Arguments Against Abortion

Kerby Anderson helps us understand that concerns about abortion are more than just a fundamentalist backlash. He reviews arguments from a Christian, biblical perspective and then introduces arguments from medical, legal and philosophical points of views as well. He concludes, "The Bible and logic are on the side of the Christian who wants to stand for the sanctity of human life."

Biblical Arguments Against Abortion

In this essay we will be discussing arguments against abortion. The first set of arguments we will consider are biblical arguments.

That being said, we must begin by acknowledging that the Bible doesn't say anything about abortion directly. Why the silence of the Bible on abortion? The answer is simple. Abortion was so unthinkable to an Israelite woman that there was no need to even mention it in the criminal code. Why was abortion an unthinkable act? First, children were viewed as a gift or heritage from the Lord. Second, the Scriptures state—and the Jews concurred—that God opens and closes the womb and is sovereign over conception. Third, childlessness was seen as a curse.

One of the key verses to understand in developing a biblical view of the sanctity of human life is Psalm 139. This psalm is the inspired record of David's praise for God's sovereignty in his life. He begins by acknowledging that God is omniscient and knows what David is doing at any given point in time. He goes on to acknowledge that God is aware of David's thoughts before he expresses them. David adds that wherever he might go, he cannot escape from God, whether he travels to heaven or ventures into Sheol. God is in the remotest part of the sea and even in the darkness. Finally David contemplates the

origin of his life and confesses that God was there forming him in the womb:

> For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (vv. 13-16).

Here David speaks of God's relationship with him while he was growing and developing before birth. Notice that the Bible doesn't speak of fetal life as mere biochemistry. The description here is not of a piece of protoplasm that becomes David: this is David already being cared for by God while in the womb.

In verse 13, we see that God is the Master Craftsman fashioning David into a living person. In verses 14 and 15, David reflects on the fact that he is a product of God's creative work within his mother's womb, and he praises God for how wonderfully God has woven him together.

David draws a parallel between his development in the womb and Adam's creation from the earth. Using figurative language in verse 15, he refers to his life before birth when "I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth." This poetic allusion harkens back to Genesis 2:7 which says that Adam was made from the dust of the earth.

David also notes that "Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance." This shows that God knew David even before he was known to others. The term translated *unformed substance* is a noun derivative of a verb meaning "to roll up." When David was just forming as a fetus, God's care and compassion already extended to him. The reference to "God's eyes" is an Old

Testament term used to connotate divine oversight of God in the life of an individual or group of people.

Next, we will consider additional Old Testament passages that provide a biblical argument against abortion.

Additional Old Testament Arguments Against Abortion

Now that we've looked at Psalm 139, the most popular argument against abortion, let's look at two other Old Testament passages.

Another significant passage is Psalm 51. It was written by David after his sin of adultery with Bathsheba and records his repentance. David confesses that his sinful act demonstrated the original sin that was within him, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps. 5l:5). David concludes that from his time of conception, he had a sin nature. This would imply that he carried the image of God from the moment of conception, including the marred image scarred from sin.

Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6). Bearing the image of God is the essence of humanness. And though God's image in man was marred at the Fall, it was not erased (cf. 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9). Thus, the unborn baby is made in the image of God and therefore fully human in God's sight.

This verse also provides support for what is called the traducian view of the origin of the soul. According to this perspective, human beings were potentially in Adam (Rom. 5:12, Heb. 7:9-10) and thus participated in his original sin. The "soulish" part of humans is transferred through conception. Therefore, an unborn baby is morally accountable and thus fully human.

Another argument against abortion can be found in the Old Testament legal code, specifically Exodus 21:22-25.

> If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

The verses appear to teach that if a woman gives birth prematurely, but the baby is not injured, then only a fine is appropriate. However, if the child dies then the law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) should be applied. In other words, killing an unborn baby would carry the same penalty as killing a born baby. A baby inside the womb has the same legal status as a baby outside the womb.

Some commentators have come to a different conclusion because they believe the first verses only refer to a case of accidental miscarriage. Since only a fine is levied, they argue that an unborn baby is merely potential life and does not carry the same legal status as a baby that has been born.

There are at least two problems with this interpretation. First, the normal Hebrew word for *miscarry* is not used in this passage (cf. Gen. 31:38; Exod. 23:26; Job 2:10; Hos. 9:14). Most commentators now believe that the action described in verse 22 is a premature birth, not an accidental miscarriage. Second, even if the verses do describe a miscarriage, the passage cannot be used to justify abortion. The injury was accidental, not intentional (as abortion would be). Also, the action was a criminal offense and punishable by law.

Medical Arguments Against Abortion

Thus far in our discussion we have looked at biblical

arguments against abortion. But what if someone doesn't believe in the Bible? Are there other arguments we can use? Yes, there are: medical arguments, for example. Let's look, then, at some of the medical arguments against abortion.

The medical arguments against abortion are compelling. For example, *at conception the embryo is genetically distinct from the mother.* To say that the developing baby is no different from the mother's appendix is scientifically inaccurate. A developing embryo is genetically different from the mother. A developing embryo is also genetically different from the sperm and egg that created it. A human being has 46 chromosomes (sometimes 47 chromosomes). Sperm and egg have 23 chromosomes. A trained geneticist can distinguish between the DNA of an embryo and that of a sperm and egg. But that same geneticist could not distinguish between the DNA of a developing embryo and a full-grown human being.

Another set of medical arguments against abortion surround *the definition of life and death.* If one set of criteria have been used to define death, could they also be used to define life? Death used to be defined by the cessation of heartbeat. A stopped heart was a clear sign of death. If the cessation of heartbeat could define death, could the onset of a heartbeat define life? The heart is formed by the 18th day in the womb. If heartbeat was used to define life, then nearly all abortions would be outlawed.

Physicians now use a more rigorous criterion for death: brain wave activity. A flat EEG (electroencephalograph) is one of the most important criteria used to determine death. If the cessation of brain wave activity can define death, could the onset of brain wave activity define life? Individual brain waves are detected in the fetus in about 40-43 days. Using brain wave activity to define life would outlaw at least a majority of abortions.

Opponents to abortion also raise the controversial issue of

fetal pain. Does the fetus feel pain during abortion? The evidence seems fairly clear and consistent. Consider this statement made in a British medical journal: "Try sticking an infant with a pin and you know what happens. She opens her mouth to cry and also pulls away. Try sticking an 8-week-old human fetus in the palm of his hand. He opens his mouth and pulls his hand away. A more technical description would add that changes in heart rate and fetal movement also suggest that intrauterine manipulations are painful to the fetus."{1}

Obviously, other medical criteria could be used. For example, the developing fetus has a unique set of fingerprints as well as genetic patterns that make it unique. The development of sonography has provided us with a "window to the womb" showing us that a person is growing and developing in the mother's womb. We can discern eyes, ears, fingers, a nose, and a mouth. Our visual senses tell us this is a baby growing and maturing. This is not a piece of protoplasm; this is a baby inside the womb.

The point is simple. *Medical science leads to a pro-life perspective rather than a pro-choice perspective.* If medical science can be used at all to draw a line, the clearest line is at the moment of conception. Medical arguments provide a strong case against abortion and for life.

Legal Arguments Against Abortion

At this point in our discussion, we need to look at legal arguments against abortion.

The best legal argument against abortion can be seen in the case of *Roe v. Wade*. It violated standard legal reasoning. The Supreme Court decided not to decide when life begins and then turned around and overturned the laws of 50 different states.

Most of the Supreme Court's verdict rested upon two sentences. "We need not resolve the difficult question of when life

begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to an answer."

Although the sentences sounded both innocuous and unpretentious, they were neither. The Supreme Court's non-decision was not innocuous. It overturned state laws that protected the unborn and has resulted in over 30 million abortions (roughly the population of Canada) in the United States.

The decision also seems unpretentious by acknowledging that it did not know when life begins. But if the Court did not know, then it should have acted "as if" life was in the womb. A crucial role of government is to protect life. Government cannot remove a segment of the human population from its protection without adequate justification.

The burden of proof should lie with the life-taker, and the benefit of the doubt should be with the life-saver. Put another way: "when in doubt, don't." A hunter who hears rustling in the bushes shouldn't fire until he knows what is in the bushes. Likewise, a Court which doesn't know when life begins, should not declare open season on the unborn.

The burden of proof in law is on the prosecution. The benefit of doubt is with the defense. This is also known as a presumption of innocence. The defendant is assumed to be innocent unless proven guilty. Again the burden of proof is on the entity that would take away life or liberty. The benefit of the doubt lies with the defense.

The Supreme Court clearly stated that it does not know when life begins and then violated the very spirit of this legal principle by acting as if it just proved that no life existed in the womb. Even more curious was the fact that to do so, it

had to ignore the religious community and international community on the subject of the unborn.

Had the religious community really failed to reach a consensus? Although there were some intramural disagreements, certainly the weight of evidence indicated that a Western culture founded on Judeo-Christian values held abortion to be morally wrong. People with widely divergent theological perspectives (Jewish, Catholic, evangelical and fundamental Protestants) shared a common agreement about the humanity of the unborn.

The same could be said about the international legal community. Physicians around the world subscribed to the Hippocratic Oath ("I will not give a woman a pessary to produce abortion"). The unborn were protected by various international documents like the Declaration of Geneva and the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

Just as there are solid medical arguments against abortion, so also there are legal arguments against abortion. *Roe vs. Wade* was a bad decision that needs to be overturned.

Philosophical Arguments Against Abortion

Finally, we will conclude our discussion by looking at philosophical arguments against abortion.

A third set of arguments against abortion would be philosophical arguments. A key philosophical question is where do you draw the line? Put another way, when does a human being become a person?

The Supreme Court's decision of *Roe v. Wade* separated personhood from humanity. In other words, the judges argued that a developing fetus was a human (i.e., a member of the species *Homo sapiens*) but not a person. Since only persons are given 14th Amendment protection under the Constitution, the Court argued that abortion could be legal at certain times.

This left to doctors, parents, or even other judges the responsibility of arbitrarily deciding when personhood should be awarded to human beings.

The Supreme Court's cleavage of personhood and humanity made the ethical slide down society's slippery slope inevitable. Once the Court allowed people to start drawing lines, some drew them in unexpected ways and effectively opened the door for infanticide and euthanasia.

The Court, in the tradition of previous line-drawers, opted for biological criteria in their definition of a "person" in *Roe v. Wade*. In the past, such criteria as implantation or quickening had been suggested. The Court chose the idea of viability and allowed for the possibility that states could outlaw abortions performed after a child was viable. But viability was an arbitrary criterion, and there was no biological reason why the line had to be drawn near the early stages of development. The line, for example, could be drawn much later.

Ethicist Paul Ramsey frequently warned that any argument for abortion could logically be also used as an argument for infanticide. As if to illustrate this, Dr. Francis Crick, of DNA fame, demonstrated that he was less concerned about the ethics of such logical extensions and proposed a more radical definition of personhood. He suggested in the British journal *Nature* that if "a child were considered to be legally born when two days old, it could be examined to see whether it was an 'acceptable member of human society.'" Obviously this is not only an argument for abortion; it's an argument for infanticide.

Other line-drawers have suggested a cultural criterion for personhood. Ashley Montagu, for example, stated, "A newborn baby is not truly human until he or she is molded by cultural influences later." Again, this is more than just an argument for abortion. It is also an argument for infanticide.

More recently some line-drawers have focused on a mental criterion for personhood. Dr. Joseph Fletcher argues in his book *Humanhood* that "Humans without some minimum of intelligence or mental capacity are not persons, no matter how many of these organs are active, no matter how spontaneous their living processes are." This is not only an argument for abortion and infanticide; it's adequate justification for euthanasia and the potential elimination of those who do not possess a certain IQ. In other writings, Joseph Fletcher suggested that an "individual" was not truly a "person" unless he has an IQ of at least 40.

In conclusion, we can see that there are many good arguments against abortion. Obviously there are a number of biblical arguments against abortion. But there are also medical, legal, and philosophical arguments against abortion. The Bible and logic are on the side of the Christian who wants to stand for the sanctity of human life.

Endnote

1. H.P. Valman and J. F. Pearson, What the Fetus Feels, *British Medical Journal* (26 January 1980): 233-234.

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Note from Kerby Anderson:
So many people ask for more information on abortion; I suggest you check out the Abortion Facts Web site at www.abortionfacts.com.

"You Anti-Abortion Doctor

Killers Are Hypocrites!”

So since obviously you say the religion is against abortion and abortion is evil and wrong. . . What is god going to do about the guy that murdered a man in church since he was an abortion doctor?

So murdering a baby is wrong. . . . and getting your anti, “you don’t have a choice” word across no matter what happens is OK?

It’s OK to bomb clinics and murder doctors and harass people. . . I must have missed that passage in the bible. That must be in the book of “I’m a Hypocrite” verse 12.

So let’s say your beautiful wholesome daughter was raped by a psychotic crazed madman and he got her pregnant. You would welcome that half-crazed child into your life? Or going off of anti-abortion tactics, obviously you would just kill her and say it was in the book of Hypocrite, or wait. . . you would put the baby up for adoption and not tell the parents that this is a child of a rape.

You see the problem here don’t you? But of course it’s not a problem in your eyes until it hits home isn’t it.

Oh I guess you anti-abortion activists will continue to bomb buildings, murder people and harass people in the name of god. Wow. . . you know what. . . that is rather hypocritical isn’t it.

Murder is OK, it must say so in some part of the bible that I missed too. . . and bombing. . . does it say anywhere there “And the lord, place a bomb in the building to blow it up”? Man, I musta skipped over that section.

Dear friend,

I’m glad you wrote so we can provide a different perspective.

Before responding to the points of your email, let me state unequivocally that *we condemn the use of all violence in the struggle to end the violence of abortion*. As a ministry, and all of us individually.

> *So since obviously you say the religion is against abortion and abortion is evil and wrong. . . What is god going to do about the guy that murdered a man in church since he was an abortion doctor?*

My guess is that He will respond the same way as to any other murderer.

> *So murdering a baby is wrong. . . . and getting your anti, "you don't have a choice" word across no matter what happens is OK?*

We would say no, it's not okay. God tells us to show respect and honor to everyone, even those we disagree with.

And we disagree with those who believe it is acceptable to use violence to stop abortion. "The end justifies the means" is not a biblical philosophy; it is actually the fruit of Darwinist thinking that says the fit will survive by whatever means they can get away with. Those justifying their unbiblical actions because they believe that abortion must be stopped regardless of the methods used are dishonoring God.

> *It's OK to bomb clinics and murder doctors and harass people. . . I must have missed that passage in the bible. That must be in the book of "I'm a Hypocrite" verse 12.*

:::wince::: Your point is well taken. However, please consider the possibility that people who bomb clinics and murder abortionists and harrass people are acting on their own choice instead of taking their orders from what God has said in His word. The Old Testament property laws show that God wants us to respect other people's property, and bombing clinics is a

violation of that. Murdering doctors is a direct violation of the commandment “Thou shalt not murder.” Harrassing people is a violation of God’s command to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

> *So let’s say your beautiful wholesome daughter was raped by a psychotic crazed madman and he got her pregnant. You would welcome that half-crazed child into your life? Or going off of anti-abortion tactics, obviously you would just kill her and say it was in the book of Hypocrite, or wait. . . you would put the baby up for adoption and not tell the parents that this is a child of a rape.*

Let’s go one step further. I’m a woman; during my childbearing years I lived with the possibility that it could have been me getting impregnated through a rape. I did think about what we would do. Because there’s a big difference between pre-deciding a response to a hypothetical situation and actually living it, we had two choices: welcome the baby into our family as a continual reminder of what grace (undeserved blessing and favor) looks like, or giving the baby up for adoption. There is a growing number of infertile couples who would give anything to bring such a life into their home, regardless of how he came to be. The baby would be an innocent party who had nothing to do with his or her conception. (And even if the father were a “psychotic crazed madman,” that doesn’t make his offspring crazy.)

> *You see the problem here don’t you? But of course it’s not a problem in your eyes until it hits home isn’t it.*

It would be a *very big* problem. Our response is that we have an even bigger God.

> *Oh I guess you anti-abortion activists will continue to bomb buildings, murder people and harass people in the name of god. Wow. . . you know what. . . that is rather hypocritical isn’t it.*

Yes, it is hypocritical to do things in the name of God who forbids us to do those things. I'm curious, though, why you wrote to Probe Ministries, since none of us are anti-abortion "activists." Not a one of us has ever bombed a building or murdered doctors or harassed people. I'm also curious. . . are you able to consider the possibility that people who cross God's lines, no matter how well-intentioned they are, are a tiny minority of those who are passionate about this issue?

We think it's interesting that in today's culture, it's not okay to blame all Muslims for the actions of extremist Muslim terrorists (and of course it's not). . . but it's acceptable to blame all Christians for the actions of a handful of extremists? Isn't that what you're doing here?

> *Murder is OK, it must say so in some part of the bible that I missed too. . . and bombing. . . does it say anywhere there "And the lord, place a bomb in the building to blow it up"? Man, I musta skipped over that section.*

You're right. Murder and bombing other people's buildings are not instructed in the Bible. In fact, the Bible tells us to do the opposite of those things. The people choosing to resort to their own methods in hopes of achieving their goals are not basing their choices on biblical values or principles. They do what they do *in spite of* what the Bible says, not because of it.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin

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“We Want an Easy Way Out of Our Pregnancy”

Dear Sir/Madam,

With due high respect I’ve got a deep problem in my family, I hope you are able to help us. My wife and me have a unwanted embryo. She had a pregnancy test and unfortunately it was positive. Our embryo is 3 weeks old. In my country, Iran, “pregnancy abortion” is illegal and even if it is possible it will be very expensive. We are not ready for have a baby and both of us hate this. What should we do? We are looking for medicine and easy way for clear it. We are impatiently waiting for your efficient way to save us and improve our life with your guidance.

Dear _____,

I’m not sure how you found us, but we are against abortion because it is the murder of an innocent human being. I know it is distressing to find yourself pregnant before you are ready, but you and your wife do not have an unwanted embryo, you are growing a BABY who is in an early stage of development.

I don’t know if it will make any difference to you, but I want you to know I regularly talk to women who had abortions, and it traumatized them. The guilt and shame they carry is a huge burden. They can’t get away from the fact that they murdered their own babies. Please reconsider your position.

There is no easy way to “clear” an unwanted pregnancy because it is a serious matter to take the life of another human being. This baby could not have been conceived without God’s permission and blessing; He means for you to have him or her, love him or her, and trust Him to help you care for this precious life.

I pray God will give you a peace that will enable you to trust Him to get you through this time without doing something you will regret for the rest of your lives and for which you will have to answer to Him.

With concern,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"How Does the Bible Show Abortion is Murder?"

In my "Introduction to Ethics" class, the topic for the night was abortion. As the discussion progressed, people all around me were saying that an abortion is good to do under any situation (rape, too young, the woman's choice) and I argued my point on that abortion is murder. I stated that the Bible had claimed to that statement also. The teacher then told me that I have to prove to him and the class that the Bible says abortion is murder. Can you help me with verses, or anything I could possibly use to make my point valid?

Glad you asked!

The perspective that abortion is murder depends on two points: 1) The Bible condemns murder (taking the life of another human being), and 2) The unborn baby is a person—a human being.

Point #1: What is murder?

> Exodus 20:13, usually translated "Thou shalt not kill," one of the Ten Commandments, actually means "Thou shalt not murder." (There is a difference. Taking the life of another

person in war, for example, is not the same thing as murder.)

Point #2: The humanity of the unborn

1. Both Hebrew and Greek (the languages of the Bible) do not make a distinction between pre-born and born babies. Whether they live inside or outside the womb is not important as to their value or personhood.

2. *For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be. (Ps. 139:13-16)*

This portion of scripture is written about the unborn baby.

3. *The Lord called me from the womb; from the body of my mother He named me. (Is. 49:1)*

The prophet Isaiah says he received God's calling and naming while still in the womb.

4. *Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)*

The psalmist states that he was a spiritual being from the point of conception. This isn't saying that he sinned while in the womb, but that he recognizes that from the earliest part of life, he was a sinner.

5. *Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." (Jer. 1:4-5)*

Jeremiah declares that God knew him, consecrated him (set him apart), and appointed him a prophet before he was even conceived! From God's perspective, Jeremiah's humanity began even before conception.

6. *At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among*
women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. (Luke 1:39-44)

The unborn John the Baptist had a physical reaction to the presence of Mary and ESPECIALLY her unborn Child. At this point, Jesus was probably only a week- or two-old embryo. (Scripture tells us that as soon as the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary about God's plan for the Holy Spirit to overshadow her and conceive the Messiah in her and she consented, she hurried to see Elizabeth, who lived about 70 or so miles from Nazareth.)

I believe that these verses indicate that abortion is murder, but all you can do is offer the light they provide. Some people who don't want to believe that abortion is murder or that an unborn baby is anything more than a "potential human being" can and will refuse to accept it. (Remember what the Word says in Jeremiah 17:9—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?") Your job is to pray for God to open the eyes of the hearts of the others in your class, humbly offer the truth, and leave the results to God.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Can You Be Pro-Life and For the Death Penalty? Isn’t That Judging?”

In my college class, a girl asked the other day, “How can you be for the death penalty if you are pro-life?” She also said the Bible says don’t judge, so how can you use the death penalty (because you would be judging). I was trying to find out the correct way to let her know that you can be pro-life and for the death penalty.

The point of being pro-life is that we put the same high value of all life that God does, from the earliest pre-born baby to the last breath of an elderly, dying person. We derive our high value of life from the fact that every human being is made in the image of God. Thus, when someone takes the life of another in murder, they are treating the person they murdered as less important and valuable than they are. God instituted the death penalty Himself after the flood when He said, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God, He made man.” (Gen. 9:6)

The reason the death penalty is pro-life is that it puts the highest possible value on the life of the person murdered by exacting the life of the person who violated that value by murdering. It’s a strong way to say, “It is not OK for one human being to take the life of another. If you murder, you forfeit your own life because the person you killed is so valuable.”

Concerning judging: yes, the Bible does say don't judge, but it also commands us to judge rightly. So you have to look at the context of commands such as "Judge not, lest ye be judged" (Matt. 7:1), which is about condemning others for doing the very same thing we do. Judging also means "be discerning" and "make a distinction between right and wrong." Jesus repeatedly taught men to judge rightly, insisting they "judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). He praised a man who "rightly judged" (Luke 7:43). Jesus also said, "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him, and if he refuses to listen, tell it to the church" (Matt. 18:15,17). Obeying such a command is only possible by making a judgment on one who sins. Jesus' apostle Paul later gave God's command to the church: "Do you not judge those who are within the church? . . . Remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (1 Cor. 5:12,13).

Also, the Bible tells us that governments (which are the only entities entitled to carry out capital punishment) are instituted by God for maintaining order: "[F]or [government] is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. (Rom 13:4)

Thus, I would argue that the Bible supports capital punishment, although it is extremely important to make absolutely sure that only the guilty are executed.

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Partial Birth Abortion – From a Biblical Perspective

A Commitment to Gruesomeness

This year is the twenty-seventh year of legal abortion, and the only thing that appears to have changed in the debate is the addition of newer and more gruesome abortion procedures. At the top of the list is partial birth abortion.

The first legislative debate on partial birth abortion took place back in 1995 when Representative Charles Canady introduced a bill to ban this unknown procedure. Congressional testimony revealed that a fetus was delivered feet first, up to the head, so that the skull could be pierced and the brain suctioned out.

Canady's bill was a response to a paper delivered by Martin Haskell, a doctor from Dayton, Ohio, at the National Abortion Federation. At the time, reaction to Haskell's practice ran high in Ohio and eventually nationwide. The state of Ohio became the first state to prohibit the procedure and Canady's bill began to focus the issue on a national level.

Who would have predicted that such a long and protracted battle would take place over the last five years? And perhaps that shows how extreme the abortion lobby has become by its willingness to defend any abortion procedure no matter how far advanced the pregnancy might be. It also demonstrates the judiciary's willingness to defend abortion at every turn.

Although Charles Canady's bill was passed by both the House (288 to 139) and Senate (54 to 44), it was vetoed by President Clinton in April of 1996. Meanwhile, pro-life advocates were turning their energies to state legislatures. Partial birth abortion bans spread like wildfire through the legislatures.

Today nearly three out of every five state legislatures have passed a ban, and some of these bans have been passed over gubernatorial vetoes. Unfortunately, liberal judges in various judicial jurisdictions have overturned many of these bans, alleging that they are vague or could threaten the life of the mother.

Congress has also reconsidered the issue again. Senator Rick Santorum reintroduced the ban in January 1997. A month later the newspaper *American Medical News* published an interview with Ron Fitzsimmons, executive director of the National Coalition of Abortion Providers. He admitted that he lied on national television regarding the number of partial birth abortions performed and the reasons for them. This was a stunning revelation that thousands of such abortions had been performed and usually for no medical indications. The momentum for a ban on partial birth abortions seemed to be growing. And the bill again passed both houses of Congress with a larger margin. But the Senate vote (64 to 36) was still not quite large enough to ensure an override of the expected veto by President Clinton.

Currently Congress is considering the issue again. And there are many political commentators who wonder if the margin may grow again since this is an election year. Also, as we will discuss in more detail, the Supreme Court seemed poised to act on the issue as well. While that does not insure that a federal ban on partial birth abortion will pass this year, it does raise the stakes over this controversial and gruesome procedure. Will Congress or the courts eventually ban this procedure? That seems more likely now than at any time in the past. Certainly the next few months will tell. But how will that take place?

The Current Climate

Publicity over the partial birth abortion procedure has helped build momentum. During the debate in October of 1999, Senator

Rick Santorum and Senator Barbara Boxer engaged in the following exchange.

> *Santorum:* But, again, what you are suggesting is if the baby's toe is inside the mother, you can, in fact, kill that baby.
>
> *Boxer:* Absolutely not.
>
> *Santorum:* Okay. So if the baby's toe is in, you can't kill the baby. How about if the baby's foot is in?
>
> *Boxer:* You are the one who is making these statements.
>
> *Santorum:* We are trying to draw a line here.
>
> *Boxer:* I am not answering these questions.
>
> *Santorum:* If the head is inside the mother, you can kill the baby.

Discussion and dialogue like this has helped solidify and bolster public opposition to partial birth abortion. Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has called this procedure "near-infanticide." Opinion polls show that he is not alone in his assessment. Even citizens and politicians who are sympathetic to abortion rights are repulsed by partial birth abortion.

Throughout this year the battle against partial birth abortion will be fought on two fronts: Congress and the courts. Pro-life advocates point out that vote counts in the Senate show they are getting very close to a veto-proof margin. Key senators forced to vote on this measure during an election year might make the difference.

Meanwhile, federal courts have forced the Supreme Court to deliberate on the issue. This fall federal judges in Wisconsin and Illinois found the partial birth abortion bans in their states to be constitutional. Before the laws could be

implemented, Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens issued a stay that holds the two state laws in limbo until the high court disposes of the appeals.

Legal experts say that the order is written in such a way as to force the court to directly consider the constitutionality of partial birth abortions, or else the court must leave these state laws in place. In either case, this appears to be a pro-life victory.

Last summer in Arizona, an abortionist was performing a partial birth abortion on what he thought was a twenty-three week old. Suddenly he realized the baby was actually thirty-seven weeks old. He stopped the abortion and delivered the baby. The police said that, “At this point it doesn’t appear that anybody will be charged with anything.” The reason? Nothing illegal was done.

President Clinton continues to veto congressional bans on this procedure, and judges continue to overturn state bans on this procedure. But it appears that in the year 2000 that is about to change.

The Biblical Perspective

Before we continue this discussion I wanted to focus on the biblical perspective of abortion. A key passage in this discussion is Psalm 139, where David reflected on God’s sovereignty in his life.

The psalm opens with the acknowledgment that God is omniscient; He knows what the psalmist, David, is doing. God is aware of David’s thoughts before he expresses them. Wherever David might go, he could not escape from God, whether he traveled to heaven or ventured into Sheol. God is in the remotest part of the sea and even in the darkness. David then contemplated the origin of his life and confessed that God was there forming him in the womb.

> For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Here David wrote of God’s relationship with him while he was growing and developing before birth. The Bible does not speak of fetal life as mere biochemistry. This is not a piece of protoplasm that became David. This was David already being cared for by God while in the womb.

Verse 13 speaks of God as the Master Craftsman, weaving and fashioning David into a living person. In verses 14-15 David reflected on the fact that he was a product of God’s creative work within his mother’s womb, and he praised God for how wonderfully God had woven him together.

David drew a parallel between his development in the womb and Adam’s creation from the earth. Using figurative language in verse 15, he referred to his life before birth when “I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.” This poetic allusion hearkens back to Genesis 2:7, which says that Adam was made from the dust of the earth.

David also noted that “thine eyes have seen my unformed substance.” This shows that God knew David even before he was known to others. The term translated “unformed substance” derives from the verb “to roll up.” When David was forming as a fetus, God’s care and compassion were already extended to him. The reference to “God’s eyes” is an Old Testament term connoting divine oversight of God in the life of an individual or a group of people.

While there are certainly other passages in the Old and New

Testament that speak to the sanctity of human life, I believe that Psalm 139 is sufficient to show why Christians must oppose abortion, especially partial birth abortion. The unborn baby is a human being that God cares for. It should not be sacrificed in the womb for convenience or even for fetal parts that might improve the medical condition of another person. The unborn must be protected at every stage of development.

Partial birth abortion is a controversial and gruesome procedure. It is also against the will of God. Christians must speak out against the horror of this procedure and do whatever they can to make the procedure illegal.

Fetal Tissue Trafficking

I would like to turn our focus to a related issue: the traffic of fetal tissue parts. In the fall of 1999, a pro-life group by the name of Life Dynamics published their two-year investigation of the traffic of fetal body parts. They produced copies of brochures, protocols, and price lists that document the interstate commerce of fetal body parts. One brochure touts “the freshest tissue available.” A price list provides a grim picture of the trafficking in cannibalized body parts: eyes are $50 to $75 depending on the age of the fetus, skin is $100, a spinal cord is $325.

The investigation provided new insight into why the fight against partial birth abortion has been so tough. Partial birth abortion, after all, is a difficult procedure that involves turning the fetus in the womb and removing it feet first. This complicates the abortion and therefore poses more risk to the mother. So why do abortionists do it? Fetal tissue parts. Quite simply, if you want an intact brain, spinal cord, or limbs, partial birth abortion will provide that in ways that other abortion techniques will not.

Essentially scientists who need human body parts for research have found a loophole in the federal law that prohibits the

sale of body parts. Abortion clinics provide these companies with whole or dismembered aborted fetuses for a service fee. This is listed as a "site fee" which is "rental on the space" that a body parts company employee occupies within the clinic. The company can, therefore, argue that they are donating the parts, but charging reasonable costs for retrieval which the federal law does allow. As long as the retrieval fees are higher than the site fee, they can make a profit.

Just one look at the "Fees for Services Schedule" can be chilling. Prices for every conceivable body part are listed. But it's important to notice that an intact embryonic cadaver costs $600. Why should there be a retrieval fee for that? Why not just list the cost of shipping? This discrepancy illustrates how the body parts companies are trying to circumvent the law.

Gene Rudd, an obstetrician and member of the Christian Medical and Dental Society's Bioethics Commission, said: "It's the inevitable logical progression of a society that, like Darwin, believes we came from nothing. . . . This is the inevitable slide down the slippery slope." He is appalled by this "death for profit" scheme that takes the weakest of the species to satisfy our desires.

Apparently women who come into an abortion clinic are asked to sign a document allowing the clinic to donate their aborted baby to research. No fetus may be used without permission. Then the clinic receives orders (usually from their fax machine) for parts that will be retrieved and shipped. Many of the protocols require that the specimens be obtained within minutes after the abortion and frozen or preserved.

Life Dynamics' two year investigation clearly documents what many of us suspected all along. The fight against partial birth abortion was so tough because a lot of money and fetal tissue was a stake. This procedure has little to do with providing women with choice and everything to do with the

interstate trafficking of fetal body parts.

A technician identified as “Kelly” came to Life Dynamics with this story of the traffic of fetal body parts.

The doctor walked into the lab and set a steel pan on the table. “Got you some good specimens,” he said. “Twins.” The technician looked down at a pair of perfectly formed 24-week-old fetuses moving and gasping for air. Except for a few nicks from the surgical tongs that had pulled them out, they seemed uninjured. “There’s something wrong here,” the technician stammered. “They are moving. I don’t do this.”

She watched the doctor take a bottle of sterile water and fill the pan until the water ran over the babies’ mouths and noses. Then she left the room. “I would not watch those fetuses moving,” she recalls. “That’s when I decided it was wrong.”

Back in the fall of 1999, Life Dynamics published its two-year investigation of the traffic of fetal body parts. They produced copies of brochures, protocols, and price lists that document the interstate commerce of fetal body parts.

I believe their investigation provided new insight into why the fight against partial birth abortion has been so tough. This procedure provides fetal tissue parts that are intact and thus available to research labs for a profit. And these are respected, tax-funded laboratories pursuing laudable goals like treating diabetes and Parkinson’s disease.

“Kelly” says that it was her job to go to abortion clinics to procure tissue “donations.” She would get a generated list each day of what tissue researchers needed and then look at the particular patient charts to determine where the specimens would be obtained. She would look for the most perfect specimens to give the researchers “the best value that we could sell for.”

Fetuses ranged in age from seven weeks to 30 weeks and beyond.

Typically, “Kelly” harvested tissue from 30 to 40 “late” fetuses each week. These are delivered using the partial birth abortion procedure.

“Kelly” and others like her would harvest eyes, livers, brains, thymuses, and especially cardiac blood. Then they would pack and freeze the tissue and send them out by standard couriers (UPS, FedEx) to the research laboratories requesting the material. Life Dynamics has produced copies of forms for fetal parts from researchers. They contain the names of researchers, universities, pharmaceutical companies, and more.

Proponents of the research argue that the goal justifies the means. After all, these babies would have been aborted anyway. Why not use the discarded parts to further science and improve the quality of living of others? Christopher Hook, a fellow with the Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity calls this exploitation of the unborn “too high a price regardless of the supposed benefit. We can never feel comfortable with identifying a group of our brothers and sisters who can be exploited for the good of the whole.” He believes that, “Once we have crossed that line, we have betrayed our covenant with one another as a society and certainly the covenant of medicine.”

This is the sad legacy of partial birth abortion and the international traffic of fetal body parts. Christians must stand up against this gruesome practice and reassert the sanctity of human life and work for the banning of these procedures.

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Living in the New Dark Ages

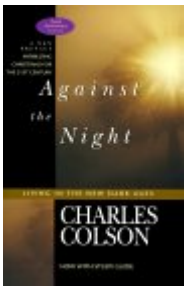
Former Probe staffer Lou Whitworth reviews Charles Colson's important book, Against the Night: Living in the New Dark Ages. *Colson argues that "new barbarians" are destroying our culture with individualism, relativism, and the new tolerance.*

Is the Sun Setting On the West?

It was 146 B.C. In the waning hours of the day a Roman general, Scipio Africanus, climbed a hill overlooking the north African city of Carthage. For three years he had led his troops in a fierce siege against the city and its 700,000 inhabitants. He had lost legions to their cunning and endurance. With the Carthaginian army reduced to a handful of soldiers huddled inside the temple of their god Eshmun, the city was conquered. And with the enemy defeated, Scipio ordered his men to burn the city.(1)

Now, as the final day of his campaign drew to a close, Scipio Africanus stood on a hillside watching Carthage burn. His face, streaked with the sweat and dirt of battle, glowed with the fire of the setting sun and the flames of the city, but no smile of triumph crossed his lips. No gleam of victory shone from his eyes. Instead, as the Greek historian Polybius would later record, the Roman general "burst into tears, and stood long reflecting on the inevitable change which awaits cities, nations, and dynasties, one and all, as it does every one of us men."

In the fading light of that dying city, Scipio saw the end of Rome itself. Just as Rome had destroyed others, so it would one day be destroyed. Scipio Africanus, the great conqueror and extender of empires, saw the inexorable truth: no matter how mighty it may be, no nation, no empire, no culture is immortal.



Thus begins Chuck Colson's book, *Against the Night: Living in the New Dark Ages*, a sober yet inspirational book on facing the future as involved Christians. He returns to this scene frequently in the book as a reminder of the transitory nature of nations and cultures. The author, chairman of Prison Fellowship and ex-Watergate figure turned Christian evangelist, sets forth a warning for the church and for individual believers.

Just as the Roman general Scipio Africanus saw in the flames of the city of Carthage the future fall of Rome and its empire, Colson believes that we are likely witnessing in the crumbling of our society the demise of the American experiment and perhaps even the dissolution of Western civilization.

And just as the fall of Rome led into the Dark Ages, the United States and the West are staggering and reeling from powerful destructive forces and trends that may lead us into a New Dark Ages. The imminent slide of the West is not inevitable, but likely unless current, destructive trends are corrected. The step-by-step dismantling of our Judeo-Christian heritage has led us to a slippery slope situation in which destructive tendencies unchecked lead to other unhealthy tendencies. For example, as expectations of common concern for others evaporates, even those who wish to retain that value become more cautious, reserved, and secretive out of self-defense, further unraveling the social fabric. Thus rampant individualism crushes to earth our more generous impulses and promotes more of the same. Other examples could be enumerated, but this illustrates the way one destructive, negative impulse can father a host of others. Soon the social fabric is in

tatters, and impossible to mend peaceably. At this point the society is vulnerable both from within and from without.

The New Barbarism and Its Roots

We face a crisis in Western culture, and it presents the greatest threat to civilization since the barbarians invaded Rome. Today in the West, and particularly in America, a new type of barbarian is present among us. They are not hairy Goths and Vandals, swilling fermented brew and ravishing maidens; they are not Huns and Visigoths storming our borders or scaling our city walls. No, this time the invaders have come from within.

We have bred them in our families and trained them in our classrooms. They inhabit our legislatures, our courts, our film studios, and our churches. Most of them are attractive and pleasant; their ideas are persuasive and subtle. Yet these men and women threaten our most cherished institutions and our very character as a people. They are the new barbarians.

How did this situation come to pass? The seeds of our possible destruction began in a seemingly harmless way. It began not in sinister conspiracies in dark rooms but in the paneled libraries of philosophers, the study alcoves of the British museums, and the cafs of the world’s universities. Powerful movements and turning points are rooted in the realm of ideas.

One such turning point occurred when Rene Descartes, looking for the one thing he could not doubt, came up with the statement *Cogito ergo sum*, “I think, therefore I am.” This postulate eventually led to a new premise for philosophical thought: man, rather than God, became the fixed point around which everything else revolved. Human reason became the foundation upon which a structure of knowledge could be built; and doubt became the highest intellectual virtue.

Two other men, John Stuart Mill (1806-73) and Jean Jacques

Rousseau (1712-78) contributed to this trend of man-based philosophy. Mill created a code of morality based on self-interest. He believed that only individuals and their particular interests were important, and those interests could be determined by whatever maximized their pleasure and minimized their pain. Thus the moral judgments are based on calculating what will multiply pleasure and minimize pain for the greatest number. This philosophy is called utilitarianism, one form of extreme individualism.

Another form of individualism was expressed by Rousseau who argued that the problems of the world were not caused by human nature but by civilization. If humanity could only be free, he believed, our natural virtues would be cultivated by nature. Human passions superseded the dictates of reason or God's commands. This philosophy could be called experimental individualism.

Mill and Rousseau were very different. Mill championed reason, success, and material gain; and Rousseau passion, experiences, and feelings. Yet their philosophies have *self* as a common denominator, and they have now melded together into radical individualism, the dominant philosophy of the new barbarians.

According to sociologist Robert Bellah, pervasive individualism is destroying the subtle ties that bind people together. This, in turn, is threatening the very stability of our social order as it strips away any sense of individual responsibility for the common good. When people care only for themselves, they are not easily motivated to care about their neighbors, community life devolves into the survival of the fittest, and the weak become prey for the strong.

The Darkness Increases and the New Barbarians Grow Stronger

Today the prevailing attitude is one of relativism, i.e., the belief that there is no morally binding objective source of

authority or truth above the individual. The fact that this view tosses aside 2,500 years of accumulated moral wisdom in the West, a rationally defensible natural law, and the moral law revealed by God in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures seems to bother very few.

Relativism and individualism need each other to survive. Rampant individualism promotes a competitive society in which conflicting claims rather than consensus is the norm because everyone is his or her own standard of "right" and "wrong" and of "rights" and "obligations." The marriage of extreme individualism and relativism, however, has produced a new conception of "tolerance."

The word *tolerance* sounds great, but this is really tolerance with a twist; it demands that everyone has a right to express his or her own views as long as those views do not contain any suggestion of absolutes that would compete with the prevailing standard of relativism.

Usually those who promote tolerance the loudest also proclaim that the motives of religious people are suspect and that, therefore, their views on any matter must be disqualified. Strangely, socialists, Nazis, sadomasochists, pedophiles, spiritualists, or worshipers of Mother earth would not be excluded. Their right to free expression would be vigorously defended by the same cultural elite who are so easily offended when Christians or other religious people express their views.

But this paradoxical intolerance produces an even deeper consequence than silencing an unpopular point of view, for it completely transforms the nature of debate, public discussion, and consensus in society. Without root in some transcendent standard, ethical judgments become merely expressions of feelings or preference. "Murder is wrong" must be translated "I hate murder" or "I prefer that you not murder." Thus, moral claims are reduced to the level of opinion.

Opponents grow further and further apart, differing on a level so fundamental that they are unable even to communicate. When moral judgments are based on feelings alone, compromise becomes impossible. Politics can no longer be based on consensus, for consensus presupposes that competing moral claims can be evaluated according to some common standard. Politics is transformed into civil war, further evidence that the barbarians are winning.

Proponents of a public square sanitized of moral judgments purport that it assures neutrality among contending moral factions and guarantees certain basic civil rights. This sounds enlightened and eminently fair. In reality, however, it assures victory for one side of the debate and assures defeat of those with a moral structure based on a transcendent standard.

Historically, moral restraints deeply ingrained in the public consciousness provided the protective shield for individual rights and liberties. But in today's relativistic environment that shield can be easily penetrated. Whenever some previously unthinkable innovation is both technically possible and desirable to some segment of the population, it can be, and usually will be, adopted. The process is simple. First some practice so offensive it can hardly be discussed is advocated by some expert. Shock gives way to outrage, then to debate, and when what was once a crime becomes a debate, that debate usually ushers the act into common practice. Thus decadence becomes accepted. History has proven it over and over.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Questions arise in our minds: How bad is the situation? Is it too late to stop or reverse the downward trend? If it's too late, do we wait, preserve, and endure until the winds of history and God's purpose are at our backs?

When a culture is beset by both a loss of public and private

values, the overall decline undermines society's primary institutional supports. God has ordained three institutions for the ordering of society: the family for the propagation of life, the state for the preservation of life, and the church for the proclamation of the gospel. These are not just voluntary associations that people can join or not as they see fit; they are organic sources of authority for restraining evil and humanizing society. They, and the closely related institution of education, have all been assaulted and penetrated by the new barbarians. The consequences are frightening.

The Family

The family is under massive assault from many directions, and its devastation is obvious. Yet the family and the church are the only two institutions that can cultivate moral virtue, and of these the family is primary and foremost because "our very nature is acquired within families."(2) Unfortunately when radical individualism enters the family, it disrupts the transmission of manners and morals from one generation to the next. Once this happens it is nearly impossible to catch up later, and the result is generation after generation of rude, lawless, culturally retarded children.

The Church

The new barbarians have penetrated our churches and tried to turn them into everything except what God intended them to be. Even strong biblical churches have not been immune to their influence. Yet only as the church maintains its distinctiveness from the culture is it able to affect culture. The church dare not look for "success" as portrayed in our culture; instead its watchword must be "faithfulness"; only then will the church be successful. The survival of the Western culture is inextricably linked to the dynamic of reform arising from the independent and pure exercise of religion from the moral impulse. That impulse can only come

from our families and from our churches. The church must be free to be the church.

The Classroom

The classroom has also been invaded by radical individualism and the secular ideas of the new barbarians. We must resist putting our young people under unbridled secularistic teaching, especially if it isn't balanced by adequate exposure to Christian principles and a Christian worldview.

The State/Politics

Government has a worthy task to do, i.e., to protect life and to keep the peace, but it cannot develop character. To believe that it can do so is to invite tyranny. First, most people's needs and problems are far beyond the reach of government. Second, it is impossible to effect genuine political reform, much less moral reform, solely by legislation. Government, by its very nature, is limited in what it can accomplish. We need to be involved in politics, but we must do so with realistic expectations and without illusions.

Our culture is indeed threatened, but the situation is not irreversible if we model the family before the world and let the church be the church.

A Flame in the Night

This is an important work, one that every Christian would benefit from reading. Though Colson's subject—the ethical, moral, and spiritual decline that many observers forecast for our immediate future—is bleak, the work isn't morose or gloomy. His focus is on opportunities and possibilities before us regardless of what the future holds. In the book's last section, he calls for the church and for individual Christians to be lights in the darkness by cultivating the moral imagination and presenting to the world a compelling vision of the good. He outlines three steps in that process.

First, we must reassert a sense of shared destiny as an antidote to radical individualism. We are born, live, and die in the context of communities. Rich, meaningful life is found in communities of worship, self-government, and shared values. We are not ennobled by relentless competition, endless self-promotion, and maximum autonomy, nor are these tendencies ultimately rewarding. On the other hand, commitment, friendship, and civic cooperation are both personally and corporately satisfying.

Second, we must adopt a strong, balanced view of the inherent dignity of human life. All the traditional restraints on inhumanity seem to be crumbling at once in our courts, in our laboratories, in our operating rooms, in our legislatures. The very idea of an essential dignity of human life seems a quaint anachronism today. As Christians we must be unequivocally and unapologetically pro- life. We cannot disdain the unborn, the young, the infirm, the handicapped, or the elderly. We cannot concede any ground here.

Third, we must recover respect for tradition and history. We must reject the faddish movements of the moment and look to the established lessons from the past. The moral imagination (our power to perceive ethical truth[3]) values reason and recognizes truth. It asserts that the world can be both understood and transformed through the carefully constructed restraints of civilized behavior and institutions. It assumes that to approach the world without consideration of the ideas of earlier times is an act of hubris in essence, claiming the ability to create the world anew, dependent on nothing but our own pitiful intelligence.

In contrast to such an attitude, the moral imagination begins with awe, reverence, and appreciation for order within creation. It sees the value of tradition, revelation, family, and community and responds with duty, commitment, and obligation. But the moral imagination is more than rational. It is poetic, stirring long atrophied faculties for nobility,

compassion, and virtue.

Imagination is expressed through symbols, allegories, fables, and literary illustrations. Winston Churchill revived the moral imagination of the dispirited British people in his speeches when he depicted the threat from Hitler not as just another war, but as a sacrificial, moral campaign against a force so evil that compromise or defeat would bring about a New Dark Ages. British backbones were stiffened and British hearts were ennobled because Churchill was able to unite rational, emotional, and artistic ideas into a common vision.

Western civilization and the church are currently engaged in a war of ideas with new barbarians. Whether we have the will to be victorious will depend in large measure on the strength and power of our moral imagination. Charles Colson's book, *Against the Night: Living in the New Dark Ages*, can give us guidance in this crucial task.

Notes

1. This essay is in large measure a condensation of several chapters of the author's work; consequently, quotations and paraphrase may exist side by side unmarked. Therefore, for accuracy in quoting, please consult the book: Charles Colson, with Ellen Santilli Vaughn, *Against the Night: Living in the New Dark Ages* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant, 1989).

2. Russell Kirk, *The Wise Men Know What Wicked Things Are Written on the Sky* (Washington:Regnery Gateway, 1987), 24.

3.For fuller discussion see Russell Kirk, *Enemies of the Permanent Things: Observations of Abnormity in Literature and Politics* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969), 119.

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