to complement him. We know that men often help each other, work together, and share common goals. But in this case, the ideal resolution to the man’s predicament is to fashion a being who is different, and thus one who fits him perfectly.

In this intimacy between counterparts, Adam is not Narcissus to Eve’s Echo. God did not fashion for man a creature who would simply mirror his thoughts or jump at his commands, but one who brings the mystery of her own thoughts, will, and contribution to the great mandates to “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.” With the mystery of the other who is different comes the possibility of surprise, joy, and challenge. In such a complementarity, love grows. Individual selves are stretched and invited to outgrow solipsistic preoccupations.

Indeed, maturity is fostered not through preoccupation with self, but through becoming other-centered. Picture the cage fighter. Which image strikes you as more human? When he strains to punch and maim his opponent, or when, after the fight, he embraces that man in recognition of their mutual struggle and pain? We were not designed to compete with or kill each other to obtain what we need. Such a survivalist attitude fears the one who is different and demands a marshaling of one’s own powers against the other. God’s intention was not that we fear but that we live and grow under an umbrella of love.

To love requires knowledge: an understanding of the other’s needs, desires, and inclinations; an appreciation of the preciousness of the other. Such knowledge lays the groundwork for human sexuality. Animals let instinct guide them. But humans, Anderson writes, “. . . not only mate but they ‘meet’—and meet again, or fear meeting again, or meet with guilt and shame.”<sup>2</sup> For humans, sexuality cannot be separated from the face and self of the other.

But what if the selves do not meet? What if there is sex without self? Has sex today lost all reference to personhood, inner needs and dreams, commitment or future? Should we not be alarmed as we consider that divorce rates remain chronically high, fewer people even bother to get married, rising numbers of kids declare they must be the wrong gender, pornography proliferates, and STDs have reached epidemic levels?

Such symptoms of societal dysfunction are often hidden. Perhaps it’s the private discovery of red spots in the genital area. Or the anxiety of loneliness, as Beth expressed to me. Or the inchoate uneasiness a college woman discerned in

classmates who avoided eye contact the morning after a night of indiscriminate sex. Despite the campus ethos of open promiscuity, a kind of self-consciousness lingers—a knowing that sexual intimacy without personal intimacy somehow constitutes a violation.

Intimacy demands not only knowledge but vulnerability, an openness to what the other brings. Anderson writes that human selfhood itself constitutes “. . . an openness of being which stands out of itself towards the other as the source of our being.”<sup>3</sup> As Brunner put it in his classic work *Man in Revolt: A Christian Anthropology*, “God creates us as finite, creaturely beings, dependent upon each other, unable to exist by ourselves, not as autonomous, self-sufficient beings . . .”<sup>4</sup> As I acknowledge my dependency and become open to the influence of another, I outgrow the delusion that I can meet all of my own needs and desires.

Such humility has gone out of fashion. The kind of hyper-individualism we see today assumes one ought to complete oneself, a marching band of one. The self-contained individual acknowledges little need for another person. The logical corollary to this hubris of independence emerges as subtle devaluation—as if the other carries no inherent value. What then? Perhaps he or she is merely irrelevant. Or useful for sex. Eventually, as individuals pursue self-centered goals, offenses occur and alienation supplants intimacy. The drive for communion retreats into the need for self-protection. Difference becomes division.

If males and females are to function as “one flesh,” we must assume complementarity. That is, the two sexes fit each other in such a way that they are, put simply, better together. Working toward a common goal, they bring what the other lacks, creating harmony and efficiency.

A partnership or symmetrical model, on the other hand, also may enable people to come together. Yet, to deny essential differences requires nonessential matching. The basis for attraction is tenuous. The connection remains only as long as goals are shared and a parity of contribution and reward is perceived. These elements shift and change. As business partners know, written contracts must replace trust. After decades of breathing the forced air of equality with its assumption of sameness, men and women are less connected than ever. Both love and sex have suffered. Mark Regnerus cites data from the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* indicating not only that marriages have declined but that Americans are having sex nine fewer times a year than even in the late 90s. He writes, “Men and women are not attracted to sameness, but to difference. We long for what is missing in ourselves. Needing each other makes us want each other.”<sup>5</sup>

God’s design for marriage is built on more solid grounds: a reciprocity based on irrevocable differentiation. The only fundamental differentiation in higher organisms is that of gender. As theologian Helmut Thielicke explains, one cannot separate *bios*—the principle of physical determination—from the person or

from personal identity.<sup>6</sup> Gender identity is intrinsic to personhood and therefore a prerequisite to healthy psychological adjustment.<sup>7</sup> Biblically, we understand that the purpose of this essential gender differentiation is love: the enhancement of the other who is different yet corresponds perfectly as a partner.

The principle of complementarity presupposes essential value as well as essential difference. Fundamental *gender worth* is assumed. In virtually every culture, boys and girls are granted a certain status simply by virtue of their gender. Despite declarations to the contrary, girls hold an innate value issuing from the simple fact that every human emerges from the female body. Every person's first attachment is to the mother. Being nursed at mother's breast constitutes the emotional foundation from which the very self emerges.<sup>8</sup> Although a boy is often more openly celebrated, as he grows away from the maternal nest, his significance retains a fragile quality. Unlike that of his sister, his body does not represent the source of life itself, leaving him less bound to nature—or the family. As George Gilder warned in *Sexual Suicide*, his prescient treatise against feminism and sexual libertarianism, the boy's value is not so tethered to the rhythms of reproductive life and is therefore more provisional and fluid.<sup>9</sup> His importance must be earned. Historically, a man's greater muscularity might have provided a complementary value to wife and community. So, too, the roles of provider, protector, or spiritual leader. While traditional sex roles have at times unduly restrained women, they also invite a man to sublimate his sexual energy in productive work, enabling him to bring value to the female—something that might approximate the preciousness of life his mother brought to him.

In their disdain for sex roles (“gender straight jacketing”), progressive activists prefer to ignore a child's biology. Gender is merely “assigned,” a figment of cultural imagination. Unfortunately, children now find themselves deprived of such cultural constructions that in fact honor real biological differences. Not only are they cheated of the self-esteem and security of knowing that they have value to the other sex, but they find themselves pitted against that sex.

A handful of disturbing YouTube videos captures how equity ideology has led to unnatural relations between the sexes. These depict pubescent boy versus girl wrestling matches. It is difficult to watch these children awkwardly grab at each other, hardly knowing where to touch. As one commenter noted, the boy loses either way, by being beaten by a girl or by hurting her. The girl loses as well, having relinquished her femininity to masculine pursuits. Thrown together in a contest of strength, each is forced to deny physical differences, repudiating nature and nature's goals. The boy sees she is out to take his little trophy, his symbol of masculinity. The girl, having been disabused of her status as life bearer, now tacitly repudiates her own body, coveting the hard shell and aggressiveness of the boys around her. Supplanting dreams of home and family, colorful ribbons and plastic trophies steal our children's imaginations.<sup>10</sup>



In societies less offended by conventional norms, two assumptions hold sway—each offering comfort to the child while laying the groundwork for heterosexual union to flourish. In the first place, the boy or girl grows up believing “I am special. I bring what the other lacks.” A certain self-esteem is granted by virtue of belonging to one sex and not the other. Fundamentally, this status is an essential value *to* the opposite sex. The corollary assumption is simply that “I am not so special that I can complete myself. I need what the other can give.” As such, each sex carries a unique power to satisfy the other. At its most primal level, this essential power represents a generative value with its potential for producing offspring.

Not only do sex roles identify an indispensable status to each gender, they also suggest limitation. In the creation story, the first humans were invited to live and grow in a world of wonderful possibility—but only within the limits of their nature. They were not designed to flourish while judging good and bad and so were prohibited from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. All things were not possible to Adam and Eve. Humans are created, subordinate beings forever bound by the nature given them. Neither God nor angel, we find our freedom as we find our place. We enact our potential as we accept our limitations, be they physical, natural, moral, or spiritual law.

**I**n the 21st century, we have come to dislike limits. We tell our kids, if not ourselves, that they can do anything. A speaker on the radio the other day described his consternation when he attended a graduation ceremony of kindergartners and heard the little ones belting out this song: “We’ve got the whole world, in our hands. We’ve got the whole wide world, in our hands . . .” Now, the fact is, they don’t have the whole world in their hands and the sooner they learn that, the better. The importance of this humility, in the context of the relationship between the sexes, can hardly be overstated.

Not everyone embraces the doctrine of essential difference and complementarity. Difference may cause disadvantage. Adept at highlighting instances of male oppression, equity feminists work to eliminate male advantage. To them, difference must imply inequality—of size and power or wealth and privilege. Inequality produces oppression. The struggle for gender equity is thus equated to battles against racism, classism, or ageism. And the struggle must go on. Vigilance must be maintained.

Though more girls than boys graduate from college and young single women make more money than men their age, feminists are not yet happy. There are still too few female engineers or CEOs of big companies—as if greed and 80-hour work weeks are values to covet. Contrarian professor Janet Fiamengo observes that feminists are curiously mute when it comes to demanding parity as oil riggers or Alaskan fishermen.

For the most part, academics imprudent enough to wonder out loud if some women are just less interested in certain fields or would prefer to stay home with their children are denounced as retrograde scoundrels—or relieved of their posts. Since justice demands equity, and inequity issues from abuse of power, any perceived imbalance must stem from oppression. The oppressors must be exposed and the sin labeled. “Sexist” or “homophobic” are ominous terms. You might as well be accused of eating your child. Such nefarious attitudes must be confronted—and early. The other day, I picked up a copy of a California State University newspaper in which the student writer howled with indignation as she recounted observing 10-year-old boys in a skateboard park. As they watched a girl who had also brought her skateboard, the boys emitted “snarky” looks! We must crush incipient sexism as soon as it dares to show its face.

But could it be that boys—and girls as well—know something adult progressives have overlooked? Could it be that there is something profoundly natural and wise occurring when young boys build their fort and tack up a “No Girls Allowed” sign? Or when an 11-year-old girl screams at her brother to get out of her room and quit bothering her pajama party? In California, second-grade teachers are not allowed to assemble their students in different boy/girl lines. My teacher friend tells me the kids do it anyway. Perhaps, as the old rock ‘n roll song says, we should “leave them kids alone!”

What might children in their innocence understand? When racist parents are not looking, will not their children naturally play with kids of different skin tone? Racism involves false distinctions, is unnatural, and kids know it. Sexual differences are natural, and kids know it. To force them to merge or deny their differences is unnatural. I recall one of my professors describing the chagrin of her feminist friends as they repeatedly discovered that, when left to their own devices, their daughters preferred dolls and frilly things to trucks and guns. What do our children just “know”? Perhaps they understand that sexual differentiation is natural. And that in the mystery of differentiation lies a deeper mystery: the potential for loving communion between two opposites and the ultimate propagation of the family.

Having drifted from our Judeo-Christian roots, many in the West have lost sight of what C.S. Lewis, borrowing from the Chinese, called the Tao, the fundamental moral and natural truths generally assumed in every culture. Traditional societies—the kind that survive for generations—foster both an acknowledgment of the natural distinctions that occur in life and a kind of coherence among them. These differentiations are fundamental and immutable realities. Time, for example, divides childhood from adulthood. A stable society honors such demarcations, fostering in its citizens the capacity to live within time in an integrated way, neither cut off from the past nor without a compass for the future. Traditions and rituals pull together past and future, as children are

taught to honor their elders and the stories they tell. A culture in chaos offers no connections, no bridging transitions to help young ones find their place in the march of time. Unprotected by a discordant medley of social media, children today are trapped in a noisy present and cheated of the time they need to just be young.

Like time, male and female bodies are inescapable realities.<sup>11</sup> Traditional sex roles, rites of passage, and courtship rituals foster integration and adjustment to these realities, offering each sex identity pathways from early childhood to maturity, from the individual alone to communion with others. Traditional societies address basic questions such as Who am I? Where do I fit in? What does it mean to have a penis? Why do I have these soft breasts? Traditional customs offer definitions tested and honed with time. Traditional rituals and taboos provide behavioral boundaries and pathways that limit and liberate. They are not perfect; they are sometimes rigid and stifling to creative expression. Yet, they liberate, freeing children from the prison of shifting subjectivity. Little Sam may not like baseball, but he is a boy. End of story. And they affirm natural realities: that male and female are designed to complement each other and together build a home from which future generations may be launched. These are not outrageous statements. As Anthony Esolen notes in discussing the separation of learning environments by gender, “There’s nothing evil or strange about what was the educational norm for centuries. Learn from the past. The wheel was a fine invention. Use it.”

**E**quity feminism has not been the only force pulling the sexes apart. In breaking free from traditional morality, the sexual revolution of the 60s spawned its own kind of sexual chaos. When the body is the main attraction, personhood is unnecessary. And the split between body and soul continues to widen. A click of the mouse now brings nameless, naked bodies within anyone’s reach, thus obviating the necessity for relationship at all. As the growing sex doll industry illustrates, real bodies are not even necessary.

Is it not time to reconsider the wisdom of the creation narrative? This question carries some urgency. In California, indoctrination to revamp students’ views of sex and gender begins early. New proposals demand that kindergartners be taught that gender depends on how they feel. To avoid STDs, “sexual health” educators already provide seventh graders with detailed instruction on how to perform oral and anal sex.<sup>12</sup> While opposing such lunacy, let us affirm that nature and nature’s God have not designed us to define ourselves, complete ourselves, or be subject only to our own impulses or emotions. Let us sound the warning that solipsistic pursuits of sexual fulfillment are lonely dead ends. And let us affirm the classic view of sexuality as a polarity of reciprocity: two becoming one, loving and taking care of each other. In finding the counterpart, they find

wholeness. Hopefully, as we pray for a cultural resurgence, more of our young will be able to relate to Adam: “Yes! This is what I’ve been waiting for!”

## NOTES

1. *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1982).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
4. Trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: *The Westminster Press*, 1937), p. 350.
5. *First Things*, October 2017.
6. *The Ethics of Sex*, trans. by John W. Doberstein (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House), 1977.
7. See Joseph Nicolosi, *Shame and Attachment Loss: The Practical Work of Reparative Therapy* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009). This well-researched study obtained the endorsement of two past presidents of the American Psychological Association. See also, “21 Reasons Why Gender Matters,” [http://fathersforlife.org/doc/gender\\_matters.pdf](http://fathersforlife.org/doc/gender_matters.pdf)
8. Australian psychiatrist Peter Cook adduces five different lines of reasoning for the primacy of mothering in a child’s life. “Mothering Denied: the Sources of Love, and How Our Culture Harms Infants, Women, and Society, [http://www.fatherhood.org.au/mothers\\_motheringDenied.html](http://www.fatherhood.org.au/mothers_motheringDenied.html), 2009.
9. George Gilder, *Men and Marriage* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 2008), a revision of his 1973 treatise in which he borrows from Margaret Mead and other anthropologists to argue that male and female roles are both bound to nature and essential for family survival.
10. In studying 40 social studies textbooks, Paul Vitz could find not a single reference to marriage as the foundation of family nor any indication that being a mother or housewife represented an important job. Cited in *First Things*, March 2019.
11. See Hacsí Horváth, the University of California, San Francisco scientist on his own story and the hard science of gender immutability. <https://4thwavenow.com/2018/12/19/the-theatre-of-the-body-a-detransitioned-epidemiologist-examines-suicidality-affirmation-and-transgender-identity/>
12. See: <https://www.christianpost.com/voice/sex-gods-design-vs-comprehensive-sexuality-education.html>



“You’re making this up as you go along, aren’t you?”

# Building a Culture of Life

David Talcott

**I**n many ways the pro-life movement has been surprisingly successful. While traditional ethical views on gay marriage, transgenderism, and other anthropological innovations are being rejected by young people, millennials appear to be slightly *more* pro-life than their parents, not less.<sup>1</sup> And, depending on how the survey question is framed, a significant majority of all Americans today supports major pro-life policies. The boots-on-the-ground reality is that the country is becoming more pro-life. Even as the population has grown, the absolute number of abortions has declined.

This year has seen significant advances, especially on the legal front. As of the beginning of June, eight states had passed laws banning abortion well before fetal viability, with Louisiana and Utah passing total bans. This is a level of direct legal confrontation not seen in generations. With Brett Kavanaugh on the Supreme Court, a major shift in abortion jurisprudence is more plausible now than at any time since the 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision (which, having been expected by many to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, actually reaffirmed it).

The goal of reducing and eliminating abortion has rightly been the central effort of the pro-life movement. However, in order to be *pro-life* over the long-term, and to produce societies that flourish in a comprehensive fashion, we must extend the range of our efforts to include promoting fertility and marriage as indispensable components of a culture of life.

In doing this, however, we must be careful to avoid using expansive government programs to accomplish pro-life work. This is not a call to enforce new ideological standards, a “whole-life” ethic, or anything like that. Nor is it to suggest that the pro-life community has failed to be authentically pro-life.<sup>2</sup> It is simply to call attention to challenging new cultural circumstances and the changing pressures on families today, and to remind the pro-life community that we face a strong set of headwinds as we enter the third decade of the 21st century.

As an extreme but illustrative example, imagine a world in which abortion was virtually eliminated. That could be a wonderful world. But now imagine a world where women rarely conceived, and few unborn children ever reached the point of delivery. That world doesn’t seem quite so wonderful. Yes, there

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would be no fetal killing in it, but it wouldn't really be a place full of *life*. To be a place full of *life* it must be a world where most people welcome children.

Ours isn't quite such a dystopian world, but we are moving in that direction. We haven't ceased childbearing altogether, but we're at historic lows for both marriage and fertility.<sup>3</sup> How clearly you perceive this will depend on where you live and what subcultures you move in.

The effects are most apparent in the blue states, which overall have lower fertility rates than the red states. In the New York City metro area, where I live, young people are getting married later, having fewer abortions, and also having fewer children. They're following what is considered today to be a proper life script for responsible Americans, both male and female: finish high school, finish college, go to graduate school, build a good career in your twenties, create meaningful "life experiences" through travel and socializing, and in your thirties perhaps add marriage and a child or two.

Children are likely to present a problem for this script. As much as you might want to get that master's degree in nursing, it's really hard to go to class while you're trying to breastfeed. Or maybe you'd like to do a PhD in art history, but having children makes it unaffordable (especially for those already saddled with student debt). If you're working and take a promotion that requires weekly travel, it will be hard to fit children in that schedule. And so the standard life script plays out in a way that delays marriage and delays childbearing. Below-replacement-rate fertility is the likely result. Abortion remains a real possibility along the way, since children aren't welcomed as the natural result of adult, married life.

The lower and lower-middle classes follow a very different life script: sex before marriage, children before marriage, divorce. Charles Murray and J.D. Vance have shown us this reality in their recent books.<sup>4</sup> Rather than settling down and having three, four, or more children, like poor families in the past, the lower classes today are getting pregnant early, experiencing massive relational and economic instability, and forgoing having large families.

The overall picture is undeniable: America is not reproducing itself. The Centers for Disease Control put it bluntly last year: "Fertility rates in the United States reached another record low in 2017, as birth rates declined for nearly all age groups of women under 40 years of age."<sup>5</sup> We have a total fertility rate of about 1.73 children per woman.<sup>6</sup> That low number includes, and is bolstered by, the higher fertility of recent immigrants. There's no way around it: We're not replacing ourselves. If current trends hold, apart from immigration the next generation of Americans will be 16 percent smaller than the one that births it. Our abortion rate may be down, but it's hard to say America has a culture of life.

The delaying of marriage is a significant factor since unmarried people have fewer children. Lyman Stone notes that virtually all of the fertility decline over



the past decade can be accounted for by the decline in the marriage rate. He writes:

Essentially all of the decline in fertility since 2001 can be explained by changes in the marital composition of the population. Married, single, and divorced women are all about as likely, controlling for age and marital status, to have kids now as they were in 2001. But today, a smaller proportion of women are married during those peak-fertility years.<sup>7</sup>

Lower fertility among the unmarried should not be surprising. Child-raising is a long-term project, and unmarried people correctly understand that they lack the kind of permanent interpersonal partnership to make that project successful. Relational and economic instability, generally inherent in single life, do not instill the confidence required for a 20-year personal commitment to caring for a needy little human person. Young people still want to get married—in many ways they over-idealize marriage—but they’re often unable or unwilling to make it happen.

As attractive as many of us find the new “responsible” life script, we have to acknowledge the cultural reality that it is affecting our fertility. As long as the average marriage age is 30 or older, it’s going to be difficult to create a long-term pro-fertility culture. There’s just not enough time: Women at age 35 are already considered at a higher risk of not being able to conceive. The assisted reproduction industry is booming, bearing witness to the difficulties of a woman getting pregnant in her mid-to-late thirties. And, as older mothers can attest, it’s just plain physically harder to have children at that age. (There are individual exceptions to this, of course, such as Ursula Hennessey, who married at age 31 and went on to have five children, but these are unlikely to become the norm.<sup>8</sup>)

While there is no one way to change the culture, we have to begin to construct alternative narratives of success, narratives where marriage and children can enter the picture earlier. We have to recover marriage as a formative institution, one that helps people to mature, rather than viewing it as a capstone to be placed only once we are fully formed.<sup>9</sup> We have to be ready to praise our children when they marry and have their own children in their twenties, recognizing that this is the most pro-life outcome possible. We have to become more skeptical about whether our educational and career pursuits can deliver happiness in a way that is better than early marriage and early childbearing.

Ultimately, it is a question of what we believe is good. What way of life leads us to true happiness and true flourishing? As affluent young people increasingly feel trapped in a race to educational and economic success, can we cast an alternative vision for them? As poor young people increasingly cannot see beyond grasping at immediate gratification, can we show them something loftier? Can we create a culture in which life and children are valued, not just to the extent that we avoid killing the unborn, but that we will give up other goods in pursuit

of these higher ones? The same considerations that move us to embrace the unborn should also move us to create the cultural and economic conditions in which more children will be welcomed into the world.

There are practical things we can do to promote this kind of culture, even those of us past the age of childbearing. Parents and grandparents should intentionally praise married life, inspiring young people to embrace it rather than fearing bad outcomes. Tell the good stories, the happy stories, not just the hard and difficult ones. Present marriage as an ordinary concomitant of adulthood, with the expectation that everyone will pitch in on this life-creating enterprise. Financially, we should put our money where our mouth is. Some older adults will be able to ease the financial strains of young families. If you're not already shouldering some of their student debt, consider helping your children with a down payment (a very substantial down payment) and seed money for 529s for the grandkids.

Beyond the fertility numbers, the reality is that we are increasingly isolated and unfulfilled in our lives. Arthur Brooks recently observed that we are in fact terribly lonely, and that loneliness is "tearing America apart," causing social and political problems of all kinds.<sup>10</sup> Kay Hymowitz argues in the Spring 2019 edition of *City Journal* that it is the decline of the family that has in large part produced this loneliness.<sup>11</sup> Philosopher J. Budziszewski notes about young people that "although they may say things like 'I am having an awesome life!'—as one of them did—they grow weary in the midst of excitements."<sup>12</sup> We thought first television, then the internet, then social media would bring us closer together. But what we've found is that they often drive us apart. Instead of going over to a friend's house to watch a game or share a meal, we sit on our couches and stare at a screen. Instead of walking to the market or shop, we sit in our bedrooms and order online. When we avoid these embodied personal interactions, we avoid giving of ourselves. And the more we avoid giving of ourselves, the more alone and empty we feel.

The cure for loneliness is not more money, more economic productivity, or more government programs. The cure for loneliness is personal relationships. As both Aristotle and the Bible tell us, man is a social animal. We come into the world in a family. It is there that we first learn to love and to be loved. To find our place and see how we can contribute to a common social project of human flourishing. It is in our family that we first learn the meaning of unconditional love. It is through marriage and having children that most of us learn the meaning of self-giving love, where life becomes about the good of the other person. Unmarried persons can certainly enter into that sacrificial life of love through their unique vocation, but marriage and child-raising will always be predominant in a pro-life culture.

In light of the alarming decline in the fertility rate, and the urgency of

resolving it, we will be strongly tempted to seek solutions in expanding government programs. But there are reasons to resist this big-government impulse, and instead focus our efforts on enabling family formation and promoting the value of children. No government program can replace the life-giving work of a mother and a father. Children today are over-programmed and under-formed. We should support policy proposals that bring families back together, both with living arrangements and caretaking, not ones that enable them to be further separated.

A recent proposal by Larry Glynn, published online by *First Things*, typifies how proliferators aiming to boost marriage and fertility could be tempted to endorse bad policies.<sup>13</sup> Glynn proposes a hypothetical “Women’s Right to Choose Act,” which would “draw on policies suggested by both Democrats and Republicans, such as Senator Elizabeth Warren’s recent national child care proposal and the family and child tax credits advanced by Senators Mike Lee and Marco Rubio.” Glynn’s proposal is targeted squarely at the financial issue. Many women (and their partners) do indeed forego having children because of perceived financial pressures. If there is a way to ameliorate this without any negative side effects, we should consider it.

But, as we’ve learned from decades of misguided social programs, sometimes direct financial subsidies do not resolve underlying problems. In some cases, the actual consequences of a policy can be exactly the opposite of the authors’ intentions. Over the past fifty years, family structures have gotten more dysfunctional, not less, even as social programs aimed at helping poor women and children have ballooned to massive proportions. Safety-net programs now comprise nine percent of the federal budget; Medicaid, CHIP, and other health insurance subsidies push that total to over 20 percent of total federal spending. We’re already doing a great deal, institutionally, to try to help those who need it, and these financial transfers are certainly improving the economic plight of many. But, they’re not substantially addressing the overall fertility and marriage decline.

Rather than focus on wealth transfers to the poor, we should cultivate conditions that enable people to flourish through their own actions and relationships. As noted above, the single biggest factor affecting fertility is marital status. When people are married, they are more likely to view their lives as naturally completed by children (and more of them). The bigger policy questions thus concern first, the effect on family formation, and second, whether they are conducive to child-raising—these are the broader structural issues that underlie fertility. Does the policy give people an incentive to stay together, or does it subsidize their breaking apart? Does it encourage child-raising within that marital unit, or does it incentivize parents to focus on things other than their children?

Consider the key “left” policy element of Glynn’s left-right proposal: child-care subsidies, to the tune of \$70 billion a year. Elizabeth Warren’s proposal, which Glynn adopts, would create “a network of child care facilities, subsidized and regulated by the government, for all children too young to attend school.”<sup>14</sup> Given that the cost of childcare is a significant reason why some women delay or avoid having additional children, this idea is certainly understandable as a pro-fertility proposal. However, like many proposals from Democratic legislators, this policy would give financial benefits to working mothers, but none to those who stay at home. It incentivizes women to work, subsidizing their labor, even if they would prefer to be full-time caregivers to their children, elderly relatives, or those who are sick. Why not have a more equitable policy? If a working mother will get a \$2,000/year subsidy for childcare, for example, a stay-at-home mother should get that same \$2,000 as a refundable tax credit. This same problem affects other “left” policies, such as federally subsidized paid family leave, which would yield similar inequities. Instead of privileging one child-care and working arrangement, government policies should at most remain neutral. Big corporations might like to see their female employees subsidized by the federal government, but that’s hardly a good reason to do it.

If anything, government should actively support arrangements that permit mothers to spend more time directly caring for their children. No government program or institutional setting can replace the care and provision of the natural family and the network of social relations it produces.<sup>15</sup> Even the highest quality daycare cannot give the same personal formation as mom or grandma and grandpa can. Children aren’t widgets that can be produced on a factory floor. There is no flowchart or routine that can take a newborn and turn him into a functioning adult. The task of raising the next generation is a task of *personal formation*, which is best done with mom, dad, and extended family as the primary caregivers.

Despite decades of pressure, most mothers work either part-time or not at all, and more mothers would rather be a full-time homemaker than a full-time outside-the-family employee.<sup>16</sup> This reflects the reality that human development is intensive work that can’t be fully outsourced. Universal preschool has no academic benefits, and it has measurable behavioral costs.<sup>17</sup> As Ryan Anderson argues in *When Harry Became Sally*, “The two-career family model rests on the belief that mothers, fathers, and day-care workers are functionally interchangeable—that caring for babies and young children can be done just as well by any adult.”<sup>18</sup> Most of us “vote with our jobs” in a way that suggests we don’t really believe that.

Instead of trying to split the difference between Republican and Democratic ideas, Glynn and other pro-life advocates should simply stick with the “right” side of the “right-left” proposal. As an example, Marco Rubio’s recently proposed

“New Parents Act” would permit parents to withdraw some social security money after a child is born if they agree to delay their social security start-date as seniors. That’s a policy both left and right should be able to get behind.

There are other policies, too, which can help encourage marriage and parenting. An expanded Child Tax Credit would be the simplest way to financially support women and families who want to have more children. Bradford Wilcox and others have argued for a modest “married with children” tax credit that would go only to married parents.<sup>19</sup> This additional credit would help offset some of the marriage penalties present in the food stamp program, Medicaid, and other federal welfare programs. Insofar as our current arrangements penalize marriage and child-raising, it’s appropriate to try to financially even the scales.

Still, even these “neutral” arrangements can have negative side effects in the aggregate if they’re not carefully implemented. The more financial and social support the state directly provides for women and children, apart from the husband, the more marginalized the father can become in the family unit. And having a father in the home is still the number one way to help children stay out of poverty. For this reason, policies that promote marriage are far more important than those that add a bit of money here or a bit of money there. Fathers are needed in the home not only as breadwinners, but as people who, along with their wives, *parent* their children. If economics gets in the way of their performing this crucial role, there is a problem.

A minimal safety net can help women and children stay out of extreme poverty, but the goal should always be to create the unique male-female partnerships—marriages—that are the natural, divinely ordained, and most effective means for nurturing the next generation. We should be looking for policies that facilitate family formation and get fathers into the lives of their children, rather than supporting those that inhibit it, thereby subsidizing fatherlessness. By helping families form and stay together, we can open room to let them do the formative work that only they can do.

The pro-life community generally has more central tasks to deal with than to go tinkering with tax-refund numbers. But the long-term flourishing of the human race depends upon the family, and so we will inevitably be drawn into social-policy questions of different kinds. In the long run, we must have public policies that avoid both inadvertently penalizing and usurping the natural functions of the family. Instead, we must let married partners live out their common life together and care for one another and their families in humane and personal ways.

If we are to flourish as a people, we need to become less isolated and more interrelated. We need to find not mere autonomy, but solidarity, partnership, and love. That solidarity comes first through the original social institution: the family.<sup>20</sup>

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# Rescuing Mister Rogers

William Doino Jr.

When Fred Rogers died in 2003, his life was honored and celebrated everywhere by people of all ages and backgrounds. An ordained minister, musician, puppeteer, writer, educator, producer, and above all, the celebrated host of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*—which ran for an astonishing 30 years on PBS—he was an American icon.

Since his death, his stature has only grown: The Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media, on the campus of St. Vincent's College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania (Rogers' hometown), was established within a year of his passing. The company he founded, Fred Rogers Productions, continues to produce high-quality children's programming for public television. He is the subject of *The Good Neighbor*, a recent major biography by Maxwell King, and Morgan Neville's 2018 documentary *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* has now earned more money than any biographical documentary in history. To top it off, this year Hollywood paid Rogers the ultimate compliment of making a major movie about him, starring its best-known A-list actor Tom Hanks. After its premiere at the Toronto Film Festival, *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* received rave reviews, and is said to be a sure-fire Oscar contender.

With all these accolades testifying to his exemplary contributions to our society, one might wonder why anyone would want to take advantage of Fred Rogers—and even attack him. But ideologues on both the Left and the Right, for different reasons, have sadly done just that.

Voices on the Left have attempted to portray Rogers as a feminist crusader, a strident opponent of the armed forces, supporter of same-sex relations (if not a closeted gay man himself), and pioneer of gender ideology. Conversely, elements on the Right have accused Rogers of being a weak, incompetent, and overrated children's show host who helped produce a generation of fragile “snowflakes,” young adults wholly dependent on others and believing themselves entitled to rewards they never earned.

None of these caricatures even remotely resembles the real Fred Rogers.

## The Formative Years

Fred McFeely Rogers was born on March 20, 1928, in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, to James and Nancy Rogers. It was the eve of the Great Depression, yet despite the

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looming financial crisis, the Rogers family remained relatively secure. Fred's mother came from a privileged background, and his father was president of Latrobe's most successful business. Their only son grew up in a three-story brick mansion and was often chauffeured to school.

Still, even with these generous comforts, Fred was unable to avoid vexations that can affect anyone, regardless of wealth. In Fred's case, he was shy and overweight, often bullied by classmates who called him "Fat Freddy." Worse, he suffered from asthma, which severely limited his extracurricular activities and frequently rendered him homebound. Despite these afflictions, Fred persevered, thanks to a loving, supportive, and deeply Christian family—his parents, grandparents, and later, an adopted sister—who encouraged him to trust in God and be creative in finding his place in the world. This Fred did by playing the piano (beginning when he was just five) and becoming a self-made puppeteer and ventriloquist, bringing to life the stuffed animals that filled his bedroom.

His parents, however, never allowed Fred to drift too far into the world of make-believe. They made it a point to help families less fortunate than theirs, and reminded Fred how blessed he was to enjoy resources most children lacked. As Maxwell King recounts:

The Rogers family philanthropy and the religious basis for it became two of the most important strands in young Fred Rogers' life. For Nancy, the centerpiece of her giving was the Latrobe Presbyterian Church [which] her whole family attended . . . In her role as community watchdog, Nancy Rogers could find out which families needed help. As often as not, the solution to a problem involved Jim and Nancy Rogers writing a check, which they did on an almost weekly basis.

Jim and Nancy's commitment to the poor left a profound impression on their son. Watching his parents live out the Gospel strengthened Fred's faith from an early age, and deepened his understanding of what Christ expected from his disciples.

After overcoming his illness and shyness—eventually becoming president of his high school student council and a member of the National Honor Society—Fred prepared for college, hoping to develop his love for music. He attended Dartmouth before transferring to Rollins College in Florida, which offered a special degree in music composition. He had planned to enter the seminary after receiving his degree, but two things delayed his religious calling: his 1952 marriage to his college love Joanne, which produced two sons, James and John, and lasted over 50 years (until Fred's death); and Fred's unexpected interest in broadcasting.

Visiting his parents during his senior year in college, Fred discovered the new medium of television—which both fascinated and appalled him. He was fascinated by its great potential for good; but appalled that it was dominated by crude forms of entertainment like throwing pies in peoples' faces. He feared TV

would become a mindless circus and harm its impressionable viewers, especially the young. Fred consequently felt an urgent mission to redeem television—at least to the extent one man could—by making it a “fabulous instrument” to nurture those who would watch and listen.<sup>1</sup>

Fresh out of college, he decided to enter the field, learning everything he could about television over the next decade, working both behind and in front of the camera at studios in New York, Pittsburgh, Canada, then finally back in Pittsburgh. What proved of immeasurable help to him during these years was becoming a Presbyterian minister—he had attended seminary classes during his off-studio hours—and studying child development with Dr. Margaret McFarland, a renowned psychologist at the University of Pittsburgh.

During his first years in television, Fred hoped to create an inspiring new program for children, drawing on his faith, musical talent, and insights from modern psychology. To his surprise, his Presbyterian elders encouraged him to pursue just that—a special ministry to children—instead of becoming a full-time preacher and pastor.

Fred’s big break arrived in the early Fifties when he was asked to help launch *The Children’s Corner* for WQED in Pittsburgh, the nation’s first community-sponsored educational television series. It was a daily, live, hour-long program, hosted by Josie Carey, a talented Pittsburgh native. Fred served as the show’s puppeteer, composer, and organist. Working together, Josie and Fred created an instant hit. *The Children’s Corner* won the Sylvania Award for the best locally produced children’s program in the nation. It lasted six years (1955-1961), and introduced many of the puppets, themes, and songs Rogers would later make famous.

At the end of its run, Fred accepted an offer from the CBC in Canada to develop a new program, simply titled *Misterogers*. It too was a critical success, with Fred serving as the show’s endearing host. By 1967, however, Fred and Joanne had decided to move back to Pittsburgh to raise their family, even though Fred had no immediate job prospects in television. It was a risky move, but one that payed off brilliantly, for over the next year he was able to craft, perfect, and win backing for the show that would become a national phenomenon and make Fred Rogers a household name.

### **The Unforgettable Neighborhood**

*Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* debuted on National Educational Television (soon to become the Public Broadcasting Service, or PBS) in 1968, and didn’t end until 2001, after airing nearly 1,000 episodes over its remarkable run. For those who grew up watching it, the show was an unforgettable experience; but for others it remains a puzzle: What could possibly be so extraordinary about a mere children’s program?

As it turns out, quite a lot. To begin with, unlike so many other television programs at that time—or even today—the show assumed an unhurried pace to counter what Fred called the rapid-fire “bombardment” then filling screens with so much disturbing and disorienting content.

Second, Rogers always made eye contact with the camera and spoke in a clear, direct, and gentle manner. It was as if he were talking to a single person—a child, a mother, a father or a teacher—rather than to millions of people. His approach earned him instant credibility and trust with viewers, who soon considered Fred a personal friend, someone utterly authentic. “One of the greatest gifts you can give anybody is the gift of your honest self,” he once said, realizing that ordinary people, especially children, “could spot a phony a mile away.”<sup>2</sup>

And then there was the show’s unique structure. A typical half-hour episode had three main segments:

1. After the engaging opening music and images of a flashing yellow traffic light—a signal for everyone to slow down—Mister Rogers would open the door to his familiar home and sing his theme song, “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” He would then exchange his suit and shoes for one of his cardigan sweaters and sneakers.

2. Next, an educational outing would usually take place—such as to a factory or a bakery—during which young viewers would learn how everyday things were made and incorporated into society. In other episodes, prominent artists and celebrities would visit the set, describing or performing their best-known works and motivating the *Neighborhood*’s audience to pursue their dreams as well.

3. Finally, there would be a trip to the “Neighborhood of Make Believe,” with its colorful cast of puppets—King Friday XIII, Queen Sara, Daniel Striped Tiger, Lady Elaine Fairchilde and X the Owl, among others—interacting with human character actors to convey an important message.

Soon after it went national, *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* became must-see public TV, not just for youngsters but for parents, whom Fred never sought to replace but only to aid in raising their children. At its peak in 1985, almost ten percent of U.S. households tuned in to watch the show—an astounding audience for any PBS program.

Each episode was painstakingly scripted by Fred and his collaborators, notably Dr. McFarland, who gave Fred expert advice from a psychological and emotional standpoint on how to reach his young audience. There were moments of rare sensitivity, and even genius. After receiving a letter from a blind girl who wanted to know when he was feeding his aquarium fish—something he would quietly do during the show—Fred started announcing the feedings so she could hear when they were happening.

One time in the “Neighborhood of Make Believe,” Daniel Striped Tiger wondered aloud in a song if he had been a “mistake.” Lady Aberlin (played wonderfully by Beverly Aberlin) sang back to him that he emphatically was *not*. But just when you expected Daniel to be put at ease by her response, he joined Lady Aberlin in a duet and *continued to express his self-doubts*, even as she tried to reassure him. The dramatic juxtaposition was Fred’s way of acknowledging how difficult it could be for children to overcome their fears and inhibitions, even as they appreciated being affirmed by their elders.

Above all, what *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* provided to generations of children was a sense of security and stability, even when their own families were breaking up and the world seemed to be falling apart. As Focus on the Family’s Paul Batura perceptively wrote:

*Mister Rogers* lasted for so long and still means so much to so many because he provided his young viewers what their hearts long for and still do—love, unconditional acceptance, respect, kindness, forgiveness, and an unjaded wonder-filled approach in a world seemingly gone mad. Fred Rogers was medicine for the mind then and a prescription we desperately need now—and not a moment too soon.<sup>3</sup>

In a career as rich and varied as Rogers had, it is difficult to rank its greatest highlights. But if one had to reduce them to just a few, one might select these two:

#### **Mister Rogers Goes to Washington**

In 1969, just a year after *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* premiered on public television, the Nixon Administration sought to slash half of public broadcasting’s federal budget—a huge \$10 million hit. This would have had a devastating impact, not only on *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, but on other important federally funded programs. Two days of Senate hearings were held, chaired by Senator John Pastore of Rhode Island. Known as a crusty conservative Democrat, Pastore had expressed skepticism about the benefits of public television throughout the hearings. Then came Fred Rogers, the last witness to make the case for renewed financing.

“What happened next,” as one analysis put it, “is the stuff of rhetorical legend.”<sup>4</sup> Sensing the urgency of the moment, Rogers put aside his prepared remarks, asking Senator Pastore to read them later, which Pastore promised to do. Then Rogers began by seeking common ground with the senator, trusting Pastore’s good faith and sense of fairness. “One of the first things a child learns in a healthy family is trust—and I trust what you have said: that you will read this,” Rogers said of his written testimony. “It’s very important to me; I care deeply about children.”

Rogers acknowledged the cost of public television, but pointed out that far more money was being wasted on frivolous children’s “entertainment”: *Mister*

*Rogers' Neighborhood* had a budget of \$6,000 per episode at the time, whereas \$6,000 paid for not even two minutes of an animated cartoon. "I am very concerned—as I know you are—of what's being delivered to our children in this country," Rogers said to Pastore, hoping to motivate him. His show, Rogers explained, didn't have to "bop somebody over the head" to keep a child's attention, but only to speak constructively to their real-life issues and concerns. Rogers then provided a heartfelt summary of his program, and why he believed it was worthy of continued public support:

This is what I give. I give an expression of care each day to every child, to help him realize he is unique. I end the program by saying, "You've made this day a special day by just being you. There's no person in the whole world like you. And I like you just the way you are." And I feel that if we in public television can only make clear that feelings are mentionable and manageable, we will have done a great service for mental health.

By then, Senator Pastore appeared genuinely moved. "Well," he said, "I am supposed to be a pretty tough guy and this is the first time I've had goosebumps for the last two days." The audience laughed, but Rogers was not yet finished. He asked if he could share one of the *Neighborhood's* most instructive songs, "What Do You Do?" It is a song as simple as it is profound—exhorting children to refocus their feelings of anger into something positive, maintain self-control, and grow up to be the best woman or man they can be. Then Mister Rogers, just as if he were on the set of the *Neighborhood*, sang—without music but with utmost sincerity:

*What do you do with the mad that you feel  
When you feel so mad you could bite?  
When the whole wide world seems oh, so wrong . . .  
And nothing you do seems very right?*

*What do you do? Do you punch a bag?  
Do you pound some clay or some dough?  
Do you round up friends for a game of tag?  
Or see how fast you go?*

*It's great to be able to stop  
When you've planned a thing that's wrong,  
And be able to do something else instead  
And think this song:*

*I can stop when I want to,  
Can stop when I wish  
I can stop, stop, stop any time.  
And what a good feeling*



*To feel like this  
And know that the feeling is really mine.  
Know that there's something deep inside  
That helps us become what we can.  
For a girl can be someday a woman  
And a boy can be someday a man.*

When Rogers finished singing, Senator Pastore exclaimed, "I think it's wonderful. *I think it's wonderful!*" Then, after a slight pause and a mischievous smile, he told his new friend, "Looks like you just earned the \$20 million"—to spontaneous and raucous applause.

Rogers had spoken for no more than six minutes, but every moment of his testimony was mesmerizing. When the crucial vote subsequently took place, Congress increased public broadcasting funding from \$9 million to \$22 million. Almost single-handedly, Fred Rogers had saved public television. It was like something out of a Frank Capra movie—with Rogers playing a version of Jimmy Stewart's role in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*—except this was real life, with real consequences, and demonstrated the power Rogers could evoke through gentle persuasion.

#### **Mister Rogers Embraces a Special Needs Child**

Among the most memorable episodes of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* was Jeff Erlanger's visit to the show in 1981. Jeff was but ten years old at the time, and a quadriplegic, having suffered severe spinal problems since he was an infant. He needed the assistance of a heavily equipped electric wheelchair to move around.

After undergoing one of his many surgeries, Jeff's parents asked him what he wanted as a reward. He immediately said, "I want to meet Mister Rogers." When Rogers was informed of Jeff's request, he had the ingenious idea of bringing him on the show during a week when the *Neighborhood* was talking about electronics. It was Rogers' way of allowing Jeff to speak about his mobile wheelchair first, not his disability, assuming he wanted to talk about that at all.

Although the show was usually tightly scripted, Rogers left this one more fluid, so Jeff would be as comfortable as possible and not feel boxed in by any expectations. Before the episode was taped, neither Jeff nor Rogers knew what would transpire, other than that they would talk about electronics and sing together.

At the beginning of the episode, Jeff, in his wheelchair, is seen outside Mr. Rogers' house, taking the initiative in calling out, "Mr. Rogers!" The host immediately opens his front door and walks over to Jeff, welcoming him as a cherished friend.

Rogers begins by asking Jeff to describe and demonstrate the functions of his special wheelchair, which Jeff enthusiastically does. Then, to Rogers' delight, Jeff practically takes over the show, freely and eloquently speaking about his disability, his parents, doctors, recent surgeries, and what it's like to feel sad—and to overcome those feelings.

At this point, Fred appears so affected by Jeff's courage and determination that he says, "We have to all discover our own ways—don't we?—of doing things when we're feeling blue. . . . I'm not feeling blue right now, though"—"Me neither!" Jeff exclaims. Mr. Rogers then sings "It's You I Like," with Jeff joining in.

Years later, Hedda Sharapan, associate producer of the show, would call this the *Neighborhood's* most "treasured moment," the one everyone remembers. Rogers himself said that his visit with Erlanger was his favorite of any episode.

As it turned out, it was not to be the last time the two saw one another. Nearly two decades later, when Fred was being inducted into the Television Hall of Fame, Jeff Erlanger, by then in his late twenties and looking more robust, albeit still in a wheelchair, was introduced as Rogers' secret presenter. "When Jeff rolls onstage to surprise him," writes Maxwell King, "Rogers runs up to the stage and hugs him as if they are the only two people in the auditorium. 'On behalf of millions of children and grown-ups,' says Jeff to Fred Rogers, 'It's you I like.' There wasn't a dry eye in the well-dressed house."

\* \* \*

If the adage "no good deed goes unpunished" is true, it's been magnified in the wake of Fred Rogers' passing. For notwithstanding all his good works, and all the good will he generated and left behind, Rogers has been the subject of bizarre rumors, irresponsible claims, and baseless allegations.

### **The Progressive Effort to Appropriate Mister Rogers**

In 2015, an article by Michael Long entitled "The Radical Politics of Mister Rogers" appeared in *The Huffington Post*. Echoing many others like it, the article claimed that Rogers was "an uncompromising pacifist," "embraced feminist values," and "was spiritually progressive." Long, however, failed to provide any convincing evidence for these assertions; when he tried doing so, in his book *Peaceful Neighbor: Discovering the Countercultural Mister Rogers*, he undermined his own case.

Start with the statement that Rogers was an "uncompromising pacifist." When journalist Tom Junod asked Rogers how he would have responded to World War II had he been old enough to fight, Fred replied (as Long acknowledges), "I have no idea how I would have responded to a call to the War"—which is not something a convinced pacifist would say. "I may have had to do alternative service,"

Rogers continued. “I have a friend . . . who was in the Ambulance Corps. I would have probably been good at something like that. I would not have been good at shooting people, though; I don’t think I could have done that.”

This is a nuanced reply, which many Americans would sympathize with, as it falls far short of absolute pacifism. Anyone who has seen the true-life film *Hacksaw Ridge*—about a heroic American soldier who served in World War II as a medic and saved many lives without once firing a gun—understands how one can support a major war effort without personally attacking the enemy.

In depicting Rogers as a modern-day feminist, Long makes even greater mistakes. After his book appeared, the Associated Press published a piece that summarized the reasons Long gives for Rogers’ alleged feminism:

He wore an apron and ironed clothes on a mid-day broadcast set in a house, when most men would have been at work, modeling a revolution in gender roles. The puppet Lady Elaine Fairchilde anchored a newscast long before Barbara Walters did, and she rocketed into space a decade before Sally Ride broke the glass stratosphere. Rogers even referred to God as female in a prayer, which wasn’t lost on writers of protest letters.

The superficiality of these statements is breathtaking. Men have cooked and worn aprons (especially if they were chefs) for centuries. Barbecues with dads wearing aprons were as prevalent in Fred Rogers’ day as they are in our own. Male collegians, soldiers, and bachelors have been ironing their clothes for generations. Women of all backgrounds, including conservatives like Clare Boothe Luce and Alice von Hildebrand, were making strides in the public square well before Lady Elaine Fairchilde was doing so in an imaginary puppet world; and this is not even to mention the power exercised throughout history by female monarchs and saints like Catherine of Siena and Joan of Arc. None of which is to diminish Fred Rogers’ elevation of women, which is highly admirable—only to point out that he was building on a long tradition, not fomenting a feminist revolution.

Long does concede that Rogers “did not use his program to support all the policy demands of the women’s rights movement. Understandably, he never addressed a woman’s right to abortion.” But there is no evidence that Rogers ever believed in any such “right” to begin with; and while Long’s book does note that one of Rogers’ favorite charities was the L’Arche movement, founded by Jean Vanier, it fails to mention that Vanier was an outspoken defender of the unborn and a hero of the pro-life movement.

As for Rogers’ views on gender, as early as the third episode of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood* Fred sang the song “I’d Like To Be Just Like Mom and Dad,” which is as strong an endorsement of traditional gender roles within marriage as songs get. Furthermore, the claim that Rogers “referred to God as female in prayer” is grossly misleading. First, it was not Fred, but his show’s character actress Lady Aberlin who briefly referred to God as “She” in the song “Creation.”

The original lyrics written by Fred clearly described God as “He,” so it was a later insertion, and one that didn’t stick, because after that “God” became “Love.”<sup>5</sup>

Though Long’s book doesn’t mention the latter change, the author claims that after the episode referencing God as “She” aired, “many” of Rogers’ conservative viewers “wrote letters accusing him of heresy.” Long summarizes only three such letters (out of an audience of millions) and not one is directly quoted using the word “heresy.” Rogers generously wrote back to those concerned, explaining that “Since God is all, both fathering and mothering aspects must be included in God’s being.” This is very close to the teaching in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (which no one accuses of sanctioning gender ideology): “God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God.”<sup>6</sup>

Even so, Long insists, “Rogers would have understood . . . all who embrace identities and roles not typically associated with their genders. . . . *For Rogers, gender-bending is ultimately a spiritual practice*” (emphasis added). This is fantasy. As Stella Morabito has written, “There is overwhelming evidence that Fred Rogers repeatedly made a point of helping children affirm the sex into which they were born.”<sup>7</sup>

But certain progressives just can’t let go of the idea that Fred Rogers was one of them. Nowhere is that clearer than in their effort to depict him as having secret and unconventional sexual desires. Rogers is said to have told a friend (the story comes to us second-hand) that if sexuality were measured on a human scale, “I must be smack right in the middle. Because I have found women attractive, and I have found men attractive.” No sooner had this alleged—and rather innocent—quotation been publicized than a slew of articles came forth with sensational titles like “Was Mr. Rogers Gay?”, “Was Mr. Rogers Bisexual?”, and “Fred Rogers Celebrated as ‘Bisexual Icon’ after His Comments on Sexual Attraction Resurface.”

No one who has read about Rogers’ beautiful courtship of his wife Joanne and their marriage would accept such wild conjecture about his sexuality. In Neville’s documentary on Rogers, Joanne expressed her gratitude for Fred’s respect for feminine values, then clearly described her relationship with Fred, knocking down all the lurid rumors: “It was really a very, very good relationship. I’ve heard people say that men and women can’t be friends and lovers. We really were friends, and I know we were lovers.”

The documentary also notes that a prominent actor on the *Neighborhood*, Francois Clemmons, who played “Officer Clemmons,” was gay, and that Rogers welcomed him as a contributor—but tried, compassionately, to steer him away from the homosexual lifestyle, and never allowed any mention of homosexuality on the *Neighborhood*.

## The “Conservative” Attack on Mister Rogers

If the progressive distortion of Rogers’ life and legacy is disappointing, the conservative critique is no less so—if only because Rogers exhibited qualities so many conservatives profess to espouse.<sup>8</sup> Since his death, Rogers has been remembered, more than anything else, for saying one thing: that human beings are “special” just for being who they are. Rogers’ conservative detractors, however, have tried to use these words against him.

In 2007, after the *Wall Street Journal* published an op-ed entitled “Blame It on Mr. Rogers: Why Young Adults Feel So Entitled,” the hosts of *Fox and Friends* ran with it, actually calling Fred Rogers an “evil, evil man” who had supposedly ruined countless children by telling them they were special, filling them with artificial self-esteem and causing them to deny any obligation to work and assume personal responsibility. That Rogers’ whole life and legacy contradicted these claims mattered little to the overexcited *Fox* hosts, who cited a study that purportedly vindicated their attack on Rogers. But when the fact-checking website *Snopes* investigated the story, it was discovered that there was no such study, and the college professor who had been quoted in association with it repudiated *Fox*’s claims, declaring, “Mr. Rogers was a great American. I watched him with my children and wouldn’t hesitate to do so again if I had young children.”<sup>9</sup>

But the best response to the conservative critique of Fred Rogers came from informed conservatives themselves. Rebuking the claim that Rogers was meek and mild, Wesley Smith wrote:

I protest most vigorously the implication . . . that Mr. Rogers was weak. Mr. Rogers was not milquetoast. Rather, he exhibited and taught children the meaning and power of unconditional love. It is difficult to watch clips from his children’s program without being deeply moved. Love is the most powerful force on the planet. It is our only real hope. In that regard, Mr. Rogers was one of our strongest and most effective leaders. It is a profound mistake to use his name as a metaphor for weak or ineffectual, because he was exactly the opposite.<sup>10</sup>

And, regarding the charge that Mr. Rogers created a generation of selfish, entitled children, Nick Olszyk wrote in the *Catholic World Report*:

This charge is, frankly, infuriating, because after watching even a few episodes of his show, it is clearly not his message. Fred was uniquely tailored by God for his evangelization because he, more than most adults, remembered what it was like to be a child. . . . The essence of Christianity is the idea that every person has an inherent dignity that does not come from society or an ideology or even a loved one, but from God. God does love us “just the way we are,” and that gives us reason to become even better” (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

The irony of the “conservative” attack on Fred Rogers is that Rogers was a life-long Republican who graciously accepted the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush in 2002, just a year before he died. President

Bush's words should serve as a reminder of who Fred Rogers really was, and who he always will be in the hearts of those who understand him best:

Fred Rogers has proven that television can soothe the soul and nurture the spirit and teach the very young. "The whole idea," says the beloved host of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, "is to look at the television camera and to present as much love as you possibly could to a person who needs it." . . . It is impossible to count the number of lives you have touched, but you've made a huge impact on thousands and thousands of children. And there are thousands and thousands of parents who are grateful for your service to the country.<sup>12</sup>

Yes, and given his decades of service to humanity, and his model Christian behavior, it is difficult to believe that Fred Rogers did not hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant" when he entered eternal life.

## NOTES

1. Quoted in "Fred and Me: An Appreciation," by Henry Schuster, CNN.com, February 27, 2003.
2. Quoted in "Happy Birthday, Mr. Rogers," by Gail Fashingbauer Cooper, Today.com, March 20, 2012.
3. "Tom Hanks' 'Mister Rogers' Movie Shows Us 7 Virtues that Lead to a Better Life," by Paul J. Batura, Fox News Online, Opinion, September 16, 2019.
4. "The Wonder of it All: Fred Rogers and the Story of an Icon," by Margaret Mary Kimmel and Mark Collins (Fred Rogers Center, PDF) p. 20.
5. For the original lyrics and changes, see, "Creation Duet," at "The Mister Rogers Neighborhood Archive," online.
6. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, section 239.
7. See Morabito's well-documented article, "How Mr. Rogers Would Have Helped an Eight-Year-Old Drag Queen," *The Federalist* online, July 5, 2017.
8. After Rogers died, conservative commentator Jonah Goldberg admitted that he "was never a huge fan of Mr. Rogers," but had changed his mind: "I was listening to him on NPR in an old interview. He had some profoundly conservative ideas about how children are and should be raised. First, he explicitly confirmed that children ape what they see grown-ups do—one of the chief arguments for censorship. Second, we have a great explanation of why kids need rules . . . he said that if a kid runs away from you down the street and you don't yell, 'Stop! Come back!' that kid will reasonably assume that you don't care if he runs off. Children respond to limits on their behavior—and test those limits—because it is one of the most concrete ways we have to teach them that we love them." ("Mr. Rogers," *National Review* online, February 27, 2003).
9. See, "Did 'Fox and Friends' Call Fred Rogers an 'Evil, Evil Man?'" by David Mikkelsen, Snopes.com, August 12, 2019.
10. "Mr. Rogers Taught the Power of Love," by Wesley J. Smith, *National Review* online, September 18, 2016.
11. "Who Was This Man's Neighbor?" by Nick Olszyk, *Catholic World Report* online, July 9, 2018.
12. Quoted in "Fred Rogers Gets Presidential Medal of Freedom," by Ann McFeatters, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* online, July 10, 2002. For an excellent book about Fred Rogers from a traditional Christian perspective, see Amy Hollingsworth's *The Simple Faith of Mister Rogers* (Thomas Nelson, 2005).



## **An Interview with Pastor Clenard Childress, Jr.:**

### **“The Most Dangerous Place for an African American Is in the Womb”**

*Rev. Walter Hoye, whose conviction for protesting in front of a Berkeley abortion clinic and subsequent jail sentence were detailed in the book *Black and Pro-Life in America* (Ignatius Press, 2018), attributes his pro-life commitments to Clenard Childress, Jr., a Baptist pastor who has been involved for decades in bringing the pro-life message to African-American communities (his website is [Blackgenocide.org](http://Blackgenocide.org)). Pastor Childress, who currently serves at New Calvary Baptist Church in Montclair, New Jersey, was educated at Northern Baptist School of Religion, where he majored in Christian Education. He spoke about his life and work with John Grondelski for the Human Life Review. Dr. Grondelski is a former associate dean of the School of Theology at Seton Hall University in New Jersey.*

**Human Life Review (HLR):** In his book, *Black and Pro-Life in America*, Rev. Walter Hoye—who was jailed for offering counseling in front of a California abortion clinic—partially attributes his interest in the pro-life cause to you and your ministry. Can you please describe how you came to focus on pro-life activity?

**Pastor Clenard Childress, Jr. (CC):** I became a senior pastor at the New Calvary Baptist Church in Montclair, New Jersey, in 1989, having been the youth director there for 11 years. Our evangelism led us to hold meetings with teenage youth. Human sexuality was a part of our teaching and discussions. My present youth director, who was in high school at that time, was approached by then Life Net street counselor Christine Flaherty, who had mistaken the young woman’s proximity to a local abortion clinic and wanted to warn her of the dangers. Even as a teenager, Sharifa Brown could quickly explain to her that she had been instructed on the ills of abortion. This prompted Chris to seek a meeting with me. My involvement in the pro-life movement incrementally progressed from that meeting.

Through Chris’s influence, I was invited by the Essex County Right to Life of New Jersey to attend a meeting at which, due to Divine Providence, New Jersey Right to Life was looking for African Americans to attend a L.E.A.R.N. Conference at the 700 Club campus in Virginia Beach. It was at that conference that I met our National Director and founder, Rev. Johnny Hunter, but the “moment of truth” came when I heard L.E.A.R.N. research analyst Akua Furrow speak about “Margaret Sanger and the Negro Project.” My wife and I were stunned, and at times literally breathless, completely without words for a while, but now determined to get more deeply involved in this whole effort.

The Virginia Beach L.E.A.R.N. Conference led to a Center for Bioethical Reform seminar in New Jersey, sponsored by Chris Flaherty, where I met its

director, Greg Cunningham. As life would have it, Rev. Hunter previously had agreed to help Greg Cunningham with his upcoming Washington DC Project. I volunteered (along with my church) to help too. The DC project reunited me again with Johnny Hunter. That led, in subsequent years, to my becoming the Assistant National Director of L.E.A.R.N. and Board member of the Center for Bioethical Reform.

**HLR:** Most observers would think that the Christian church is strong in African-American communities. You are a Baptist minister, probably the largest denomination in the black community. Can you tell us something about how active African-American ministers are in the pro-life field?

**CC:** African-American ministers have increasingly become more engaged on the issue of the genocidal effect of abortion on the Black community. Unfortunately, the percentage of African-American pastors involved is critically low, especially in the areas of activism and education. In the African-American community, the clergyman is still the most highly revered person, followed by the doctor, and then the political leader. Clergy involvement is critical and, thankfully, it is increasing, but there's still great need.

The lack of engagement and blatant opposition to pro-life activism by African-American pastors is directly due to their being politically bound to the Democratic Party's platform, which includes abortion and other "politically correct" social goals. Pastors today are judged by the size of their membership and how well they are recognized by locally or nationally elected political figures. Some pastors firmly believe that advocating for children in the womb, or preaching against abortion, will offend their congregation and alienate them from political power. Often in private they will say they are pro-life but view it as a political matter, or as a private matter that exempts them from having to speak publicly about it.

**HLR:** You have been quoted as saying that "the most dangerous place for an African American is the womb." Can you tell us about what abortion looks like from within the African-American community: its causes, its effects, and its proponents?

**CC:** In order to understand abortion in the African-American community, you would have to look past the veneer of civil and human rights platitudes that are ascribed to it. This is a marketing scheme specifically designed to resonate among African Americans. Having done that, you will clearly see abortion as an agenda that is deliberate, decimating, and depraved. On average, 1,876 black babies are aborted every day in the United States. Fifty-two percent of all African-American pregnancies end in abortion. I see generations lost, families never birthed, and millions of gifts never given the right to be exercised. This genocide is perpetuated by a biased public-school system, academia's finest schools,

and Planned Parenthood, the leading killer of African Americans. Seventy-eight percent of their clinics are in minority communities. Blacks are 12 percent of the population, but have 35 percent of the abortions. We are the only minority in America whose population is declining. If the current trend continues, by 2038 the black vote will be totally insignificant.

**HLR:** When one looks at American cities with large African-American populations—New York, Washington, Newark—the number of abortions, especially in the African-American community, sometimes exceeds the number of live births. Can you comment on that phenomenon?

**CC:** The eugenic effect of a systemic, deliberate system designed to target the African-American community is clearly seen by the number of cities, such as New York, Washington, Philadelphia, and Detroit, where in many cases there are more children aborted than born. Abortion is the most frequently performed operation on women, yet many of these clinics are not properly inspected and their conditions are abysmal, which indicates they are given exemptions from the law by elected officials to operate with impunity.

**HLF:** You founded a website in 2002, BlackGenocide.org, to combat the plague of abortion in African-American communities. Don't you think that "genocide" is an exaggerated or "loaded" term?

**CC:** Many have called the term "Black Genocide" hyperbole, but it's a sociological fact. New York, Washington, Philadelphia—all substantiate the claim that abortion is Black Genocide. Thirty-six percent of all abortions are performed on African-American women. Blacks make up 12.4 percent of the population. That's genocide. More than half of African-American pregnancies end in abortion. That's genocide: over 20 million and counting. African Americans are familiar with other genocides and can connect the dots.

**HLR:** Most Americans probably think of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as the quintessential leader of the African-American community. Pastor Hoye attributes his own pro-life non-violent witness to Dr. King. How do you think Dr. King might inspire pro-life activity?

**CC:** Martin Luther King's words mean more now than when he first spoke them: his words expressing personhood being sacred; rights coming from God, not from governments or persons; sacrificing our children's future for immediate comfort and safety; America living out its creed of all people being created equal. Most of all, probably most African Americans especially must reconcile their belonging to a Democratic Party that promotes killing a child through all nine months of pregnancy and beyond, with Dr. King's words, in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," which remind us "that the early church put an end to such *evils* as 'Infanticide.'" Yes, surely those words mean more now than when

he wrote them!

The more the African-American community reads Dr. King's sermons and speeches, the more they will see the necessity to turn from the current path and return to the paths of true social justice. This will also mean that they stop supporting "social justice issues" that are presently described that way but really are just masquerading as them.

**HLR:** If abortion is such a toxic phenomenon in the African-American community, why is virtually every elected African-American political leader to a man (and woman) pro-abortion? Why this disconnect?

**CC:** The toxic attachment of African-American politicians to the abortion agenda is based purely on wanting political power. The Democratic Party is still perceived as the party that will promote the well-being of African Americans. Thus, African-American leadership is bribed to endorse the eugenic ideology held by wealthy, progressive elitists who are fully invested in social engineering. I have always said, "If abortion was not lucrative, it would not be legal." The leadership is enticed by money, while their constituents believe they are "shepherds" protecting them from the mean old "white wolf" Republicans. Ironically, this has led to the shepherds leading the sheep to the slaughter. The answer is knowledge: getting the message out without the political spin, a message that will shift hearts, minds, and decisions. And it's happening, even right now.

**HLR:** When the average American thinks of the right-to-life movement, he probably thinks of white Catholics or fundamentalist Protestants marching in Washington. People long ago forgot about Dr. Mildred Jefferson. African Americans have been largely invisible in the pro-life movement. Why, and how can we change that?

**CC:** It's sad, but up until now the socialist progressives have shaped most of the narratives in media and the society. We are now in a season when those narratives are being challenged and exposed. Much of it is due to the rise of the Evangelical church in the 2016 election and the significant call to be engaged politically. Also, I believe that the Evangelical rise *was possible* due to the message and vision of President Donald Trump. As I speak, there is a shifting of the African American community to support the President's strong pro-life agenda, an agenda that was deeply rooted in the African-American community before it betrayed its conscience for the sake of the Democratic Party. Now many are waking up, getting back to church and our Judeo-Christian ethic, and embracing the agenda of Donald Trump. That can shift the nation exponentially.

**HLR:** Most observers note the increasing presence of young people in the right-to-life movement at large. Can you comment on pro-life sentiment among

African-American youth?

**CC:** All the data proves that young people in America are increasingly pro-life, no matter what their race or ethnicity. The scientific data endorsing the pro-life position is overwhelming. It's up to educators but above all to clergy and parents to be engaged in school curricula and assure that the homilies preached in our pulpits reflect that position unabashedly.

**HLR:** How do you see the future of the pro-life movement and African Americans?

**CC:** The African-American Community was and has been the key to ending abortion. Margaret Sanger realized this and noted that the clergy would be essential in executing her eugenic plot. Planned Parenthood courts Black preachers, Black civil rights organizations (the NAACP), and Black politicians to carry their agenda to the people they represent—and forsake, due to the love of money and power. Now, the target Margaret Sanger coveted to promote her genocide can be the key source that destroys the institution of abortion in America. The African-American preacher must take his or her rightful place in the community as the true shepherd who protects the sheep, from the womb to the tomb.

**HLR:** Thank you, Pastor Childress.



*Pastor Clenard Childress, Jr.*

## BOOKNOTES

### **RESISTING THROWAWAY CULTURE: HOW A CONSISTENT LIFE ETHIC CAN UNITE A FRACTURED PEOPLE**

Charles C. Camosy

(New City Press, 2019, \$19.95, 150 pp.)

*Reviewed by Christopher White*

The megahit pop song “Blurred Lines” came to mind as I read Charles Camosy’s new book *Resisting Throwaway Culture: How a Consistent Life Ethic Can Unite a Fractured People*. It’s not that the lyrics to the 2013 song, catchy as they are, help to illuminate Camosy’s main arguments—arguably they contradict some of them—but blurring the lines of conventional political orthodoxies precisely describes what is going on in each chapter of this highly provocative, yet thoroughly readable work.

The same year the song landed atop the billboard charts, the world was introduced to a Jesuit pope who would shake up the Church and, at least in part, reframe its vocabulary around life issues. As I wrote in these pages a few years ago, “Soon after being elected pope, Francis called for Catholics to engage in ‘a creative apologetics, which would encourage greater openness to the Gospel on the part of all’” (“Pope Francis and His Pro-life Critics,” Spring 2016).

Camosy, a professor of theology at Fordham University, heard the pope’s call. In *Resisting Throwaway Culture*, he uses Francis’s critique of Western materialism as a guide in proposing a new paradigm for authentically pro-life witness in both public and private life. He is, as one might expect, interested in policy outcomes, but insists that achieving desired public results often begins in private, quotidian habits and actions. “The seeds of morality necessary to generate a new politics,” he writes, “can take root only if we focus first on living out the consistent life ethic in our daily life choices.”

“Blurred lines” come into play as Camosy calls out “a number of different-but-interrelated topics that transcend the conservative/liberal binary.” His method will both frustrate and delight readers as he challenges all parties to embrace a consistent life ethic—a term popularized in the Catholic tradition by the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago, and subsequently embraced by Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI, and now by Pope Francis.

While drawing deeply on Catholic moral theology and social teaching, Camosy insists the principles he espouses can be embraced by secular audiences, indeed by anyone who seeks not merely to reject the “throwaway” ethos, but to promote a culture of encounter and hospitality. His book addresses a range of



contentious issues—e.g., abortion, contraception, sex trafficking, war, euthanasia, surrogacy, and animal ethics. His consideration of each is shaped by seven guiding principles:

It is always wrong to radically reduce someone's inherent dignity for some other end, especially by aiming at their death; violence ought to be resisted at every turn; give priority to protecting and supporting the lives of the most vulnerable, especially those who cannot speak up in their own defense; resist appeals to individual autonomy and privacy that detach us from our duty to aid; resist language, practices, and social structures that detach us from the full reality and dignity of the marginalized; go to the peripheries even where there is risk, showing hospitality and care for the stranger; and mutuality, not only between human persons currently living, but also between current and future generations, and between human persons and the rest of non-human creation.

These may sound like lofty philosophical and ethical codes, but in discussing issue after issue Camosy deals in the concrete, seeking to give practical and lived expression to these commitments. Concerning abortion, he promotes legislation that reduces and ultimately ends the practice while at the same time supporting strong family leave and anti-poverty policies. In discussing euthanasia, he's just as interested in opposing lethal uses of medicine as he is in rooting out loneliness and providing greater welcome to the disabled community.

Camosy's project is to lay the groundwork for a cultural ecosystem that rejects toxic practices *and* facilitates healthy ones that build up resistance to such evils. "Anyone who prizes critical thinking and authenticity," he writes at the outset, "should be skeptical of views that line up neatly with those of a particular political team." For that reason, Camosy will challenge libertarians whose main interests are productivity and maximizing profit and pleasure. He will equally provoke liberals who, motivated exclusively by concerns over consent, would limit discussions of sex to the private sphere. And he will aggravate conservatives who worry more about proper documentation at the border than they do about the dehumanization of those who lack it.

Critics of Camosy will doubtless argue—as they did of Cardinal Bernardin—that in confronting such a range of issues he renders them all morally equivalent. This argument amounts to a lazy slander, because what Camosy hopes to show us is that "leading a life of consistency is also important for our flourishing."

Although Camosy is an academic, *Resisting Throwaway Culture* serves as a crossover work, of interest to scholars and students alike, accessible to all those who are open to having their thinking challenged: "When we follow our moral principles wherever they lead (even, perhaps, to places we don't want to go) we resist the ways in which bias and self-interest can hurt our ability to protect those on the margins of our culture." This is a particular challenge in our increasingly fragmented society, but because there is so much at stake—so many lives at stake—Camosy is asking readers to dare to go places they may

not want to go. In showing us what must be resisted, he is also showing us how much there is to be gained.

—*Christopher White is the national correspondent for Crux and The Tablet, the weekly newspaper of the Diocese of Brooklyn (and Queens), New York.*

## **SUNDAY WILL NEVER BE THE SAME: A ROCK AND ROLL JOURNALIST OPENS HER EARS TO GOD**

Dawn Eden Goldstein

(Catholic Answers Press, 2019, 256 pages, paperback, \$13.95)

*Reviewed by Maria McFadden Maffucci*

You have heard it said that truth is often stranger than fiction. In the case of Dawn Eden Goldstein's story, recounted in her spiritual memoir *Sunday Will Never Be the Same: A Rock and Roll Journalist Opens Her Ears to God*, the truth is more strange, unexpected, and wonderful than a work of fiction because the author of her life is God.

Goldstein tells us she chose to write in the present tense in order to “capture my feelings and reactions as they happened” at each stage in her journey—from Judaism to a “generic baptism” at an Adventist church to Catholicism. This effective technique draws us into her interior life at different stages of her maturity, starting with her memories of being a little girl.

*Sunday Will Never Be the Same* (after the 1960s pop song by Spanky and Our Gang) asks and answers this question: Can an intense interest bordering on obsession with rock and roll and those who create it lead a person to healing and peace in the love of Jesus Christ? The answer is, Yes. In fact, Goldstein's early love of rock music, and the sensory, emotional experience of live concerts and charismatic performers, literally kept her alive.

Goldstein writes with candor about the crippling depression and suicidal ideations that haunted her for decades. Sexually abused as a child, she also suffered through her parents' divorce and a host of insecurities. As a teenager and young adult, studying at New York University, she considered suicide often, but providentially, each time she almost succumbed to despair, she was saved, either by a friend's presence at the right time, or the anticipation of events in the music world she determined were worth sticking around for. But also constantly present, though often under the surface, was her spiritual seeking, her desire to know that a God she wasn't sure she believed in was there and actually loved her.

Goldstein's first love, before music, was reading, and G.K. Chesterton fans will appreciate that it was the “chance” recommendation by a musician of a Chesterton novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday*, that started her on a solid road

to finding the faith she had always desired.

I don't want to give away too much of the plot, lest I spoil the fun—this book, though serious, is also captivating and funny—but want to mention an incident of special interest to *Human Life Review* readers. In 2006, Goldstein was working as a copy editor at the *New York Post*, where she also excelled in writing punny headlines (“Just this week I encapsulated in four words the confession of a man who murdered his fiancée’s feline: ‘Cat killer’s meow culpa’”). By now a non-denominational Protestant Christian, she was also “obsessed with pro-life issues,” having discovered Planned Parenthood’s website for teens, which, she writes, was “exposing children to adult sexual perversions.”

Goldstein also had her own blog, The Dawn Patrol, and was posting nearly every day about what Planned Parenthood was doing. Then came the day at the *Post* when a story she was assigned to proofread got her “really mad.” It was a story about in vitro fertilization, and what “sparked my fury was the line that said that, after a woman had three embryos implanted, ‘two took.’”

She thought about all the babies “languishing in orphanages and foster homes because they had handicaps . . . while IVF doctors rake in large salaries by playing Russian roulette with the unborn.” Taking matters into her own hands, she inserted in the copy, “‘One [embryo] died.’ And I added some educational information elsewhere in the story, saying that in the process of IVF, embryos were routinely destroyed.”

The story went to press, and the “editors went ballistic”—but what cemented her being fired was not only her (admittedly wrong) tampering with someone else’s work, but the pro-life nature of her own blog, which was brought up as an accusation. Although she was devastated at the time, this event led her to her final home, as she decided to enter a program for adults wishing to become Roman Catholic. “What solidified my decision was the experience of being persecuted for being pro-life. It struck me that Catholics had been persecuted for being pro-life for 2,000 years, and that my experience put me in solidarity with them. . . . it seemed to me that the dignity of every human life, from conception to natural death, was inscribed in the Catholic Church’s very identity.”

Once Goldstein entered the Church—in 2006 on Holy Thursday—Sunday really would never be the same! Her book goes on to discuss her life-changing friendship with the late Jesuit priest Father Francis Canavan (also a *Review* contributor) and her groundbreaking accomplishment: In 2016 she became the first woman to earn a doctorate in sacred theology from the University of St. Mary of the Lake. She went from rock and roll to Catholic rockstar, in an inspiring tale of God-incidences.

—*Maria McFadden Maffucci is editor of the Human Life Review.*

## FROM THE HLR WEBSITE

### Letting Weeping Spend the Night

*Tara Jernigan*

It was the twenty-third of May, and I found myself face to face with a small, sticky-sweet-looking red velvet cake. I may have considered the purchase for a few moments; cake isn't healthy after all. In the end, though, I brought it home, and we had it for dessert. My husband asked me what the family had done to earn cake on a seemingly random day. My only response, "Dad's birthday."

My father died suddenly when I was twenty-six. For a long time, I just wouldn't talk about it. I hated the awkward moment when someone said "I'm sorry for your loss," and I didn't have an answer. I never did. It all seemed so canned. Even now, when people learn that my father died before two of my children were born, they feel the need to offer consolations that are as easily forgotten as spoken. Even now, I still don't know quite how to receive them, except to simply say "thank you," as one would receive an awkward compliment or an unexpected gift.

My father must have been gone ten years when I brought home that unexpected dessert. Red velvet was his favorite cake, and, growing up, there was always one on the table on the twenty-third of May. I wanted my children to have a touch-point for that memory, and I wanted to celebrate my father, even though I wasn't of a mind to talk about missing him.

It was not until a couple of years ago, when one of my closest friends was dying, that I really learned how to talk about my father's death. During Beth's year-and-a-half struggle with cancer, her teenage daughter would ask me frenzied questions about what it was like to lose a parent. We talked about the awkward grieving rituals. I admitted to the guilt we all take on but don't deserve as we ask ourselves if we were grieving properly, or if we had unfinished business somewhere along the way. We talked about regrets and missed opportunities. We talked about the differences in our situations, too. My father died quickly; her mother rallied, lingered, and suffered. I was twenty-six; she was sixteen. This was not exactly something I was good at, but opening up my experience was a gift to my friend's daughter. It turned out it was also a gift to me.

Loss and all the emotions that attend it don't exactly go away. Instead, they become integrated more into who we are and how we express our love for someone who has passed away. Over the years, grieving slowly becomes part of the fabric of our lives, but at some point it turns itself inside out and becomes rejoicing. I wouldn't miss my father if I hadn't had a father worth missing. That cake was the beginning of a process of learning to celebrate his life all over again.

I watch now as others—my friend’s daughter and other dear ones who have lost a parent or spouse or someone close to them—begin that process themselves. Their grief is still fresh, with its vivid and painful side turned outward, and I watch as reassurances about grieving are again offered up as shields behind which all parties can hide. There is truth in these, of course: My friend Beth is not suffering anymore, and “we don’t grieve as those who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13, paraphrased). Cancer didn’t win, and she is with Jesus now.

Still, truth spoken repeatedly into our wounds seems to become cliché—well-intentioned words that grief repels as easily as they come its way. They are words given to soothe the helplessness of the one who offers them, but are useless against the power of loss itself.

In the Psalms, we read that “weeping may spend the night, but joy comes in the morning” (Ps. 30:5b). We want, instinctively, to rush straight to the joy. Of course the Psalm’s ancient use was for those who had found themselves in the morning no longer walking through the valley of the shadow of death. At the same time, for those who do grieve, it is the night of weeping that demands to be acknowledged. There is no rushing the night of weeping, it will progress forward in its own way.

Until that grief turns itself inside out, becoming a grief-shaped joy that no one else can understand, the clichés and kind words have nowhere safe to land. Nonetheless, there is a remarkable aspect to grief. The loss comes from a profound experience of what is beautiful in this life. No one mourns an enemy. No one grieves the end of suffering. Grief is, in fact, the last sacred gift we offer to the ones we are thankful to have known and loved. It is in this sacred mystery that grief turns itself inside out, that joy comes even in the dark hours before the dawn.

The Psalmist himself goes on and proclaims, “You have turned, for me, my mourning into dancing” (Ps. 30:11a). Sackcloth and ashes become garments of joy and gladness. Weeping is not cast off but transformed. Suddenly, while it still seems to be dark, the things that our beloved loved, which once triggered our sense of loss, begin again to resound with echoes of joy.

—*Tara Jernigan is a vocational deacon in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh.*

## Talking to Myself

*Dominique Cognetti*

I consider myself a level-headed person. I try not to judge people because I don’t think I have a right to judge. I am not the one at the gates of heaven deciding who gains entrance. But in this day and age, being nonjudgmental isn’t easy. In fact, it’s a daily struggle. Our culture teaches us to identify people—and judge them—according to their gender, their race, their religion, etc. However,

we need to realize that there is a difference between judging people and disagreeing with their actions and beliefs; in the classic formulation, we can hate the sin but not the sinner. But just how do I go about doing that? How do I continue to love a family member who is gay, for instance, while believing that gay marriage (and the gay lifestyle) are morally wrong?

This summer, a cousin graciously invited me to stay with him and his wife for two weeks while I interned in New York. All of us were raised in the Catholic faith, but I knew they were no longer practicing. Within an hour of my arrival, we were discussing three subjects I had wanted to avoid: gender identity, sex, and abortion. Perhaps I feared what they would have to say. Or was it that I was scared to tell them what I firmly believed? I have seen the photos of aborted babies and witnessed the pain that abortion can cause the mother. I told my cousin and his wife that I was pro-life, and that I was glad we could agree on some points, for example, that it is unacceptable to “murder” an unborn child at 34 weeks. I had to be careful while speaking so that I did not come off as aggressive or rude and ruin the relationship. I discovered that it was especially tricky to discuss abortion with childless forty-year-olds, because I didn’t know if possibly they could have had one. I needed to be sensitive to the situation.

The conversation then devolved to other questions concerning the Catholic Church. “I don’t understand why the Church won’t let people live together before they are married.” “Why are there so many dumb rules?” I quickly realized that I needed to listen and allow them to express how they felt. When people have questions but are unable to grasp the answers, it becomes even harder for them to consider the other person’s perspective. So I sat there and listened. Then the conversation turned to my cousin’s wife’s sister, who is gay. I also knew that another cousin of ours, who is gay, is getting married this September. Asking myself how I, as a Catholic, was supposed to act in this situation—“How should I respond?”—I recalled Jesus’ command: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” After I quoted Matthew, the conversation got a little more intense. We skipped from one question to another, my not having the ability to finish discussing one before being expected to answer another. But one of the most important things I have learned is to listen hard before fully stating my opinion. And I did. After the conversation ended, I felt I had earned their respect.

Here’s a scenario I have been thinking about lately: Let’s say I have a sister who is gay. My sister asks me to be her maid of honor. I disagree with her life choices and am unsure if I should even go to the wedding. But I tell her that though I cannot support her in this marriage, and could not in good faith be her maid of honor, I will be there for her on her day. Now of course this could



cause controversy, because wouldn't my presence mean I was supporting her gay marriage? No, it would not. I am firm in my beliefs but that does not mean I need to break ties with family or friends because we see life differently. I think perhaps this is when people begin to hate those who are Catholic. Because they assume we are not willing to accept those who are different from us. That is not the case. Jesus ate with tax collectors and prostitutes but called them to conversion. He didn't do it with the sword but with love.

I am going to speak in broad terms. The majority of us have never claimed to hate those who are gay or who identify as transgender. I don't say, "Oh, I hate my friend because all of a sudden he came out as gay." But ours is now a society of picking sides instead of having honest conversations and accepting differences. Reflecting on my own life, I look back at when people have judged me. I have crazy short hair, like to wear pants, and really hate carrying around purses. I remember going on a mission trip and a man asking if I was a boy. Does this mean, because I dress differently from most young Catholic girls, that I won't be a good wife or mother? Or that I'm gay? The answer is no. We need to stop associating how people dress or what they look like with identity groups. I write this because there are conversations that need to be had. Uncomfortable conversations. We cannot live our lives assuming things about others while not knowing their whole story. I think I finally understand what it means not to judge a book by its cover. Don't judge a whole community of believers because of one individual's bad behavior. Don't hesitate to have those hard conversations. Remember to follow the Lord's commandments and love one another. Good luck out there.

—*Dominique Cognetti, a student at Steubenville's Franciscan University, interned at the Human Life Review in the summer of 2019.*

## APPENDIX A

[Hadley Arkes is the Edward N. Ney Professor of Jurisprudence and American Institutions emeritus at Amherst College, and the founder and director of the James Wilson Institute on Natural Rights & the American Founding in Washington, D.C. The following was posted on the Institute's website (<https://jameswilsoninstitute.org>) and is reprinted with permission.]

### **Michael Martin Uhlmann: In Memoriam (1939-2019)**

*Hadley Arkes*

We come to our friends today with heart-breaking news, on the death of our beloved Michael Uhlmann yesterday in California. In my own case, I've lost one of my dearest, closest friends, and the country has lost one of its most gifted, wisest teachers and public servants. I told a good part of Mike's story when I dedicated my book *Natural Rights & the Right to Choose* (2002) to Michael Martin Uhlmann. That dedication ran far longer than dedications usually ran, because Mike was always too modest to tell his own story. I made a point of that in the dedication, just as I insisted that the story had to be told.

We are posting that dedication below. And we will be running, in the days to come, recordings of Mike in various lectures and commentaries he has done. We may also be open to letters of recollection, or memories of Mike, that people might be moved to offer. Especially prized for us is the talk Mike had done every year, as part of our seminar with young lawyers, on the remarkable person and statecraft of John Marshall. That talk has become a classic, and we include a recording below. It was magnificent in part because of the love and breadth of learning that Mike brought to the subject, but in part also because of the way Mike managed to show how Marshall's shaping of our jurisprudence must establish his standing as a truly preeminent figure in the work of the American Founding.

But right now we pray for Mike—and hold to his memory.

—Hadley Arkes, October, 9, 2019

**Prof. Arkes's dedication of *Natural Rights and the Right to Choose* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) to Michael Uhlmann.**

"The final word is for Michael Uhlmann. Man of letters, counsel without peer, raconteur with limitless range, sustainer of families, runner to the rescue, devoted son of the Church, maddeningly self-effacing. For matters of moral consequence, enduring alertness; for pretension, unremitting jest. And in friendship, untiring, with the touch of grace that lifts everything. I write here with a free hand, not holding back, because I fill in a story that the principal himself will ever be too modest to set down. He immersed himself in Elizabethan literature at Yale, then went back for a while to teach at his beloved Hill School. But then to the law, at the University of Virginia, with the same depth of engagement, this time in jurisprudence and philosophy. Following philosophy out of the clouds, he moved thence to political philosophy, to earn his doctorate, studying with Leo Strauss and Harry Jaffa in Claremont. His natural—or supernatural—gifts

of teaching kept him for a while in the academy, until the academy turned upside down in the turmoil of the late 1960s. He had done a master work on the Electoral College, and he was drawn away to Washington, to Senator Hruska, to save the Electoral College, when it was subject again, in the 1970s, to another bootless campaign to end it. The recurring melodrama would play out once again: the affectation of shock that we should be governed in modern times by such an anachronistic device, followed by an awareness, slowly setting in, that every practical alternative was notably worse or unworkable. The passion for reform would usually exhaust itself before Michael could go on to show that this arrangement, devised by the likes of Gouverneur Morris, might actually have something to do with preserving constitutional government in a continental republic. Staying in Washington, Michael would join the staff of Senator James Buckley, where he wrote the first Human Life Amendment. He would be recruited to the Department of Justice under President Ford, where he would shepherd John Paul Stevens to confirmation at the Supreme Court, and eventually persuade a young Clarence Thomas that he could find his vocation in judging. With the advent of the Reagan administration, Michael became counselor to the president, where he argued compellingly, and dealt deftly, on matters freighted with a moral significance. He took an active lead in propelling the administration into action, in dealing with the Baby Doe cases that arose in the 1980s. In those cases, parents sought to withhold medical care from newborn infants afflicted with Down's syndrome and spina bifida. If there was a federal presence, casting up alarms, standing against the trends, it was there mainly as a function of his own art.

At one moment, he was persuaded by his friends to let himself be appointed to the federal court of appeals in the District of Columbia. But that was also the moment when the rigors of teenage years began to be felt keenly in a family of five children, and he came to the judgment that his energies and wit had to be absorbed more fully in the family at that moment than in the courthouse. For his friends it has been a lasting source of disappointment that he did not take that appointment—as it has been a source of pride among the same friends that he made the decision he did. But in public office, or in private practice, returning to teaching, or to the life of a private foundation, his counsel has been sought by people at every level in the country, from Attorneys General and presidents to kids in the shipping room. He continues to be, at every turn, the sustainer of everyone else. I have pleaded with him never more to write an essay or speech with the willingness to put, in place of his own name, the name of a figure in public office. In the judgment of his friends, he has been too inclined to efface himself, with rationales too public-spirited: namely, that the byline of a public figure will draw more attention to the argument, and the argument may be far more important than the name attached to it. With the same temper, he is apt to spend Thanksgiving Day working at a kitchen in the parish or painting walls for nuns. And on Christmas morning, his friends are likely to find gifts laid at the doorstep, from a messenger evidently sweeping past in a Mercury station wagon rather than a sleigh. When he returned to teaching, with a stint back in Claremont, one of his students wrote in a review that “Professor Uhlmann could read the telephone book and make it compelling.” He could also, no doubt, lead the students into its deeper implications and find, somewhere in that

prosaic thing, the lurking premises of modernity.

In the course of this book I describe the proposal I had shaped as the most modest first step of all on abortion: to preserve the life of the child who survived the abortion. When it appeared to be the moment to revive that proposal in 1998, Michael made the rounds with me on Capitol Hill, meeting with senators, congressmen, and their staffs. He would take himself out of any of his projects to join me, with a keen sense of what staffers on the Hill would find helpful. With the right blend of respect and familiarity, and with the authority of one who had been there before, he would make the case, and no one made it better. Along with Robert George, of Princeton, he knew the logic of that bill as well as the one who devised it. The sparest account of Michael, and the one most readily recognized, might well be that account, in *All's Well That Ends Well*, of Bertram's late father, a man legendary for his wisdom in council. Of him the poet writes that

... his honour  
 Clock to itself, knew the true minute when  
 Exception bade him speak, and at this time  
 His tongue obeyed his hand.

Governed by that hand, this account would have ended far earlier. But I plead again for a certain license when the principal figure in the story will never broadcast it himself. Lincoln, as a young politician, in his taut style, defended his course and said, "If I falsify in this you can convict me. The witnesses live, and can tell." In this account, I would invoke the same claim, and the venture is even more warranted here because the chief witness would never tell or speak of what he has done. His friends know, and so they must tell. Judy Arkes and Susannah Patton would no doubt skip the embellishment, but they would confirm the judgment, and they would join me, with deep affection, in dedicating this book to Michael Martin Uhlmann."—H.A., 2002



## APPENDIX B

[Kevin C. Walsh is Professor of Law at the University of Richmond. The following article was published on the website of First Things on October 18, 2019, and is reprinted with permission.]

### A Chance to Challenge *Roe*?

Kevin C. Walsh

This term, the Supreme Court will hear *June Medical Services v. Gee*, which concerns a Louisiana law that requires abortion doctors to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital. This is the first major abortion case the Court will hear since President Trump appointed Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, and some abortion advocates are concerned that a new Court majority will use this case as a vehicle to overrule *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*.

But nobody should be expecting a sudden shift in American abortion law. The circumstances surrounding *June Medical Services* resemble those surrounding the Court's 1989 decision in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*. Thirty years ago, pro-lifers pressed the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe* in *Webster*. A Republican president who ran and won on a pro-life platform had recently appointed two new justices. The sitting chief justice was committed to judicial restraint. His opposition to *Roe v. Wade* was not in doubt. Indeed, he was one of the original dissenters from the Court's decision in that case.

If you know how the *Webster* story ends, then you can appreciate why pro-lifers are not hoping for too much from the Supreme Court in *June Medical Services*. Pro-lifers' primary hope for *June Medical Services* should be that we do not end up with another *Webster*. That decision was a tactical win but strategic defeat. The Court upheld various provisions of Missouri law regulating abortion. But in order to achieve the five-justice majority necessary for upholding a key provision, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor deployed her then-idiosyncratic "undue burden" test. Three years later, a three-justice plurality consisting of O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy, and David Souter adopted this test into governing law in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*.

The *Casey* plurality trimmed back parts of *Roe*'s doctrinal framework while purporting to preserve its central holding. According to the *Casey* plurality, "[a] finding of an undue burden is a shorthand for the conclusion that a state regulation has the purpose or effect of placing a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion of a nonviable fetus." That is the test the Court has claimed to adhere to ever since.

A few years ago in *Whole Women's Health v. Hellerstedt*, the Supreme Court applied *Casey* to hold unconstitutional two provisions of Texas law, including one that required abortion providers to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of each facility at which he or she performs abortions. The Court was down one vote from its normal nine because the vacancy resulting from Justice Scalia's death had not yet been filled. By 5-3 vote, the Court in *Whole Women's Health* determined that the admitting privileges requirement imposed an undue burden and was therefore unconstitutional. Writing for the majority, Justice Breyer determined that Texas had failed to show any health benefit from its admitting privileges requirement. The law's challengers, on



the other hand, had demonstrated that this requirement created a “substantial obstacle” to abortion access in Texas because abortion clinics closed as a result.

*June Medical Services* is a constitutional challenge to a Louisiana admitting-privileges law similar to that from *Whole Women’s Health*. The case comes to the Supreme Court from the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. A split three-judge panel upheld Louisiana’s admitting-privileges law after distinguishing the circumstances of the Louisiana case from those in the Texas case. The challengers asked the full Fifth Circuit to review this panel decision. By 9-6 vote, that request failed. Louisiana’s admitting-privileges law did not go into effect after that loss, though, as the law’s challengers obtained a stay from the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court’s vote on the stay was five to four. Chief Justice Roberts, who dissented in *Whole Women’s Health*, joined with the four justices who remained from that majority after Justice Kennedy’s retirement to grant the stay. Justice Kavanaugh, joined by Justices Thomas, Alito, and Gorsuch, dissented.

Although the Louisiana admitting-privileges law was similar to Texas’s law, the Fifth Circuit panel majority found that the likely effect on abortion access in Louisiana would have been very different. Whereas the Texas law resulted in many clinic closures, the Fifth Circuit panel majority predicted that this would not be the case in Louisiana. Based on a detailed review of the record compiled in the Louisiana case, the panel majority determined that “the only permissible finding, under this record, is that no clinics will likely be forced to close on account of the Act.” Some of the abortion doctors, the panel majority found, had not put in a good-faith effort to get admitting privileges. The decision came down to dueling predictions about what would happen if the law were to go into effect.

With the stay in place, the Supreme Court’s recent grant of review in *June Medical Services* will return the justices to the record to review predictions about the likely effect of Louisiana’s admitting privileges law. While it is possible that this case could be a vehicle for transforming the substantive law governing abortion, that is unlikely.

Even so, the Court’s decision to decide *June Medical Services* might turn out to mark the beginning of the end of the *Roe/Casey* regime. In addition to granting the challengers’ petition for certiorari, the Court also granted Louisiana’s conditional cross-petition. The question presented in that conditional cross-petition is whether abortion doctors and clinics have third-party standing to assert the rights of their potential patients. If the challengers in *June Medical Services* had asserted only their own rights as physicians to be free of a regulation governing their medical practice, they would almost certainly have lost under the deferential “rational basis” test that the lower courts would have had to apply. But by asserting the rights of their prospective patients/clients, abortion clinics and doctors have benefitted from the harder-to-satisfy “undue burden” standard.

Louisiana’s cross-petition contends that the law of third-party standing in abortion cases is an outlier, and that abortion clinics and doctors should not be permitted to wield the constitutional rights of their patients in order to invalidate patient-protective procedures such as Louisiana’s admitting-privileges law. Given that the Supreme Court granted *Roe v. Wade* at first only to review a technical question about federal-court abstention, it would be fitting if the Court were to begin dismantling the *Roe/*



*Casey* regime through renewed rigor with respect to jurisdictional, procedural, evidentiary, and other “adjective law.”

It only takes four votes to obtain Supreme Court review. It is likely that these votes were the Ginsburg/Breyer/Sotomayor/Kagan foursome, while the votes to grant the cross-petition likely came from the stay dissenters. All eyes are on Chief Justice Roberts.

Instead of expecting anything dramatic, look for Roberts to engage in a careful comparison and contrast of the record on review, which differs significantly for Louisiana’s law as compared with Texas’s in *Whole Women’s Health*. And expect facile comparisons between the two cases from people who have not done the reading. It is difficult to predict precisely what path a Supreme Court majority will take through the issues. But history and experience suggest some virtue in chastened aspirations for immediate *Roe/Casey* regime change.

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## APPENDIX C

[Clarke Forsythe is senior counsel of Americans United for Life. The following column was published on September 24, 2019, in the Wall Street Journal and is reprinted here with Mr. Forsythe's permission.]

### Protecting Unborn Children Is No “Cosmic Question”

Clarke D. Forsythe

Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg appeals to Scripture to defend his opposition to restrictions on abortion. “There’s a lot of parts of the Bible that talk about how life begins with breath,” he told a radio audience Sept. 5, adding that no matter what anyone thinks about “the kind of cosmic question of where life begins,” it ought to be up to “the woman making the decision.”

Mr. Buttigieg’s words evoke rulings by the Supreme Court, which has upheld a sweeping right to abortion since *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, based on the supposed inexactness of when life begins. Yet with regard to issues other than abortion, many states have passed laws that define life as beginning at conception and treat unborn children as human persons. The Supreme Court has allowed such laws to coexist with *Roe*, creating a legal landscape in which arguments against restricting abortion look increasingly tenuous.

A gap opened between how the courts treat abortion and other life issues because *Roe* didn’t address the other contexts in which unborn children can be killed. What about medical negligence? What about the bank robber who fires a gun, strikes a pregnant woman, and kills her child? What about the estranged boyfriend who batters his pregnant girlfriend and kills her child?

Why didn’t the Supreme Court address those scenarios in 1973? In writing “Abuse of Discretion: The Inside Story of *Roe v. Wade*” (2013), I interviewed a former Supreme Court clerk who is well versed in the legal history. At the time of the case he discussed existing legal protections for unborn children with Justice William Brennan. Asked about the other controversial scenarios, Brennan replied, “We’ll deal with those in the next case.”

The next case never came. In fact, the justices have refused all such cases since 1973. Consequently, for nearly half a century the court has allowed states and lower courts to build on centuries of Anglo-American legal protection for unborn children.

Mr. Buttigieg’s religious musings obscure that America’s legal tradition—going back to the English common law—has long protected unborn children to the greatest extent possible given existing medical understanding. As Justice James Wilson noted in the 1790s, “With consistency, beautiful and undeviating, human life, from its commencement to its close, is protected by the common law. In the contemplation of law, life begins when the infant is first able to stir in the womb. By the law, life is protected not only from immediate destruction but from every degree of actual violence, and, in some cases, from every degree of danger.”

Rulings from as long ago as the 17th century show that English common law prohibited abortion at the earliest point that medicine could detect that a developing human

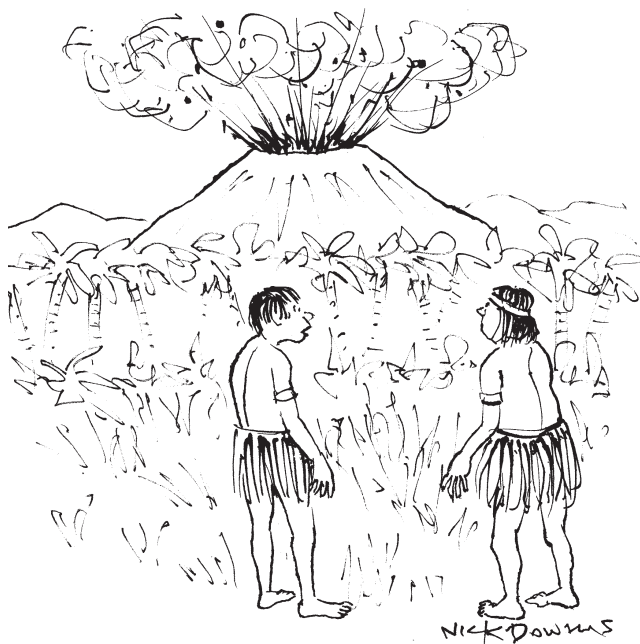
was alive (the stethoscope wasn't invented until 1816). English and American law subsequently prohibited abortion at earlier points during pregnancy, as medical understanding and technology allowed.

Even at the time of *Roe* in 1973, multiple states protected unborn children under laws governing injury and wrongful death, as well as fetal-homicide laws. In deciding *Roe*, the court either overlooked or ignored the depth of these precedents. Thus the justices left them standing with regard to most issues other than abortion.

Legal scholar Paul Benjamin Linton summarized the state of the law in 2011: "The most common approach, the one that has been adopted in more than one-half of the States, has been to make the killing of an unborn child a crime without regard to any arbitrary gestational age." In other words, since *Roe* many states have incrementally deleted gestational markers, and have moved to protect the developing child from conception.

Today, several states protect unborn children in laws regarding legal guardianship and inheritance of property. Thirty-seven of them have criminal statutes that treat the killing of an unborn child as a homicide when done by means other than abortion. California's statute protects unborn children after as few as eight weeks of gestation. Thirty states do so from conception.

Why speculate about "when life begins" when state law is so much more revealing about where the American people and their elected representatives stand in 2019?



*"The gods have issues."*

## APPENDIX D

*[Stefano Gennarini writes for C-Fam. This article first appeared in the Friday Fax, an internet report published weekly by C-Fam (Center for Family & Human Rights), a New York and Washington DC-based research institute (<https://c-fam.org/>). This article appears with permission.]*

### **Trump Administration Doubles Down at UN: “There is no international right to abortion”**

*Stefano Gennarini*

September 27, 2019 (C-Fam)—The United States led a coalition of twenty-one countries to promote pro-life and pro-family international policies and oppose abortion at the United Nations on Monday.

The countries criticized the use of “ambiguous terms, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, in U.N. documents, because they can undermine the critical role of the family and promote practices, like abortion, in circumstances that do not enjoy international consensus and which can be misinterpreted by U.N. agencies.”

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar III delivered the statement of the coalition during a specially held press conference ahead of a high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage.

Their statement emphasized, “There is no international right to an abortion and these terms should not be used to promote pro-abortion policies and measures.”

The countries who joined the U.S. also criticized ongoing international efforts to promote explicit and inappropriate sex education materials, such as the World Health Organization’s guidelines for Europe, which promote telling children under the age of four about “early childhood masturbation.”

“We only support sex education that appreciates the protective role of the family in this education and does not condone harmful sexual risks for young people,” the countries underlined.

They concluded asking the international community to concentrate “on topics that unite rather than divide on the critical issues surrounding access to health care.”

Areas of consensus that were highlighted in the statement included “equal access to health care, which includes, but is not limited to reproductive concerns, maternal health, voluntary and informed family planning, HIV, elimination of violence against women and girls, and empowerment to reach the highest standard of health.”

The Trump administration went on offense to promote the pro-life cause this summer, asking countries to join U.S. pro-life efforts at the UN ahead of the meeting, as the Friday Fax reported.

The Trump administration was unable to remove references to ambiguous terms from the final declaration on universal health coverage adopted on Monday. The statement of the 19 countries insisted that the declaration must be read in light of past UN agreements that exclude an international right to abortion.

During the official adoption of the agreement on universal health-care, later in the day, Azar lamented how some delegations were unwilling to more explicitly reaffirm those past UN agreements in the declaration. The Friday Fax reported that it was the

European Union that blocked those references in August.

Surprisingly, both Poland and Hungary, which are members of the European Union, joined the U.S. press statement. It remains to be seen if in coming months they will prevent the European Union from blocking U.S. pro-life efforts in UN negotiations.

In addition to the U.S., Hungary and Poland, Bahrain, Belarus, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Guatemala, Haiti, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, also joined the statement.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin leading the Holy See delegation at the universal health coverage summit underscored similar pro-life concerns with the wording of the declaration in his official statement. He said the right to health belonged to “all persons during all stages of development of their life, from conception until natural death.”

In contrast, 54 countries, mostly from Europe and Latin America, delivered a joint statement which said investing in “sexual and reproductive health and rights” is integral to universal health coverage and a “cost-effective and cost-saving” measure to “decrease the burden on health systems.”



*“Of course, it was through my efforts that we landed that account, but did I get any credit? Hah! Don’t make me laugh.”*

## APPENDIX E

[Maria McFadden Maffucci is editor of the *Human Life Review* and president of the *Human Life Foundation*. She is also a regular columnist for *Newsmax*, where the following reflection was published on August 29, 2019 (<https://www.newsmax.com/insiders/mariamcfaddenmaffucci/id-592/>). Reprinted with permission.]

### Remembering Faith

*Maria McFadden Maffucci*

For those of us who really love summer (I actually thrive in heat and humidity!), the sunny yet cooler days at the end of August are bittersweet. This is especially true for me, as it is a reminder of loss.

It has been eight years since my mother died, of cancer, on August 30, 2011. Her name was Faith, an apt name for a woman who followed her own path to find the truth, even when it meant a wrenching separation from her family's church and community, and a brave setting out into the then-foreign worlds of New York City and Roman Catholicism! But that's another story, one beautifully captured in a tribute by Kathryn J. Lopez [reprinted in the Fall 2011 issue of the *Human Life Review*].

What I am thinking about this anniversary is how the painful memories of searing grief at the final goodbye have been steadily tempered by an unshakeable confidence that her motherly love is with me now, and will always be. Our bond was forged in her womb, before either of us was aware of it, and it cannot be broken.

Twenty-six years ago, in late August, my husband and I suffered the loss of our "honeymoon baby" in a first trimester miscarriage. To be honest, I wasn't prepared to be expecting so soon, but once the pregnancy was confirmed, I experienced a deep love and fierce protectiveness of the life growing within me, even as I groaned through all-day morning sickness. Early pregnancy losses are mysterious. Our first ultrasound, at 10 weeks to find a heartbeat, found none. Did it ever beat? What happened? Miscarriage, especially when it is a first pregnancy, strikes at the heart of that instinct to protect—there is an overwhelming sense of failure. What did I do wrong? Why couldn't I protect my baby? Will I ever be a mother?

But I was already a mother. I didn't really start to have peace with the loss until I gave birth to my son a year later, but I did realize that it was that first baby who changed us forever; we became parents. I became a mother. Amazingly, as researchers have discovered, that child is probably still a part of me; and part of me probably stayed in my mother's body for decades. Microchimerism is the biodirectional transfer of cells between mother and fetus during pregnancy, a fascinating biological bonding process.

But the real bond lasts even after life is gone. As I reflect on these late-August memories, I rest in acceptance of the mysteries of life and death. Human life is finite; but human love is forever. We know this because we don't suddenly stop loving someone after we lose them. We remain connected. I believe that with my faith, and with my Faith.



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**T**he lack of engagement and blatant opposition to pro-life activism by African-American pastors is directly due to their being politically bound to the Democratic Party's platform, which includes abortion and other "politically correct" social goals. Pastors today are judged by the size of their membership and how well they are recognized by locally or nationally elected political figures. Some pastors firmly believe that advocating for children in the womb, or preaching against abortion, will offend their congregation and alienate them from political power. Often in private they will say they are pro-life but view it as a political matter, or as a private matter that exempts them from having to speak publicly about it.

—Pastor Clenard Childress, Jr., "*HLR Interview*"