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. . . In a November 7 interview with Catholic News Service, Dutch Cardinal Willem Eijk warned that gender theory was “spreading everywhere in the Western world.” Catholics, he went on, were accepting it “in a very easy way, even parents, because they don’t hear anything else.” In “Transgenderism: A Creature of Political Correctness” (page 57), longtime contributor Stella Morabito examines the rise of gender ideology: a pernicious movement that denies the immutability of sexual identity and threatens the age-old primacy of the family. Generated in the groves of academe, it is now invading the public square at warp speed. A new HHS regulation, for instance, would force all private doctors to perform transgender procedures on children. No, I am not making this up. For more information, see the Becket Fund’s recent press release announcing they have filed a lawsuit in North Dakota challenging the law (www.becketfund.org/state-hospitals-nuns-challenge-new-transgender-regulation/). Donald Trump’s pro-life bona fides have yet to be proven. The good news from the Nov. 8 election, however, is that a Trump administration is unlikely to use federal law to circumvent religious liberty and freedom of conscience: no new HHS contraceptive or abortion mandates; no assault on the Hyde Amendment; no medical professionals forced to participate in mutilating children or risk losing their jobs.

* * *

It is always a pleasure to welcome new contributors and this issue features four of them: Diane Moriarty recalls the early days of the *Roe* regime in “Wish You Weren’t Here” (page 20); Justin McClain considers faith, race, and life (“Marching On: The Catholic Church, the Black Community, and the Pro-life Movement” (page 33); Catherine Glenn Foster provides keen analysis of last June’s Supreme Court decision invalidating Texas abortion-clinic regulations (“Texas Aims to Protect Women and Children: Come *Hellerstedt* or High Water,” page 37); and Anne Sullivan reviews *Hush*, a new documentary examining widely ignored links between abortion and health risks such as breast cancer (Filmnotes, page 79).

Richard Weikart, a recent contributor (“Does Science Sanction Euthanasia?” Spring 2016), has a new book out—*The Death of Humanity and the Case for Life* (Regnery)—which inspired senior editor William Murchison’s meditation on “Dark Forces Assailing the West” (page 69). In the same vein, Encounter Books has issued an updated edition of Wesley J. Smith’s *Culture of Death*—reviewed in this issue by David Mills (Booknotes, page 75).

Finally, our thanks to *National Review* for permission to reprint Matthew Hennessey’s “The Medical Pros Are Wrong on Down Syndrome” (page 91) and to Consistent Life Network, where Richard Stith’s “When Choice Itself Hurts the Quality of Life” (page 93) first appeared. And, as always, thanks to Nick Downes for his unique sense of humor, expressed with hilarious charm in his cartoons.

ANNE CONLON
MANAGING EDITOR



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INTRODUCTION

How fitting that we open this issue with Ellen Wilson Fielding’s marvelous essay “Making Choices,” in which she turns the “pro-choice” argument on its head, beautifully articulating the powerful human longing for “do-overs” when choices have damaging consequences.

As I write, millions of Americans are yearning for a “do-over” of the 2016 presidential election, while millions of others are cheering the choice that led to victory for President-elect Donald Trump. So much remains to be seen, but, for those of us in the pro-life movement, the choice *against* Hillary Clinton and her embrace of the most radical pro-abortion policies ever is a chance for desperately needed progress. We hope and pray that Mr. Trump keeps to his pro-life promises; real lives depend on them.

Fielding’s article points out a contradiction of our times: In an age obsessed with “reality” shows, people increasingly act as if reality is up for grabs. She uses an analogy: a genre of fiction for school-age children—choose-your-plot books—in which the reader can “decide among various plot twists leading the protagonist through a variety of middles and endings.” So, backtracking can lead to “do-overs.” It’s the same kind of magical thinking, Fielding writes, that is at the base of the “pro-choice” mentality. Women seeking abortion desperately want to “unmake the choices” that got them to where they are. But choice “rhetoric,” she continues, “goes over better with young and unpregnant women than with the women experiencing crisis pregnancies [who] don’t really feel like they are choosing the abortion either.” If a choice doesn’t have real-life consequences, it’s not what we mean by a choice at all. And the only way to become *unpregnant* is if the child dies.

Individual children are saved when aid is offered to desperate mothers-to-be; this is the daily ministry of an order of nuns founded in New York City 25 years ago by the late great Cardinal John J. O’Connor. In his reminiscent essay, “Twenty-five Years Consecrated to Life,” contributor Brian Caulfield tells their story, which has several points of intersection with his own pro-life journey. The Sisters, he writes, are a sign of “sanctity in a fallen world; a witness to something better and higher in life; a hint of the hidden God whispering within each heart amidst the dust and din of New York.” Their ever-growing order has branched out to other cities in the United States and in Canada.

We welcome Diane Moriarty to our pages next with “Wish You Weren’t Here,” her vivid memoir of one evening in the “birthday” year of *Roe*, 1973. Her absorbing tale has a startling denouement; it illustrates well the advent of a warped feminist ideology that ignores the suffering of individual women. In our next article, senior editor Mary Meehan travels back almost as far—to the first anniversary of *Roe* and the first March for Life in January of 1974. The annual March for Life has been, we’d say, the most massively under-reported American happening ever. It is a mind-

boggling experience to see the hundreds of thousands of marchers, especially young people, who are there not just for the March, but also for so many other events around it; yet there is hardly a whisper in the mainstream press. Meehan recalls her interviews with the late first president of the March, Nellie Gray, and brings us up to date by speaking with its current president, Jeanne Mancini, who took over in 2011. She also gives us a tour of other notable Marches around the country.

The ever increasing activities of pro-lifers on the ground is a cause for optimism, a sentiment shared by our next author (also new to our pages), Justin McClain, in “Marching On: The Catholic Church, the Black Community, and the Pro-life Movement.” McClain reminds us that ten years before *Roe*—August 1963—the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr “delivered his historic ‘I have a dream’ speech at the Lincoln Memorial, not far from where the annual March takes place.” He outlines pro-life initiatives undertaken by groups such as the National Black Catholic Congress and Black Catholics for Life which “offer concrete solutions to help resolve social problems while endeavoring to reiterate the value of all human life”—so needed as the rate of abortion in the African American community is disproportionately enormous.

A crushing setback of 2016 was the June 27 Supreme Court ruling in *Whole Woman’s Health v. Hellerstedt*. “At issue,” writes attorney Catherine Glenn Foster, was a Texas law “carefully crafted to protect women against abortionists in the vein of Kermit Gosnell,” the man whose filthy and unsafe abortion practice caused the injury and death of poor African American women and children. We welcome Foster’s sharp and thorough analysis. While the Court ruled that the health and safety restrictions proposed by the Texas law would place “undue burdens” on women seeking abortions, Foster deftly illustrates that what the Court found intolerable were the undue burdens such common-sense regulations would impose on Big Abortion and its profit margins.

What comes next is a short story written by *Review* contributor Leslie Fain. “Heroes” is a poignant tale about surrogacy, exploring how people with good intentions can get caught up in situations that go against nature and ethics. We see again the painful results of so-called “reproductive choices,” when wombs are for hire and mothers’ hearts are broken: There are no “do-overs” in surrogacy.

We spoke earlier about a culture caught up in fantasy: What better example than the politically correct issue of transgenderism. Stella Morabito, a senior editor at *The Federalist*, lays out with chilling accuracy how the transgender movement has systematically used people’s fear of being “isolated, rejected, cast out of society,” to coerce them into accepting new dogmas that fly against reality. Transgenderism is pushing the “assigned at birth” gender premise; the “endgame” is to make it illegal to “distinguish between biological male and female.” As Morabito writes, “Most Americans would have laughed off such a mission as fringy at best, and totally implausible”—but now it’s here! She reminds us that history has seen many totalitarian movements use agit-prop to get people to accept the unthinkable. But

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where did the anti-human exceptionalism impulse first take hold? This is very much the theme of a new book, Richard Weikart's *The Death of Humanity and the Case for Life*, which senior editor William Murchison finds a "sober, deeply researched, clearly written and persuasive . . . account of our civilizational descent into denial." What is being denied is that human beings were created by God, and have a "right to predominance in the natural world." Murchison uses Weikart's book as a "liftoff point" for a brilliant discussion of what he calls "our present disorders," and where they came from in history, starting with a turning away in the Enlightenment from Christian revelation. If "man's characteristics were in no way special or outstanding . . . it was easy . . . to argue that particular humans were inferior to other humans on account of mental or physical defects." Are we beginning to sound contemporary here?, he asks.

The answer is, sadly, yes. In Booknotes, David Mills reviews the updated edition of Wesley J. Smith's *Culture of Death: The Age of "Do Harm" Medicine*. Smith's book hit home with Mills, as he read it during a difficult time—the final stages of his sister's affliction with cancer. His sister received excellent medical care, but Mills wonders if, in a few years, as Smith's warnings come more to fruition, people in her condition will be judged not worthy of the expensive treatment she was given. Smith writes that bioethics has "ossified into an orthodoxy or perhaps even an ideology," and that orthodoxy, Mills observes, is "cold utilitarianism." Strange, then, that those who attempt to inform the public about a link between abortion and a sharp rise in breast cancer—an illness that requires costly medical care—are silenced and denigrated because the "right" to abortion is so zealously promoted. This is the subject of *Hush*, a new documentary directed by Punam Kumar Gill ("a self-described pro-choice feminist"). In her review of the film, Anne Sullivan writes that in our "information age . . . it comes as something of a shock to learn of the near total blackout, both in the media and the medical community, on news of a health issue that could affect millions of women."

* * *

Our appendices this issue include: Patrick Langrell's inspiring interview with Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Australia, about the cleric's recent struggle with Guillain Barré syndrome; Matthew Hennessy on why the "medical pros are wrong on Down Syndrome"; Professor Richard Stith on when the ability to choose is itself harmful; and Ifeoma Anunkor reporting on an invigorating EXPECT event held at Columbia University this fall.

MARIA MCFADDEN MAFFUCCI
EDITOR

Making Choices

Ellen Wilson Fielding

Early in my life as a reader I determined that there were two types of readers: those who “cheated” by checking to make sure the book ended happily to guarantee a pleasant reading experience and those who refused to spoil the suspense by hearing how the book ended. By the time my own children reached reading age, the book industry had created (or perhaps discovered) a third variety of reader: those who loved the choose-your-plot books that allow young readers to decide among various plot twists leading the protagonist through a variety of middles and endings. In these, a surprising number of story lines can unfold as readers choose to branch out along this path or that, each route proceeding toward one of several possible outcomes.

The fictional stakes for these critical plot decisions can be quite high. My grandson recently exhausted the possibilities of one such book whose plotline followed a Star Wars offshoot series featuring a young Jedi-knight-in-training; he found, by trial and error, that only one series of choices would protect both the hero and his Jedi mentor from dying. Not to worry, though: Each time my grandson unintentionally killed off the hero, the Jedi master, or both, he just backtracked to the first branching off and tried a different approach. In the case of my grandson’s book, the process of trying out alternative plotlines actually served (or was meant to serve) an edifying purpose, since choices that reflected self-indulgence or hubris or a lack of emotional control or reckless disregard for safety did not end well.

Of course, defining success as the good guys living happily ever after excludes the option for another kind of happy ending traditionally open to heroes: that of dying bravely to save others or to defend one’s homeland, or in a lost but noble cause. Instead, these stories seem written from the more sanguine perspective that, given enough do-overs (like Bill Murray in *Groundhog Day*), a choice will emerge that is not only morally satisfying but linked to an outcome best summarized as “and they lived happily ever after.”

You can think of the do-over plots as the flip side of the “tragic flaw” school of story-making, in which unhappy endings (unhappy in the sense of leading to an unpleasant outcome, usually involving death and destruction for the protagonist and often for those he loves or is responsible for) can be traced back to the hero’s following the wrong game plan, making a bad choice.

Ellen Wilson Fielding, a longtime senior editor of the *Human Life Review*, is the author of *An Even Dozen* (Human Life Press). The mother of four children, she lives in Maryland.

But if there were a way for the protagonist to learn from his mistakes in a way that would let him avoid the consequences—if, in other words, he had the chance to do it over again . . . maybe he could recognize and repair that tragic flaw and eventually find a way to make everything work out right.

To take that route means forgoing the other venerable school of heroic story-making, which celebrates the hero's noble pursuit of a cause he cannot win for reasons unrelated to deficiencies of mind or character. The aged Beowulf's final combat against the dragon terrorizing his people comes to mind. Or countless other tales, fictional or true, that bring us to tears with the mingled beauty and pain of witnessing high human purpose confronting human limits. In such cases, we can't help wishing for the opportunity of a do-over in which the hero's exploits would be advantageous to himself as well as to others. We crave a happily-ever-after ending for everyone, despite our suspicion that the piercing beauty of the story might be blunted if we always had our wish.

Another excellent example of the reader's emotional tug-of-war occurs at the end of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Frodo is seemingly granted, at the very last minute, the happy ending for his quest, after he had long given up on it. From his point of view, everything seems ready for this epic tale to assume the kind of pastoral or comic vein more suited to hobbits. After all, the Ring of Power is destroyed, the evil Sauron is defeated, and the forces of good take on their rightful roles and positions. However, after setting up this happy-ever-after, the author wrests it away from a number of lead characters.

To begin with, there are the Elves, though perhaps they don't count since they never anticipated a happy ending. The defeat of Sauron and the destruction of his Ring of Power, while an outcome they desired and strove to achieve, precipitated the end of their era and the diminishment of their powers. The twilight feel of the book from the Elves' point of view atmospherically shares much in common with, say, the end of Beowulf or other elegiac farewells to old orders.

But even Frodo, whose goodness and pity make possible the snatched-from-defeat ending and whose hobbit good sense and high spirits seem adapted for a happy ending, cannot long enjoy the aftermath. As he puts it to his faithful companion Sam, "It may often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them."

If the multifarious actions of *The Lord of the Rings* were converted into a choose-your-own-story book, I wonder whether those doing so could fashion a happy ending that would feel remotely satisfying to the reader. Maybe they could manage it, for our time and our readers at least. Because it seems to me

that the natural human desire for happiness has for many people in our era slipped into a desire for happiness at any cost. One symptom of this may be the devotion of pro-abortionists for something they claim is choice but which, from the meaning they give it, hardly qualifies. In fact, maybe one reason they argue so strongly for the right to choose (always excepting one of those taboo choices they have relegated to a special scary category, like the choice to defend the traditional heterosexual definition of marriage) is that, in their minds, this liberty both recognizes and enables do-overs. It's a bit like rescinding the standard board-game rule against changing a move once your fingers have released your game piece.

And it's not hard to see the appeal of this position. Someone who seeks an abortion after a contraceptive accident or a poor choice made under the influence of lust and loneliness or any of the hundreds of explanations for why, sometimes, carelessly or mistakenly, we open the door to unwanted things happening, desperately wants a do-over. A return to the way things were before the fateful coupling. A chance to choose differently, to try a different roll of the dice. All of us at one time or another have very much wanted to take back a bad choice (and even more so, its consequences). And sometimes it seems like it should be—could be—possible.

Once I sat in a hospital waiting room after being helicoptered there along with my bleeding four-year-old. As I sat stupefied by the swift opportunism of fate, able to take advantage of a moment's inattention, my mind balked at accepting that time could not be rolled back a bit to allow for a slight but significant adjustment—just the smallest alteration in the arc of a small child's orbit—to undo the accident. It seemed bizarre that this was not possible, that someone's life story could not rewind, or be deleted and retaken like a blurry digital photo, or erased like a penciled-in test answer and replaced with the right answer.

I think something like this experience holds true for most people undergoing a very traumatic event. And often, along with this sense that one should be able to recover a time *before*, is an "if only" sentence that expresses our knowledge of something we did or failed to do (which need not be something morally wrong, but can also be something we were unable to foresee, or were not prepared for, or were distracted or caught off-guard by). But the "if only" option cannot really be chosen in retrospect.

This desperate desire for a do-over and almost delusional feeling that it must be possible helps explain why the experience of people undergoing abortions often differs from the antiseptic description conveyed by pro-choice "providers," politicians, and polemicists. Most people in the contraceptive

era do look upon an unplanned pregnancy—particularly one that occurred despite the use of contraceptives—as an anomaly, an accidental occurrence, something (in their minds) almost unrelated to the sexual intercourse that was the occasion of egg meeting sperm. So of course, if you want to talk in terms of choice, despite the objective purpose of sex in propagating the human race, most women pregnant with an unwanted, unintended child did not subjectively *choose* the pregnancy.

But often they do not really feel like they are choosing the abortion either, which is where the rhetoric about the “right to choose” and “it’s her choice” falls flat. That’s the sort of rhetoric that goes over better with young and unpregnant women than with women experiencing crisis pregnancies, even when—almost in spite of the pro-choice oratory—they get an abortion.

For many women in crisis pregnancies, what they really want is to unmake the choices that got them to this point. They want a do-over, where they rewind to the night they succumbed to the temptation, pushed the envelope a bit with their fertility, or placed too much trust in the Science god to protect them from pregnancy. It seems like it should be possible—why shouldn’t it be possible? Why do human beings come equipped with the ability to change their minds, make different choices, if they aren’t also able to erase all the consequences of earlier ones?

I can’t look into the mind of God to fully perceive his plans and purposes, but I imagine it has something to do with the reality that, unless our choices can actually (which surely entails, to some extent, fully and permanently) affect our world, our lives, and the lives of those around us, they are not really what we mean by choices—they are more like expressions of curiosity about what would happen if this or that occurred first. Structurally, they would resemble logic or math problems in which we solve for X or like simple controlled scientific experiments. Psychologically, they would resemble the choose-your-own-plot story books where no set of choices held actual consequences, even in the world of the book, because the reading could be redone using other choices.

In fact, we have only truly made a choice if we can say the words “If only. . .,” expressing by that phrase our regret that it cannot be undone. Or, for those times when we happily make a good choice, we recognize our agency in permanently altering the course of our life by saying something like, “Thank God I chose X, or else Y would never have happened.”

If, however, many of us much of the time view our choices as things we can easily back out of, retreat from, do over (without grave harm to ourselves and others), then an unimagined, conditional, or wished-for event or condition

may not appear quite as distinct from the here-and-now reality. After all, under those conditions, what really is the meaning of “contrary to fact,” except in purely temporal terms?

This seems, even to me, an exaggeration of how divorced from reality people have become, but a conversation I had not long ago suggests otherwise. I recently found myself on a plane with someone who was lamenting the angst she and other millennials feel about discerning their purpose in life. She had concluded that it was impossible to ever really “know” what one’s life purpose was, because there was no way to prove the correctness of the decision: It was inevitably based on inner feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment, along with the opportunity to use talents and expertise, and these could and almost certainly would change. “I might have several careers in my life, each of which might seem to me to be my purpose. How could I determine whether one or some or all of these were my purpose?”

Then she shifted to the topic of marriage, expressing her belief that it made no sense to think of marrying someone for a lifetime, since you met and loved someone in a moment in time, and you and your partner were likely to grow out of that period of exclusive love.

“That isn’t to say you didn’t really love the person at the time. But we change. It’s like how rare it is for your best friend in childhood to remain your best friend throughout life.”

The best solution to what she saw as the doomed pursuit of an unknowable purpose was to simply decide on the direction of her life at any point based on what she wanted—not in a mean or selfish way, but in a way that made the decision, so to speak, a matter of reading her own pulse. And if she changed her mind about what she wanted, as was likely to happen often enough in life, well, all those other people she knew who were trying to work out their life’s purpose were changing their minds too, but in a more muddled way under more illusions about the need and ability to know what life was all about.

Something in this chance conversation reminded me of the “life is a dream” strain of thought experiments suggesting that there is no external reality and we are trapped (or sheltered) in a solipsistic existence of dreams or fantasy. To what extent our perceptions and experience are real is a theme that has also been taken up and played with to greater or lesser degrees in recent decades in popular sci-fi, fantasy, and other types of movie offerings such as *The Matrix*, *The Truman Show*, *The Island*, and *Memento*. All of these in different ways question how we can know what is real—how we can trust sense perceptions and memories that may be distorted, manipulated, or twisted by madness or disability.

However, in our own world, quite a number of untraumatized, substantially sane, and ordinary people dabble with perhaps a willful denial of the solid ground of reality afforded us by the senses. But what we see and hear, touch, feel, and taste, subject to the mind, the heart, and the will, are all supposed to take their part in attracting and propelling us to be actors: to move, to do, to choose the good (or, if we will it so, the bad). Our desire to deny reality as an escape hatch is understandable under extreme circumstances (though under no circumstances does it work well as a life stratagem). But it is obstinately untrue.

The 18th century English writer and critic Samuel Johnson, questioned about how he would refute Bishop Berkeley's philosophical proof of the nonexistence of matter, famously replied, "I refute it *thus*," kicking a stone. And he, like many of us, had a lot of life circumstances he would have been happy to wish away.

And really, while that reply may seem to academics lacking in intellectual rigor, my sympathies, intellectual and otherwise, are with Dr. Johnson. Why should someone with his literary and polemical qualifications dignify Bishop Berkeley's argument as a serious obstacle to reliance on reality by laboriously deconstructing it when he could instead have been assembling his great *Dictionary of the English Language*, composing essays, writing his novel *Rasselas*, or recording *The Lives of the English Poets*?

I once briefly entered into my own thought experiment in the "life-is-a-dream" line, seeking an easy out for God from the charge of permitting the suffering of innocents. "What if," I considered for the space of 60 seconds, "when I hear or read stories of people suffering (especially children and other innocents), or even when I myself see people suffering, is it not real? That is, the people might be real—all my loved ones and other people's loved ones—but we all inhabit little self-contained bubbles of experience and these things we think others are suffering constitute for each of us the material for moral decisions that can advance us in virtue and knowledge of self and God and constitute our preparation for heaven."

Well, the gaping holes in this theory were obvious, including the question of what kind of God would let us think that such horrors were happening if they were not. But for the purpose of discussing choice, what struck me most about this theory was that it reduced all decisions and choices to sheer unreality. Yes, any moral (or immoral) speech or action I made in such a "world" would, in a sense, "count," since I believed within my bubble that I was choosing real actions and doing and experiencing real things. However, if God is true (and how could we be true if he weren't), he would not create us to falsely believe that we live and move and have our being among other

beings; on the other hand, if he made us aware of this “bubble” existence, then we would be incapable of true choices, since we would know they did not really count, they did not affect others.

As far-fetched and as divorced from reality as this thought experiment was, it sheds a little light on people like my acquaintance on the plane or the folks at Planned Parenthood. “Humankind cannot bear very much reality,” observed T. S. Eliot, and so we seek one or another form of escape. The rash desire I once expressed barely out of adolescence—“I want to make an irrevocable decision, like the angels!”—I have taken back a thousand times since. And, thank God, to some extent the wrong choices that we all make—with often imperfect information and wayward wills and inconstant and immoderate emotions—can at least be rued and repented of and forgiven. In addition, almost always there is something we can work to do to ameliorate the harm our poor decisions caused, though the reparation may be only partial and the remaining harm lasting.

But although we are incapable of the fixed and unalterable purpose posited of the angels, our own choices move us—and others affected by those choices—in ways that are real, that are not merely imaginary, that leave a footprint.

That person outside the abortion clinic, trying to engage the attention of the young girl or woman being hustled in by a “pro-choice” escort, believes in choice in a much truer way than most of the pro-abortion activists and entrepreneurs. That person in the crisis pregnancy center, trying to convey to a frightened woman that there is help, there is support, there are options that respect both her life and that of the little one within her, believes in choice too. In contrast, the woman pregnant after a one-night stand and unable to imagine how to live with the consequences, or the significant other or parent convinced that the mother-to-be is too young or that her life (and theirs) will be upended by motherhood—none of these really believes in practice that there is such a thing as choice, as demonstrated by their often-expressed conclusion that the woman really doesn’t have a choice. What is there to decide? Only one path makes sense. If you come to a fork in the road and the road to the right is blocked by large signs reading DANGER!!!, GO BACK!!!, THIS MEANS YOU!!!, then you can call your turn to the left a choice, but it wasn’t much of one.

And for many women facing crisis pregnancies, aborting the child may appear to be like that: like the only course of action offering hope of a rewind to the point before egg and sperm met.

So abortion, that great incarnation of pro-choice convictions, does not

seem to many of those driven to it to be a choice at all. First, because it is represented by others and often by the woman herself as the only real option, the only course that will not ruin her life. And second, because it is cast as a way to undo the earlier roll of the dice that led to the pregnancy. It is supposed to be the route that brings her life back to the way it was. It erases the in-between, the consequences of the choices (her own and those of others) that led to pregnancy.

This is of course not true. It is a bit like thinking that, if you accidentally run someone over, you can get things back to normal by reversing your course and returning the car to its original parking place. For whatever reason, by whatever concatenation of events, something happened to the pregnant woman—something really happened. Reality was forever altered, and the question that remains is: What are you going to do about it? What action that recognizes the real effects of choices on the present and the future will you choose?

So, though the term has long since been captured by the opponents of reason and reality, *that's* what it means to be pro-choice. Not that we don't care what choice is made—God knows we care, because an individual and unrepeatable life is riding on it, as well as the lives and destinies of the child's parents and all those he or she would have affected. But we know and honor and refuse to sugarcoat or deny what a choice is, and with what care it should be made, and what good a right choice achieves, and what evil a bad choice ushers in.

Twenty-five Years Consecrated to Life

Brian Caulfield

At a busy midtown intersection, in a city that stops for no one, there is a sudden, subtle pause. Cabs slow, drivers hold their horns, trucks throttle down, buses idle at their stops, and New Yorkers who think they've seen it all try not to stare. The mad-patterned rush of 65th and First seems for a split second to hush in startled silence as a pair of religious sisters in long veils and flapping habits scurry across the avenue to beat the blinking red light. Unaware of the scene they have caused, the two Sisters of Life make the sign of the cross as they reach the sidewalk safely and continue their determined trek toward the old convent where they staff a crisis pregnancy phone line at the Visitation Mission.

Although causing a brief city stir was not what the Sisters of Life were founded for, the moment provided a silent insight into the charism of the religious community devoted to upholding the dignity of all human life. In our secular age, amid the time-is-money, push-and-pull world of traffic and commerce, two women who appeared as mere specks on the street in a city of millions were recognized in an unspoken way for what they were—a sign of sanctity in a fallen world; a witness to something better and higher in life; a hint of the hidden God whispering within each heart amid the dust and din of New York.

I was there, among the surprised pedestrians who just happened be at that particular intersection as the Sisters made their crosstown dash. We were witnesses, and in some small way participants, caught up together in an “only-in-New York” moment that made the city seem smaller, personable, livable, and uniquely likeable. Scenes such as this one should register as extraordinary, living long in memory and making for a good story after years gone by, because they make us feel more human in a place that is too often nameless and faceless.

True to their calling, two simple religious sisters brought a greater sense of what life is really about to a hundred or so souls on a random Manhattan afternoon. We were blessed.

More recently, the Sisters of Life made another midtown scene, this one planned but just as effective. Members of the religious community gathered at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral on June 1, 2016, to celebrate 25 years since their founding by Cardinal John O'Connor, who passed away in May

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of 2000. They were joined by dozens of lay associates, who assist the Sisters in various works from maintaining the grounds of the upstate motherhouse to counseling pregnant women who seek out the Sisters for help in crisis pregnancies. Also present, with big smiles and words of love and gratitude, were some of the women whom the Sisters have ministered to over the years. The children they had once thought of aborting played on the steps of the cathedral or ran into the arms of the Sisters they had come to know as family—inarguable witnesses to the natural value and dignity of human life.

The Mass of Thanksgiving was offered by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who spoke of his predecessor's "historic dare" when Cardinal O'Connor proclaimed, "Wanted: Sisters of Life," in his weekly column of November 2, 1989, in the archdiocesan newspaper *Catholic New York*.

After noting the impact the Sisters have had on countless individuals and families, religious life in general, and the life of the Catholic Church itself, Cardinal Dolan led those at Mass in a round of applause for the Sisters of Life and for Cardinal O'Connor, whose remains lay interred in the cathedral crypt below the high altar. Who would have thought in 1989, Cardinal Dolan said, that one key to the renewal of religious life in America would be found in the pro-life movement, among professional, college-educated women who would give up marriage, family, and promising careers to dedicate themselves to defending and nurturing life?

"The advent of the Sisters of Life was a booster shot for all religious orders, and for that beacon of hope, we praise God for them," Cardinal Dolan said.

Following Mass, on a sparkling spring day, the Sisters led a blocks-long procession across town to Sacred Heart of Jesus Convent on West 51st Street, stopping noontime traffic and turning heads as they went. The full block between 9th and 10th avenues was closed off as the Sisters hosted a party with food, games, rides, face painting, red-nosed clowns, and lots of laughter, as well as an outdoor Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. A celebration of life, both physical and spiritual.

Tours were conducted of the section of the convent, called Holy Respite, where women stay during and after their pregnancy, with mother and child cared for by the Sisters. Right across the street is Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, the anchor of a neighborhood once known as Hell's Kitchen, for its immigrant gangs and violence.

A Personal Perspective

Much of this article on the 25th anniversary of the Sisters of Life will be told from my own experience. Just as I happened to be there at the Manhattan intersection that one afternoon to see those Sisters skirting traffic, and attended

the June 1 Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral, so I was fortunate to get a close-up view of the founding and early growth of the new religious community.

When Cardinal O'Connor published that *Catholic New York* column asking for Sisters of Life, I read it with great hope for the pro-life movement in which I was just getting involved. A month later, I became a Saturday morning sidewalk counselor outside Eastern Women's, Manhattan's busiest abortion clinic at the time (which since has closed), and I knew that in addition to the prayer and heroic witness of so many pro-lifers, we needed others who were consecrated to the cause. The Helpers of God's Precious Infants, founded by the saintly Msgr. Philip Reilly under then-Bishop of Brooklyn Thomas Daily, was made up mainly of lay men and women who were dedicated to the cause of life yet had their own lives, jobs, and family commitments. Some had bravely gone to jail with Operation Rescue for blocking the entrances to abortion clinics. Yet as Msgr. Reilly pointed out, unless a significant number of pro-lifers were willing to rescue on a weekly basis, the legal system would tie up and intimidate with draconian sentences the relatively few who could risk arrest.

We needed a religious community just like the one described in Cardinal O'Connor's inspired, prescient column. He was looking for prayerful, joyful, committed young women from all walks of life, including professionals with advanced degrees and experience in the workplace, to join a new religious community dedicated to defending the God-given dignity of human life in all its stages, from conception to natural death. Although soon after he had become Archbishop of New York seven years earlier he had been castigated by the media for comparing abortion to the Holocaust—an experience which prompted him, in his usual amiable manner, to forge close ties with the city's Jewish leaders—Cardinal O'Connor revealed in his column that the genesis for the idea to found the Sisters of Life came during a visit to the Dachau concentration camp. There he had placed his hand on the brick crematoria that had been the site of the extermination of millions of Jews, as well as many thousands of Christians, and he vowed to do everything in his power to help assure that such a Holocaust never happen again. He saw the mission of the Sisters of Life not only to respond to the legally allowed killing of millions of preborn babies by abortion, but also to be witnesses in a larger context to the primeval sin of humanity, in which brother has lifted hand against brother since the time of Cain and Abel.

The cardinal's instinctive identification with the Jewish people and their suffering was more than coincidental. Years after his death, his sister, Mary (O'Connor) Ward-Donagan, discovered that their mother was Jewish and converted to Catholicism two years before marrying their father. The children

knew their mother was a convert, but had assumed it was from another Christian denomination, not from the Jewish faith. Writing about her discovery in an April 2014 issue of *Catholic New York*, Mary Ward-Donagan said that her brother would have embraced his Jewish heritage, which served as an unknown underpinning to his strong relationships with Jewish leaders and his role in the Vatican's opening diplomatic relations with Israel under Pope John Paul II.

"There is indeed a great mystery here," Ward wrote. "I do not know what inspired my mother to become Catholic. Yet, I am certain that her Jewish roots were mysteriously planted in my heart and in my brother's heart. The woman my brother loved most in this world was once a simple Jewish girl, a daughter of Abraham, a daughter of grace. He never knew this, but it undoubtedly formed his heart."

His was a deep and wide heart of compassion that could forge authentic friendships with people of all faiths and walks of life without ever compromising his devotion to and teaching of the Catholic faith. It was a heart that expected, and usually won, the same sort of acceptance from others that was more than mere toleration, even from those who strongly disagreed with him. He fought New York Mayor Ed Koch publicly on condoms in the public schools and city clinics that referred minors for abortions, yet the two men, the Jewish "Hizzoner" and the Catholic "His Eminence," wrote a book together, dined together, and worked together on the issues they agreed on for betterment of the city and its citizens. Koch was at his friend's funeral, saying that he loved the cardinal as a flesh-and-blood brother.

Cardinal O'Connor was an unflinching pro-life advocate who marched through the city's streets to pray at the Eastern Women's abortion clinic, despite death threats, and proclaimed from the pulpit, after the shooting of an abortionist in Boston, that he would order pro-lifers to stop their public witness when Planned Parenthood stopped performing abortions. Yet his steadfast opposition to abortion was always rooted in the timeless Catholic teaching of the inviolable dignity of the human person, which he lived out in its fullness by his respect for those of other religions, his unflinching courtesy with those who opposed him, and his personal service to the poor and neglected, including his visits to AIDS patients at a Greenwich Village home run by Mother Teresa's nuns.

His most personal and heartfelt pro-life mission, of course, was as founder and father of the Sisters of Life. Although I could not respond to the cardinal's call to join a women's religious community (though I thought he might soon issue a similar call for "Brothers of Life"), there was someone praying at the Eastern Women's clinic who did. A tall, thin woman, who had the demeanor

of a special grace, joined the dozen or so faithful each Saturday outside the facility in the prayer pen, set off by police barricades to keep the peaceful group away from the clinic doors. In my work as a sidewalk counselor, I approached women headed to the clinic, offered pamphlets containing medical facts and helpful resources, careful not to step over the court-ordered “frozen zone” as I was jostled and insulted by pro-abortion escorts who could pass freely through the doors with abortion-bound women. In times of frustration, I would glance at the prayer pen to see the serene yet determined face of this tall woman. Her name, I learned later, was Agnes Donovan.

I spoke with her for the first time at a going-away party held for both of us in May 1991 at the home of a couple that prayed often at the clinic. She was entering the newly forming Sisters of Life under Cardinal O’Connor. I was entering the First Philosophy program at the archdiocesan minor seminary, also under Cardinal O’Connor. On June 1, 1991, she left her position as a psychology professor at Columbia University to become one of the eight founding members of the Sisters of Life.

Growing with Life

I met her again a year later when Cardinal O’Connor gave a summer discernment retreat for another group of women at my minor seminary in the Bronx. I worked that three-day retreat, serving meals, washing dishes, preparing the chapel, marveling that so many sweet, attractive, accomplished young women would come from all over the country to see if they were called to give up all worldly ambitions to become a Sister of Life. Indeed, following the example of the former Ivy League psychology teacher, women have come over the years from many high-level professions such as NASA engineering, military service, computer technology, and graphic designing, all with undergraduate or advanced degrees and some from elite universities.

At the time of the retreat, their habit was prim business attire, a modest skirt and jacket with high-necked blouse that some called, not approvingly, the stewardess suit. Soon after, at the insistence of the Sisters and with the assistance of Cardinal O’Connor, their garb was changed to a long veil with a floor-sweeping Marian blue-and-white habit that is so well-known and welcomed by pro-lifers.

As Agnes Donovan became Sister Agnes, then Mother Agnes, the congregation’s first superior general, I would kid her when our paths crossed: “They say women can’t get ahead in the Church; but while it has taken only a few years for you to become mother superior, in that same time I have remained a mere seminarian.”

After I left the seminary and headed back to an active life of the laity,

Mother Agnes was overseeing one of the fastest-growing religious communities in America. As a reporter for nine years for the same *Catholic New York* newspaper in which Cardinal O'Connor had issued his "help wanted" column, I was fortunate to be able to follow and report on that growth through interviews and articles over the years.

Today, there are nearly 100 members of the Sisters of Life, 42 sisters in perpetual or final vows, 24 in temporary vows preparing for the perpetual stage, 17 novices, and 11 postulants or beginners. The congregation follows an active/contemplative model. Hours of the day are devoted to contemplative prayer, which forms the foundation of their active apostolic work for life. Each sister takes the usual three religious vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but the distinctive character of the congregation is found in the fourth vow "to protect and enhance the sacredness of human life."

The congregation has nine convents and houses, including two in Toronto, Ontario, its first international expansion. The Annunciation Motherhouse is on donated land in Suffern, N.Y., about a 40-minute drive from midtown Manhattan. Other houses are the original convent in the Bronx, St. Frances de Chantel, where the postulants reside; the Manhattan convent; and recent expansions to Wheaton, Maryland, and Denver, Colorado. The Sisters also staff a 24-hour crisis hotline at Visitation Mission in Manhattan, and a retreat house in Stamford, Connecticut, Villa Maria Guadalupe, which is supported by the Knights of Columbus. The retreat house hosts regular events for young adults, talks by Catholic experts, days of recollection, and retreats for married and engaged couples and priests. There are also regular Entering Canaan retreats for women who have suffered abortion and seek healing and reconciliation.

The heart of the Sisters of Life charism is "a call to spousal love," said Sister Mary Elizabeth, the congregation's vicar general. The spiritual spouse is Christ, the giver of all life, and it is through a close relationship with him that the Sisters are able to engender the life of God in others.

"This life is impossible without a full grasp of that reality, that Christ is at the center of all we do as women religious," she added. "Religious life is not something you think up yourself. It is something you are invited into, this intimate life with the Lord."

Mother Agnes Reflects

The history of the order can be told in timeline fashion, but since the Sisters of Life ultimately are a witness to the grace and work of God in the world, a fuller picture requires the insights of the woman who has lived with the grace and carried out the work that define the community. With Mother

Agnes, her title is more than honorific. Over the years, she has given birth to a hundred or more vocations, guided younger women along the often difficult path of religious life, taken other women into her home at the most difficult times of their lives, and nurtured them and their unborn children to new life. In the Christian spirit that has been so well identified by Pope Francis, she has gone to the peripheries of our society, accompanied countless women in their troubles, supported them in their weakness, lifted them after falls, and sent them forth with a mother's loving heart.

In speaking with her, it is striking how much she focuses on relationships, on the human dimension of her work, and on what may be called a divine psychology (the word "psyche" comes from the Greek word for "soul") which recognizes that God's love has been joined to human love. She rarely speaks directly about what abortion advocates must think pro-lifers talk about obsessively—the moral and political aspects of the issue. Mother Agnes, of course, doesn't downplay the horrors of abortion and other attacks on human life, but she places the fight against these within the larger context of human dignity, including the dignity of pro-abortion folks.

Reflecting on that God-given dignity, she said, "The only fitting response to love is love."

She noted that commitment to religious life, and the willingness to bear life even in difficult situations that a secular mindset finds intolerable, are in some way related. The Sisters, who have vowed chastity, have a natural sympathy and affinity for the single women who are struggling to choose life. Both are engaged in countercultural acts that can free them from the false demands of our society. But choosing the good for oneself is never a solitary act; it must be done with guidance and reliance on others. "The discernment of one's vocation is always mutual," she explained, "between the young woman and the religious community. It is the community, and then more formally the Church alone, who can affirm the reality of the call to a religious vocation."

Just as the Sisters look to the Church to affirm their vocation, so do women in crisis look to the Sisters to affirm their desire to keep their babies. It is a wonderful dynamic in which hope and love meet.

Mother Agnes said, "Looking to the future, we live and pray daily for a greater realization of the Culture of Life in our nation and the world, in which every life is revered, and all people know their dignity before the God who loves them."

Wish You Weren't Here

Diane Moriarty

In 1973 I attended a party the invitation to which was a hand-scrawled poster tacked up in the hallway of a Greenwich Village brownstone. It read: Feminist Party in 3-B. Meet and Greet. As I jotted down the date and time a woman passed me and grumbled: "It's not what you think." Her remark had a dual effect on me. At age twenty-three a party that could irk neighbors even before it happened not only sounded like one with potential but also undercut the notion that feminists were angry grumps with no sense of humor. Intrigued, I made plans to go.

A few days later, a totally humorless woman answered my knock at 3-B, immediately demanding to know how I knew about the party and who had sent me. Good thing I had changed my mind about bringing a six-pack. I stammered out that I had seen a poster about it in the first-floor hallway. She squinted at me suspiciously. Desperate for some proof, I took a little scrap of paper out of my pocket and showed her the info written down in my own handwriting. She studied it a moment, then declared, "I guess you're okay," and let me in.

I can still see her. Heavy set, wearing a man's over-sized pin-striped shirt crisp with starch, sleeves rolled up. Her thick, grey hair was short and combed straight back. The scene in the room was strange: a dozen or so women standing very straight, hands clasped behind their backs, and in the center, a pale, embarrassed-looking blonde. I began to think I should have brought that six-pack after all. Our hostess introduced me to the proceedings by way of thundering at the top of her lungs: "This meeting is to recognize the beginning of a new direction in feminism and the dawning of a new age of feminine empowerment!" Scratch the six-pack. She continued: "It is important that legal abortion, which the recent *Roe v. Wade* decision has made possible, not just be used but celebrated, and it's what we're doing here this evening!" All the hands-behind-the-backs gals cast their eyes downward while the blonde smiled thinly and stared straight ahead. Our hostess bellowed on: "We have gathered here tonight to honor Pat for being the first in our group to get an abortion!" After making a grand sweeping gesture towards the center of the room, she took my coat and, with a grave nod of her head, gave me permission to mingle.

I burned my bra for this? Not only was her cynical proposal stupefying,

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the fact that she would conduct herself in such an arrogant manner—at a self-proclaimed feminist event no less—should darn well have been an issue in its own right. But it wasn't. From the cheesy, Check Point Charlie charade at the front door to the booming soap-box oratory to the egotistical and controlling way she “released” me to mingle once she saw fit—you would think someone would have objected. But no one did. I don't even have to suggest the invective such behavior in a man would have provoked. What was going on?

I really wanted to talk to Pat but was afraid to engage her. For all the whistle-stop energy being tooted around her, she still might be in a fragile state of mind, or simply not feeling well. And besides, what would I say? Congratulations? Instead I decided to approach one of the dour-looking huddles the other guests had formed, hoping to get the lowdown on our hostess, now in the kitchen barking out orders to a soft-drink-pouring brigade she had recruited from the attendees. I was the youngest person in the room. The guest of honor looked around thirty. Everyone else was forty or older. I was greeted in the polite but condescending tone your high school teacher might use if you bumped into her on a movie line. Perhaps it was brash of me to jerk my head in the direction of our hostess and bluntly ask: “What's with her?” The huddlers took collective umbrage. “Watch your tone of voice,” one of them actually said, “remember that you're a guest in her home!” Another attempted to educate me: “This is not a social event, it is a political meeting.” Got it, but why the attitude? “Then why doesn't she follow parliamentary procedure,” I asked, “or have a formal debate?” Although this elicited some head-nodding, the idea was quickly dismissed: “Because it's her apartment,” someone said. Right. And we're guests. I pressed on: “Do you agree with her?” Some shuffling of feet; casting down of eyes. “Then why are you going along with it,” I asked. The same answer came back, this time in unison: “Because it's her apartment.”

I absolutely had to talk to Pat. I glanced over at her and she smiled at me. She was pretty in a Midwestern wholesome kind of way. Even though she was the main attraction, she seemed the most out of place. Was she too shy to complain, or did she in fact believe in all this? I took a deep breath and walked over. I had no idea how to begin the conversation, but then she gave another little smile and raised one eyebrow in a display of irony that suggested maybe she also thought this whole thing was loony. I asked her how she was feeling. She responded in a flat, practiced tone of voice: “Fine, no regrets, I feel as if it's already behind me.” I told her I had meant physically. How did she feel? This caught her off guard; up till then, it seemed, the only thing anyone had worried about was her political health. She said she felt okay

now, but it was a medical procedure, an unpleasant one. I then asked for her take on our hostess and this decidedly undemocratic political meeting. She laughed, and said it was more like a campaign launch, only the “candidate” was an idea, and the idea was that women wouldn’t be truly free to make use of legal abortion as long as they felt guilty about it.

I was speechless, stunned. The logic was clear enough, clear and cold as ice. Then the hostess’s opening remark about it being “important that legal abortion be used,” came back to me. Important that it be *used* in the interests of “empowerment.” But wait, wasn’t that making abortion a weapon?

There were so many things flying around in my head that I couldn’t express. I was confused, and I hate being confused. I looked around the room. I had blown in half accidentally, but apparently everyone else was there on purpose. Still, I wasn’t clear about how they truly felt. Pat explained it to me: “They all belong to the same political collective and the deal is I show up for your meeting and, in return, you show up for mine.” So, go to enough meetings and you’re guaranteed if not a true constituency at least the appearance of one. Sounded like cheating at Solitaire to me. I asked her how she got involved in all this and did she believe in it. “She’s my friend,” Pat said of our hostess, “and she asked me, so I’m doing it as a favor. She really helped me with all this.” I asked her how. “I was getting cold feet so she dialed the clinic for me, took me there, waited, and took me home. She said in return I could use my experience to help her make her statement tonight—to put a human face on the abortion issue.”

I stared at some invisible spot on the floor. When I raised my eyes again, I said: “She dialed the number for you?” Pat swallowed hard and her voice got higher. “She begged me to come tonight. And since I’m for *Roe v. Wade* anyway—look, she wouldn’t take no for an answer, she’s really serious about this new age of empowerment stuff.” And her role in it, obviously. Our hostess was now strutting about with a wide, fixed smile on her face, “meeting and greeting.” She looked like Teddy Roosevelt.

I was afraid our conversation was becoming not only confusing but unpleasant. So I switched gears. Pat was happy to engage in small talk. We were getting along like a house afire. Ever just click with someone? We decided to exchange phone numbers. “This is so ironic,” I said, as she was writing hers down for me, “I was supposed to be an abortion.”

There were abortions prior to 1973 and they weren’t all in back alleys. If a married woman went to the family doctor early in the pregnancy she’d be given a D&C, a uterine scraping. Then the doctor would urge her to get her tubes tied because D&C was a very serious matter, not to be done again. My

mother had polio. The experts told her she'd never be able to conceive and if she did conceive she'd never be able to carry and if she did carry to term she wouldn't have the "push" muscles to deliver. She had four children. But with me, the last one, the warnings about push muscles would come true. She had a bad feeling from the start, didn't think she could do it a fourth time. She asked her doctor for a D&C. At first he treated her like a child, which was common for doctors back then. He sang the Lady Bug song, then told her a terrible story about a woman who had an abortion and after that lost all her other kids in a fire. My mother was so angry she wanted to end her pregnancy just to spite this paternalistic jackass. She reminded him that women who were blind, lame, or retarded were allowed to abort and could go anywhere for it. Reluctantly, he agreed to the D&C and set an appointment.

Later that day my mother's sitting in the kitchen. The sound of girls skipping rope comes through the screen door. They're singing "Lady bug ... (*slap/scrape*) lady bug ... (*slap/scrape*) fly away ... (*slap/scrape*) home ... (*slap/scrape*) your house ... (*slap/scrape*) is on ... (*slap/scrape*) fire ... (*slap/scrape*) your children ... (*slap/scrape*) will burn." Mom freaks, cancels the abortion. There were big problems with the delivery. She was conscious, and, since she was disabled, she could have permitted the doctor to end my life rather than endure more uncertainty. She said no. She almost didn't make it. I almost didn't make it. We both made it. Girls skipping rope. Life is so funny.

The slip of paper with my phone number on it fell to the floor as Pat threw her hands over her face. Horror-stricken women surrounded her. "How dare you," someone yelled at me. "Have you no heart?" I felt terrible and stupid and wished I could take back my words. But wasn't this supposed to be an event to celebrate Pat's abortion decision? She had said she was fine, absolutely fine about it all! Remember? Guess not. Our hostess came over to see what the commotion was about just as Pat looked at me, sad as sad could be, and murmured, "Why did you have to go and say that?" When our hostess learned what had happened she pointed angrily at me. "That's it," she yelled, "I'm throwing you out!" And headed off to get my coat.

Then something happened. As she marched across the room all the women who earlier had been ambivalent about this "celebration" started patting her on the back and saying things like "You were right after all." She stops. Nods at Pat to be patient, and starts shaking hands, accepting accolades, and then, even though there were only about a dozen people there, and half of them were at Pat's side, she starts waving and reaching over heads to shake hands as if she were being swamped by a huge throng at a political rally. She was making believe, acting out a fantasy of being on a campaign trail. Pat looked

over at me. Our eyes met. Her eyes cleared. The women around her were stroking her hair and touching her waist. Pat's lip curled, anger crackled across her face. Pushing the women away, she screamed: "It's nothing to celebrate. There's blood. Why don't you think about that?" She walked over to me. "I'm glad you said what you did. I thought I was okay with abortion but I'm not. I will never, ever, do this again." The room went silent. The tide turned once more. The women started nodding at what Pat had said and speaking amongst themselves. I guess there was a debate after all. Attempting damage control, the hostess ran to get my coat, then shoved it in my hands as she opened the door. "Don't you understand?" she hissed, pushing me out of the apartment. "I'm her friend and I'm just trying to make her feel better." She's not trying to make her feel better, I thought as the door slammed in my face. She's trying to make her feel nothing.



"Mrs. Hildigger doesn't confine shopping in her pajamas to the internet."

Marching for Life: East, West, and Midwest

Mary Meehan

Of all the many events of the U.S. pro-life movement, the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C. is best-known to the public. First held in 1974, it produces huge numbers every year—except when fierce winter weather interferes with interstate bus travel. The large and increasingly youthful crowds who march up Capitol Hill, the speeches, chants, and songs all make an impression on members of Congress and media reporters—no matter which side of the abortion issue they are on. There is a major problem, though, with many media outlets. Even when their reporters are fair and professional, some top editors and television executives downplay or bury March stories. That’s why many first-time marchers are surprised to see how huge and youthful the event really is.

And, oh, the colorful banners! A multi-colored one that proclaims “Michigan Loves Life/Protect the Unborn”; a white-on-red one: “Belmont Abbey College is for *Life!*”; orange-on-black: “Princeton University for Life.” And from Shepherd Gate Church, Chantilly, Va., white-on-dark-green: “*Every Life Counts.*” Hundreds or thousands of marchers every year carry one of two signs: the green-and-white Knights of Columbus one that urges everyone to “Defend Life” and the Students for Life one (white-on-black) that proclaims “I Am the Pro-Life Generation.” There are also banners and homemade signs that just make one think: “Speaking for Those Who Can’t Speak for Themselves”; a sign, with four pairs of toddler shoes attached, and the comment “They’d March If They Could”; another that proclaims, “Given a Choice/They’d Want a Chance”; and a sign of encouragement, held by a smiling marcher: “Keep Calm and Pro-Life On.”

The U.S. Park Police used to estimate crowd numbers of Washington protests. They stopped doing so after 1996 because so many protest leaders had complained that the counts were far too low. Some even insisted that their numbers were double what the police said—or even higher than that—usually without offering evidence to back up their claims. It is unfortunate that the Park Police stopped counting, because they had a good system. They sent a helicopter up to photograph the crowd, counted protesters’ buses in their assigned parking lots, and also checked the subway crowd-count for the day—thus cross-checking their numbers. Their highest estimate of the

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March for Life turnout, given in 1990 and again in 1993, was 75,000.¹ Current estimates made by other sources vary greatly. This writer (who, alas, does not have a helicopter) guesses that the March for Life now usually draws 100,000 or more.

There are newer marches on the West Coast, including large ones in San Francisco and Los Angeles each year. Many pro-lifers in the Midwest, though, cannot take time off from work or school to attend a march on either coast, and others cannot afford the long trips. But there are rallies, marches, or walks for life in most or all states. Some draw small numbers, while others have hundreds or thousands of people. Most are held in January. A few, although not affiliated with the main March for Life, have received permission to use that trademarked name.

How It All Started

In an interview many years ago, the late March for Life president Nellie Gray explained how she became leader of the largest pro-life march of all. In the fall of 1973, as they looked toward the first anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion nationwide, some East-Coast pro-life activists wanted to mark the January 22nd anniversary with a major protest in Washington. They were veterans of tough political battles over abortion in states such as New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. But some existing pro-life groups, Gray said, thought there wasn't enough time to plan an effective protest. They declined to help, fearing that a small march would harm the cause instead of advancing it.

"I was not very interested in marching, either," Gray recalled in a 1984 interview. But the protest planners "didn't have a place to meet, and they called me and asked me if they could meet in my house" in Washington, D.C. She let them do that, "and the next thing I knew, I was president of the March for Life." With a smile, she said that "I am not the marching type—but here I am." A longtime federal-government attorney, Gray had taken early retirement to do pro-life volunteer work even before she became involved in the first march. She spent the rest of her life—nearly 40 years—as the volunteer leader of the March for Life. She played down her own role, saying that it involved "trying to get the permits and get the speakers and get platforms up and Porta-Johns out and this sort of thing." She said the March itself was "conducted by the thousands of people throughout the United States who are getting their buses ready. And that is the March for Life. This is truly a grass-roots effort that has a life of its own."²

From the start, the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal order, provided financial support, marshals to keep the marches orderly and peaceful,

and volunteers who helped organize at the local level. Many Catholic schools and parishes in the East and Midwest sent busloads of people to join each year's march.

Increasingly frail in her later years, Nellie Gray was helped by a consultant who did many administrative tasks. And she always had strong support from the March for Life board of directors. A new addition to the board in June 2012 was a young activist named Jeanne Monahan (now Jeanne Mancini), who then worked for another pro-life group. Two months later, Nellie Gray died at the age of 88. "I remember it was a shock, I think, to everyone, although everyone knew that she was certainly up in the years," Mancini said in an interview. As they mourned her, Gray's colleagues on the board also had to make plans for the next march. They chose Mancini to be the interim president. (The "interim" part of the title was later dropped.) She had never run an organization before, much less a huge march. And District of Columbia officials, Mancini said, "were making us jump through hoops that Nellie had never had to jump through before," such as having "different, big, emergency plans."³

But things came together, and Mancini was "overwhelmed with peace" on the actual day of the march, something she felt was "a gift from God." A few months later, when she and her colleagues were thinking of expanding both staff and year-round activities, they found that someone who had worked with Nellie Gray many years earlier had made a bequest of over \$500,000 to the March for Life. Learning this, Mancini said, "was like hitting gold." The group's annual budget, still modest by Washington standards, is now "around a million dollars a year." Mancini said the Knights of Columbus provide about half of that money. Other donors include ones gained from a direct-mail program that she hopes to expand. Like many people, she isn't comfortable asking others for money: "I feel like I'm exploiting them, you know. I hate it. But I'm trying to grow in that area." She also has part-time help in fundraising. The March currently has a staff of five full-time and two part-time members. They include a meetings/events professional, a specialist in social media, and a lobbyist who has experience at both state and national levels.

I asked Mancini whether she ever worries that, in terms of impact on the public and the media, "the March appears to be too white, too Catholic, too Republican?" She replied that she does and that she and her staff are "always seeking" diversity. African American or mixed-race speakers at recent marches, she noted, have included Senator Tim Scott (R-S.C.) and Ryan Bomberger of the Radiance Foundation. (She described Bomberger as "great," "awesome," and "a good friend.")⁴ The staff member who specializes in

social media also works on outreach to evangelical Protestants, and Mancini spoke at an Evangelicals for Life conference that took place in Washington just before the 2016 March for Life. Dr. Russell Moore, the key Southern Baptist Convention official on pro-life issues, was much involved in that conference. (The SBC is the largest Protestant denomination in the United States and, despite the “Southern” in its name, is now active throughout the country.) In announcing the 2016 conference, Moore had said that “I don’t want to see any fewer rosary beads at the March for Life, but I want to see more evangelicals” there. He suggested that “we don’t need any less ‘Ave Maria,’ but we need some more ‘Amazing Grace’ in the mix as well.”⁵

Jeanne Mancini, a political independent, is not optimistic about making major inroads among Democrats in the near future. Referring to a speech by Ilyse Hogue at the 2016 Democratic National Convention, she commented that: “They have the head of NARAL Pro-Choice America, shouting her abortion.” She noted that Democrats even “want to eliminate the Hyde Amendment,” which for decades has prevented most federal funding of abortion.⁶ Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.)—one of the few pro-life Democrats still in Congress—spoke at a recent march. But a Democratic legislator from Louisiana, scheduled to talk in 2016, was “snowed out.” Mancini realizes that “we’ve got a ways to go” on outreach,⁷ but she is working on it.

California, Here We Come

“We couldn’t believe that they had the nerve to come to San Francisco. They’ve been so emboldened that they believe that their message would be tolerated here.” That’s what local Planned Parenthood official Dian Harrison said shortly before the first Walk for Life West Coast in January, 2005.⁸ Despite Harrison’s rhetoric, it was San Franciscans—not outsiders—who organized and led the walk. And despite the city’s liberal/radical politics, several thousand people joined the first one. The walk also draws many people from the rest of California and from other Western states. After the 2016 walk, the online version of the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that: “Tens of thousands of antiabortion marchers flooded into the Civic Center Plaza for a rally and then marched along Market Street.” The Walk for Life website suggested that between 50,000 and 55,000 people turned out to walk that day.⁹

Eva Muntean, co-leader of the San Francisco walk, once described its goals as “not so much political, but supportive and informational. . . . We would like to show people that there are far better choices available than abortion.”¹⁰ From the start in 2005, though, radical opponents have counter-demonstrated. San Francisco police stand between the two groups, keeping the often-raucous opponents on the sidewalk, while the walkers have the

street. Cami Mischke, a 15-year-old from Tulsa, Okla., was not worried by the opposition at the 2016 walk. “We love them no matter what they say,” she remarked, “and our shouts will be louder.” Mischke had spent nearly 30 hours on a bus with over 100 people from a church in Broken Arrow, Okla. They had reached San Francisco at 4 a.m. on the day of the walk.¹¹

Speakers at the Walk for Life have included both Mother Agnes Mary Donovan of the Sisters of Life and Monica Snyder of Secular Pro-Life. Rev. Walter Hoye, an African American minister and pro-life leader, has spoken there; so has Alveda King, a niece of the late Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Rev. Clenard Childress, Jr., a New Jersey pastor who views abortion as “black genocide,” speaks there nearly every year. Frank Lee of Asian Americans Pro-Life has spoken there. The walk also has featured people who used to be involved in abortion, but have turned against it, including Abby Johnson and Dr. Vansen Wong. Consistent Life, a group that opposes abortion and euthanasia—and also the death penalty and war—was one of many groups that had tables at the 2016 Walk.¹²

Los Angeles and San Diego also have annual life walks. The Los Angeles event, called One Life LA, was started and is still led by Archbishop José Gomez. He sees it as a celebration of life and also of Christian works of mercy. In 2016, participants were “invited to bring diapers to support L.A.’s pregnancy-help centers, clothing and toiletry items to help human trafficking victims, or even donate their hair to Locks of Love to make wigs for cancer patients.”¹³

All Around the Country

From Maine to California—and then on to Alaska and Hawaii—most states have one or more marches, rallies, and/or walks for life each year. Many pro-life groups—especially state affiliates of the National Right to Life Committee—have annual rallies on the steps of their state-capitol buildings, with talks by state legislators. These events offer a chance to thank legislators who are supportive and—when held on weekdays—to lobby ones who are not. Mary Kay Culp, longtime leader of Kansans for Life, remarked that this is “the one day of the year that your local media really pays attention to what you have to say . . . that’s when they really want to talk to you.” Helping a great deal with media attention in Kansas is Gov. Sam Brownback, a veteran pro-life leader who regularly appears at the state-capitol rally. “Kansas is now a pro-life state,” he said at the 2012 rally, “and we’re not going back.” In 2015, referring to a bill to outlaw dismemberment abortion, he declared, “That bill should pass. I’ll sign it.” It did pass, and he did sign it; but it’s now tied up in the courts.¹⁴

Despite the bitter cold of Chicago in January, the 2016 March for Life Chicago drew a crowd estimated at 3,000 in one news story. (Organizers estimated 5,000.) Catholic Archbishop Blase Cupich told the crowd: “A child, like no one else, fosters hope in our world. . . . What we do today is about making room for hope in our world.” Rev. Corey Brooks, a black pastor who leads a church on Chicago’s South Side, remarked: “I have heard it said many times over and over . . . ‘Black lives matter.’ And they do. I’ve heard it said many times from many people, ‘All lives matter.’ And they do. . . . I’m here to say, ‘Babies’ lives matter!”¹⁵

At a Mass before the 2016 Maryland March for Life, Rev. Carlos Osorio explained his own brush with abortion. His teenaged mother in Colombia had arranged for an illegal abortion, but finally decided against it. Meeting a couple who wanted a child but had gone through four miscarriages, she asked them if they would “like to have a nice Christmas gift?” Father Osorio explained that *he* was the gift and that was why he was “talking to you today, telling you about hope.” Marylanders—1,200 by a marshal’s rough count—paraded to the state-capitol building. At a rally there, a former Planned Parenthood staff member explained why she quit working for that group, and a disabled Vietnam veteran made a case against doctor-assisted suicide.¹⁶

A Few Suggestions from a Longtime Observer

Mighty though they are, Catholics and evangelical Protestants cannot—even when they work together—by themselves win protection for the unborn. There is need for more pro-life outreach to mainline Protestants, the Jewish, Muslim, and Asian American communities—as well as to the non-religious, who are a growing percentage of the American public. March outreach to the African American community has improved in recent years, but still needs more attention. Catholic and evangelical churches reach many Latinos on pro-life issues, but some marches could do more to reach out to Latinos. People from all of these communities should be invited to speak at rallies and marches. They should also be represented on march committees and organizational boards of directors. Sending press releases to their media is essential.

Citizen lobbying of legislators after a march also needs more attention. After the March for Life in Washington, many participants visit their members of Congress; but I suspect the great majority do not. They are tired, and often cold and hungry, by the time they have marched up Capitol Hill and past the Supreme Court. It is tempting to skip the fuss and bother of going through security at the House and Senate office buildings, finding members’ offices, and urging them to vote pro-life. What some groups of marchers do—and

what many more *should* do—is make appointments in advance to see their state’s members of Congress just after the March. They should press to see the members themselves but, when directed to staff aides instead, make their case with the aides. They also should realize that it can be extremely helpful to have good contacts on members’ staffs. Making friends there now can make a big difference in the future.

Crowd-counts are still important to both march leaders and media reporters. But no one should be surprised that police, bombarded by complaints from all sides when they count or estimate crowds, are now very reluctant to do so. Counting a large, moving crowd is not easy, but it can be done through good teamwork. March sponsors can recruit volunteers who will learn how to do it and then make counts that reporters can rely on. The largest marches might even think about hiring helicopters for aerial photos.

Finally, march leaders could follow the example of OneLife LA and one or two other groups that invite marchers to donate baby items for distribution by pregnancy care centers. Marches all over the country could become giant baby showers. What a wonderful way to celebrate life!

NOTES

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Grace Maffucci with New Wave Feminists, Kristen Hatten and Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa, at the 2016 March for Life

Marching On:

The Catholic Church, the Black Community, and the Pro-Life Movement

Justin McClain

As an American, I treasure the ideals of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. As an African-American, I value the contributions blacks have made to this land, generation upon generation. Although many of my ancestors were brought here unjustly—shackled and sequestered on western African shores and sold into slavery—kinsmen of various cultural backgrounds have achieved the highest levels of societal engagement. As a Roman Catholic, I embrace my part in a divinely inspired institution, founded by Jesus Christ himself, which for two thousand years has brought the Gospel into a world that is yearning for love. As an African-American Catholic, I celebrate the overlapping legacies of these three groups, seeing in them—both separately and jointly—manifold beautiful expressions of the breadth of humanity. Only a God who loves life, and can give life, would raise humanity so high as to be able to consider just how sacred our covenantal bond with him is.

This past year’s March for Life—held on Friday, January 22, the dreaded anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision—made the news, but not for the reason that one might think. In fact, it was not so much the March itself that mainstream outlets covered but rather the gridlock traffic conditions resulting from a blizzard that began the same day and swept through the region over the course of the weekend. Although tens of thousands of marchers had braved the elements—many of them subsequently stranded in Washington because of the storm—the mainstream media overwhelmingly underreported the event, causing one blogger to headline “Pandas Get More Airtime than March for Life.”

On August 28, 1963—less than a decade before the civil-rights violation known as *Roe v. Wade* was perpetrated—Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his historic “I Have a Dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial, not far from where the annual March takes place. No doubt it is beyond ironic—it is providential—that today his niece, Dr. Alveda King, serves as a national

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and international leader in the right-to-life movement; she is also a mainstay at the March for Life, a keystone event in the broader movement. Anyone who has difficulty fathoming the significance of the right-to-life movement in our present calamitous societal situation need only consider the dire reality that in New York City—the largest metropolis in the most powerful nation in the world and the cultural capital of American civilization—there are nearly as many babies aborted each year as there are live births.

The Catholic Church has been a constant champion of the unborn. In the age of abortion, its leaders, particularly its prelates, have been outspoken in their support for unborn children, powerfully articulating the moral and ethical arguments for why the unborn have innate, inalienable, and unqualified human worth. Here in the U.S., the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has reliably underscored and supported the Church's teaching that every human life deserves to be protected from conception through natural death. In order to appreciate the rhetorical connectedness between the Catholic Church's teachings on human sexuality and human life, one need simply consult such papal documents as Blessed Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* (1968) and Saint John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae* (1995).

The USCCB Subcommittee on African-American Affairs has labored indefatigably to lead and serve the nation's African-American flock. Bishops like Martin Holley, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., have brought attention to the severe impact abortion has had on the black community in particular. Bishop Holley's 2008 statement, "A Reflection on the African-American Family and the Culture of Life," emphasized the need for the black community to re-embrace a culture of life, one which historically had been at its core. The statement was widely covered in the Catholic press, including *America* magazine ("Racial Disparity in Abortion Rates," November, 2008), which featured this quote from the bishop: "The loss of any child from abortion is a tragedy, but we must ask: Why are minority children being aborted at such disproportionate rates?" It is a question we are still asking today.

American bishops continue to decry the onslaught abortion providers are leveling against our society. Another example is Cardinal Seán O'Malley of Boston, a close confidant of Pope Francis who has spoken out against the growing inventory of human-rights violations committed by such organizations as Planned Parenthood. In a statement issued after the release of videos exposing that group's involvement in the sale of fetal body parts, the Cardinal said "the now standard practice of obtaining fetal organs and tissues through abortion . . . fail[s] to respect the humanity and dignity of

human life.” And “[t]his fact,” he insisted, “should be the center of attention in the present public controversy” (“Planned Parenthood’s Work Reflects ‘Throwaway Culture’ Decried by Pope Francis”). Concerning the deleterious effects of abortion on the black community in particular, groups including the National Black Catholic Congress and Black Catholics for Life offer concrete solutions to help resolve social problems while endeavoring to reiterate the value of all human life. In a broader sociological sense, the Catholic Church continues to speak the truth regarding such unsettling realities as the readily evident role that abortion has played in catapulting families into poverty (or at least keeping them there), as described in documents such as the Bishops’ 2014 statement, “Poverty and Abortion: A Vicious Cycle”:

Some social observers once thought . . . [if] single poor women had access to abortion, they could avoid the hardships of trying to raise a child alone without resources. But after more than forty years of legalized abortion, out-of-wedlock births have increased, and the plight of poor women has worsened.

. . . The rate of marital breakups and relationship dissolution after an abortion is said to be between 40 and 75 percent, often related to a breakdown of intimacy and trust.⁸ And that often leaves women alone to care for themselves and any other children. In fact, sixty percent of abortions are performed on women who already had one or more children.

Marriage has been called “America’s greatest weapon against child poverty.” By the same token, anything that disrupts lasting relationships undermines the ability of women and men to join together to make a promising future for themselves and their children. In short, poverty can lead to abortion, and abortion can lead to more poverty.

It is vital to reflect on the numerous services that are in place to assist mothers and fathers who find themselves in unexpected and challenging situations, feeling that there is no way they could bring their child into the world. I am honored to serve on the volunteer board of directors for the Forestville Pregnancy Center in Marlow Heights, Maryland. Forestville, like many other such centers, offers free services to clients in order to help them choose the gift of life. As a theology teacher at Bishop McNamara High School in Forestville, I also have the privilege of witnessing the promise of the next generation of America’s leaders. My aim there is to impart pro-life values, undergirded by Christian hope. My wife and I have also been blessed with the gift of our own children, as effective proof as any that ours is a good God who has fashioned us in “the palms of [his] hands” (cf. Isaiah 49:16)—each of us!

The pro-life movement will continue courageously to speak up for the unborn, emphasizing the need to foster civil rights for all people. And it will continue to reinforce the unique and irreplaceable importance of the family

as well. The black community, again, needs support as it seeks to encourage familial strength, growth, and stability; there are several efforts in place to accomplish this objective. Individual diocesan initiatives, such as the Diocese of Savannah [Georgia]'s Office of Black Catholic Ministry, specifically highlight support for the family as an urgent goal. Since 1989, the first Sunday of February (at the outset of Black History Month) has been celebrated as a National Day of Prayer for the African-American and African Family.

As we continue to fight for recognition of the unborn child of any racial background, in any community, we recall our shared human dignity, in keeping with our understanding that each of us, no matter our social status or circumstance, is made in God's "image and likeness" (cf. Genesis 1:26-27). As we thus rejoice in the presence of the unborn, who are the most fragile, vulnerable, and (ideally) protected of all bearers of human rights, we march on. Whether at the March for Life or along other avenues of our global society, we must keep at the forefront of our resolve the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: "I came so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Texas Aims to Protect Women and Children: **Come *Hellerstedt* or High Water**

Catherine Glenn Foster

On June 27, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, a case about Texas's health and safety standards for abortionists.

At issue was Texas H.B. 2,¹ signed into law by Gov. Rick Perry in 2013. H.B. 2 was carefully crafted to protect women against abortionists in the vein of Kermit Gosnell,² who had just received three life sentences for murdering babies born alive and killing a woman after botched abortions. Closer to home, in Texas, late-term abortionist Douglas Karpen has been exposed as committing many of the same acts.³

And so, with the Texas Capitol Rotunda bursting at the seams with women's safety advocates and their pro-abortion counterparts,⁴ the Texas legislature easily passed the bill to improve the standard of care for women.⁵ Among its provisions (later to be challenged in *Hellerstedt*), it required abortionists to smooth transfer in emergency situations by carrying hospital admitting privileges and also required abortion facilities to meet health and safety standards common to outpatient medical practice. In addition, H.B. 2 mandated adherence to tested drug protocols for chemical abortions and prohibited late-term abortions.⁶

These provisions were, and are, sorely needed; in 2015 just one Planned Parenthood abortion facility in Houston reportedly botched at least 10 abortions, including five in four weeks. Planned Parenthood has admitted that at least 210 Texas women are hospitalized after botched abortions every year, and the true number may be much higher.

Abortion is an invasive surgical procedure, and its risks and complications can be life-threatening. Texas's law implemented a set of common-sense health and safety regulations to prevent patient abandonment and bring abortion facilities in line with similar outpatient surgical clinics. Yet Planned Parenthood and its fellow Texas abortion facilities do not seem to share Texas's concern for women's wellness, as evidenced by their long history⁷ of battling common-sense health and safety regulations.⁸ Unsurprisingly, they fought H.B. 2 as well.

The first lawsuit was *Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas Surgical Health*

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Services v. Abbott, which challenged the law's admitting privileges and chemical abortion provisions. On March 27, 2014, three female judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit unanimously upheld H.B. 2 as constitutional, concluding that "the State acted within its prerogative to regulate the medical profession by heeding these patient-centered concerns and requiring abortion practitioners to obtain admitting privileges at a nearby hospital." Planned Parenthood asked the U.S. Supreme Court for a stay, but when the Court said no, it decided not to go further with the case, and thus the law went into effect.

However, the Texas abortion industry again went to court in April 2014 with the *Whole Woman's Health* case, which challenged the outpatient surgical standards across the state and the admitting privileges provision as applied to certain rural clinics. Interestingly, Planned Parenthood, which had recently been converting its local "family planning" clinics to huge, state-of-the-art abortion mega centers,⁹ did not join this lawsuit; one has to wonder what business considerations went into that decision.

In June 2015, the Fifth Circuit largely rejected these challenges and upheld H.B. 2's application to every plaintiff clinic except one isolated business in south Texas. This time, the Supreme Court agreed to weigh in. Legal precedent was on Texas's side. In 1992's *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the Supreme Court affirmed that a state may regulate abortion as long as it "has a rational basis to act, and it does not impose an undue burden." This "undue burden" test asks whether a given regulation has the "purpose or effect of placing a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman" seeking a previability abortion.

It should go without saying that improving women's health and safety is a rational basis for legislation; innumerable other laws have been enacted for precisely the same purpose without coming under the microscopic scrutiny that comes part and parcel with the abortion distortion. Further, as in other contexts, the states are given "wide discretion" to regulate the practice of medicine, and the existence of a reasonable medical debate on the importance of the law is enough to uphold it, according to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Gonzales v. Carhart*.

As the Fifth Circuit articulated, the ample evidence proffered by the state demonstrated that "the State truly intends that women only receive an abortion in facilities that can provide the highest quality of care and safety." The court also addressed the "undue burden" standard, finding that a "burden" is not the same thing as a "substantial obstacle," and all of H.B. 2's standards can be and have been met by abortionists operating today.

In *Hellerstedt*, then, the High Court was being called upon to determine (1) whether courts must scrutinize the medical merits of each proposed

abortion regulation that would raise standards of medical care, effectively elevating abortion to a more protected status than other medical procedures, and (2) to what extent ensuring access to abortion should prevail over safety. As one pundit pointed out, Planned Parenthood was essentially asking the Supreme Court to “make regulations constitutional only where they wouldn’t have any effect.”¹⁰

And then, before oral argument, Justice Antonin Scalia died suddenly in his sleep. Without warning, the makeup of the Court was changed at least for the remainder of the 2015 Term, if not permanently. (Supreme Court terms begin in October and extend into the succeeding year.)¹¹

And so too would our prognostications change. On March 2, the morning of oral arguments, we attorneys filed into the Court and awaited our passes. Justice Scalia’s familiar seat was left empty, draped in black, adding a doubly somber note to the day’s proceedings.

However, even in Justice Scalia’s absence, even with Justice Anthony M. Kennedy joining his liberal colleagues to reach the high threshold required for the June 29, 2015, order that blocked the relevant parts of H.B. 2 from taking effect, we yet maintained some slight hope for a positive result. At the end of the day, after an intense oral argument that stretched 26 minutes longer than scheduled, there was no clear victor. The liberal justices of the Court had fixed their sights on Texas Solicitor General Scott Keller, who skillfully argued that H.B. 2 was intended to improve health and safety standards for Texas women, a legitimate state goal, particularly in the wake of Gosnell. The conservative justices had tough questions for Stephanie Toti, arguing for the clinics, and Solicitor General Donald B. Verrilli, Jr., for the Department of Justice as *amicus curiae*, on basic safety regulations, undue burden, and the doctrine of *res judicata*, which arguably prevented the plaintiffs from even bringing the action in the first instance.

The Court’s longstanding median voice, Justice Kennedy, appeared to waver between second-guessing the state of Texas and following the “undue burden” standard crafted by the Court. He was clearly concerned that the abortion clinic challengers had offered little evidence supporting their claim that Texas clinics had closed due to the standards set by H.B. 2. However, on the assumption that demand for abortion is a constant rather than a variable driven in any way by abortion clinic marketing or other factors, he turned the conversation to the capacity of the remaining abortion facilities to sustain the current abortion rate, and to Texas’s justification for H.B. 2. He even considered remanding the case back to the lower courts to address questions about capacity.

Over the next four months, we waited, analyzing the nuances of the oral argument. The decision came down on the last day of the term, June 27. That Monday I sat in the attorneys' reserved section with my longtime Alliance Defending Freedom colleague Steven H. Aden, face to face with Justices Stephen G. Breyer and Sonia Sotomayor, and next to Nina Totenberg, National Public Radio's famed legal affairs correspondent.

The ruling was split 5-3, and the breakdown was all too familiar. Handed the assignment to write for the majority by the more senior Justice Kennedy,¹² Justice Breyer delivered the opinion of the Court, joined by Justices Kennedy, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan. Justice Ginsburg also filed a concurring opinion. Justice Clarence Thomas filed a dissenting opinion, as did Justice Samuel Alito, Jr., which Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., and Justice Thomas joined. And in just a few moments, the Court undid years of Texas's work to protect women's health and safety.

Justice Breyer read at length from his technical, academic opinion. Relying heavily upon *Casey*, the Court held that petitioners' constitutional claims were not barred by res judicata, and that the two relevant provisions of H.B. 2 were facially invalid: "We conclude that neither [the admitting-privileges nor the ambulatory surgical-center requirements] offers medical benefits sufficient to justify the burdens upon access that each imposes. Each places a substantial obstacle in the path of women seeking a previability abortion, each constitutes an undue burden on abortion access, and each violates the Federal Constitution." The Court signaled far less deference to state legislatures than in *Gonzales* and prior cases and determined, based on scant evidence, that H.B. 2's admitting privilege requirement was an "extra level of regulation" compared to the regulations on other providers—placing the burden on the state to justify them—and led to clinic closures, which constituted an undue burden:

Those closures meant fewer doctors, longer waiting times, and increased crowding. Record evidence also supports the finding that after the admitting-privileges provision went into effect, the "number of women of reproductive age living in a county . . . more than 150 miles from a provider increased from approximately 86,000 to 400,000 . . . and the number of women living in a county more than 200 miles from a provider from approximately 10,000 to 290,000."

The Court did not address how they might have treated a regulation or law that increased the number of women living more than 150 miles from an abortion facility from, say, 20,000 to 86,000, a number that apparently does not constitute an undue burden. And of course, the undue burden standard is by no means universally accepted: As Justice Scalia feistily opined in his *Casey* dissent, the "undue burden" standard was crafted to "conceal raw

judicial policy choices” and “has no principled or coherent legal basis.” As Ed Whelan, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, put it: “All that the majority’s ruling really means is that five justices don’t like the Texas provisions that were being challenged.”¹³

Conversely, the Court was unable to find any evidence of a need for the health and safety standards, despite the 210 or more Texas women hospitalized each year after abortions:

“[I]ncreased driving distances[,] . . . here, . . . are but one additional burden, which, when taken together with others that the closings brought about, and when viewed in light of the virtual absence of any health benefit, lead us to conclude that the record adequately supports the District Court’s ‘undue burden’ conclusion.” Even more astonishingly, the Court could find no connection between H.B. 2 and preceding Gosnell-style atrocities in Texas: “Gosnell’s behavior was terribly wrong. But there is no reason to believe that an extra layer of regulation would have affected that behavior. Determined wrongdoers, already ignoring existing statutes and safety measures, are unlikely to be convinced to adopt safe practices by a new overlay of regulations.”

And despite the legislature’s inclusion of a strong severability clause in H.B. 2, which the majority said it would typically respect, in this case it declined to take the time to parse the law in order to determine which portions would be constitutional.

Justice Ginsburg, in her terse, militant *Hellerstedt* concurrence, called health and safety regulations such as Texas’s, “Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers [TRAP] laws,” and wrung her hands at the idea that women might not have access to substandard, even filthy, clinics:

[I]t is beyond rational belief that H.B. 2 could genuinely protect the health of women, and certain that the law “would simply make it more difficult for them to obtain abortions.” When a State severely limits access to safe and legal procedures, women in desperate circumstances may resort to unlicensed rogue practitioners, *faute de mieux*, at great risk to their health and safety.

Each *Hellerstedt* dissent is an exceptional piece of legal writing. Justice Thomas offered a spirited defense of the natural law and its implications here, and disputed that abortion doctors and clinics should be permitted to sue on behalf of patients. Speaking to the Court’s abortion distortion, Justice Thomas proclaimed that “our Constitution renounces the notion that some constitutional rights are more equal than others,” and quoting Justice Scalia’s *Sternberg v. Carhart* dissent, lamented that the *Hellerstedt* “decision exemplifies the Court’s troubling tendency ‘to bend the rules when any effort to limit abortion, or even to speak in opposition to abortion, is at issue’”:

The majority's furtive reconfiguration of the standard of scrutiny applicable to abortion restrictions also points to a deeper problem. The undue-burden standard is just one variant of the Court's tiers-of-scrutiny approach to constitutional adjudication. And the label the Court affixes to its level of scrutiny in assessing whether the government can restrict a given right—be it “rational basis,” intermediate, strict, or something else—is increasingly a meaningless formalism. As the Court applies whatever standard it likes to any given case, nothing but empty words separates our constitutional decisions from judicial fiat.

Justice Thomas's point on the inequality of rights and the injustice of the tiers of scrutiny is apropos. To an outside observer, the Court's rulings on abortion (*Hellerstedt*), religious liberty (*Stormans, Inc. v. Wiesman*), and the Second Amendment (*Voisine v. United States*), to name but a few, appear to be contradictory, even politically motivated in some sense. After all, in *Hellerstedt* the majority suggested with a straight face that laws do not prevent lawbreaking; with that logic, perhaps gun control, bullying, sexual assault, and speed limit laws and regulations should all be abandoned, as well. And in *Stormans*, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit said that regulations requiring all pharmacies to distribute abortifacient emergency contraceptives promote “patient safety,” and despite the government's stipulation that “facilitated referrals do not pose a threat to timely access to lawfully prescribed medications,” five justices decided that the assertion of “patient safety” was enough to warrant deference. In *Hellerstedt*, however, where the legislature also asserted patient safety, the bar was set higher. In his dissent, Justice Thomas articulated that these tiers have no basis in the Constitution and, moreover, that the Court, serving as “the country's ex officio medical board,” “easily . . . tinkers with levels of scrutiny to achieve its desired result”: deference to the legislature on restricting religious liberty and healthcare legislation, but not on abortion; undue burden balancing approach on abortion but not on the Second Amendment. He further warns that “the majority's undue-burden balancing approach risks ruling out even minor, previously valid infringements on access to abortion.”

Justice Alito read excerpts of his dissent from the bench. He was very clearly displeased with the majority opinion, and rarely needed to consult his notes as he spoke directly and vehemently to those in attendance. His dissent deftly exposes the majority's “patent refusal to apply well-established law in a neutral way” on *res judicata*, the evidentiary requirements for a facial challenge, and severability. The law he references is well-established indeed; as Justice Alito reminded the Court, the *res judicata* doctrine “predates the founding of the country. That's why it's in Latin.”

Justice Alito considered H.B. 2 to be a reasonable response to the horrors of Gosnell: “If Pennsylvania had had such a requirement in force, the Gosnell

facility may have been shut down before his crimes. And if there were any similarly unsafe facilities in Texas, H.B. 2 was clearly intended to put them out of business.”

Justice Alito further disputed that there was evidence of H.B. 2 closing many of the clinics in question, rebuking petitioners’ conflation of correlation and causation and calling for “precise” findings:

At least nine Texas clinics may have ceased performing abortions (or reduced capacity) for one or more of the reasons having nothing to do with the provisions challenged here. . . . Precise findings are important because the key issue here is not the number or percentage of clinics affected, but the effect of the closures on women seeking abortions Petitioners—who, as plaintiffs, bore the burden of proof—cannot simply point to temporal correlation and call it causation.

After all, there are many locations where women may have to drive 8-10 hours to the closest Planned Parenthood clinic, which as noted above has been consolidating its smaller, more numerous businesses into abortion mega centers.

Justice Alito likewise noted the lack of evidence that demand has exceeded capacity following the closing of some clinics: “Petitioners offered scant evidence on the capacity of the clinics that are able to comply with the admitting privileges and ASC requirements, or on those clinics’ geographic distribution. Reviewing the evidence in the record, it is far from clear that there has been a material impact on access to abortion.” And as discussed above, this still assumes that demand is more or less steady rather than driven by availability and marketing.

He recommended that any bad provisions be severed from the good ones rather than indiscriminately overturning vital women’s wellness protections:

By forgoing severability, the Court strikes down numerous provisions that could not plausibly impose an undue burden. For example, surgical center patients must “be treated with respect, consideration, and dignity.” That’s now enjoined. Patients may not be given misleading “advertising regarding the competence and/or capabilities of the organization.” Enjoined. Centers must maintain fire alarm and emergency communications systems, and eliminate “[h]azards that might lead to slipping, falling, electrical shock, burns, poisoning, or other trauma.” Enjoined and enjoined.

He listed the numerous beneficial provisions that had just been struck down—provisions like informed consent and a fire safety plan. And like Justice Thomas in his separate dissent, Justice Alito concluded that the majority’s refusal to take the time to thoughtfully and properly parse the law reveals its partiality: “When we decide cases on particularly controversial issues, we should take special care to apply settled procedural rules in a neutral manner. The Court has not done that here.”

The media response was swift. Hillary Clinton tweeted, “SCOTUS’s decision is a victory for women in Texas and across America. Safe abortion should be a right—not just on paper, but in reality.”¹⁴ Other tweets included “Thank you *#SCOTUS for affirming undue burden so we can choose to become undue!” Many other tweets were not suitable for quoting here,¹⁵ but pushed the idea that H.B. 2, by holding purported healthcare clinics to healthcare clinic standards, was “sexist.”¹⁶

True to form, Planned Parenthood has crafted a strategy to dismantle more common-sense health and safety regulations that protect women’s wellness. Mere days after *Hellerstedt* came down, they published a list of eight target states where they will attack: Arizona, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.¹⁷ The fact that abortionists oppose these laws, which emphasize the right of women to safe medicine over the abortionists’ bottom line, speaks to their true interests. It seems that whether we are talking about Medicaid billing¹⁸ or cleaning the blood out of sponges,¹⁹ abortion clinics would like to self-regulate rather than be accountable to any outside organization or agency for their substandard conditions. In the last decade, policy wonks have increasingly claimed health as a right; in this light, where else but in the context of abortion would the Left-leaning justices on the Supreme Court strike down basic clinic standards and medical benefits?

It remains to be seen how the legislative justification requirements will play out as we go forward. After all, as constitutional scholars Justin Dyer and Hadley Arkes have astutely observed, the State of Texas employed quite a precise embryological argument in its *Roe v. Wade* briefing.²⁰ And so among the questions that remain are (1) whether states still have “wide discretion” in passing health and safety laws where there is “medical and scientific uncertainty”; (2) whether there is some constitutionally mandated level of access to abortion and what role political and physical boundaries might play in that determination (and relatedly, how to determine the cause of clinic closures and absences, when we have the example of states like Maine with liberal laws yet relatively long drive times due to clinics’ business decisions); and (3) what is the future of *Casey*’s “large fraction” test, as Justice Alito wondered:

I must confess that I do not understand this holding. The purpose of the large-fraction analysis, presumably, is to compare the number of women actually burdened with the number potentially burdened. Under the Court’s holding, we are supposed to use the same number (women actually burdened) as both the numerator and the denominator. By my math, that fraction is always “1,” which is pretty large as fractions go.

The one thing that is clear is that we have not lost the war. We know that

the *Casey* test lives on, and that the Supreme Court presumes certain types of laws and regulations to be valid, including clinic record-keeping and inspection requirements, staff licensing and anesthesia requirements, written transfer agreements between abortion facilities and area hospitals, and other physical safety protocols. And we know that we are gaining ground in terms of public opinion, the number of abortion clinics in both red and blue states, and the Court's split ratio.

Hellerstedt constitutes a setback for Texas women's health, to be sure. We must all pray for the women desperate enough to walk through the doors of a Texas abortion clinic that, despite the risk, they will not find themselves butchered along with their unborn children. We now know the cost of a woman's life, and it is somewhere between "1 . . . [and] 1.5 million dollars," the cost to upgrade a clinic so that a woman in medical distress can be quickly and safely evacuated from the building.

It is also a setback for legislation that may relate to abortion in any way. But *Hellerstedt's* lessons will carry forward, and Texas Governor Greg Abbott is encouraging his state's legislature to continue to pass life-affirming laws. He has developed what he calls a Life Initiative "to protect the unborn and prevent the sale of baby body parts,"²¹ as well as "enhance[] protection of the health and safety of the public."²² Other states are following suit.

As Margaret Thatcher was fond of saying, "you may have to fight a battle more than once to win it." No one knows better than the devoted readers of the *Human Life Review* that we of the pro-life movement are in it for the long haul.

NOTES

1. See <https://legiscan.com/TX/text/HB2/id/872841>
2. See <http://www.phila.gov/districtattorney/pdfs/grandjurywomensmedical.pdf>
3. See <http://www.operationrescue.org/archives/special-report-new-stunning-photos-testimony-show-texas-abortionist-kills-babies-born-alive/>
4. See <http://www.lifenews.com/2013/07/03/abortion-activists-yell-hail-satan-as-texas-pro-lifers-sing-amazing-grace/>
5. See <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/hb2/texas-women>
6. The abortion industry has never challenged the late-term abortion prohibition in court; this may be because of the strong evidence that babies in the womb feel pain when aborted at least by 18 weeks gestational age.
7. See <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/abortion/planned-parenthood.cfm#note7a>
8. See <https://www.adflegal.org/detailspages/blog-details/allianceedge/2015/11/16/do-women-deserve-the-highest-standards-of-care-not-if-you-ask-planned-parenthood>
9. See, e.g., <http://www.stopp.org/article.php?id=14868>; <http://townhall.com/columnists/marjoriedannenfelser/2015/05/06/planned-parenthood-to-open-megaabortion-clinic-in-texas-n1995338>
10. <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2014/04/13065/>
11. See <http://townhall.com/columnists/catherineglennfoster/2016/06/14/2016-historic-crossroads-for-supreme-court-innocent-lives-n2178268>

12. This is particularly surprising because Justice Breyer authored the Court's ruling in *Stenberg v. Carhart* that held that Nebraska's partial-birth abortion ban was unconstitutional, and Justice Kennedy, in his dissent, was quite clear in his belief that Breyer had misinterpreted *Casey's* undue burden standard.
13. <http://www.nationalreview.com/bench-memos/437402/whole-womans-health-hellerstedt>
14. <https://www.rt.com/usa/348571-scotus-rules-abortion-guns/>
15. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/hell-yeah-the-burden-is-undue_us_57712fa7e4b0f168323a0df8; see also generally <http://www.burntorangereport.com/diary/13734/brochoice-how-hb2-hurts-texas-men-who-like-women>
16. See, e.g., <https://www.liberationnews.org/report-from-the-womens-rally-women-unite-against-sexist-policies-on-our-bodies/>
17. See <http://www.lifenews.com/2016/06/30/planned-parenthood-will-try-to-overturn-pro-life-laws-nationwide-after-supreme-court-ruling/>
18. See <http://www.adfmedia.org/files/ProfitNoMatterWhatReport2015.pdf>
19. See <http://www.operationrescue.org/archives/virginia-abortion-facilities-with-history-of-abuses-see-to-be-excepted-from-the-law/>; <http://thefederalist.com/2013/10/25/virginias-blood-spattered-abortion-clinics-lies-tell-ourselves-womens-health-care/>
20. See <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/11/16011/>
21. <https://www.gregabbott.com/life-initiative/>
22. [http://www.mystatesman.com/news/news/texas-health-officials-propose-new-rules-on-fetal-
nrtFn/](http://www.mystatesman.com/news/news/texas-health-officials-propose-new-rules-on-fetal-)



"We can learn from our pets. I've learned from Mr. Whiskers that I'm not a cat person."

SHORT STORY

Heroes

Leslie Fain

Maybe it was just the epidural or a rush of hormones, but as soon as the nurse placed the crying newborn, swaddled in thin white hospital blankets, in Andi's arms and they locked eyes, she felt a giddy excitement, the kind she used to feel when, as a little girl, she would swing as high as she could, pumping her legs, and pushing them out, trying to reach the sun. Now in this child's orbit, she saw her own brown hair, her own upturned eyes, the same pug nose, and her dimple in the right cheek.

For the last nine months, Andi, a surrogate mother, has had a recurring daydream. In it, she has an effortless labor, delivering a beautiful baby girl. The doctor hands the baby over to the intended parents, the McDaniels. Smiling and crying, they tell Andi and each other how beautiful the baby is, thanking her over and over. This daydream went by the wayside that Friday morning, however, when the doctor scheduled Andi for an emergency C-section, and the McDaniels wrecked their silver BMW on the way to the hospital.

Despite the unexpected turn, now that the baby was here, everything signified joy: the bed ride to the room, the smiling, interchangeable nurses in bouffant caps, the pink and blue geo mesh wreaths hung on the hospital room doors, and the reassuring smell of antiseptic. The first time she made this trip, her husband Sam was among the smiling faces, and the baby went home with them both. Now Sam was serving as an enlisted soldier on active duty in Iraq, and the nurses pushed her bed parallel to an empty, tightly made twin bed in a room awash in pink flowers on the wallpaper and in paintings hung on the wall.

A gray-haired nurse named Joyce laid out baby shampoo, a towel, a diaper, and a tub in a row on the counter. After filling the tub with water and soap, she took the baby from Andi's arms, put her in the plastic tub, and began bathing her. The room smelled of baby shampoo now, and the sight made her miss Chloe, their three-year-old daughter, who was home with grandma, eating applesauce and watching cartoons. They would arrive later.

"I've got a fresh, clean baby who wants to be held," Joyce said, the fat in her cheeks making her eyes appear as slits when she smiled. Andi reached

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for the baby, and for several minutes sat quietly memorizing the baby's features, smelling her wet hair and playing with her smooth fingers. She guessed if the McDaniels had been on time, they probably would have let her hold the baby for a few minutes, but not for this long. She and Lauren agreed it would probably be better for all involved if she didn't get attached to the baby.

The McDaniels were going to be so pleased with this little girl, and with her. She smiled, thinking about how much joy this new baby would bring them, since they couldn't have children. She had instantly liked Lauren and Hunter, and giving of herself made her days as a military wife, left stateside, move along quicker.

Just a couple of winters before, she was pushing Chloe in a black stroller along the gray-tiled floors of the mall, wondering if God would answer her prayer. She didn't pray much, but at that moment, she felt a little desperate. What Army wife doesn't pray for her husband's safe return? She wondered, though, if her connection to God was faulty. When she was 9, she had prayed her dad would come back, but his blue Ford sedan just kept driving down the road to the stop sign, turned left, and headed toward the highway. Later that week, her mother put on a green apron and walked out the door at sunrise to start her job making doughnuts at Jerry Lee's Grocery, and that evening she sat at the foot of her double bed, rubbing her feet after working a shift at the coffee shop around the corner.

Sometimes at night, Andi would light a candle that sat on the kitchen table and stare at the shadows it made on the wall. Her grandmother, who smelled like White Shoulders powder and wore her salt and pepper hair in an updo, used to light a candle at night when she stayed over, and the two of them said prayers for all the children who were suffering in the world. Andi was always careful to remember to hide the lit matches in the kitchen trash; otherwise her mother would fuss at her about the danger of burning candles when she was in the apartment by herself.

Fifth grade was a bad year. After school she would open the apartment door with the key she wore around her neck, close to her heart like a wish. Later, she would clean the windows as an excuse to watch the kids play tag by the big magnolia tree in the back of the apartment complex. Two sensations dominated those years: missing her mother, and being hungry. Sometimes her mother would come home a little early, bringing leftover biscuits from the coffee shop. Perhaps that was an answered prayer.

Besides concern over Sam, she had another nagging problem. She wondered if she and Sam would ever make enough money so she wouldn't have to supplement each week's groceries with bread and jars of peanut

butter from the food pantry. More children were out of the question for who knew how long. Although Sam's deployment would give them a temporary financial boost, she longed for him to get out of the military, go into another field, put a down payment on a house, and buy a car that worked more than half the time. She had no idea how to make that happen. Sam had felt drawn to the military since he was a little boy. She believed he had never outgrown the fantasy of wanting to be a hero. For her part, she didn't want to take a job and be away from Chloe. She knew that as part of a military family, always moving around, it was going to be difficult for her to get any kind of job anyway and be able to move up.

Her thoughts and problems had become a knot she could not untie. She enjoyed a short respite from it all when an elementary school choir began singing "Joy to the World." She pushed Chloe's stroller past store windows decorated with Christmas packages and populated with mannequins wearing sweaters and fur coats rarely appropriate for a December day in the South. Sunlight filtered in through the skylight, exposing a thousand specks of dust floating through the air, and two ficus trees seemed to grow miraculously out of the tiled mall floor, stretching toward the sky. To the left, an advertising kiosk featured a pretty, very pregnant blonde woman wearing a red, white, and blue floral dress, touching her extended belly. "Give the Gift of Life Next Christmas! Surrogate Mothers Generously Compensated."

Now here she was giving the gift of life.

"Is there anything I can get you before I go?" asked Joyce.

"Yes, could you hand me the pink gift bag on the table?"

Joyce nodded, walking across the room to retrieve the bag and hand it to Andi.

The paper bag crinkled as she pulled out the pink chenille baby gown she had made, along with the pink booties and bonnet her mother had knitted. She ran her index finger and thumb across the thick seam she had sewed, as if making a final inspection. Outside the window, there was only the steady hum of a leaf blower as she grabbed her cell phone, a gift from the McDaniels, off the table nearby. It was 2 o'clock. No phone calls from them or Sam. The newborn blinked at her. She hesitated. Should she? She took off the hat and white t-shirt the nurses had given the baby, and dressed her in the gown she had sewed by hand, before completing the outfit with the bonnet and booties.

It did not seem like an hour had passed when she was startled by a tap at the door and the McDaniels walked in.

"There she is!" Lauren said, clutching her white wool coat with a delicate, manicured hand. Tall and brunette, she walked toward Andi and the baby, carrying gift bags of various sizes and pastel colors, stuffed with tissue paper,

the handles tied in shiny, curled ribbon.

“Our little princess!”

Andi smiled wearily, doing her best to sit up straighter while positioning the baby for better view. “I was worried about you. Were either of you hurt?”

“Oh no, we’re fine,” said Lauren’s husband, Hunter, who carried a white and pink toile diaper bag on his shoulder. “Our brand-new car is totaled, though. We are just so upset we are late. We had a glass vase of roses for you, but the glass broke in the accident and the roses went everywhere,” he said, looking over his wife’s shoulder to catch a glimpse of the baby. “We ran out to get a new car seat, in case the other one had glass in it.”

The baby fell asleep in Andi’s arms, and she leaned over to kiss her smooth forehead. Lauren placed the bags on the table.

“This has been some day, so far. I just can’t believe we missed it—the labor, cutting the cord,” said Lauren. Hunter touched her elbow.

“All because an old man who shouldn’t have a driver’s license pulled out in front of us,” he said, shaking his head.

“That’s an experience I can’t get back,” Lauren said.

“Well, there was no labor, really,” said Andi, smiling. “I missed that, too, you know, with the C-section.” Joyce walked in and placed a cup of ice chips on the tray in front of her. She picked up the cup and began crunching the cold chips in her mouth.

“Oh yes, of course, the C-section,” Lauren said, looking at the black and white clock on the wall. “Andi, I want to hold our baby now, please.”

She nodded, her cheeks flushing. She put the cup down, and handed the child to Lauren. Lauren took the baby in her arms and said, “Hello, Rosalind, I’m your mother.”

Rosalind wailed.

Lauren laughed quietly, and looked at Hunter. “None of the baby books I read gave any tips on what to do if your baby cries at the sound of your voice,” she said, appearing to shock herself at the notion. Hunter rubbed her back with his hand, and looked down at Rosalind. “She’s beautiful, even when she’s upset,” he said. Lauren began to pace back and forth with the crying newborn. Her hair was pulled back in a ponytail, emphasized her high cheekbones.

“It might help if the baby could smell your skin and hear your heartbeat,” said Andi.

Lauren hesitated, then nodded. Hunter took Rosalind from her, and jostled her while she continued to cry.

Andi smiled apprehensively at Lauren as she took off her coat, placed it on the back of the rocking chair, and took the baby back. She held the bundle

tight to her chest and continued to pace.

Several months ago, they had asked her a lot of questions. Lauren came to her doctor appointments, and treated her to maternity massages. They had lunch together once, at a little café downtown called Albert's. Jazz music played from the speakers as they ate chicken salad on croissants and sweet potato fries on the side. Afterward, Lauren took her to a boutique and bought a navy polka-dot maternity dress for her, Lauren confiding in her how after she lost one of her babies, the one she carried the longest, she returned a white bassinette to the store. When she took back her credit card and receipt, she realized she had returned the last connection to her baby. She didn't cry in front of the cashier, but when she walked out of the store to her car, she cried so hard and loud, a little girl in the parking lot tugged at her mother's sleeve and asked, "What's wrong with that lady?" Andi squeezed her hand and reminded her about the ultrasound pictures and how she wanted to hear all about Hunter's reaction to them. When it was time to leave, Lauren hugged her and clasped a crisp \$100 bill into her hand.

"Let me take her," said Hunter, as the baby continued to cry. "I can rock her, and you can video us."

"I don't want to video her crying," Lauren said, blowing a shock of fallen hair out of her face.

"Can I try to calm her down," asked Andi, "so you can video her?"

Hunter nodded. Looking down at the shiny pink-and-white tiles, Lauren handed Rosalind to her.

"I'll be back in a minute," he said. "I need to say hello to one of my fraternity brothers." As he opened the door, a gaggle of nurses walked by whispering.

When Andi took Rosalind in her arms, the crying stopped. Lauren watched them, twisting her platinum wedding and engagement rings back and forth.

"I have a lot of experience with babies," Andi said, slightly embarrassed.

"I just feel like maybe we got off on the wrong foot here with her."

"I don't think a baby can get off on the wrong foot with her mother," said Andi, stopping herself to choose her words more carefully. She began playing with Rosalind's fine hair. "I mean, you are going to be fine." As she took in Lauren's blank expression, she decided it would be best just to stop talking. Andi felt sure she didn't want her encouragement. Looking down, she noticed that Rosalind's armband, with the name McDaniel all caps, seemed large and out of place on her small arm.

Lauren began pacing again, but her face flashed a sense of relief and a quick smile when Hunter and a doctor walked in the room.

"Andi, this is Dr. Greg Anderson," said Hunter, slapping him on the back.

“He is the pediatrician on call today. He’s going to take a look at Rosalind.”
Andi handed Rosalind to the doctor.

“This is a beautiful baby,” said Dr. Anderson. “You are an angel to have a baby for people who are not able.”

She nodded and smiled faintly.

“Her husband is serving in Iraq,” added Hunter, motioning to Andi.

“Tell him thanks for his service,” said Dr. Anderson. “People like you and your husband are heroes.”

She would have thanked him, but he was soon preoccupied with the McDaniels. He carefully placed Rosalind in the bassinet, then the three of them stood with their backs to her as Dr. Anderson put his stethoscope in his ears and began listening to Rosalind’s heartbeat.

She could feel her own heartbeat as the doctor, Lauren, and Hunter discussed Rosalind’s reflexes and muscle tone, and a new nurse came in to take her blood pressure. Her long hair was in an elaborate updo, and she reminded Andi of a younger version of her grandmother—the one who smelled like White Shoulders powder, and read stories to her out of the children’s Bible, and taught her to pray. The blood pressure cuff felt tighter and more uncomfortable than usual.

“How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine, except for being a little woozy and tired,” she said.

“Are you sure you’re OK?” asked the nurse, as she looked back at the McDaniels and Dr. Anderson.

The nurse’s gold cross pendant glimmered in the sun. Andi chewed on her short nails as Dr. Anderson walked over with a smile and his arms around Lauren and Hunter. “Great news, Andi. Rosalind is in perfect health.”

He and the nurse walked out the door. Lauren and Hunter looked at each other. He let out a deep breath.

“Andi, since the baby was cleared for release by Greg, we are going to go ahead and take her home.”

“Home? I thought she would be staying at the hospital at least as long as I am,” said Andi, who seemed to surprise them with the volume of her voice. “Y’all were going to sleep in the room next door. You’ve already been banded.”

“That was the plan, but Dr. Anderson was able to release her for us,” said Hunter, running his hand through his hair.

“You’ll be able to rest, Andi,” added Lauren. “You’ve been through a lot. You need that.” Lauren clasped her hand with both of hers. Her hands were warm.

“I’m fine, really,” she said. “I just wasn’t expecting this so soon.”

The McDaniels walked back to the bassinet, but didn't pick Rosalind up. She suspected it was out of fear of making her cry again.

She had not heard from Sam in three days. Was he OK? He had told her it was the rainy season there. She imagined him trudging through thick, sticky, Iraq mud, the rain stinging his face like a rebuke. During late-night phone calls he had described the details of his daily life. In letters, he wrote about the helicopters flying over him noisily, always in pairs, the rat-tat-tat of gunfire, the boom of IEDs in the distance, the whistle of mortar. His descriptions were so vivid, she could almost feel the rain on her own face, rain barely masking the smell of diesel exhaust mixed with human sweat. In her worst moments, after Chloe was in bed and every dish in the kitchen put away in the cupboard, she would worry. What if his call sign were called over the radio, "We have one down"? He told her he had premonitions of dying, of losing his weapon, of being shown up as a coward. His body was not even his own anymore.

He had been skeptical of her being a surrogate, but after a few weeks of her convincing him that it would help another family and give her something to focus on instead of worrying about him, he relented. Plus (she knew he would never say this out loud), the truth was, they needed the money. It would help Chloe. She and Sam had much in common now. She thought about how he had also signed on the dotted line and did not really know what he signed up for.

Lauren began undressing Rosalind.

Andi snapped out of her daydream. "Wait, I sewed that gown for her, and Mama knitted the bonnet and booties," said Andi. "I thought it would be a nice going-away present for her, a take-home outfit."

"That was very thoughtful of you."

"I spent a lot of time on that," said Andi. "Oh, please don't take it off!"

"I have a take-home outfit for her. I got it at this boutique a friend of my mother owns. That was very sweet of you to make her something, though. She will wear it, sometime. Trust me."

It began to bother her how immobile the C-section made her. Her legs felt heavy. She looked down at the white blanket that covered her stomach and legs like gauze.

"We are going to have pictures made with her and some of the family after this," Hunter said.

"I can send you a picture," Lauren said, flashing a bright smile.

"Oh, I really wish she could wear it home," Andi began. "I wanted to have this memory of her wearing this outfit we made."

“At least one of these pictures will be in the paper.” She took a few steps to the table, and took the white gown out of a pastel gift bag, and held it up to the fluorescent light for her to see. The fabric looked silky and delicate.

“It’s very nice,” Andi said. “I know I am being stubborn. I guess I just thought she would wear the outfit I made out of here. I put a lot of thought into it.”

“We appreciate that so much, but no, we don’t need more clothes.”

“Lauren,” said Hunter, holding up his hand.

Andi could not hear it anymore. She knocked the bag off the bed with her forearm. “Why can’t you just do this for me? I carried her for nine months, and had a C-section. I will have this scar for the rest of my life—”

Rosalind woke up crying.

“Maybe she’s cold,” Lauren said, as she walked briskly back to Rosalind’s bassinette. She started putting her clothes back on her, but seemed to have trouble. Her frustration seemed to escalate along with the baby’s crying. She finally snapped at Hunter to help. He sauntered over, picked up the baby from the bassinette and handed her to Lauren. She jostled Rosalind as she walked around the room.

“Rock-a-bye and goodnight,” Lauren began singing. She started the song three more times and stopped. “I can’t even concentrate.”

“Maybe you should feed her,” said Hunter. “I’ll mix the formula in a bottle for you.”

Lauren sat in the chair and started rocking Rosalind as the baby cried.

Hunter rustled through the diaper bag, pulling each item out, placing it on the counter, and sighing. “The formula isn’t here.”

“I know I packed it. Maybe it fell out of the bag during the wreck.”

“I can probably get some from the nurses.”

“No! Rosalind is not going to eat GMO formula,” Lauren said. “Could you please go to the store and buy some more of the organic brand?”

“For our princess? Of course.” Hunter quickly tossed the baby clothes and diapers in the bag and put it back on the counter.

Rosalind continued to cry as Lauren rocked her. Andi felt too angry with Lauren to offer any assistance, but the desire to comfort Rosalind was overwhelming.

“What if I nursed Rosalind until Hunter gets back from the store?”

“No,” Lauren said, as she stood up and began walking the floor with Rosalind.

“I’ll be gone 20 minutes, what’s it going to hurt?”

“Nothing, it will only help Rosalind,” Andi said.

“We both agreed that wouldn’t be right to expect that of Andi or of—”

“Rosalind is obviously hungry,” Hunter began. “Andi wants to help, let’s let her.”

“I just don’t know—”

“Let Andi feed her.”

Lauren kissed Rosalind’s forehead before walking over to Andi and placing the baby in her outstretched arms. She didn’t look at Andi’s face.

“I’ll be back in a few,” Hunter said as he walked out the door. Lauren was now sitting in the rocking chair, and continued avoiding any eye contact with Andi.

Andi looked down and began nursing the baby. Rosalind’s body felt warm and familiar. It was strange to her that nursing Rosalind came so much easier than it had with Chloe. She latched on immediately. Andi loved being pregnant, but the days after delivery of her first had been more difficult. Chloe had so much trouble latching on, and the two of them spent so many frustrated, sleepless nights trying to make it work. This time, she and the baby were in sync. She took this as a gift, or maybe even a sign. If the McDaniels had died that morning, her life would have been forever different. She imagined Chloe at the kitchen table four years from now. Sam walks in with Rosalind on his shoulders, as she lights four candles on a strawberry and cream cheese birthday cake. Rosalind’s birthday cake. She looked down and stared into Rosalind’s eyes. They were her eyes. After a few more seconds of fighting to keep her eyelids open, Rosalind finally closed her eyes and went to sleep.

It didn’t seem as though 30 minutes had gone by. Hunter pulled open the hospital door triumphantly and announced, “Got it!” while holding up a white plastic grocery bag presumably of organic formula.

“Sh!” Lauren said, putting her finger up to her lips. “Why don’t you go get the car seat and try to put her in it without waking her up,” she whispered. “This is the best chance we have to go.”

With that, Andi felt as if all the blood had run from her head and torso. All she knew was that they were about to take away her daughter.

The McDaniels walked to her bed and stood close to her and the baby. “Looks like Rosalind is going to wear the outfit you made her,” Hunter said, whispering. “She’s finally asleep. Everybody’s happy now.” He smiled and winked at her.

Lauren looked down at Rosalind, and gently touched the gown she made. “This stitching is perfect, Andi. You could make a career out of sewing.”

“Well, if she wanted to move to a Third World country and work in a sweatshop,” Hunter said, shaking his head. “Everything has been outsourced these days.”

She looked down at the baby and, as if in a dream, she couldn't resist when Hunter took Rosalind out of her arms. She couldn't make a sound. Inside, though, it was like someone was slowly expanding a balloon inside her chest that would explode any minute. One of them said something about getting in touch with her sometime soon. In her mind, she was like an injured soldier on the ground now, abandoned by the three of them, as they left the hospital room.

Out the window, the sky was streaked orange and pink. There was no longer the hum of a leaf blower, the maintenance man had probably long since finished his work and gone home. A light breeze blew through the leaves of the trees, but it was otherwise silent. A robin flew from the limb of one tree to a nest on another branch. Everything was aglow in the late afternoon sun. Her cell phone rang on the table beside her. It was Sam. She answered the phone and began to cry.

Transgenderism:

A Creature of Political Correctness

Stella Morabito

Perhaps the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women could more accurately self-identify as the UN Commission on the *Abolition of Women*. After all, that body's commitment to gender ideology means it is devoted to legally abolishing sex distinctions, female as well as male.

Nevertheless, each year in March, the Commission hosts a glut of events and talks in New York City, presumably to celebrate and support women's rights. This year I had the honor of speaking at a panel there hosted by the pro-life Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam). The topic was "Gender Ideology and Political Correctness." My fellow panelists were Michael Walsh, who had just published a brilliant expose of cultural Marxism entitled *The Devil's Pleasure Palace*,¹ and moderator Austin Ruse, who is president of C-Fam and polemicist extraordinaire.

The experience was both liberating and surreal for me. It was liberating to have the opportunity to talk about something rarely discussed in depth: the inseparable connection between transgenderism and political correctness. And to do so right there in the belly of the UN beast.

And since the UN bureaucracy in New York is perhaps *the* global bastion of both gender ideology and political correctness, the experience was drenched in surrealism. Consider the fact that transgenderism is an ideology that basically refutes the biological reality of women because its endgame is to abolish all sex distinctions in law. After all, if a man can be a woman, then being a woman to begin with doesn't mean anything. So the UN Commission on the Status of Women is promoting a program that denies the premise of its very existence: women.

Adding to the surrealism was that those who attended in order to protest our talks—basically a gang of young students who swelled attendance to standing room only—ended up proving so many of our panel's points. The connection between these youths' purported agenda to promote "diversity"—in this case, gender ideology/transgenderism—and their caving to the pressures of political correctness could not have been clearer. Their tone of righteous indignation sounded rehearsed, no doubt because such behaviors are so often conditioned in students at today's thoroughly propagandized

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college campuses and culture. But such performances shouldn't surprise us, because environments hostile to free inquiry are also going to be hostile to clear and independent thought.

Putting on Personas

During the question and answer period, our detractors adopted exactly the personas I would expect well-programmed students to adopt. We had the social justice warrior—a striking young woman with evident but unfulfilled intellectual potential—who loudly complained about white privilege and how she would *always* face discrimination in her life for the sole reason that her last name is “Lopez.” Then there was the soft-spoken young man who wore large dangling earrings to make the point that he was “gender non-conforming.” His basic argument went like this: We need a regime of political correctness because otherwise our personal interactions might offend somebody else's reality. Another young agitator simply resorted to labelling us as bigots.

But there were several audience members who were very thankful for our panel. A Maori woman from New Zealand, as well as women from Kenya and Nigeria, expressed gratitude to me for speaking on this topic. They confided that Western elites are applying enormous pressure on their societies to get with the LGBT agenda. (This is a fact that Robert Cardinal Sarah pointed out so persuasively in his book *God or Nothing*.²) They were relieved to hear an affirming voice from Americans at the United Nations.

Indeed, in my talk I focused on that sense of social isolation which is often manufactured through the process of agitation and propaganda (agitprop) that we call political correctness. We should all be alarmed about how deeply propaganda has infected our culture. And we must build awareness that gender ideology could not survive without the force of political correctness to silence us, divide us, and program so many people into cult-like obedience.

The De-Sexing of Humanity through Propaganda

Gender ideology is based on the notion that biological sex distinctions should be meaningless to you—and to your children. One of the ultimate goals of the transgender project is to eliminate from all birth certificates any reference to male or female. So let's not be conned by the narrative that this is about anti-discrimination or human rights for a tiny demographic that today is called transgender. Not at all.

The ultimate end of so-called sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) non-discrimination laws is the universal de-sexing of all of humanity. (This is a point I made in a recent Public Discourse article: “A De-sexed Society is

a De-Humanized Society.”³) The corollary is that those who disagree with the idea should have no legal right to express their opinion and should be silenced by force of law. This is gender ideology in a nutshell.

In other words, in order to exist, gender ideology is totally dependent on political correctness. Transgenderism is the very creature of political correctness. And that is because the great majority of people would outright reject it if they were permitted to think it through and think out loud. Transgender activists, along with their big guns from the Obama White House and its co-opted allies in corporate America, have advanced a fast and furious campaign so that we don't know what hit us. Just in the past year or so, Americans have felt a huge flood of transgender propaganda coming out of Hollywood and the media to thoroughly saturate them. At the same time, any whisper of dissent or innocent question about the agenda ends up getting suppressed and vilified. Coincidence? No way. Predictable? Utterly.

“Assigned at Birth” Is the Poison Pill We Started Ingesting Decades Ago

The media blitzkrieg to mainstream transgenderism should have been a totally predictable result of the Supreme Court's *Obergefell* decision to abolish civil marriage as the union of one male and one female. The “T” in LGBT made clear that same-sex marriage and the transgender project were always a package deal. And why wouldn't they be? By legally abolishing marriage as a male-female institution, we began the process of legally abolishing state recognition of sex distinctions between husband and wife, as well as father and mother. The next step is to utterly “burn the hetero-normative binary,” as gender warriors are fond of saying, in order to erase any distinction of male and female in law.

Under the guise of erasing discrimination on the basis of gender identity, we began over 20 years ago to enact such laws in a multitude of municipalities and states. In that time, lots of well-meaning but short-sighted legislators signed on to a deadly premise embedded in them all: that sex is something that is “assigned at birth.” No doubt they did so by assuming falsely that such a premise only applied to transgender persons. Well, folks, it doesn't.

Nearly six years ago I wrote an essay for the *Washington Examiner*⁴ warning readers that the “assigned at birth” premise embedded under the radar in SOGI laws was meant to be applied universally. It means *your* sex. It means *everybody's* sex. Until very recently, most people did not take seriously that our society would make it illegal to distinguish between biological male and female. Most Americans would have laughed off such a mission as fringy at best, and totally implausible.

Unfortunately, such underestimation afforded the transgender project cover

in which to undertake such a huge operation. For decades, gender warriors marched through all of the institutions spreading the cult of gender ideology, starting in the arts and academics. After obtaining the firmest of footholds in Hollywood and the media, it was easier to penetrate all of the institutions. Softer targets were absorbed or bought off—legislative bodies, the justice system, corporate America, religion lite. The harder targets would include the military, K12 education, and the more traditional churches.

Of course, the biggest prize for LGBT activists would be ridding society of its very nucleus: the biological family. But to abolish the family in law, one must first abolish all sex distinctions, so that there is no legal rationale for the husband-wife relationship, or for the default recognition of the legal guardianship of biological mothers and fathers over their sons and daughters. Dissolving those legal bonds is paramount for them. In this way, the state would end up deciding and controlling all personal relationships, right at their source: the biological family. That is what is at stake, and that is why the transgender project is so inherently totalitarian.

How Do You Get People to Sign onto Such Suicidal Stuff?

During the United Nations panel, Mr. Walsh noted that the degree of difference between what you will say publicly and what you feel you must whisper privately represents the degree of your freedom. The greater the difference in these expressions—private and public—the more unfree you are.

This self-censorship is what political correctness—and, indeed, all propaganda with agitation—is designed to cultivate. Since people generally will not sign on voluntarily to having their freedom suppressed, they must be led into it or coerced into it.

So, how are people led into accepting such suicidal notions—not only for themselves, but for their own children? Government schooling is now on track to hack the minds of very young children, telling them that they are neither male nor female at a time in their development when they are trying to navigate the line between fantasy and reality. Gender ideologists insist children must figure it out all on their own, but, of course, at their prodding. If you are able to see the world through the eyes of a child, you will recognize this piece of gender ideology as an exercise in psychological abuse and cruelty. How do you get parents to subject their children to this hellish level of confusion?

When you can't convince people to do what you want them to do—especially when it is not in their own self-interest—you have to lead them there. To lead them there requires something special: a machine. A machine intended to divide and isolate people so that they cannot verify reality with one another. An anti-conversation, anti-family, anti-friendship machine.

The Machine of Political Correctness: Its Engine and Its Process

Here's how the political correctness machine works. The components of its engine are the prime outlets of communication, including Hollywood, the media, and academia. All of these outlets are dominated and controlled today by elites who champion gender ideology.

Political correctness operates as a twin process of saturation and suppression. We've been saturated by all things transgender in TV, movies, the Internet, all media, college campuses, and so on. The effect and intent of this saturation is to desensitize people to it.

At the same time, we get a lot of jamming or suppression of any voice that might question the preferred agenda. Civil discourse takes a hit. Comedy takes a big hit. Friendship takes a hit. The red flag here is that such censorship—and increasingly, government-sponsored censorship—is central to pushing through this whole agenda. We can see examples of this in laws that enforce the transgender view of reality through punitive measures, including huge fines such as the New York City maximum of \$250,000 for “mis-gendering” someone.

It's all about getting all people to suppress their natural inclination for conversation and for openly sharing—in friendship—how we see reality, how our perspectives may differ from those of others.

One-on-one dialogue, freely spoken, is how we arrive at a finding of what's real and what is true. It's how we develop friendships and how we live in civil society. The net effect of political conditioning is to shut down civil society and real conversation by inducing self-censorship and uncertainty in people trying to navigate the saturation and suppression of discourse dictated by the politically correct view of gender ideology.

The Fuel of Political Conditioning: Fear

The fuel of the political correctness engine is fear: fear of being isolated from others, rejected, cast out of society. As with all agitprop, political correctness works by manipulating in each of us the primal and universal human fear of being cast out of society.

Our aversion to rejection is hard-wired in us from infancy on. It's akin to the terror of being placed into solitary confinement. It's like the separation anxiety a child feels. This dread of isolation affects a person's ability to function. We know from history that the threat of becoming a “non-person” is common to the social policing that happens in all totalitarian societies. I've no doubt that this fear factor also accounts for the epidemic of loneliness that is now gripping our society.

So when advocates of a particular view smear or label someone simply

for having a different perspective, we are going down the totalitarian path. The smears—whether “bigot” or “hater” or some sort of “phobia”—serve to induce self-censorship in everybody. The branding creates a lot of polarization and distrust in society overall. It stimulates an environment in which people learn to shun others, not because they know anything about the person, but only because that person has been branded as a non-person. It destroys social trust. It breaks down communities. It prevents friendships.

It is chilling to think about how the manipulation of this universal fear has worked through history to induce societies to conform to any kind of agenda, including crimes against humanity. Nazi Germany, Stalin’s Russia, Mao’s China, and Pol Pot’s Cambodia are just a few examples of societies in which people adapted to the unthinkable. Of course, the crimes are always committed in the name of some higher good—or, as Flannery O’Connor famously noted, in the name of a compassion that leads to the gas chambers. Indeed, propaganda that aims to vilify groups of people happens to be a staple of all genocidal programs. As the granddaughter of Armenian genocide survivors, I’m especially aware of this.

Once an open society starts engaging in self-censorship on this scale, such self-censorship takes on a life of its own, creating a dangerous spiral of silence. A great irony is that the more we respond to this fear of isolation by self-censoring, the more isolated we actually become. Unfortunately, the self-censorship induced by political conditioning is an inherent part of the laws enforcing gender ideology.

Gender Ideology Is a Vehicle for Consolidating State Power

In the end, transgenderism does not promote freedom for anybody, least of all for persons identifying as transgender. It can only lead to the consolidation of state power. That’s because (as I mentioned above), de-sexing everybody in law removes the basis for allowing the biological family unit to exist autonomously, unmolested by the state. A dearth of functioning families creates a dearth of functioning communities. It’s a ready-made divide-and-conquer scheme.

But four other factors contribute to transgenderism’s use as a power consolidation tool for the state: its manipulative use of language, unsustainability as a form of individualism, dependence on censorship, and endless use of agitprop.

“Gender Identity” Is an Orwellian Term

Language—and how it is used in laws that promote transgenderism—plays out in two related but independent ways. First, it changes the language and the legal framework by which each and every one of us is permitted to

understand our *own* humanity. Second, the language codes, enforced socially or legally, ultimately limit independent thinking. And that's a huge step to forcing conformity onto a society, and regulating all of the relationships within it.

The underlying premise that your sex is not a biological fact, but an arbitrary designation "assigned" to you at birth, is Orwellian on its face. In the past, the expression "sex assigned at birth" was a medical term reserved only for rare cases of intersex conditions, particularly for children born with ambiguous genitalia. But today it's being applied to all of us. The point is to muddy the language so that your biological reality is replaced in law with a mental state called "gender identity."

Transgender activists are also pushing hard now to ban something they call "infant gender assignment," which means prohibiting doctors from identifying a newborn as either male or female. In addition, obstetricians and midwives are now being required to accommodate the fiction of "pregnant men," who are biological females who insist on identifying as male throughout pregnancy and childbirth.

The effect of this whole canard is to legally separate our sex from our bodies by declaring in law that the main thing that counts in all of us is our *idea* of "gender identity." The limitless "gender spectrum" is another myth produced by gender ideologists who claim that male and female are extremes and we can exist on any point in the spectrum, and that gender can be fluid, ever-changing. So, since gender identity can exist only in one's mind, under this scheme the rule of law must give way to as many perceptions about gender as there are people perceiving and being perceived.

This is obviously unsustainable. Ultimately, gender ideology obscures and then abolishes the common language and understanding of biological sex distinctions. In practice, it means, again, that the state is freer to invade the family and other private relationships. It means the state can control how we communicate with one another.

If transgender law can force everyone to reject and disregard their sex and replace it with something called "gender identity," this means we must also reject all of the relationships that normally come with sex. So the "transition" we're talking about is not so much in the transgender person. *It's in everyone around that person.* In all of society. The language is destabilizing as people sort out whether a brother is a sister, a father is really a mother, a daughter should be addressed as a son. All of those relationships, according to transgender law, may exist only in the isolation of our minds, and not in any shared physical reality. (For a good look into what the whole "gender" fad does to us, read Daniel Moody's essay "The Flesh Made Word."⁵)

By trying to keep up with these illusions, at some point we lose touch with

reality. We basically infect all of society with mass delusion. Erasing our sex distinctions—as they exist in nature and as they apply to childbearing and rearing—undermines the template for the biological family as a legal unit. If the family is no longer legally accepted as a unit that originates through the union of biological male and female, is there any real obligation for the state to recognize any biological family ties? I don't think so. Without any such obligation, children become more easily classified as wards of the state.

This sort of imposed “diversity” claims to do away with limits on our identity. But it actually creates a vacuum of ambiguity, particularly for young children who crave and need structure—and a mother and a father—no matter what the law tells them they should want or need.

Gender Ideology Is a Made-to-Order Trojan Horse for Central Planning

The transgender movement presents itself as promoting individual freedom and authenticity of self, which are both considered positive ideas in Western culture. But the individualism we are dealing with—that each of us is free to demand that the world adjust to infinite perceptions of reality—is so extreme that it is not sustainable. It's an illusion. How can society and the legal community accommodate the many different “genders” on a spectrum that includes “gender fluidity” and “multiplicities of persons,” enforcing usage of the pronoun “they” for an individual?

By replacing biological sex distinctions with something changeable like “gender identity,” we invite social and legal chaos. Or, to avoid such chaos, we invite a legalism that is totalitarian and brings centralized state power into that vacuum.

The elimination of sex distinctions also serves to eliminate the institutions that protect the individual from the power of the state. We often forget about that space between the individual and the state, filled with institutions that mediate and balance the power of the two. These mediating institutions include the family, the church, and all manner of civic and private associations.

They are like buffer zones that protect each one of us from state abuses of power. They allow self-governing communities to rise and flourish. But the transgender project serves to give the state great access to those institutions under the banner of non-discrimination; this allows government to regulate the institutions' missions as well as the relationships within them.

Gender Ideology Is Built on Censorship

We see aggressive censorship in these laws because they end up undermining the biological facts of nature itself. Censorship is always required in cases where illusions need to be propped up.

Gender ideology requires most of the population to stifle acceptance of living in physical reality as biologically either male or female. So, in the process of protecting any given individual's sense of inner reality, we must all reject any commonly held outward reality.

And without any common understanding that's rooted in reality, we can't communicate. In the United States, conscience protections were a big part of cutting deals to get the marriage laws through legislatures. Governor Andrew Cuomo made a big deal about including them in New York's law. But, predictably, that mask is now off. All attempts to allow citizens to express their conscience are being smeared as hate and bigotry.

Gender Ideology Depends on Aggressive Agitprop

Facts are hostile things to gender ideologists, since they are in the business of trying to undo millennia of human understanding about reality. This means that civil society and real debate are verboten to them. Equally unwelcome is unregulated one-on-one conversation, which endangers conjured-up illusions that defy reality.

In order to regulate conversation, gender ideologists are heavily dependent upon political correctness and conditioning. The idea is to get people to change their language in a way that reforms how they think. The best way to do this is to evoke emotional responses in people, especially the fear of being excluded and the desire to be included. Peaceful exchange of thoughts between two people actually gets in the way of those conditioned emotional reflexes. One of the greatest experts on propaganda, Jacques Ellul, wrote that "Propaganda ceases where simple dialogue begins."

So to force an agenda item that tells people to reject their physical reality requires some regulation of speech. How to do that? Again, it's about cultivating the fear of being socially cast out if you don't comply.

We can see how this happened in the coordinated strategy to coerce public compliance with the LGBT agenda. In the 1989 book *After the Ball*,⁶ the authors basically called for the twin processes of political conditioning I described above. The first is saturation, which they called "desensitization." The second was the suppression of opposing views, which they referred to as "jamming." But both of those processes—saturation of the media with the desired agenda and suppression of any voice of dissent—were to be followed by wholesale conversion.

After the Ball was an intensely aggressive marketing plan. The intent was to inject memes (e.g., slogans such as "love is love," "marriage equality," etc.) into public discourse in order to manufacture opinion cascades. You can read more about this sort of mass manipulation in a 1996 *Stanford Law*

Review article by Cass Sunstein and Timur Kuran on “availability cascades.”⁷ Sunstein and Kuran explain how you can create “collective belief formation” by taking any implausible idea and simply injecting it repeatedly into public discourse. It’s all about smearing dissenters and rewarding compliance. There’s a lot of social psychology behind it. Once enough people in a society are conditioned to self-censor, the propaganda has done its job and any implausible agenda item—including transgenderism—can take hold.

As with any other implausible idea, transgenderism could only overcome through force, deception, and stealth manipulation. It was never going to happen through real persuasion, which is powered through free will and open conversation.

Our Collision Course with Reality

The integral part played by censorship in this agenda causes transgenderism tragically to become a campaign *against* human rights. That’s because the follow-up to that kind of censorship is always centralized state power and the corruption and abuses that ensue. In the end, such a system never serves anybody’s human dignity. State power feeds on itself, but requires a population docile to accepting anti-reality. We’ve seen this sort of pattern throughout history.

All of these features of gender ideology—the control of our language, extreme individualism, need for censorship, and dependence on agitprop—move us towards tyranny. And they stunt our growth as individuals because they cause people to become more polarized and fearful about sharing their perspectives and common humanity. That fear and polarization can only serve a centralized surveillance state. And it’s tragic for true human friendship and freedom, which serve as paths towards recognizing reality and our common humanity.

Political Correctness Is Inherently Anti-Friendship

I think one of the great buried truths of our time is that freedom is impossible without friendship—and vice versa. Any tyrant who wishes to control people knows that he must first divide them and make them resent and hate one another. In today’s world, gender ideology is turning out to be a perfect tool for creating such divisions.

The Supreme Court’s *Obergefell* decision invalidated the husband-wife bond as legal marriage. Hence it paved the way for undermining the biological mother-child-father bond in law. And without strong family bonds, communities lose the foundation upon which they can grow and thrive. People end up more alienated and isolated from one another than ever. This is because

families are the foundation of friendship. And friendship is the foundation of freedom.

To elaborate on this concept, consider these words on the nature of tyranny, penned by Alexis de Tocqueville, nineteenth-century author of *Democracy in America*⁸:

Despotism, which by its nature is suspicious, sees in the separation among men the surest guarantee of its continuance, and it usually makes every effort to keep them separate. No vice of the human heart is so acceptable to it as selfishness: a despot easily forgives his subjects for not loving him, provided they do not love one another.

It's no wonder that tyrants would seek to separate people through the dictates of political correctness. Real conversation and friendship cause ripple effects of freedom that are the bane of oppressors. Political correctness is designed to stifle these ripple effects.

In order for friendships and trust to develop, people must be free to have real conversations. And in order to do that—in order to exchange different ideas and thoughts—our language must reflect a common understanding of our common reality and our shared humanity. If we can't share a basic common understanding of reality—and what it means to be human—then we can't have personal relationships.

The only solution is to find ways to tear down those barriers and reach out in real friendship to others. One person at a time.

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**The individuals listed above are remembering the
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*In Fond Memory of Mr. Patrick Joseph Gorman
January 17, 1938-March 2, 2016*

Dark Forces Assailing the West

William Murchison

Let's say you have been contemplating—oh, I don't know—prospects under our present political order for redress of the abortion horrors perpetrated with official permission since 1973. And you pick up Richard Weikart's new book *The Death of Humanity and the Case for Life*. And you read. And you come across, quickly enough, various 18th-century pronouncements as to the negligible traits of human beings and the equivalence of humans and animals. And they remind you of various 20th and 21st-century declarations. And you start to wonder how deep this thing really is—this ongoing disparagement of life viewed as nothing special and maybe worse than that: outright detrimental to Progress. And you move on to read of scientists and philosophers who see life as a thing to be manipulated, if not exterminated, and brought in line with the superior expectations of the thinkers and leaders in question, whose judgments, on their own showing, always trump conventional expectations concerning the innate goodness of life. And you . . .

One thing I suspect you do is wonder aloud where all this is going—this life business, amid perpetually raised eyebrows as to the worth of life itself. Whereupon you recognize the consonance of Dr. Weikart's concerns with your own: his awful examples—Darwin, Skinner, Nietzsche, Stalin, Dawkins, to name a few at random—standing for the moral chaos of the present.

The present article is not a book review in the standard sense. I use Weikart's book (Regnery \$27.99) as a liftoff point for discussion of our present disorders: over which he grieves as copiously as any reader of this journal. *The Death of Humanity*, in spite of its slightly melodramatic title, is a sober, deeply researched, clearly written, and persuasive—though what do we life-affirming fogies know anyway?—account of our civilizational descent into denial.

Denial of what? Excellent question. Denial of the special—it is not too much to say heaven-blessed—role of men and women in their relationship to the world. That is the point our thought leaders seem to think no longer obtains. Life: yeah, fine; but not without qualifications concerning what we might call fitness.

The lack of a resounding yes to the Lord's favor as exemplified in His creation of us is the feature that probably more than any other—nuclear war

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included—subverts and challenges our grasp of the human essentials. What essentials?, as Darwin, Skinner, etc., might reply. The knock on humanity, as Weikart, professor of modern European history at California State University, Stanislaus, undertakes to show us, has to do with our dispensability. I groped for that word—dispensability, signifying as it does our evidently contingent relationship to the world. No one wants to exterminate us completely, you will be glad to know. But much of modern thought, as the case has been since the 18th century, takes a decidedly skeptical view of our right to predominance in the natural world, and of our right to act as though God has put us here to do His will.

He didn't put us here?! Shock and astonishment would once have swept the world upon the advancement of the claim that God acted in a manner other than *Genesis* records. Not so much these days. A world without a Creator can be said to have a moral void which men and women fill with their own imaginings. There are plenty of these, as it turns out.

Weikart dates the modern crisis—unsurprisingly—from the Enlightenment. He begins with the comparatively unknown materialist Julien Offray de La Mettrie, who suggested that humans are machines; and, if machines, creatures detached from trifles like personal responsibility. La Mettrie's worldview, says Weikart, rescued humanity “from the taint of moral goodness, respect, dignity, and love.” It de-humanized us, in other words; put us under the reproach of “mindless natural laws that have no intrinsic purpose or meaning.” The vilest members of the race, the author reports, were mere “marionettes dancing along the stage of history without any ability to control their destiny.”

It got worse from there; much worse. There would seem some natural disposition in the culture of the Enlightenment, which of course was a phenomenon of the scientific age, to reject the unseen—the merely grasped, on questionable evidence—nature of the Christian revelation. From La Mettrie it was on to Helvetius, who affirmed, in 1773, that “Man is a machine, that being put in motion by corporeal sensibility, ought to perform all that it executes.” And from there to Karl Vogt and Bertrand Russell; thence to Darwin and the Darwinists—not necessarily in a straight line but in relationship to the notion that man's characteristics were in no way special or outstanding. It was easy, on the basis of that premise, to argue that particular humans were inferior to other humans on account of mental or physical defects. Are we starting to sound contemporary here?

Darwinism, as it developed, emphasized the “survival of the fittest”: in which notion there was not much room for the Christian insight that the weak and the helpless and the poor were subjects for compassion, rather than for anger at their “unfitness.” Dispose of Christianity as a factor of

much scientific interest and you create space to weed out those less fitted—in the empirical-scientific way of looking at things—for the achievement of empirical goals. Out, damned cots! And crutches! And sick or hungry countenances. Weikart notes how the eugenic movement, based expressly on the weeding out of the less empirically fit, enjoyed vast vogue in the 19th century and, indeed, beyond.

Meanwhile “science” seemed to permit such as Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, the thrill killers successfully defended by Clarence Darrow, to shrug off or disclaim personal responsibility for heinous acts not chargeable to the accounts of men and women “made that way,” and therefore lacking moral reference points. Lenin and the Marxists were participants in the delusion that conventional morality, being a dead letter, could not hinder the visionary from creating realities all their own, and imposing those realities on all they encountered, never mind the cost, never mind the bloodshed.

All these enlightened folk—and there were, and are, many more—were making it up as they went; inventing new destinies for the animal Man. They were the biggest egotists you ever heard of. What they said, went. Don’t bother questioning them. They knew. God was dead; all, in Dostoyevskian terms, was permitted. Never before in human history had so many minds, mostly learned (in worldly terms) and well-cultivated by the educational processes of their day, drawn themselves into godly form. The scepters of power they seized were—are—theirs by right. Don’t tell them what to think. They know. You don’t. Shut up, therefore. (Civilized discussion seems rarely to take place in the presence of the enlightened; try carrying on a conversation with Richard Dawkins, or some other likely atheist, about divinely wrought presumptions as to morals.) Life, says the philosopher Peter Singer, “just happened; it did not happen for any overall purpose.” Oh, really? And whence that challenging conclusion? He knows what he knows what he knows, it appears; and to the hot place (which probably doesn’t exist) with those who say otherwise.

Human Life Review readers will surmise correctly that Weikart accords abortion and euthanasia prominent places in his narrative of causes that draw their success (so to speak) from adaptation to a climate of hostility to higher views of human destiny than those shaped by the philosophers. If human life enjoys no God-given status and exhibits in particular cases great weaknesses—disability, misshapeness, illness—what is the obstacle to removing these particular lives from our midst? It should surprise absolutely no one that the claim to the right of self-extinction enjoys a large modern fan club. Self-extinction takes some guts, which may be one reason the assisted suicide

movement seems to me less potent than the abortion movement. Whatever one's cultural entitlement, is it likely that one relishes the thought of cold steel tickling the temple, or of drugs from whose effects there is no escape? Abortion poses less difficulty: a fragment of—it may not even be life! not real life anyway; a fragment of something not visible; unformed; a cartoon of all it means to be human. It is easy for many to wish such a fragment removed . . . elsewhere, on the premise that the rights of the Thing in question cannot bear comparison with the right of a woman to be extracted from the burden of an undesired pregnancy. If life is other than the gift of God, other than the result of mechanistic maneuverings and random processes that sometimes go well and sometimes go ill, you never know which—by that very modern reckoning there is no barrier to abortion. You can do it, and you might as well, if that's what you want and need.

Weikart performs a public service—not one that will commend itself to the fans and followers of Richard Dawkins, Peter Singer, et al.—for cataloging the all-too-numerous heresies that shape modern ethics. I use deliberately the word “heresies,” with all its theological freight. A heresy purports to stand normative understandings on their heads—at the behest of the heretic: all-wise, all-knowing, you have to assume, or where would he get the chutzpah to contradict that which we take for enduring Truth. Weikart is on to these people. Where do they get this stuff? he inquires. They make it up. They like the flavor, the taste. They insist that the rest of us participate in the same value judgments. “Because I say so,” is their implied explanation.

“Life as a whole has no meaning,” quoth Singer. As for Nietzsche: “To speak of right and wrong *per se* makes no sense at all.” As for Ayn Rand: “[M]an must live for his own sake.”

“Oh, yeah?!” as Americans, sufficiently provoked, tend to say. That time-tested comeback seems not to work on the philosophers of materialism and human insufficiency, who reply, calmly: “Yeah. That's how it is. Get over it.”

We know where this thing is leading us—down an intellectual garden path that winds up at the intellectual gallows. We WILL believe! We WILL! Or else.

“Or else” has varied implications. “Vee haf vays of making you talk,” as the uniformed inquisitors in World War II movies used to say to the recalcitrant. Whereupon the screen would go blank. Screams would fill the air. Followed by silence.

It won't come to that in America: not while the Second Amendment to the Constitution remains in force. Nevertheless, ridicule and shunning have effects the New Heretics have already shown to be effective. Force of one kind or another—legal or social—is their fallback. The justice system, as with

abortion “rights,” becomes their instrument. When Power itself buys into the claims of the New Heretics, the old Orthodoxy—Life is good, Life is of God—itself becomes heresy: an object of intellectual contempt.

We see this process already in play in modern America, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission having asserted lately that “religious freedom” can be a cover for homophobia and racism. Note, first, the gall of the commission in making a declaration unsupported by evidence of any kind: just personal opinion, no better, constitutionally speaking, than anyone else’s opinion; no better grounded in fact and logical appraisal. Note, second, the menace lurking in the commission’s formulation: You can’t fool us, you Bible-waving bigots with your delusory claims to religious rights under a constitutional order that prohibits the kind of rights you have in mind; mess with us and we’ll see what the Department of Justice has to say about wretches of your character! Perhaps we *will* see one day soon. And what a constitutional clash that will make for!

As I can testify at my advanced age (why, boys and girls, I can remember Perry Como), the pass at which we find ourselves could not have been forecast in those quieter days before we ingested Darwin whole, and subsequently Jack Kevorkian and Peter Singer and situation ethics and *Roe v. Wade*—an extraordinary range of events that reshaped our ways of thinking about the world, and about God.

God—yes; Who, by reliable report, as we commonly used to suppose, made the world and everything in it, including humans. Weikart sees the way out of our present difficulties as wending through recovery of faith. “I suggest,” he says in summation, “that Christianity can help us make sense of our intuitions that human life is meaningful and that morality is objective, while secular philosophies cannot. The Christian understanding of God gives real value to human life that is absent in secular worldviews. Christians have good reason to believe in human equality and human rights, but these values are not explicable from a secular standpoint. Secularism cannot explain why slavery or genocide is wrong, but Christianity is wrong.” In which Weikart is right. Completely. The oddity in that once-normative assertion is the “once” part. “Once” is not “presently.” But why? What tremendous things happened to change up the conditions of belief? Yes, Science; experimentation; knowledge; the discarding of biblical “evidence” no longer seen as persuasive; e.g., a Creation account in which followers of fossils and stalkers of species could not believe. Yet for belief in the eternal to lapse, and give way to the speculations of people not very different from ourselves (save perhaps in self-estimation) something large had to occur; some transformation.

The matter is one to which this Weikart reader wishes Weikart had given some sustained attention, some investigatory effort. His command of the secular sources is impressive. He has read widely and learned much. What he has not done—I did not say “failed to do”; that would impute blame he doesn’t deserve—is draw back the curtain to show the larger picture: why educated people in the advanced cultures of Europe and America leaped to affirm ideas and positions contrary to those their civilization had held for centuries. Were these people tired of God? Had they no wish to fit him into the aborning narrative of random forces rising to shape human life in ways Moses could never have thought of, or Paul, or John—or Our Lord himself?

Important questions, these, but maybe they can wait. What Weikart deposits in the public record is a fine and learned book, intelligently written, lacking pompous intellectual flourishes. It brings into perspective the dark forces that assail the West in these perplexing times. Maybe that is the point on which we need, presently, to lavish our attention: the moral challenge, the moral stakes. My considered advice to the readers of *Human Life Review*: Go get it!



“You don’t think ‘Goodbye, cruel world’ is a bit hackneyed?”

BOOKNOTES

CULTURE OF DEATH: THE AGE OF “DO HARM” MEDICINE

Wesley J. Smith

(Encounter Books, 2016, \$17.99, 360 pp.)

Reviewed by David Mills

Most people don't start out to be monsters, but I can understand how they get there. I began reading Wesley J. Smith's *Culture of Death* a month ago as I write, as my wife and I drove from Pittsburgh to Portland to see my sister, who had late stage-four metastatic cancer. We arrived on Sunday afternoon and she died on Tuesday morning just before sunrise.

I wonder what, in the utilitarian world to which we are moving, so well described in this book, the hospital committee tasked with deciding what to do with the sick would make of my sister. She was single, a worker with no special skills they could see (her great gift for cheering the sick and elderly appearing on no resume), no projects to complete, a private person with no public presence, her parents long dead, just one sibling, his wife, and their four children for family, very sick and needing very expensive care to live six months, a year, at most two. She would leave only the tiniest of holes in the world when she died.

They'd send her to the euthanasia room, though I'm sure it will have a soothing name. The Life Transition Department, maybe, or something cheery like Life Changes or The Next Stage.

Journalistic Hero

Culture of Death is an updated version of a 2000 book with the same title (and cheers to the publisher for not changing the title to gin up more sales). A journalistic hero to defenders of human dignity—he was given the Human Life Foundation's Great Defender of Life award in 2008—Smith is not the culture warrior of stereotype.

He's an old lefty and early associate of Ralph Nader, among other things—a throwback to the days when the left saw itself as the defender of the vulnerable and marginalized. This was part of my youth as well, and I feel nostalgic for the days when care for the poor was automatically assumed to be a leftist cause. (Although when I was young the sexual revolution had already removed the unborn from the recognized list of the world's poor.)

Those days are gone, but at least we have Smith. A senior fellow of the

Discovery Institute's Center on Human Exceptionalism, his other books include *A Rat Is a Pig Is a Dog Is a Boy*, *The War on Humans*, *Forced Exit*, and *A Consumer's Guide to the Brave New World*. I would commend them all, partly because Smith can write, and partly because his research is so thorough any of them will tell you what you need to know on its subject.

Culture of Death is a rich book, with chapters addressing the current idea of "quality of life," modern eugenics, assisted suicide and the drive to encourage the dying to let themselves be killed, organ farming, and what Smith calls "biological colonialism," closing with his proposals for a "human rights bioethics." Readers will understand that after six months with my dying sister, the first most interested me.

She was treated very well. Her doctors encouraged her. The state of Maine spent a great deal of money on her. She chose whether to fight the cancer or accept palliative care. But what if the state's policies had been based on the ideas of the mainstream bioethicists, who want to base a sick person's care on their judgments of his quality of life?

According to the seductively attractive "quality of life" ethic, my sister didn't have any life left worth living. That meant no life worth the effort others would make to extend it, and definitely no life worth the cost to the state of the aid she would need to survive.

Peter Singer speaks admirably without euphemism, though what he says is barbarous. He, a leader of the mainstream bioethicists, explains this ethical system this way: "We must treat human beings in accordance with their ethically relevant characteristics." Yes, okay, most people would say. The trick is in the definitions. Among Singer's relevant characteristics are those that "depend on the relationship of the being to others, having relatives for example who will grieve over your death, or being so situated in a group that if you are killed, others will fear for their own lives."

In other words, the person has no value in himself. That he is a human being is not an ethically relevant characteristic. Something more is required. The modern bioethicist decides what that something more is. He bases his judgment, explains Smith, "on what he considers important and 'relevant.' . . . Subjective notions of human worth, in the end, are about raw power and who gets to do the judging."

The world of official "bioethics," he adds, "dovetail[s] nicely with the reigning political liberalism of the educated classes in America." One great value of *Culture of Death* is the way the author explains that this term doesn't indicate a field with different positions so much as a hard ideological commitment. "Put simply, bioethics seeks to create the morality of medicine, define the meaning of health, and define when life loses its value (or has less

value than other lives).” It “has ossified into an orthodoxy and perhaps even an ideology.” That orthodoxy is cold utilitarianism.

With its comprehensive coverage, *Culture of Death* gives the reader much to think about. I was struck by the way bioethical ideology uses language. It makes itself appear acceptable to those who are not utilitarians—which means the normal person—by making all its key terms vague and susceptible of several readings. Take the oath that isn’t really an oath.

Smith compares the original Hippocratic Oath (which doctors no longer say) to a modern substitute used by Cornell Medical School. The original includes promises like “I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel,” the substitute says not one thing of the sort. The first offered specific actions that assume an objective morality.

“Contrary to the specificity of Hippocrates,” Smith writes, “the modern substitute contains bromides such as ‘wrong,’ ‘vice,’ ‘highest interests,’ and ‘justice,’ vague terms that can mean mirror opposites to different practitioners.” Yet the person feels assured by his doctor’s having taken the oath, not realizing that in practice it means nothing.

Doctors are being driven out of medicine by state and medical society policies that require them to help kill patients or their unborn children or refer their patients to another doctor who will. Doctors and medical societies that ascribe to the new version increasingly treat as unethical what had been part of the Hippocratic basis of medical ethics. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, for example, includes abortion among the “standard reproductive services” their members must provide. Hippocrates would be distressed.

Similarly vague are the four principles from a 1979 book called *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, sometimes called “the Georgetown mantra.” Smith notes that there is “very much that is right with them” and “nothing inherently wrong,” but “in the relativist context in which they exist, unanchored in objective morality (such as equality/sanctity of life), these guidelines are entirely malleable and subject to manipulation in order to justify an answer desired by the ethics analyzer. . . . [T]he guidelines are often reduced to mere outcome justifiers.” He illustrates the problem with a scholarly article by a K. K. Funk of Memphis State University (your tax dollars at work), who uses them to propose that very ill and disabled people (that is, not dying) be able to get money for their (unused) health insurance by agreeing to kill themselves.

I began saying that most people don’t start out to be monsters, or, as is the case with most of us, to look to the monsters for direction and aid, for reasons to act, and for approval. Smith argues that the ethics, policies, and beliefs

“mainstream bioethics espouses are being imposed on a public that does not share many of the underlying values.” I wonder if that’s really true. Smith describes the motives behind our shared creation of a brave new world as “radical self-creationism” and “personal recreationalism” (the last is Leon Kass’s term), all operating in “the current nihilist cultural milieu.”

Taking *People* magazine as a measure of popular desire, Smith describes how the major media played up one woman who wanted to kill herself but not the one who left her death in God’s hands. *People* gave Brittany Maynard several cover stories and an obituary of over 1,100 words, but another young woman dying of brain cancer just a few stories and a 196 word obit. The one thing *People*’s editors know is what people want to hear. And what people want to hear is that choosing to kill yourself when you’re sick is a great thing to do.

I understand this. We brought my sister home on Monday morning. All day she kept changing positions: rolling on her side, then pulling up her knees or just one knee, then straightening her legs or just one leg, then rolling onto the other side, then sitting up, every minute or two. Sometimes she’d cry out in anger or pain. She did this for hours.

Watching her die slowly hurt. I could also imagine suffering the same thing and just wanting it to be over. I could have been tempted to be merciful, as it would appear to me then, to her or to myself. Many of you could have been as well. The culture of death is within. We could be monsters. Wesley Smith’s book shows us why we can’t.

—David Mills, former executive editor of *First Things*, is editorial director of *Ethika Politika* and a senior editor of *The Stream*.

FILMNOTES

HUSH

Directed by Punam Kumar Gill

Reviewed by Anne Sullivan

We live in the “information age,” our personal lives accessible to millions in the cyber world of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Our need for giving and receiving information is palpable, and our embrace of science—as an answer to ills as varied as global warming, autism, and Alzheimer’s—borders on the fanatical. So it comes as something of a shock to learn of the near total blackout, both in the media and the medical community, on news of a health issue that could affect millions of women. This is the focus of the provocative and powerful new documentary *Hush*, directed by Punam Kumar Gill, a Canadian filmmaker who dares to look at abortion and women’s health through a non-political lens.

On camera, Gill is poised, attractive—and a self-described pro-choice feminist. However, her support for abortion doesn’t stop her from maintaining a compelling yet neutral tone throughout the film, which, she says, is not about the legality of abortion but rather a “side issue”: the link between the procedure and the long-term health risks it poses. Gill recognizes the polarizing effect the subject of abortion conjures in any circle. Nowhere is this more evident than in an on-the-street interview with two women who are asked if they believe that abortion can have negative psychological effects on the patient. One hesitantly answers, Yes. The other, clearly annoyed, offers her differing opinion before angrily storming off, claiming she wants nothing to do with pro-lifers even as Gill blurts out that she herself is pro-choice. In another street interview, a woman states that she is pro-choice before demanding of Gill, “Are *you* pro-choice?”

Hush builds the connection between abortion and the increased risk of breast cancer, preterm birth, and emotional and psychological damage. For each of these health issues, accredited scientists reveal known links that can no longer be dismissed as “purely coincidental.” For instance, Dr. Joel Brind, a professor of human biology and endocrinology, discusses research in which he found a 30% increase in the risk of breast cancer for women who had abortions. “This is about science,” he says. “This is about the effect on women.” But in the medical community his data—developed in collaboration with several other scientists—is suspect because Brind happens to be pro-life. His and other scientific studies provide overwhelming evidence of the

connection between abortion and these serious health issues. Yet the evidence is ignored by a large part of the scientific establishment, leading the viewer to question the degree to which science has become a servant to politics. One of the more startling graphs in the film has a near-vertical line showing an alarming rise in breast cancer in young women from 1970 to 1985. It cannot be lost on anyone that 1973 was the year the Supreme Court handed down *Roe v. Wade*.

But Gill's investigation is not limited to scientists. In a roundtable discussion, a group of honest and brave women detail the emotional and physical toll abortion has taken on their lives. They speak of the betrayal they felt from medical professionals who assured them there would be no side effects, much less health risks. "Immediately after the abortion," a smartly dressed woman, looking directly at the camera, calmly recounts, "I started self-destructing." She goes on to describe years of drug use and suicide attempts. Another woman reveals how her abortion led to a compromised cervix—and eleven subsequent miscarriages. Each of these, she explains, was a wanted pregnancy, each one a child she loved. The anguish on her face and in her voice is more arresting than any graph.

On a parallel track, the film presents the systematic denial of doctors, scientists, and reporters who routinely dismiss this evidence as a "myth," or an "old dog" brought out by those blinded by religiosity. The manager of a Seattle abortion clinic claims there is no "research that's ever been done" connecting abortion and breast cancer. Of the seven internationally recognized medical institutions that have denied the link, none would grant Gill an interview on the subject. And one, the National Cancer Institute, went so far as to have her escorted off their premises by security. What are they hiding?

Barbara Kay, a columnist for Canada's *National Post*, wonders the same thing. Questioning the ethical, even moral judgment of the medical community and media in suppressing the story about abortion-related health risks, Kay seeks to shift the discussion from pro-life vs. pro-choice to pro-information. "The door is always open to new research and discoveries," is her answer to those scientists who insist this discussion is over. She maintains that, considering how many women's lives could be affected, there is enough evidence to merit more study. Back in 1985, when the Surgeon General decided to put warning labels on cigarette packs, only seven studies documented a link between preterm birth and smoking by pregnant women. Today, more than 80 studies connect abortion to preterm birth, a fact that is routinely kept from women seeking to end a pregnancy.

The filmmaker endeavors to make the science accessible to the viewer. But the profusion of medical statistics and information presented at times

can be overwhelming. Still, Gill manages to put a human face on cold data and, surprisingly, one of these faces is hers. Over the course of her investigation, Gill discovered that her health might be at risk as a result of having had a preterm pregnancy, increasing her own chances of getting breast cancer. Her clinical evaluation of the statistics suddenly takes a personal turn. She cites one survey in which women who had an abortion were asked if it had benefited or harmed them. Seventy-nine percent reported they felt it was a benefit. Gill ponders, who is helping the other 21 percent?

Although focused on the science and data surrounding abortion, Gill's film nonetheless strikes an emotional chord. Close-ups of preterm babies tiny enough to fit in one's hand make the heart ache. The pain felt by women who have had their lives upended by abortion is deeply affecting. The coldness with which a former abortion clinic owner admits to "maiming one woman a month," and the self-professed goal of overcoming any obstacles in order to "get the sale," made this reviewer recoil in both anger and disgust.

In one sense, *Hush* reveals Gill to be a reluctant but valuable ally to the pro-life cause. Certainly, her film focuses on the woman, not the unborn child—a comfortable place for most pro-choice individuals. But the film also relentlessly pushes the viewer to ponder whether this "simple" medical procedure is in fact dangerous to both mind and body. *Hush*, as its title implies, aims to push through the silence that encompasses abortion in order to promote a healthy conversation about women, their reproductive health, and the well-being of their future children. It mostly achieves that goal. It cannot be ignored that the lack of discussion about abortion and its associated health risks is having a serious impact on women's lives. Knowing about these potential risks may give some women pause when faced with the decision of whether to abort.

But while Gill's honesty and integrity make her an admirable figure worthy of respect, one can only wonder about the questions *Hush* leaves unasked and unanswered. Women's health is not the only casualty of abortion, and Gill's narrow focus doesn't allow her to consider the other victims. The scientific advancements since *Roe v. Wade* make the humanity of the unborn child undeniable. We can count fingers and toes on a 20-week sonogram and know whether to paint the nursery pink or blue. And while the film clearly portrays the quiet despair of parents of preterm babies as they cling to any hope the doctors might offer to save their wanted child's life, a woman can still make the "safe and healthy" choice to abort her child at the same point of gestation. Some might find the film's silence in this regard deafening.

—Anne Sullivan previously wrote for the USCCB as a nationally syndicated film critic. She lives in New York City with her husband and three children.

APPENDIX A

[Archbishop Anthony Fisher, of Sydney, Australia, was struck down with Guillain Barré Syndrome, an immune-related condition, last Christmas. Symptoms include varying degrees of muscle weakness. The Archbishop, who also experienced temporary paralysis from the neck down, is now on the long road to recovery. Patrick Langrell, formerly the Archbishop's public policy and engagement advisor, conducted this interview. A shorter version of it appeared in Imprint, a quarterly publication of the Sisters of Life.]

An Interview with Archbishop Anthony Fisher

PATRICK LANGRELL (PL): Archbishop Anthony, you've just recently been discharged from hospital, but hospitals, health care, and the healing professions aren't things you're unfamiliar with; in fact you've contributed a lifetime of work to these issues and bioethics more generally. How has your understanding of these issues and their importance been deepened or changed by your recent experience?

ARCHBISHOP ANTHONY FISHER (AF): I'm presently working on another book of essays in bioethics and a few people have remarked to me that they think there will be some differences as a result of my recent sickness. Because now I'll be talking about health and sickness, and health care and ethics—the ethos of that—from the inside, having been a patient, having been in hospital for four and a half months. It will be interesting to see—and others might be better than me at judging—what's changed. I do think I've had a lot of time to reflect on the importance of the body in our life. On its vulnerability, its fragility, and the reliance we inevitably must have on others when we are frail or sick. How do we view that relationship? Is it humiliating to be dependent on others? Or is dependence actually part of what human relationships are about? What does that mean for the character of a sick person? I asked people to pray for patience, courage, and hope for me, so those were three virtues I perhaps sensed I would really need to develop while I was sick. I hope I have done a better job cultivating them during my sickness. And I've been given some supernatural help with that, too. . . .

I think people often respond glibly to suffering, people of faith say things like “This is giving you a share in the suffering of Christ,” or “It will pass,” and “Keep up a happy disposition.” But there are many things people say, which they hope will help, partly reflecting that they feel helpless themselves—that they don't know what to say. They probably don't help very much at the time, apart from that they communicate through those words—underneath those words—that they are helpless like you are, and that they fear for you and they care about you. I hope that at the end of this my answers won't be quite as formulaic as they might have been before. I'll have a bit more to say, I think, about suffering and health, and the body, than perhaps the simplistic answers I once might have given.

PL: Many people experience suffering of different forms throughout their lives. One of those can be a significant health crisis, which can often lead, as you

mentioned, to feelings of vulnerability, over-dependence on others, even the sense in some cases of being reduced to or returning to childhood, that is, in terms of what we're capable of doing. These are generally feelings we try hard to avoid, or at least try hard to keep people who are suffering from feeling: What did you learn about these experiences in your recent illness?

AF: I think there's no doubt that for the person who's used to being very independent and very able, it is humiliating when other people have to wipe your bottom for you, or help you shower, or feed you very basic things. In that respect you're quite right to say it's like going back to being a baby, except a baby isn't conscious of that being in any way humiliating; a baby thinks that's exactly what the world is there for—to provide him with food, and warmth, and hygiene. Whereas for an adult that seems demeaning, and can be demoralising. In recent years, I've been interested in a number of writers in moral philosophy and moral theology who have been insisting on vulnerability and interdependence being at the very heart of what it is to be human, to be a human person, and to be a person in community, and in relationships. On this view, for people like [Alasdair] MacIntyre and [Stanley] Hauerwas, it shouldn't be humiliating because we should actually expect this in life, for ourselves, for people we love, for a significant number of people at any particular time in our community. And that's not just babies and the very elderly, but lots of people in between. We will be dependent. In fact, we're all dependent all the time on others to feed us; not literally to put the food on a spoon and then into our mouth, but to get the food to us, to grow it, to prepare it, to process it, and all the rest. We are much more dependent than we actually realise or reflect upon day-to-day, but it becomes more obvious to us when things we're used to being independent—or relatively independent—about, we suddenly can't do for ourselves anymore. Then we realize “Oh, I need others, I can't do this on my own.”

I think with MacIntyre, Hauerwas, and some others this presents a very different starting point from the view of the human person as the totally autonomous agent who can do everything for him or herself, who really doesn't need others much at all, or only relates to others on the basis of a choice to do so because there's some mutual advantage in working with another person. Much of human life just is not like that. We experience situations where we don't have much in the way of choices. Or they're very limited because we're not as powerful as that idealised model of the human agent presumes. Or the options in front of us are few and difficult. I've had to reflect upon that and quite a lot of other things that have come with my sickness. I've reflected for instance that in terms of our philosophical and theological anthropology as Catholics, we are very strong on the unity of the human person—my body *is* me. We don't think, like some dualists do, of the body as just a machine, or clothing for some inner self, the “real me.” We don't think that way as Catholics . . . most of the time, at least, we don't think that way. But I've had the experience of wanting to lift up my hand, or lift up a glass, and finding that I can't. And there have been times when I've been willing my body to do something which it should

be able to do, and it doesn't. It's made me feel, at times, quite some sympathy for these more dualist philosophies, or even strands within the Christian tradition. Look at the Neo-Platonists and Augustine, and his influence on Bonaventure, and then *his* influence on Pope Benedict. Even within the Catholic tradition not everyone has always held to the Thomist view—the more Aristotelian view—that we are a perfectly united whole, and that whatever a body says or does, the spirit says or does, and *vice versa*. Those are just a few examples of re-thinks that have come for me and I think I'll be reflecting on this for many years to come.

PL: To many people today suffering can seem pointless, useless, something to be avoided by any means, at any cost; but the sages and the saints have seen suffering a little differently, haven't they?

AF: Yes, there's no doubt that a great many of our great saints, starting with the king of saints, Jesus himself, have suffered, some of them physically, some more existentially. People who have been through a dark night of the soul, as we see in the great Carmelite saints; or who have gone through long periods of psychological or spiritual dryness, as we see in someone like soon-to-be-Saint Mother Teresa; or who've suffered in some other way, such as saints who've found themselves on the outer amongst their peers, amongst their own religious order, their families, and so they've experienced rejection—St. Alphonsus Liguori, for instance. And we could point to lots of others who've suffered in one way or another, and come out the other end of that suffering a greater, more beautiful, more whole person, rather than becoming bitter, angry with God, or the world, or their fellows. And I think as Christians we admire that, and we wish that for ourselves. It's not that we wish suffering for ourselves, we're not masochists as Christians, we don't go . . . in general, we don't deliberately go looking for pain—physical or emotional or psychological. But Christianity means that we meet suffering, when it does come, differently than someone without faith. We do know that Christ has gone there before us—and the great saints have accompanied him, and accompanied us in our suffering. And that Christ has a power to relieve that suffering, or to help us transcend it in some way: to bring some meaning, to bring some new inner beauty out in us, to make us like Mother Teresa, for example, who would say of that long dark period she had of doubt, of spiritual dryness in her prayer, and of loneliness in her vocation, that she came out the other end of that as someone the whole world could be inspired by, someone that even non-Christians could look at and say, “Wow. That is humanity at its best, at its greatest,” and believers can say that it's humanity at its holiest.

I want some of that for myself. Probably like most people, I'd rather have it without too much pain, thank you very much, without too much disability, or too much existential, psychological, or emotional pain. I'd like the result, in terms of greater character, without the process required to get there. That's how we all feel, and I'm not a masochist myself. I feel that whatever God is doing with me—and

will do in the next decades if he's willing to give me more time—that it might be done less painfully than it's been the last five or six months. But one way or another I'm determined by his grace that those months won't be wasted, that something good will have come from that, for my own character, for my mission, my apostolate for God and people. One little example of that might be this: A cheeky friend of mine said there's nothing I could have done to unite the people of Sydney in prayer that would have been more effective than getting seriously sick. That had I issued prayer cards to the world, or a special programme on how to pray, or a pastoral letter telling people they must pray more, or preached a great homily on prayer—or anything else I could have done—it would have had very little effect compared with my getting seriously sick. And so he suggested I should aim to get seriously sick every two or three years as a strategy for getting the people of Sydney and beyond to pray more, and pray together. Well, that's a joke (I hope), and I'm certainly not planning to get seriously sick on a regular basis, but it's a very good example of how with the eyes of faith we can see fruits of sickness and suffering that others just mightn't notice and might not be able to harvest. I have seen very dramatically the effect of my own sickness in uniting people in prayer for a good purpose, that is, my recovering my health, and my ability to be a pastor in Sydney. That's something that's been very precious to me. Knowing that so many people love me, support me, and join me in faith and turning to God for help has been hugely encouraging, and I think that's been fruitful for me in my recovering more quickly. And I hope it has been fruitful for them too, that it's made them more prayerful, and more aware of the needs of the sick.

PL: When people fall ill, relationships often become very significant, particularly with nurses, with one's own family, loved ones, close friends, and visitors. Do you have any observations on the ups and downs of this during sickness, both the possibility for deepening friendships and relationships, and also straining or testing them?

AF: Yes. In terms of deepening of relationships, I think vulnerability—dependence—is an opportunity for some of us, some of the time, to discover in the people who care for us things we hadn't previously appreciated, things which are demonstrated by way of affection, or willingness just to engage in the hard slog of caregiving. Things we mightn't have experienced before, or that we now appreciate more, so that a friendship deepens with someone who was already a friend or colleague. Or maybe with a new person who we encounter because they are caring for us in one way or another while we are sick. You can quite quickly in that situation develop a friendship with someone . . . it might not be the kind of friendship that you expect to continue for life, it might be one that continues for the length of the caring relationship, but there'll be an ongoing, permanent feeling of gratitude and great respect after that relationship ends, and in that sense friendships are always for life. I don't think this always happens. I think sometimes almost the

opposite can happen. The strain is too much for people, sometimes they just can't cope with the demands of someone's frailty, or the sick person is so demanding it just gets too hard and can become a breaking point in the relationship. It's very sad, but we know how often for people with a degenerative neurological condition, or with a cancer or dementia or some other very demanding sickness, marriages break up, or previously good friends end up not seeing as much of each other. And I'm not judging anyone as selfish, or not sufficiently generous or giving in that situation. I just know that for some people this can create terrible confrontations, and they don't, for whatever reason, have the internal resources to endure them. And that could be the patient, the sick person, or the friend, the relative, the would-be or should-be carer—they find they don't have the internal resources to do this well over a very long period. So it can cut either way, just as I think, the journey of faith, sickness, can cut either way, people can come out the other end surer of God's loving providence and deepened in their faith; or it can be the point where their faith evaporates, breaks down, and they can make no sense of how God could allow this to happen to them. So their friendship with God can be deepened or it can be strained, as I think their friendship with others can be deepened or strained by sickness and dependency. I've been very blessed to have a few people who have really invested themselves in me during the months I have been sick. Blessed to have a number of others who have cared for me, not by coming to visit me every day or every few days, but by taking up some of the roles I had and making me less anxious about the tasks I would have been doing were I not sick. And there have been people who have cared for me in the very obvious and immediate ways of being my doctors and nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. And in all those different ways I would say I've experienced new kinds of friendship, new depths of friendship.

PL: St. John Paul II was famous for writing on suffering and also for showing his suffering to the world. You founded the JP II Centre in Melbourne a number of years ago, dedicated to marriage and life. How has your own illness affected the way you understand the teaching and witness of John Paul II?

AF: It used to be said, and it's still said in Vatican circles, that a pope is never sick until he is dead. And a lot of bishops—and a lot of civic leaders—would adopt that as something of an aphorism too: that you never show weakness in public because that will shake people's confidence. People want in their leaders . . . they want them to be strong. You might think, for instance, of President Roosevelt, and the strategies that were used to hide his physical weakness because people feared it would lead to a loss of confidence in him that could be very bad for government and for national confidence particularly during wartime. So there are some very good reasons why people often try to hide their weakness. But John Paul II did show us that sometimes it is right for people to see the crucifixion; that sometimes the vulnerability of the human person, and their continuing to struggle in faith and

hope and love, like every human being does at one time or another through suffering . . . that it's good sometimes for people to see their leaders experience and go through that just as they do, and not sugar-coat it, not hide it or try various techniques that minimize it.

I think for John Paul it was especially dramatic because he had been so strong—an athlete of tremendous physical and emotional and spiritual strength. So there must have been a real humbling for him: being cast down so low by his Parkinson's disease and by the other things he suffered that left him more and more incapacitated. I prayed to John Paul quite a lot in my own sickness, knowing firstly that, unlike him, I am expected to fully recover and return to full health, whereas he knew that he would gradually get worse and worse. And yet somehow he managed to maintain great hope and great dignity; to be more than ever an inspiration to people around the world in his very weakness, in his quite public sickness, which he didn't hide from the world in those last years. And that was a great example to me, and it meant early on in my own sickness, when my doctors and staff said to me, "Do we tell people that you are sick?" I really had to weigh that up and talk to some of my closest confidantes. I had to think about what I should say about my sickness, if I should let people know what it was and how long it was likely to take to fully recover, and how in what ways it has left me, at least for a time, handicapped. Talking to my doctors, talking to some of my closest friends, and reflecting on the life of John Paul, I decided to be fairly open about those things. Others might take a different view of that with respect to their own situations and want to be more private. I'm not saying that is wrong. I do think John Paul, in his own life, in the wisdom of the decisions he made in his last years, did help me during my recent sickness.

PL: The point of illness is to get healthy and the point of death is new life. What has your illness taught you about the value and worth and destiny of human life, both our shared life here now and our new life made possible by the Resurrection?

AF: I can jump to the new life in the Resurrection. I was struck down with my sickness on the night of Christmas and, because Easter was very early this year, most of the time I was sick was in Lent, in the Paschal time looking towards Easter—and going there through the Passion. So I just happened to be sick at a liturgical time that gave me immediately things to reflect on. Such as, that God, in becoming a human being, allowed Himself as creator of the universe, the all-powerful one, to have the fragility of a baby so that as a newborn He couldn't do anything for Himself. He couldn't even reach out to His mother as we normally see in religious art. A newborn baby in fact can't even do that yet, they are just completely dependent on someone else to take care of them. And there He was, unable to use His own hands and feet, not yet speaking words, very vulnerable, very dependent. When I found myself totally paralysed from the neck down, and also affected from the neck up, I very much sensed I was there like the babe of Christmas was at that

same time; as powerless as Him. And then in the weeks that followed, when I gradually recovered a little of my strength but was quite disabled for quite some time, we found ourselves almost straight after Christmas going into Lent, reflecting on God on the Cross, again with His hands and feet completely disabled, and in tremendous pain. As I went through my time of disability and pain, again I had a very strong sense that Christ had been there, was there with me, and that it would be exactly His hands and feet which He would be showing to us after the Resurrection, now glorified. That's what He showed the Apostles first and foremost: "Have a look at my hands, have a look at my feet," still with the tattoos of His ordinary human life, of the suffering He had been through, but now gloriously enjoying new life, eternal life, transfigured life. So I kept asking Him in my prayer to share at the Resurrection of His hands and His feet, and I keep asking Him that in my prayer, that the new life He experienced after the Cross—particularly in His extremities, those limbs that were nailed—that I might experience something of that Resurrection even now in this life.

Of course there are other parts of more ordinary life in which we can experience new life. I remember when a young physiotherapist said to me, "Let's escape," and he wrapped me up in a blanket, put me in a wheelchair, and we escaped from the hospital and went and got gelato at the local gelateria. Or when a friend of mine would appear suddenly with coffee and banana bread for me; or someone would bring pizza or curry into the hospital. Or when people brought me music, or downloaded entertainments or talking books . . . In one way or another I experienced little bits of new life, of the hope of a return to normal, and the ability to enjoy things in the meantime. And I think there are lots of possibilities for this even when people are going through really hard times. You see it in the stories of those who have been through quite horrible things—concentration camps, genocide, civil wars, the death or deaths of their nearest and dearest, as well as sickness and the things that it occasions . . . that often people can nonetheless find things to take joy in, that give them new life and new hope—little experiences of the cross, certainly, but also of the Resurrection.

PL: You mentioned at the beginning those virtues that you found helpful in your own experience, virtues of patience, hope, and courage. What would you recommend for individuals who are suffering and those who are looking after those people who are suffering, so they can grow in those virtues?

AF: Hmm. Well, the first thing I did was say to myself, "I can't pull myself up by my own shoelaces." In fact, I couldn't tie my shoelaces at that stage at all, and nearly six months later I still can't tie them. "I need God's help if I'm going to have more patience, and more courage, and more hope." So the first thing I said aloud was, "Everybody who loves me, everybody who cares for me, please pray for those things for me," as I was praying for them myself. I think these are supernatural gifts, first and foremost, as all the virtues are great graces when we find them

within ourselves and realise “I’m not the why of that,” or “I’m not the whole of the why of that.” I find in myself some reserves of character that I might never have guessed I had, or certainly didn’t do the work to get them. I think then, like all virtues, we also have to practise them, and so there were times when my emotions, my physical feelings, my spiritual feelings, might have inclined me to frustration, to anger, to impatience—to where I had to practise virtue and resign myself to the fact that I will be weak for quite some time, and it will not help me or anyone else to rage against that. A certain contemplative acceptance of our lot is proper, I think, to the Christian soul. It doesn’t mean, again, that we’re masochists, it doesn’t mean that we’re lazy and do nothing about improving our lot—I threw myself wholeheartedly into the physiotherapy, the four or five hours in the gym every day. So having a certain proper resignation to one’s lot is not the same as being lazy, or not doing your best to cooperate with grace, and with your own gifts and possibilities to make the situation better. But it does mean that in the meantime you can live, you can adopt a certain courageous, patient, hopeful acceptance of the situation, and learn some things, even gain some things—harvest some fruit from that period, so that it’s not just gritting your teeth and bearing it, but that actually there are some positives, some gains along the way.

PL: Thank you Archbishop. I believe that, probably because of your illness, you had to cancel a trip to the US this year. I’m sure the Sisters of Life would have loved to see you. Is there any message you’d like to give them?

AF: Yes, I do love my visits to the United States when I get to make them, and this year I had planned especially to join my fellow Dominicans in their celebrations of the eighth centenary of the Order by giving some talks in America, and then visiting some of my friends such as the Sisters of Life along the way. That didn’t get to happen this year; hopefully God will give me many more opportunities in the future. I love and admire the Sisters of Life for their great apostolate, and for the more contemplative side of their life, too, when they reflect on why human life is so beautiful, on why human dignity is to be always respected, and built up. And I really hope and pray that when I get to see them at last there will be more of them, that they’ll be more happy, more boisterous, more determined to serve the great gift of human life in the ways that they do at the moment, and will do in the future. God bless those wonderful Sisters.

PL: Thank you very much.

APPENDIX B

[*Matthew Hennessey writes from Connecticut. The following article was published on National Review Online (www.nationalreview.com) on Oct. 12, 2016. © 2016 by National Review. Reprinted by permission.*]

The Medical Pros Are Wrong on Down Syndrome

Matthew Hennessey

October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month. As the parent of a child with Down syndrome, I'm on something of a mission to spread awareness. Unfortunately, some in the medical community are on a different mission. They would like to eradicate Down syndrome. Of course, no one puts it that way. They say their goal is to provide information so that women can make choices.

The proof, however, is in the pudding. A stunningly large percentage of the time, women who are told they are carrying a baby with Down syndrome choose what is euphemistically called "termination." For this reason, spreading awareness of Down syndrome requires talking about abortion. This makes some parents of children with Down syndrome uncomfortable. Abortion is as gruesome a reality as it is divisive a topic.

Many prominent writers and advocates cling to the idea that they can be both pro-choice and pro-Down syndrome. They don't want to address the invisible genocide of our children because it forces them to make common cause with pro-lifers like me. I don't envy their predicament. To say that life with Down syndrome has value is to flirt with the dangerous notion that all life has value. Convincing yourself otherwise must be exhausting.

Instead, these writers and advocates want to spread awareness by talking only about social acceptance, job opportunities, and educational inclusion for people with Down syndrome. I don't discount the importance of these things. But it's morally incoherent to argue that a just society must bend over backward to integrate, accept, and educate a child with Down syndrome, while at the same time suggesting that it's fine to abort a baby because it has Down syndrome.

For me, it's not possible to celebrate our children without also acknowledging that their lives, and the lives of those like them, are under threat. Because of the accuracy of a new generation of non-invasive prenatal tests, pregnant women who are carrying a baby with Down syndrome get the news much earlier than they used to. The tests can be given at nine or ten weeks, before most women have told anyone about the baby and, perhaps, before it's even visible that they're pregnant. Naturally, this makes it easier to obtain—and, for some, easier to justify—an abortion.

Requiring no more than a finger-prick of blood, the new tests are 98 percent accurate. Soon, they will be available in every hospital, doctor's office, and clinic in the country. Those who feel that Down syndrome shouldn't be a death sentence should view this as a crisis.

Women who receive a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome or any other kind

of genetic abnormality face constant pressure to have an abortion. The pressure comes in various forms. Sometimes, a friend or a loved one will come right out and say it: You should abort this child. It's too difficult. Think of your future. Put this behind you and try again.

More often, the message comes in the form of a look, a reaction, or a body posture that says, "I'm not sure I know how to support you." Don't be that person, I implore you. If someone in your family—a brother, a sister, a child, a grandchild—comes to you with the news that they've received a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome or any other prenatally diagnosable genetic condition, open your heart to them. They need your support more than you can know. They need your first reaction to be perfect. You should be preparing it now.

There's another kind of pressure that pregnant women face that is in some ways even more pernicious. It's the constant, subtle pressure to abort babies with Down syndrome—this time from doctors, nurses, and medical technicians at checkups and ultrasound appointments. At every visit, the professionals look at the medical chart and see that the baby has Down syndrome. Their expression changes and they say, "So, you're going ahead with the pregnancy then?"

What they mean is: You're an alien. You're different than everyone else. You don't have any idea what you're getting into.

My wife and I experienced this ten years ago when she was pregnant with our daughter. We just had a new baby this summer and not a single thing has changed. A perinatologist who examined my wife characterized the genetic abnormalities that she was looking for as "deal-breakers."

Not every doctor or nurse is so insensitive. But let's face facts: Many in the prenatal medical community are in the business of hunting down and eliminating genetic differences. It's their job, and they are at peace with it. They don't understand why you would ever give birth to a child with an "avoidable" condition such as Down syndrome. Put it behind you and try again. That's the prevailing attitude.

In *A World Without Down's Syndrome?*—a new BBC documentary—British actress Sally Phillips asks the right questions: "What kind of society do we want to live in? And who do we think should be allowed to live in it?" She visits a London hospital to interrogate Kypros Nicolaidis, a leading maternal-fetal-medicine specialist, on exactly what makes a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome so problematic.

"For some people, having a baby with Down's is an intolerable event," he says.

"All I want to make this program for is to say, 'You know, it's really not a catastrophe,'" says Phillips, herself the mother of a child with Down syndrome. "Why is everyone behaving as if it's a catastrophe?"

"Whether they have the wrong perception about what the condition is, or the system has not emphasized to them the goodness that can come from having a baby with Down's, I do not know. But it is a fact," says Nicolaidis.

This "just providing a service" mentality that encourages abortion is common in the prenatal medical community on both sides of the Atlantic. Perhaps it's a

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necessary and soothing self-justification for those whose job it is to seek and destroy children with Down syndrome.

I'm not against prenatal testing. It's important for expecting parents to have time to prepare for what's ahead. But the people who handle the information that these tests produce need to be educated. This is an opportunity for the pro-life community. We need to reach the ultrasound technicians. We need to reach the doctors. We need to reach the nurses. We need to reach the people who work in these offices. We need to turn their hearts somehow. We need to change that culture.

If our goal is simply to spread awareness of Down syndrome, there are many things we can do. We can post cute pictures of our kids on Facebook. We can participate in the National Down Syndrome Association's annual Buddy Walk. There's nothing wrong with any of it. But so long as the medical professionals who administer prenatal tests think of genetic abnormalities such as Down syndrome as "intolerable" and as "deal-breakers" warranting the baby's "termination," we won't have achieved much.

APPENDIX C

[Richard Stith, a Research (non-teaching) Professor of Law, is a board member of Consistent Life Network (www.consistent-life.org), where this article was published on Sept. 7, 2016. It is reprinted with Professor Stith's permission.]

When Choice Itself Hurts the Quality of Life

Richard Stith

Here's a question about "choice" and abortion, assisted suicide, and voluntary euthanasia: Could the very existence of these options have a negative impact on the legally-authorized choosers, no matter what they choose?

Consider that women who refuse legal abortion may be blamed for their choice by boyfriends, families, employers, and others. Infirm or dying people may find family and other caregivers upset by their refusal to agree to assisted suicide, if it's available as a legal option.

These are the sorts of overlooked consequences of choice that this blog is about. Society sometimes limits choice that's harmful to the chooser. For example, we might not permit people to sell their organs because they might seriously harm themselves by preferring money to health.

But there's a second kind of harm that could befall voluntary organ sellers, not from what they choose but from their having been able to choose in the first place. Simply because they had a choice, they may lose support among friends, family, and employers.

Compare the plight of someone who needs expensive and time-consuming special care because of an operation forced on her by an illness—say, cancer surgery—with a person having the same health needs resulting from her free and deliberate choice (not extreme economic necessity) to excise and sell part of her body. Cheerfully-given help for the post-surgery care of the voluntary seller will be less forthcoming, for her sad situation will be said to be her own fault.

This is separate from any evaluation of which choices are good and which are bad. If the sale of one's organs were legal, someone who refused to sell them could also be blamed for her own voluntary impoverishment. ("Don't ask me for a loan. You could have a lot more money if you wouldn't insist on keeping both your kidneys!") She incurs this blame simply because of having a choice. If organ sale had remained illegal, others would have been more sympathetic to her economic needs.

Even if she made a wise choice in not selling a kidney, her having a choice to sell or not to sell may make some people less sympathetic to her financial plight. This has nothing to do with the paternalistic notion that society should intervene to save people from making unwise choices. Here we (society, the law) cause her harm simply by leaving this choice open. She may be blamed by some no matter what she does.

Care for the most vulnerable among us, those at the beginning of life and those who may be nearing the end of life, requires solidarity. Truly single parenting is nearly impossible; the help of others is needed to bear and raise a child, and solidarity

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with the child is needed as well. Likewise, the afflictions of age and illness are often too much to bear without family or friends standing in solidarity.

Yet autonomous choices are now being proposed for human life in its initial and final stages. Those choices concern the existence of life itself: “Should I choose abortion or birth?” and “Should I choose assisted suicide?”

But the ability to choose—to undergo or to refuse abortion or suicide—may isolate the chooser. It may leave her without the solidarity she needs to implement her choices. That undercuts real autonomy.

Throughout human history, children have been known to be the consequence of sexual relations between men and women. Both sexes knew they were equally responsible for their children. Contraception didn’t change this; it makes fertilization and birth less likely, but mother and father are still equally responsible if fertilization and birth nevertheless occur.

Elective abortion changes everything. Abortion absolutely prevents the birth of a child. A woman’s free choice for or against abortion breaks the causal link between conception and birth. It matters little what or who caused conception. It matters little that the man involved may have insisted on having unprotected intercourse when the woman didn’t want it. It is she and she alone who finally decides whether the child is to be born.

A grandmother’s “right” to assisted suicide or voluntary euthanasia means that she has been given a way out. So her suffering seems no longer to call for as much family compassion or social support. In choosing to continue living in great dependency, a grandmother may be felt to be deeply selfish, preferring to benefit herself at a heavy cost to her family.

Similarly, social policy planners may reason that the option of voluntary death diminishes any public duty to regulate toxic industries, or to secure health insurance benefits, to decrease the risk of suffering. Even if governmental acts or omissions cause suffering, it may be thought, no duty of solidarity arises where the victim has refused an accessible option of suicide.

Here’s another question: can a life chosen as an option ever have the dignity of a life simply accepted? Does a child a mother once chose not to abort suffer from her having been able to choose otherwise? Does the severely disabled but suicide-rejecting person suffer from having an existence that needs to be justified? Does making choice possible bring a profound change to our perception of the life that is made optional?

Choosing to let a being live confirms a radical domination over that being, like the upraised thumb of a Roman emperor in the Coliseum—when thumbs-down was always possible.

That makes the chooser—and others—less likely to respect the object of choice.

Even if someone ends up being evaluated so highly that one would never choose her death, when an evaluation was required rather than the person simply being accepted for who she is, something very valuable has been lost.

APPENDIX D

[*Ifeoma Anunkor, a graduate of Columbia Law School, is the director of EXPECT, the Human Life Foundation's new initiative for young professionals and college students. The following column, reporting on a recent EXPECT event, appeared on the Human Life Review website (www.humanlifereview.com) on Oct. 20, 2016.*]

Transcending Partisan Politics

Ifeoma Anunkor

On October 5, EXPECT, the Human Life Foundation's new initiative for college students and young professionals, co-sponsored a panel discussion with Columbia University Right to Life on "Transcending Partisan Politics in the Pro-Life Movement." We had a strong turnout on campus and our Facebook Live recording has nearly 900 views to date!

(You can see it here: <https://www.facebook.com/HLRexpect2016/videos/vb.854266574695570/1006641222791437/?type=3&theater>).

The topic was inspired by Fordham University professor Charles Camosy's laudable book, *Beyond the Abortion Wars: A Way Forward for a New Generation*, published last year. Camosy, who was one of the panelists, emphasized that the labels "pro-life" and "pro-choice" are unhelpful, given there are areas of commonality among most Americans. For instance, he pointed out, 71 percent believe abortion should be broadly illegal after 12 weeks—some form of legislation reflecting that consensus ought to be possible. As the title of his book implies, Camosy is looking for ways to move the debate beyond familiar left/right arguments.

Mollie Hemingway, a senior writer for *The Federalist*, shed light on the media's history of polarization and bias in abortion reporting, which has had the effect of stifling public conversation on the issue. Hemingway believes there is potential to do what has been done many times in U.S. history: create a third party outside the two-party system, in this case one based on pro-life ideology. She acknowledged, however, that cutting across party lines on the right-to-life issue would face obstacles. Many liberals, for example, would join such a party only if opposition to the death penalty were included in the platform.

Pro-life feminist of *Feminists Choosing Life* New York and president of the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace Museum, Carol Crossed, reminded the audience of how the abortion culture not just violates all the principles of feminism, but also distorts all the communitarian values that liberals hold, including non-violence and caring for the poor. A rarely discussed rationale for abortion, she said, is that \$400 of taxpayer money for the procedure is a lot cheaper than childcare, housing, and education for that child. Crossed also stressed that in addition to changing cultural attitudes on abortion pro-lifers must pursue legislation, here quoting Martin Luther King: "Let us never succumb to the temptation that legislation and judicial decrees play only a minor role. They may not change the heart, but they restrain the heartless."

Human Life Review editor Maria Maffucci spoke about transcending partisan

politics through truth-telling in cultural engagement. Our political discourse is so polarizing, she said, with abortion-on-demand at one end and abortion-as-murder on the other—again not reflecting the American people’s views on abortion. An example of a lack of truth-telling, she noted, is the inaccurate labeling of abortion as a women’s health issue, since abortion in fact poses many risks to women’s health. We need honest talk about people’s real experiences with abortion, and we can find common ground—in areas such as sex-selection abortion and disability rights—even with people who are pro-abortion.

The panel was moderated by Christopher White, Director of Catholic Voices USA. For his take on the event, see his recent Crux column, “A Conversation on Abortion that Moves beyond Stale Polarities” (<https://cruxnow.com/catholic-voices/2016/10/12/conversation-abortion-moves-beyond-stale-polarities/>).

**UPCOMING EXPECT EVENT TO KICK OFF
BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

On February 1, 2017, Ryan Bomberger
of the Radiance Foundation will speak on
“How the Abortion Industry Targets the Black Community.”

For more information about this free event,
contact expect.hlr@gmail.com
or call 212-685-5210.



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Pushing the women away, she screamed: “It’s nothing to celebrate. There’s blood. Why don’t you think about that?” She walked over to me. “I’m glad you said what you did. I thought I was okay with abortion but I’m not. I will never, ever, do this again.” The room went silent. The tide turned once more. The women started nodding at what Pat had said and speaking amongst themselves. I guess there was a debate after all. Attempting damage control, the hostess ran to get my coat, then shoved it in my hands as she opened the door. “Don’t you understand?” she hissed, pushing me out of the apartment. “I’m her friend and I’m just trying to make her feel better.” She’s not trying to make her feel better, I thought as the door slammed in my face. She’s trying to make her feel nothing.

—Diane Moriarty, “Wish You Weren’t Here”