

Abortion and War

At 2 a.m. on Christmas morning in 1976, we were awakened by a mad pounding and screeching at our front door. I went downstairs to determine what was going on. Since I could not see who was on the other side, I tried to ask a few questions through the door. All I received for an answer was more pounding and screeching. But amidst the cacophony I heard the words, “I’m hurt!” So, I opened the door.

As soon as I did, a man lunged through, looked wildly around, vomited and collapsed at the bottom of the stairs where my wife, who was pregnant, and my seven children were standing. I called an ambulance and it came, with an uncalled police car right behind it. The man was drunk and had smashed his car into a tree. By the time the medics and police finally left it was 4:30 Christmas morning. The possibility of the children going back to sleep at that point was “zero!”

About 4:30 that Christmas afternoon my wife, Mary, told me there was “bleeding.” Before Christmas Day was over a miscarriage had taken place. The doctor called it a “natural abortion.” One week earlier, he had said, “Everything is just fine.” The cause of the Christmas loss he said was probably the trauma and severe tension coupled with the fatigue of the day.

OBLIVIOUSNESS TO TERROR AND TRAUMA

In the very first news program I saw on TV after the start of the 1991 war between the U.S. and Iraq, an American pilot was being interviewed. He said he experienced no interference in dropping his bombs and that when he left Baghdad, “It was lit up like a Christmas tree!” For reasons probably related to Christmas Day 1976, the immediate thought that came to my mind was, “Imagine all the abortions that are going to take place in Baghdad over the next weeks.” As I read the triumphant headlines in the newspapers day after day—“U.S. Pounds Iraq from Air”—and saw the pictures of missiles streaking into Iraq, I could not help but hear the silent screams of all the little Iraqi children *in utero* who were having their lives ripped from them. The lucky ones were the ones who took a direct hit. The ones, who were aborted because of percussion, vibration or because of the terror, trauma, malnourishment and/or exhaustion visited upon their mothers by war, would probably have suffered less agonizing deaths at the wrong end of a suction machine in an abortion clinic.

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THUNDEROUS SILENCE

Yet the silence on this matter of abortions induced by war in the Church, in pro-life circles and in Christian peace and justice efforts is thunderous. It is as if abortion for saving a person’s reputation is absolutely evil; abortion for saving a family’s economic life is absolutely evil; abortion for saving a person’s job is absolutely evil; abortion for saving a person from what he or she perceives to be an intolerable personal future is absolutely evil, but abortion to save oil fields for the present and future control and profit of American and British oil interests or to save the world from non-existent weapons of mass destruction or from a local dictator is

morally permissible! It is as if patriotic earplugs have been discreetly employed by pro-lifers in order to not hear what they have been telling others to listen to for over thirty years—the silent screams.

It does no good to slickly try to argue that when Baghdad is bombed it is not the primary intention of the bombing to induce abortions, but rather the primary intention of the bombing is to save Kuwait or to save oil wells or to save our country's standard of living or to save us from a hypothetical attack by Saddam Hussein. These arguments are nothing more than the pro-choice arguments wrapped in a flag. No one ever chooses abortion just for the fun of aborting. Abortion is always chosen in order to save something that is considered of more value than the child in the womb or in order to be saved from some evil that is considered a greater evil than abortion. This is what the pro-choice philosophy is all about—abortion as the lesser evil.

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WHO WILL BE A VOICE FOR THE UNBORN IN WAR?

Modern industrial war, once unleashed, produces an instant Auschwitz for the unborn—that's fact, not conjecture. Mass abortions are the necessary and one hundred per cent inevitable consequence of modern war. Morally, that which a person is certain will occur, if he or she makes a particular choice, represents a choice for which he or she is responsible before God. A person cannot morally claim he or she does not intend the abortions that are absolutely certain to take place, by claiming he or she only intends to preserve the mother's bodily health or the health of the body politic. Health is being preserved at the cost of knowingly and willing killing *in utero* life.

So, where is the Church's pro-life voice for the voice-less children in the womb in Iraq, who are daily being chopped to pieces by military abortions? Or, is abortion by war the great exception to the inviolable right to life of the innocent child *in utero*? If so, how many abortifacient military actions is a desert oil field worth in the eyes of God? How many abortions are justified to destroy non-existent WMDs? How many does God permit in order to get rid of a two-bit dictator who sits on a black gold mine? How many? 1? 100? 1000? 10,000? Where are the pro-life protests of industrial high-tech war on the unborn?

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PRO-LIFE TO PRO-CHOICE?

It has always been the pro-choice understanding that the Church's pro-life movement would come to the pro-choice position when a serious interest of its own or its members was attacked in a way that required the pro-life movement to see the "complexity" of the issue and the naïveté of its absolutist prohibition against destroying children *in utero*. Is preserving borderline neo-fascist Muslim dictatorships (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, etc.) or control over oil fields or the vain posturings of patriotism just the "complexity" the pro-life movement or its leadership needs to find the exception to its total rejection of *in utero* homicide?

If not, why was the Church's pro-life movement not being a microphone for those screaming in silence in the wombs of Iraqi mothers as tens of thousands of abortions took place, due to the brutal economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the US/UN, during the twelve years leading up to the current war? If not, why is the pro-life movement not a lone voice in the world pleading for the lives of those Iraqi children in the womb who are being torn limb from limb by the dogs of war today in Iraq? Both Old and New Testament are

clear: Where more is expected silence is sinful. Moral laxism where the destruction of human beings is concerned is among the gravest forms of evil—especially for those in positions of moral or spiritual leadership.

MISNAMING REALITY—DECEITFUL MIND GAMES

Christmas tree lights are a symbol of new life in the baby Jesus—the Prince of Peace—who has just been allowed to complete His nine months in the womb of His mother. To analogize a Baghdad of a thousand horror-filled infernos to a “lit Christmas tree” is a grotesque misrepresentation of the event that is taking place.

However, it is an accurate representation of a human mind and heart drugged into a moral stupor by the war propaganda of erotic nationalism. Now let us pause here a moment and think: Is it not the flagrant misnaming of reality that is the foundation for all pro-abortion philosophies and politics? Is it not the obstinate refusal to call murder by its correct name, murder, that is at the heart of the pro-choice position? Is not the misnaming of murder as just another “medical operation” the hook on which all pro-choice propaganda hangs?

The time has come for a clear, unambiguous position statement and for political action by the Christian pro-life movement and its leadership on behalf of the unborn children of Iraq and by extension on behalf of the unborn children of all countries in all wars. I believe God could be trying to raise the value and significance of the Church’s pro-life movement in His salvific designs, but to do this, the movement must have the courage to say an unequivocal “No” to a misguided patriotism that ignores or justifies abortions as just another “military operation.” If, however, the Church’s pro-life movement now succumbs to the temptation to start “hair-splitting” or cleverly “side-stepping” its uncompromising and vigorous defense of all the unborn, it is finished as a moral force, because it will have become the embodiment of the untruth it opposes: “I am against abortion, but...”

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So to be clear, the Church is now being called to pass through the fire of Her own teaching. The integrity of Her response today will be the measure of the power of Her proclamation tomorrow in many, many areas. Murder does not become anything less than murder because it is mass murder. Logical pettifogging and rhetorical chicanery are what the pro-choice movement practices in order to justify abortion. These deceitful mind games must not become what the Christian pro-life movement practices in order to justify or ignore the abortion mills of war—even if the Church’s good and profitable relationships with the nation-state and its monied elite is jeopardized.

I hope and pray that I am dead wrong but, because of its graceless non-witness up to this moment in time, I am deeply concerned that the Christian pro-life movement—and especially its leadership—has intentionally turned a deaf ear to the silent screams of thousands of pre-born Iraqi children and instead sees only the power and the glory of the U.S.A. in a Baghdad “lit up like a Christmas tree.” God’s anawim of the womb deserve so, so much more than this from those who have been given by God “eyes to see and ears to hear.”*

Rev. Emmanuel Charles McCarthy

*SEE FOOTNOTE ON FOLLOWING PAGE.

FOOTNOTE TO ABORTION AND WAR:

The quotation below is from a March 24, 2003 interview by Charlie Rose, which took place on his national PBS show with Jon Lee Anderson, a writer for *The New Yorker*, reporting live from Baghdad.

As part of a discussion of whether those Iraqis who are opposed to Saddam Hussein might nevertheless turn against the United States if the destruction wrought upon Iraq and Baghdad became too great, Anderson responds that such is a real possibility. To emphasize his point he adds: “My driver, a sweet Iraqi man, was bitter today because one of his daughters suffered what he called an involuntary abortion during last night’s bombing due to fright. She was 3 to 4 months pregnant.”

Where are the microphones that will allow the silent screams of Iraqi children in the womb to be heard over the jingoism of the raging of nations? Where is the disgust over the destruction of the innocent *in utero* or post-natal? Where is the moral condemnation? Where is fidelity to Jesus?

CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN NONVIOLENCE

167 FAIRHILL DRIVE • WILMINGTON, DE 19808-4312

PHONE: 302-235-2925 • FAX: 302-235-2926

E-MAIL: JJCARMODY@COMCAST.NET

WEBSITE: CENTERFORCHRISTIANNONVIOLENCE.ORG