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living.*

GENERAL EDITOR: BRUCE J. NICHOLLS



this regard.¹⁰⁶ In the six years since Holway's lecture at this Missiology conference nothing constructive has been done about it. Before another six years pass something must be done about this urgent matter.

In conclusion, there is a painting in Edinburgh showing Muhammad riding on a war camel and Jesus riding on a donkey.¹⁰⁷ It was the other way around in Africa for the last hundred years or so, since Christians entered with colonial powers and Muslims as humble traders. Now we as Christians must set this right and in all humility be present among Muslims to witness to them about Christ and to cooperate with them for justice in society.

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The Sanctity of Human Life: An Appraisal of Trends in Medical Ethics

C. Everett Koop

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In speaking to you on the sanctity of life: an appraisal of the trends in medical ethics, I do so as a Christian physician who has spent thirty-five years as an active pediatric surgeon, teaching surgery at every possible level, and observing in the oldest medical school in America the trends in medical ethics. As the founder and editor-in-chief of the only English-speaking journal on pediatric surgery in the world, I have had an extraordinary opportunity to be in close contact with that group of physicians who deal with the situations medical and ethical which surround the birth of a child who is less than perfect.

When I speak to an audience such as this which is fundamentally Christian, I do not have to be exhaustive in my definition of the sanctity of human life. The Bible certainly affirms from cover to cover that life is precious to God. But what I have to say should be of importance to every thinking individual regardless of where he comes from spiritually. The sanctity of human life is being eroded and is being done so to the distress of millions of people, Christian and non-Christian alike. The erosion of the sanctity of human life is extraordinarily significant in the moral and political development of our shrinking world, so that even an atheist should be concerned about what is happening.

Communication is improving so rapidly that it takes less and less time for one part of our world to appreciate what is going on in another.

Social advances, so called, do not take long to travel across the Atlantic. Although the traffic goes both ways, it has been my general observation that you import from us by way

¹⁰⁶ For more information on the activities of the IAP elsewhere in Africa, see J. Crossley, "The Islam in Africa Project", *International Review of Mission*, vol. 61, 1972, pp. 154f.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. N. Q. King, *Christian and Muslim in Africa*, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p.113.

of the cinema a number of frivolous things that you probably would be better off without while we import from you concepts which have far-reaching effects upon our society and which I wish we had not learned. Major concepts like a national health service take twenty-five years to cross the Atlantic from the United Kingdom, while a symptom of the change in society such as abortion-on-demand can make the passage in five to six years. The mini-skirt and the Beatles' music crossed in a matter of days.

I use that term symptom after some thought. I believe our cultures are sufficiently similar to be able to say that we both suffer the effects of a disease and that the inhumanities of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia are merely symptoms of that disease which have surfaced in recent years.

The disease I refer to is the change in the basic philosophical and religious concepts in the West, which had their origins in Judeo-Christianity. It was the Judeo-Christian consensus which gave us not only our heritage but our laws, our method of government and our cultural relationships with each other. These have been abandoned for a philosophy which might best be called secular humanism. In America at least you might even say it is the new religion, although it has no god.

Secular humanism is taught directly or subtly in our educational system in the United States, whether it is in the inexpensive books you read to your children or in formal education from kindergarten through graduate school. God is no longer at the centre of this universe; Man is! The universe is seen as a great mechanism of which this planet is just one complex machine. You and I, they say, came about in random fashion through an evolutionary process from some primordial ooze. We ourselves are machines—more complicated to be sure than the machines we make, but we are machines, nevertheless.

With that philosophy, only the memory of the Christian consensus remains, where Man was unique because he was created in the image of God.

Several years ago, a student at the University of Pennsylvania where I have been privileged to teach since 1942, stood 16,000 dominoes on their ends in such a way that when he knocked over the first, it hit the second, which fell against the third, and so on, until all 16,000 dominoes fell in orderly fashion without a break in continuity. The inhumanities I am talking about might be likened to falling dominoes.

The first domino to fall was abortion-on-demand and it fell with a resounding boom. Abortion has split the United States as no other social issue has since the practice of slavery which led to the Civil War.

The second domino to fall was infanticide. It fell silently because unlike abortion, which is a public issue, infanticide is practised behind the shielding facade of the hospital.

The third domino is euthanasia; it has been struck and is falling.

These three dominoes, abortion, infanticide and euthanasia, are examples of the erosion of the sanctity of human life—an acknowledgement that Man is unique because he is created in the image of God.

The three inhumanities are being practised against a background of moral decay in a hedonistic society where life other than one's own is lightly esteemed and readily destroyed.

Abortion-on-demand set the stage for infanticide and euthanasia. Or, to say it another way: First the unborn were deprived of their right to life, which had been established for centuries, then the recently born were classified as having either no potential for meaningful life or life not worth living. How do you feel now concerning the sick, the aged, the senile, the dependent, the mentally retarded? How do you see them compared with your view of them seven or eight years ago? When you talk about a better society or a desire for an improved quality of life, what are your standards? Whatever your answer to these

questions, I know that your reaction will determine whether we have a society in which human life is respected or is uncharitably disdained.

ABORTION

Of all the immoralities that we cite as examples of the loss of our Judeo-Christian heritage to the forces of secular humanism, abortion is the keystone and for that reason I may seem to spend disproportionate time in discussing it. Even though abortion is the pivotal point, do not lose sight of the procession of events from abortion to infanticide to euthanasia to who knows what?

What is legal is right. At least, that is the way the world sees it. But the legality of abortion is not the same as the legality of gambling, or the practice of homosexuality. No matter how strict or how liberal may be the stance one might take in reference to these issues, they lose their similarity with abortion because of the fact that there is more than one set of rights involved in abortion.

The real reasons for abortion are social with economic implications in our society. It is not a medical question, but nevertheless abortion because of the skill of the physician becomes a medical answer to a social problem. As a physician, I resent that! The doctor has been named the social executioner.

Abortion is the taking of human life. Biologists have no problem in declaring the life of a sea anemone, an earthworm, a fox, or a baboon to be a continuum from fertilization until natural death of the organism, but medical doctors when discussing the highest form of animal life, whether they arrive there by evolution or by creation, talk about that elusive, non-definable moment when the developing fetus acquires a soul and therefore becomes a human being.

I am a soul. I inhabit a body. I have a spirit. Until someone can prove to the contrary, I intend to assume that that soul which I am has existed from the moment of conception and that the development of the fetus which has become me was to provide a body for that soul to become incarnate.

I have assumed the role of prophet on several occasions in reference to the abortion issue and in 1976 I said that if abortion in the United States continued to be performed without restraint that we would soon have abortion for no more important reason than the sex preference of the parents. In other words, destroying an unborn child when it was a girl and the parents wanted a boy.

The diagnosis of sex of a developing unborn child cannot be made until after the 16th week of pregnancy and sometimes not until after the 20th. The first step is to withdraw fluid by amniocentesis from the amniotic sac and then to culture it—a procedure which takes up to three weeks. This brings the developing baby very close to the point of viability.

My prophecy, made in 1976, proved to be incorrect, because I said that this would come upon us by 1985. It actually came to the United States in 1979 and to the United Kingdom in 1980.

We have referred to abortion-on-demand frequently, but now would you accept abortion-at-whim? I cannot understand why pro-abortion feminists are not up in arms over the obvious result—the disproportionate destruction of females.

Whitaker Chambers once said that Satan's greatest triumph was convincing us that he did not exist. What I have been talking about is sin, and sin has been buried in our cultures. It has been buried not by an anti-religious effort, not by a juggernaut of weaponry, it has been buried only by human contempt. Our humanistic philosophers and many psychologists

whose contempt is perhaps the greatest have replaced our concept of sin by the most unbelievable drivel.

Abraham Lincoln recognized the threat of secular humanism although he did not call it by that name. Listen to what he said:

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven: We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity ... but we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched us; we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us.

That statement could have been made today. It leads me to believe that whatever happened to the human race began to happen a long time ago. We cannot escape responsibility. We read in the 24th chapter of the book of Proverbs: "Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say: 'But we knew nothing about this', does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?"

INFANTICIDE

Infanticide is the killing of a born child. Whether that killing takes place by the withholding of something vital to the child's sustenance or whether that takes place by a direct act is immaterial; in either case a newborn life is being terminated.

Infanticide is extraordinarily important to those of us who are interested in the sanctity of the human life, because infanticide could never have come about had it not been for abortion-on-demand. When I read in the months following the January 1973 decision of the Supreme Court in the United States various references to Justice Blackmun's majority opinion, my blood ran cold. He stated in his decision that the Hippocratic oath which forbids abortion was irrelevant. He also said that he would not take any cues from the Judeo-Christian heritage of the United States, but instead he turned to the pagan religions of Rome, Greece, and of Persia for exemplary circumstances. Although these cultures did practise abortion, it was infanticide and euthanasia which were more important inhumanities in their day. The second important thing to remember about infanticide is that it is euthanasia in an age group. The hidden importance of infanticide in reference to our concerns in the future is that I am certain the day will come when the euthanasia forces will say: "Why are you concerned about euthanasia? We have had euthanasia for infants for a long time and there has been no outcry." The third important thing I would say about infanticide is that it is being practised by a segment of my profession from which we should expect more, and it is being ignored by a segment of society from which we should expect more integrity. It is being practised by that segment of the medical profession that in days gone by we could always look to to stand in the role of advocate for children; namely pediatricians and pediatric surgeons. Infanticide is homicide. The law from which we should expect more integrity makes believe it does not happen.

To illustrate how important the domino effect from abortion to infanticide is, consider this. The fetus in the United States has no protection at all up until the moment of birth. The reason for that is that the fetus has been declared to be a non-person without the rights that go with that personhood. Newborn infants who have defects which are physical and/or mental are now being referred to as fetus-exutero. In this way the protection of the law

which applies to the living child is being eroded by redefining him, not as a child, but as a fetus outside of the womb.

It was Leo Alexander, the psychiatrist appointed by the United States to be its observer at the Nuremberg War Trials, who said that the Holocaust began with the notion that there was such a thing as life not worth living. Infanticide in the United States and the United Kingdom where I know the situation best, is based upon exactly the same principle. The quality of life has replaced the equality of life. That does not auger well for you and me as we grow older and lose some of the faculties we now enjoy.

Perhaps the first thing that concerns me about infanticide is the fact that so many non-medical factors are taken into consideration when a physician decides that a youngster has a life not worth living. These include such things as the economics of the family, the stability of the marriage, the effect that a handicapped child might have upon the siblings in reference to certain luxuries they might enjoy as they grow up.

The second thing that concerns me is the application of a distorted ethic to other classes of human beings. If we are to acquiesce to the destruction of a newborn because he has the potential for a respiration insufficiency, a problem with his intestine, an orthopaedic contracture, or a sexual handicap, how long will it be before we decide that those adults who already have such handicaps also have lives not worthy to be lived?

Just as I believe that we are on a slippery slope from abortion to infanticide to euthanasia, we are on a slippery slope within each of these inhumanities. For example, infanticide was originally practised on those infants who had congenital anomalies which if untreated would cause the death of the child. This included such things as intestinal obstruction and congenital heart disease amenable to surgical correction. Now, non-lethal problems of the newborn such as spina bifida are also causes for what the British call the selection process. Here an infant who has a defect which is correctable but which would end up with a child having perhaps the need for orthopaedic surgery and braces and/or the construction of an artificial bladder is declared by fiat to be nontreatable. Then the problem arises how to get rid of this child. Lorber of Sheffield, England, the man who has brought about the change in attitude toward spina bifida in the United Kingdom, sets the death sentence this way: "It is essential that those who are not treated should not live long. It is imperative, therefore, that nontreatment should really be nontreatment, not just no operation. Nothing should be done to prolong life." These children are given eight times the sedative dose of a sedative like chloral hydrate or phenobarbitol, they become so floppy they cannot feed, and their death takes place in about three weeks from dehydration and starvation.

That example I think makes this an appropriate place to state my major thesis: In the West, at least, we are at the crossroads of the corruption of medicine with the corruption of the law. The corruption of medicine takes place when the profession acquiesces to the demand by the social planners to become the social executioners. The corruption of medicine takes place when the profession does not rise up in rebellion when some of its members choose to become killers as well as healers. The corruption of medicine takes place when the disease is eliminated by eliminating the patient.

The corruption of the law takes place when it enacts legislation or hands down judicial decrees that make the corruption of medicine legal, or as in the case of infanticide, when the law simply turns its back as though infanticide were not homicide and as though infanticide did not exist.

One final word about infanticide and the reaction of those from whom we should expect more. Two Nobel Laureates have voiced opinions concerning this subject. James Watson, of

DNA double Helix fame, said: "If the child were not declared alive until three days after birth, then all parents could be allowed the choice only a few are given under the present system. The doctor could allow the child to die if the parents so chose, and so save a lot of misery and suffering. I believe this view is the only rational, compassionate attitude to have." He said that in May 1973.

In January of 1978 Francis Crick, also a Nobel Laureate, was quoted in the Pacific News Service as saying: "No newborn infant should be declared human until it has passed certain tests regarding its genetic endowment and that if it fails these tests, it forfeits the right to live."

EUTHANASIA

I cannot leave the subject of the handicapped without expressing one more concern. If there is anything that annoys me more than discussions of the quality of life as the criterion for survival, it is cost-effectiveness—because I have never been able to bring myself to put a price tag on human life. We are constantly bombarded by propaganda not only in the lay press, but in medical journals as well, concerning the cost of the handicapped to society, and the cost of the retarded and otherwise mentally disadvantaged to society. I would submit to you that the cost of all the physically handicapped individuals and for all the mentally handicapped individuals in our society today and in the future is but a drop in the bucket compared to the cost to our society for the morally handicapped. I never read anything in the newspapers about how the physically handicapped have perpetrated tremendous crimes against society. The same could be said of the mentally handicapped. But the headlines in your newspapers and mine and the commentaries in our international news magazines constantly bring to mind the fact that we are burdened almost beyond our ability to stand it with the cost of the morally handicapped. In fact they are never called the morally handicapped at all. As a matter of fact, these are people who are defended by legal aid societies. These are the people for whom we are asked to provide every conceivable rehabilitation programme. We are asked to see that they have easy sentences when convicted. We are informed about the advantages of plea bargaining and for some of them there is not even an ultimate penalty because capital punishment has been abolished. Why then do we demand perfection for those who have physical handicaps and those who have mental handicaps when we do not even demand normal behaviour from those who are morally handicapped?

Euthanasia means happy death, but for people of my age it has a bad connotation because of the mercy killings which preceded the Holocaust in Nazi Germany.

The proponents of euthanasia use a language or vocabulary which is inaccurate, imprecise and on occasion even incorrect. Euthanasia is the purposeful killing of a dependent human being allegedly for his own good. It matters not whether that death is accomplished by withholding necessary vital support or whether an action is taken to terminate that life. In either instance, a life is terminated. It will not stretch the imagination to recognize that inevitably there will be a shift in emphasis from the killing of an individual for the *alleged* benefit of that individual to the killing for the benefit of others.

The role of physician is shifting from healer to killer. The late Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, pointed out just before her death in 1978, that in the days before Hippocrates and the Hippocratic Oath, the patient never knew whether the approaching physician was coming in his role as healer or killer. Do you see how with euthanasia we will

have come full circle? Once again, the elderly patient in a nursing home would not know whether the physician is coming in the form of killer or healer.

Terms such as the right to die, natural death, and death with dignity, are euphemisms around which the passive euthanasia movement is built. In any relationship between a physician and a patient, the patient is master and the physician is servant. Most physicians practise in the realm of trust between patient and physician and the patient can count upon his physician for doing the right thing. By the right thing, I mean not prolonging the act of dying, but on the other hand, giving the patient the full benefit of the life to which he is entitled.

Proper care is the human alternative to euthanasia. Under these circumstances the withdrawal of inappropriate support which only prolongs the act of dying is not to be confused with the term euthanasia no matter how many adjectives precede it to make it more palatable.

Those who are in the vanguard of the euthanasia movement are promoting an ethic of the quality of life which eventually must deprive imperfect individuals of their right to live. Spokesmen for the movement have extolled death and promoted the taking of human life as a public good.

Just before I close, I would like to express my concern about the apathy in that branch of the Protestant Church from which I come, namely the conservative evangelicals. These should be thinking people. These should be people who can understand the sanctity of life as it is expressed in the Word of God. These people are numerous and these people have political clout. Why are they so apathetic? Is it because they are so convinced of their citizenship in heaven that they are more concerned with the Hereafter than the Here-and-Now? Certainly if the Lord left us here to be salt and light to our generation, it should include a deep concern for the inhumanities I have been discussing.

The unrestricted liberty to perform abortion is destructive to the family. The pregnant woman becomes totally autonomous and the law permits her separation from her husband in the act of procreation. In the case of a minor girl, it separates her from the authority and advice as well as the love of her parents.

Abortion sets the poor against the rich, protestants against catholics, secularists against those who adhere to the Judeo-Christian belief. Parents are at enmity with their daughters, wives are in opposition to their husbands, and mothers are without doubt the enemies of unborn children.

Finally in the assault on human life, even the child who is born alive as the result of an abortion is in jeopardy because his former mother-to-be somehow or other has achieved the right to a dead baby.

In the 19th century, Dr. Christopher Hufland made this astute comment: "If the physician presumes to take into consideration in his work whether a life has value or not, the consequences are boundless and the physician becomes the most dangerous man in the state."

From a spiritual point of view, we must by word and action show our understanding of what it means to be created in the image of God. Those who are Christians must give witness to the fact that Jesus who existed in union with God the Father from before the foundation of the world, became flesh and dwelt among us, that his incarnation took place at conception, that he came to minister to the outcasts in society—those who today would be said to have "lives not worth living". Finally we must proclaim that life was so precious to God that his plan of redemption demanded the death of his son so that we who believe in him might live.

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A Place of Their Own

A Bible Study Guide

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This Bible Study Guide is designed to help Christians discover what the Old Testament says about our just stewardship of the natural environment in which we live. It is one of three studies by 10 members of the Environment Problems Group of the Shaftesbury Project, England. It is published as A World to Waste. For further details see "Journal Information", p. 308.

(Editor)

The people of Israel had a very special relationship with God and with the Promised Land which was their environment. The place which God had given them, and the sustenance it provided played a vital part in their history. We therefore have an opportunity to see how biblical teaching on environment and resources applied to a nation and how it affected the conduct of national affairs and the laws governing the life of the people.

The world was living under the consequences of the Fall: the broken relationship between man and God; the conflicts between man and man, and between man and his environment. In forming the nation of Israel, God provided laws which, if they had been obeyed, would have helped resolve these conflicts.

God made a covenant (or binding agreement) with Abraham ([Genesis 15:18–21](#) and [17:7–8](#)) and later with the people of Israel ([Exodus 19–23](#)). He made great promises to the people, but he also gave them laws to obey as their part of the covenant. The promises and the laws involved the whole of the life of the nation and each individual member of it. They affected environment and resources in a variety of ways which show how the principles to be found in the early chapters of Genesis applied to the social and economic problems of the nation.

We can attempt to apply these principles to our own society, although we must take care in doing this because:

- The covenant with the people of Israel has now been superseded by the new covenant instituted by Christ ([Matthew 26:26–28](#), [Hebrews 9:15](#)). The Old Testament law has not lost its validity, but we must be careful to understand its real meaning for us (see, for example, [Matthew 5:17](#), [Romans 13:10](#), [Mark 2:27](#)).
- The Old Testament is describing a society and economy very different from our own; we should therefore understand the basis of the principles involved rather than simply apply specific instructions intended for quite different circumstances.