

Abortion and the Law

no one is justified by the law (Galatians 3:11)

from the 1992 bulletin

The old Jewish Law was both moral and criminal. It decreed that someone guilty of adultery or blasphemy should be stoned to death !

Despite these harsh laws, Israel was not a moral nation. As St. Paul tells us, the Law was not effective in forcing people to be good. Nonetheless, many of the Jewish converts to Christianity still clung to the Law as the way of salvation and to these St. Paul writes his many arguments about the power of the Spirit versus the letter of the law.

It is peculiar how many people still look to the Law for a final resolution of the abortion "issue" despite the overwhelming evidence that it is no solution at all.

What the law says, and whether we continue to tolerate abortion or not, are two different questions. In Mexico, where the law strictly bans abortion, there are a million abortions a year in a population of only 82 million. In the Philippines, where the ban on abortion is written into the national constitution, there are an estimated 500,000 abortions every year in a population of 60 million. There is a similar situation in many other places.

In other words, these countries, with strict laws against abortion, actually have a higher rate of abortion than the United States. It would make sense for them to end the hypocrisy and legalize abortion as we have in the United States. Why wouldn't it? At least then there would be some regulation of the abortion industry, some lessening of back alley butchery. They could have front alley butchery like we have here. And also, perhaps, a pro life movement like we have here. Instead they have a society that is complacent about this terrible evil because it is illegal and therefore half-hidden.

A recent pro life article notes with satisfaction that an attempt to legalize abortion in Brazil was defeated. But there are 3 to 5 million abortions a year in Brazil! So keeping it illegal just means that you can't even get an accurate count, within a million or two!

The peculiar obsession with legality and the parallel disregard for reality is like the **video arcade syndrome**: people become absorbed with winning the games and quite lose track of the fact that they aren't winning anything at all in the real world. In real terms, all they are doing is losing time and money. The similarity isn't accidental. When Satan designed the video arcade for adolescents, he modeled it upon the system of conventional politics by which he mesmerizes over-the-hill adolescents.

Laws that are unenforceable because they have no moral force behind them are not only useless, they are pernicious. They keep the moral evil out of sight where people don't have to look at it or deal with it. When that moral force is present, the law is redundant--a formality. It is the effect, not the cause, of the moral change in society.

For a generation, laws guaranteeing basic civil rights to Negroes were routinely defeated or filibustered to death in the United States Congress. When the landmark civil rights bills of 1964 and 1965 finally swept through the Congress, it was because of the irresistible momentum created by the direct action civil rights movement which put half a million people into the streets in 1963. They passed because of the blood of the civil rights martyrs, not because of the maneuvers of the lawyers, lobbyists and politicians who claimed the credit. And these laws were still only pieces of paper except to the degree that people everywhere personally adopted the attitudes written into the law.

The laws passed since then, supposedly for the benefit of Negroes in general, have benefited a few at the expense of others and have created new injustice instead of curing the old, because we still have not made the moral commitment to basic justice for the under class where most Negroes are forced to spend their lives.

Would an amendment to the constitution stop abortion? As the result of a great effort by a lot of Christians, the United States once had an amendment that prohibited alcohol. It was widely disregarded, finally repealed, and the result was more drunkenness than ever.

The effort to pass a constitutional amendment can soak up all the available time, energy and money, so that, if you lose, you're done. That's just what happened to the feminist movement because of their failed attempt to pass the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970's. They never have recovered the strength they had before they threw all their energy into this doomed effort. The same is true of other efforts which aim at legal changes. They divert our time and energy from the real battle.

The worst mistake we can make is to see the battle in the narrow terms of what the law says. Many people see it that way because they don't comprehend the moral and spiritual dimensions of the battle. Many see it that way because their careers or their personal ambitions are dependent upon this narrow definition of the battle.

The pro life politicians and the pro life lobbies perpetuate their careers and justify the funds they solicit by promoting morally compromised laws which lack any effective enforcement provisions and which amount to little more than statements of good intentions. They are in the same position as those who staff the civil rights lobbies. Typically, they go on year after year, endlessly pushing marginal or useless laws, because they thereby perpetuate their jobs.

This kind of program appeals to many people who want the credit for doing something without the burden of doing it. What many people are aiming at, consciously or unconsciously, is a return to hypocrisy. They want the homosexuals to return to the closet, and they want abortion to disappear into the back alley. It isn't morality they believe in, it's respectability--hypocrisy--crestoring the *Christian* curtain that used to hide the real character of our society.

Their lack of serious moral purpose shows where they are coming from. They accept moral evil as inevitable, but they want it out back with the garbage, not on the front steps where everyone has to pass by it. Their attitude is curiously similar to that of the people on the other side of the fence at Planned Parenthood--abortion isn't horrible unless you take pictures of it, unless you bring it out into the open where everyone has to look at it. So these believers in the law tacitly recognize that abortion will still be there, but they want it to disappear from the law.

Restoring a formal law restricting abortion will only deceive people into thinking that the problem is solved and encourage them to go back to sleep. Unless there is a moral and spiritual revolution along with it, a law will do nothing to stop abortion. You have to win the moral and spiritual battle first or any law will be useless. If we are serious about stopping abortion, we need to look beyond the political fight over what the law says. We need to dig down to the spiritual roots of abortion.

[later] The tap root is the money loving American life style that so many *Christians* have embraced. The **careers for women** which mandate that women must rely upon contraception backed by abortion until they can have that one baby they are allowed at age 35.

the folly of half measures

A limited anti-abortion measure like the one passed in Pennsylvania may have some use as a kind of political football. It precipitates the fight and it focuses our attention on the abortion issue here at home. It pushes people to cease being so obsessed with what happens in Washington and it puts the issue a little closer to where it belongs--on our front door step. But these limited measures are also very dangerous and they can easily do more harm than good to the pro life movement. They distract us from the real battle.

The Pennsylvania law has been shaped to conform to the position of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor who is willing to accept "reasonable" restrictions on abortion so long as they do not substantially interfere with a woman's right to abortion. It doesn't ban abortion, it only regulates it. Measures like parental notification and informed consent can muster a substantial majority. They don't touch the central moral issue nor do they lead to any more serious measures, rather they tend to set the practice of abortion in legal cement. They are like the reasonable restrictions against alcohol such as the 21 drinking age, the 2 a.m. closing time for bars, and the severe penalties for drunk driving. Those aren't the first steps towards outright prohibition of alcohol, and in fact they take us in the opposite direction by implicitly establishing the legitimacy of what is regulated. When you support a law which regulates abortion, you are supporting a law which establishes abortion as all right so long as certain excesses are eliminated.

The same thing happened in the civil rights movement and even earlier in the abolition movement. Partial measures actually increased the evil of slavery instead of alleviating it. An act of the British Parliament in 1807 supposedly abolished, not slavery itself, but only the slave trade. This and other partial measures led to a situation in which *the traders made great efforts to carry as many slaves as possible in every voyage, and practised atrocities to get rid of the slaves when capture was imminent. It was, besides, the interest of the cruisers, who shared the price of the captured slave ship, rather to allow the slaves to be taken on board than to prevent their being shipped at all. Thrice as*

great a number of negroes as before, it was said, was exported from Africa, and two-thirds of these were murdered on the high seas. It was found also that the abolition of the British slave trade did not lead to an improved treatment of the Negroes in the West Indies. The slaves were overworked now that fresh supplies were stopped, and their numbers rapidly decreased. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 9th edition, essay on Slavery)

It is to the eternal credit of George Fox and the Quakers that they took a firm and principled position against slavery at a time when other Christian Churches still used the Old Testament to justify slavery and long before the politicians began to pass their half measures. Christian radicals like William Lloyd Garrison demanded the complete abolition of slavery and he went to prison for it. It is the example of serious and uncompromised Christians such as these that we should follow. In 1761 the English Quakers excluded from their society anyone who was involved in any way with slavery. The American Quakers did the same in 1776. By contrast, the best the British Parliament could do was to pass an act in 1788 which said that the number of slaves carried in British slave ships must be in proportion to the tonnage. The American "statesmen" shamefully surrendered on slavery when they wrote the American Constitution in 1787 and this act of unprincipled political expedience on their part led directly to a major increase in slavery and in the power of the slavery interest in America and to the death of half a million people in the Civil War. There is a price that has to be paid for a moral society. If we do not pay it now, we must pay it later--with heavy interest penalties.

Jonah's Run

All the trouble that people take to avoid having to bear Christian witness--it reminds me of the prophet Jonah who ran away rather than deliver God's message and so he wound up seasick, thrown overboard and living in the belly of a whale. In the end, he had to go back and bear witness anyway, so he might have saved himself a lot of trouble by doing it in the first place.

The "informed consent" bill which was recently aborted in the Colorado legislature is a good example of what happens because Christians are unwilling to take personal responsibility for bearing witness to the truth about abortion. The task of telling women the truth about abortion is put off on the legislature, which won't pass it, and on the abortion industry and the pro death politicians, if it does pass.

The bill mandated that the "doctor"--that is, the abortionist--would have to give a woman a packet of information about abortion and then wait 3 days before he could do the abortion. The information packet was to have been prepared by a committee of experts appointed by the governor and other elected politicians.

So the abortionist and a committee appointed by pro-abortion politicians--they'll all be from Planned Parenthood!--is to be entrusted with the task of seeing that women are told the truth about abortion! This idea isn't just absurd, it's obscene!

The best thing to be said for the bill is that it didn't pass. If it did it would have been not simply useless but pernicious. Is it really all right for women to kill their babies, so long as they are fully informed about what they are doing? The sponsors kept defensively reassuring the pro-aborts that nothing in the bill would interfere with the right to abortion. So all the pro-lifers who supported the bill were effectively supporting the right to abortion in a doomed attempt to pass an absurd and useless law ! Why are pro lifers so addicted to illusion? So quick to be suckered into shameful compromises ?

But that is exactly how you end up when you 1) lack the courage to bear Christian witness 2) settle for what the law might allow instead of being faithful to the whole Christian gospel 3) promote laws, dictated by political expedience, which sacrifice fundamental principles to the vain hope of political success.

Support the Informed Dissent Bill!

Instead of these futile, foolish and immoral half-measures, I call upon serious pro-lifers everywhere to support my **Informed Dissent Bill**.

The major advantages of my bill are these: 1) It is a nationwide bill which can be passed in every State, whether the legislature wants to pass it or not. 2) It targets all baby killing whether informed or mis-informed and it does not concede that it is all right for a woman to kill her baby so long as she knows what she is doing. 3) it is sure to pass--the pro-aborts can't stop it. 4) It will **stop** abortion, not just regulate it!

Here is how you can support it: a) Look through your pro life literature and select the best leaflet. b) Order 1000 of them. c) Go down to the shopping center, the grocery store, or the sidewalk by the high school and hand them out. In short, **you** pass the appropriation, **you** select the committee, then **you** vote it in with your feet. The only one that can veto it is the devil of timidity and, with the Holy Spirit in your heart, you can override the veto!

What you want to promote isn't informed consent, it's **informed dissent**. You tell people the truth about abortion so that they will turn away from it.

Instead of depending upon the legislature, depend upon yourself and answer the call to follow Jesus by bearing personal witness to the truth. Instead of depending upon a committee of political and abortion industry "experts," depend upon yourself as to what kind of abortion information women need to see. Instead of depending upon the abortionist to talk a woman out of an abortion, depend upon someone who believes in the message.

Is it a battle of information only? Of course not! It's a battle of spirits, of good versus evil spirits. How can the battle possibly be won except by someone who is strong in the spirit? Can the truth prevail if there is no one with the courage to bear witness to the truth? These people who are forever looking for some safe and easy way to promote the truth, without any personal risk or commitment on their part, show how far they have drifted from the most basic obligation of anyone who wishes to call himself a Christian. Bearing personal witness to the truth isn't an option for a Christian! It is **the test of whether you are one!**

Recently, six of us went into a shopping mall and passed out *Did You Know's*. We were there an hour and a half before we ran out of leaflets and we passed out about 1500 leaflets in that time. If 350 pro-lifers in the State of Colorado would each pass out leaflets twice a month, we could give one to every person in the state in 12 months time. If we plant these pro life seeds this year, we will reap an abundant pro life harvest in the years to come.

A woman bound for an abortion needs a courageous and warm-hearted pro life friend to inform her, not a money-hungry abortionist! Is that really so hard to see? And it isn't just the scared, abortion-bound girl who needs to be told the truth about abortion. Her boy friend needs to be told. Her friends need to be told. Her parents need to be told. All the people that are pushing her into the abortion need to be told as much or more than she does. They don't just need to be told, they need to be convinced. How can that happen except by someone who passionately believes it, who has spent the time to learn all about it, who has gone to jail for it?

We need to stop talking, and we need to start doing. By any sane reckoning, we won the argument before it started. But we will never convince our opponents by arguments alone. **It's a stupid argument !** How many ways do you have to tell people that abortion kills babies before they believe it? Our problem isn't a lack of eloquence, it's a lack of courage !

It isn't that we need more sophisticated arguments because people don't believe us when we tell them that abortion kills babies. What they don't believe is that we mean it, that we care enough to do something about it beyond the endless arguments. And they are right ! It is all too obvious that most of the respectable wing of the pro life movement is going to spend the next ten years doing what they have been doing for the last twenty years: talking to each other, and forlornly waiting for an invitation to appear on television. Their behavior makes it 100% plain that they are serious about pursuing their careers and that they are not serious about stopping the killing of babies.

You can convince people of something that is false just because you really believe it yourself. The converse is that you won't convince people of what is true if you don't seem to believe it yourself, if your actions--your lack of actions--believe your words.

The pro life movement has to be a moral crusade. A moral crusade has to chart a course which avoids the futility of the Law and the immoral compromises that are in the very nature of conventional politics.

how to lobby the legislature: from the street!

The Supreme Court *almost* overturned Roe versus Wade! It temporarily dashed the false hopes of the pro-lifers who believe that the Law can win it for us. The Court did come within one vote, so there is still the hope that some day it will overturn Roe. Meantime, be patient! You don't see George Bush and the pro-life establishment getting impatient do you? So why should you be impatient? If we--and the babies doomed to die tomorrow--can just be patient, some day it will happen!

The Court stopped short of overturning Roe vs Wade in an election year. Those fellows didn't get where they are by being bold and reckless. The decision also illustrates how judges hang onto power once they get hold of it. As it stands, abortion laws will still have to be approved or disapproved by the Supreme Court.

If and when Roe goes down, the battle will move to the legislatures, where, in many states, the battle will be lost, if we have to fight it any time soon. In some states, like Connecticut, the legislative battle has already been conceded by establishment pro life organizations (see the May 1991 issue p. 13). In many other states it is predictable that the pro life establishment will embrace a specious legal victory that conceals a moral defeat.

What we need is a sustained campaign which forces the politicians and every one else to confront the reality of abortion. The pro life politicians are more of a hindrance than a help in this campaign. They won't serve the issue unless it serves them. These people are always ready to compromise and ignore the "issue" and for the worst of reasons--it serves their careers.

In this battle, NOW and NARAL are actually our allies and it is the luke warm compromisers and the nominal pro lifers who are our worst enemies. The weird witches of NOW and NARAL help us by insisting upon an extreme no compromise abortion position that not even 10 % of the people agree with, and by insisting upon making abortion **the** issue. While politicians on both sides avoid the issue as much as possible, the feminoids push the issue constantly. When they get the chance, they throw the raw meat on the floor in front of all these nice and respectable folks who don't want to disturb other people by bringing up the nasty subject of abortion. They are helping us because they want to make a fight of it, as the nominal pro lifers do not.

It isn't any use putting on your best dress to go down and lobby the legislators, until the legislature is encircled with a perpetual life chain. Legislators will ignore the efforts of pro life lobbyists so long as they are getting a contrary message or a mixed message from the people that elect them. It is these people that we have to reach with the pro life message and we have to do it by direct personal Christian witness.

We aren't going to win the battle in the court or in the legislature until we have won the battle out on the sidewalks and inside the shopping malls. We are a long way from winning that battle because we haven't even begun to fight it seriously. Most of our nominal "pro-life" organizations are too faint-hearted to even think about fighting.

To turn it around, we have to turn our state around. To do that, we have to turn around the people in our state. How are we going to do that when we aren't even trying to do it ? How will we win the battle unless the people in our state get the pro life message from us? How will they get the message unless we deliver it in person ?

Terry Sullivan