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Letters to the Editor ...

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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Letters To The Editor . . .

CRITICAL OF HARRINGTON'S ABORTION ARTICLE

To the Editor:

In his treatise on abortion the Rt Rev Harrington seems to reason in a circle, first exalting person per se and then subjugating person to things. We are shown in detail how the fetus from its beginnings is more than an aggregate of cells but is indeed a human being, therefore distinct and too precious to destroy. But later, we are told that while a child has the right to be born, it has, in the light of law, no right to not be born. (Rev Harrington's reference to many laws and their definitions on the subject appear to us irrelevant, anyhow, as the whole point at issue in this day of examination is whether laws are fair, scientific, logical or if they should be changed.)

Now we hold that if a child has no right to not be born (even when it would be a mindless, limbless jelly or perhaps with enough mind to know itself an horror to itself and to its world) that, then, as a person, that child has no rights at all; neither have its parents, neither have science, common sense, or judgments of mercy and love. The only *right* has returned to that biological activity which must have its way, being divine, no matter how weird or cruel its developments. Person is now subjugated to those very cells and energies to which it was supposed to be superior and because of which superiority its birth as a human being, we were advised, must (morally) be assured!

Now this identification of nature with divine activities would appear strongly pantheistic in the very ecclesiastics who radically oppose Pantheism as a doctrine. The river carries away a child; lightning strikes an adolescent; immediately we hear: "It was the will of God." But was it, now? Any more than when a kidnapper carries someone away? We prefer to say that God's will is in warning child or adolescent about the rivers, storms, kidnappers.

Yes, and the will of God is to heal disease, correct nightmare situations of nature, society, or individual——not in

every wanton, freakish, or ogreish act of nature. We see God in health, in peace of mind and contentment, in administering of medicine, in happiness——i.e., in quality of life, for which the Rt. Rev. Harrington tells us the law makes no provision.

Dr. Lees, formerly of Mercy Hospital, in a TV discussion, explored a hypothetical situation in which a patient (without there being hope of return to consciousness or to communion with society) could be kept alive indefinitely by artificial means and which continuance this doctor considered foolish and wrong, a fruitless trial to friends and big expense for nothing. Clearly there is a choice here between person and thing, as in abortion in some cases. An evaluation must be made. Are person, thought, conscious communion the essentials? Or are the workings of nature, however hideous and chaotic, the sacred and final answer? We ask, are not health and financial status and mental states of the living friends of more worth, than unconscious existence of cells and energies?

In like manner we must give precedence to a mother's life, as personality, to the unborn, especially if to be born is disaster to both parent and offspring.

Not that we condone the dispatching of prenatal life on any pretense: embarrassment, selfishness; only when it concerns the whole person, mother or child; or both. In viewing that classic movie, *the Cardinal*, and the decision there in to let the mother die, we couldn't help but wonder that had that woman been married in the Church (rather than participating in what the Church considered great sin) would the choice have been different; would mother rather than infant been spared! At any rate, we are reminded of Jesus' words when certain persons objected to his healing on the Sabbath: "Is it lawful . . . to save life, or to kill?" (Mk 3:4) Whether he did right or wrong, the Cardinal didn't just allow a human being to die; he killed her. Which ever way he decided, he would take a life; and the mother, being the suffering, cognizant one, and comparatively young, would seem the tragedy in the case. If forgiven and encouraged by the Church she might have put in many years of worthwhile living.

We offer that, in religious evolution (or in the increasing discovery of truth, if you prefer), the time has come to exalt person over things. We submit that rules of conduct, formation or revision of laws, standards of sexual and all moral conduct, definitions or patriotism, scientific studies and experimentations, as well as merciful acts toward unborn or presently living, shall come under obeisance to human individuals as persons. And we contend that rejecting abortion under all circumstances is as great an evil as condoning it unconditionally.

Respectfully yours,

Harold Bradford
Chicago

HARRINGTON'S REPLY

TO THE EDITOR:

I am grateful for the opportunity of replying to the letter of Mr. Harold Bradford. Unfortunately, I do not know his special area of competence or expertise. I gather that he represents some group or organization because, in the first paragraph, he uses the pronoun *us* but he neglects to identify the organization.

To say the least the logic of his first paragraph escapes me. He challenges my position that the innocent, defenseless unborn fetus has an inalienable right to be born and then complains that the law does not recognize, on the part of this same fetus, the right *not to be born*. I can only reply that, if the law did recognize a right of the fetus *not to be born*, his inalienable right to be born would be in jeopardy since the defenseless fetus looks to the law to protect his basic right of survival.

I find very interesting the statement that Mr. Bradford and his associates find the "many laws and their definitions on the subject" of the rights of the fetus "irrelevant". However, he offers no proof or no evidence to demonstrate their irrelevancy. This is a famous technique of those who favor and propose liberalization of abortion laws or total repeal of all abortion laws. Either, they refuse entirely to come to grips with the only *relevant* issue — what is the fetus from the moment of conception and what are the rights of the fetus — or, if they

are forced to take cognizance of these issues, they dismiss them abruptly as irrelevant. I would remind Mr. Bradford of an axiom of logic QUOD ERAT PROBATUR, GRATIS NEGATUR. If you wish to participate in discussion of issues, you give reasons and evidence for your conclusions; you just do not pronounce conclusions gratuitously. They will not receive serious consideration.

Apparently, in the second paragraph, Mr. Bradford is referring to the right to be born of a fetus that will be born handicapped or damaged. The reason that the law does not recognize the right of the fetus not to be born damaged is not because the unborn child is subordinate to cells and energies. Rather, the law, from very current evidence of embryology and fetology, recognizes that there is human life present in the fetus, that human life is protected by the Fourteenth Amendment and the destruction of this human life would be accomplished without due process of law, that, if consulted, the fetus would very likely wish to be born damaged rather than not to be born at all, that the right of the unborn to be born must take precedence over the mother's right to be free of traumatic reactions or the father's right to be free of additional expense, that the original abortion statutes were enacted in much to protect the right of the unborn to be born as to protect the mother's health, that the preciousness of each human life is protected as a matter of public policy by the law, that, in such a situation, eugenic considerations and the breeding of prize cattle are not controlling issues.

Mr. Bradford apparently believes that the quality of human life is more important than the human life itself. It is a novel approach to place greater value on an accident rather than in the substance in which it inheres.

By indicating that damaged life is expendable before birth, Mr. Bradford would be bound in logic, if he wishes to be consistent, to insist that damaged life should be destroyed at or after birth.

Also, if he maintains that the human life of the damaged fetus can be destroyed before birth because it doesn't measure up to the minimum standard that some committee of human gods will establish, he will be forced to hold, if he desires logical consistency, the propriety of euthanasia of the born. Any person, according to him,

who does not measure up to the quality control standard — be it from age, accident, disease — can be destroyed. Be careful, Mr. Bradford, you might yet be caught in your own trap, when a member of the "quality control board" might point the finger at you and order your destruction, because you can no longer make a useful contribution to society.

Mr. Bradford equated the issue of helping a dying person to die in comfort with aborting a fetus. What is done for the dying person is **NEGATIVE** — the *not* providing *extraordinary* means to sustain life. What is done in abortion is very **POSITIVE**. The actual direct intervention of invading the uterus and destroying the human life by cutting out an arm, a leg, a head, a torso, etc. Mr. Bradford, helping a dying person to die gracefully and aborting a fetus are not the same thing and you do no service to a responsible discussion by trying to make them appear identical.

"We must give precedence to a mother's life" Another gratuitous statement and conclusion. How are you going to measure or evaluate the human life of the mother and her unborn child so that the human life of the mother emerges as of greater value and of importance and the human life of her child is considered to be inferior?

Mr. Bradford, on what basis and by what guidelines do you conclude that "to be born is a disaster to both parent and offspring?" As previously stated, your entire letter is long on gratuitous statements, conclusions and assumptions but woefully short on specific information, precise evidence, tangible facts. I have thus far published *fifteen* lengthy articles on **ABORTION** in **THE LINACRE QUARTERLY** just so I could present fact and evidence to validate my finding and not be content with platitudinous slogans or assumptions in place of conclusions.

One final reference to the closing paragraph of Mr. Bradford's letter. Here, he speaks of allowing abortions in some circumstances but denying them in other

circumstances. If you are to be logical and consistent, Mr. Bradford, since abortion is the destruction of innocent, defenseless unborn human life, if you can justify an abortion for *any* reason you must condone it for *all* reasons. The human life of every fetus is the same. Therefore, you cannot approve one abortion or deny another abortion on the basis of the human life involved. Some other extraneous and incidental factor must become your guideline — the convenience of the mother, her comfort and ease, finances, housing, etc., then, human life, which traditionally and historically has always been accepted as the greatest good, will become subservient and subordinate to some lesser good. If that ever happens, watch the decline in our culture and the deterioration of the fibre of our society! The concentration camps will be in our midst as millions of our citizens are exterminated. Who will preside at our Nuremberg trials?

Most respectfully,

Rt. Rev. Paul V. Harrington, P.A.
Boston, Massachusetts

CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE EDITOR:

Contratulations on the high quality of the August Linacre Quarterly. It is very useful and will do a lot of good.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

Charles E. Rice
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