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What Makes Abortion Plausible? What Makes Abortion Unthinkable?, Part Four

We look back at the Third Reich and the German medical ethics that produced that and we ask how could it be that agents of medicine and doctors who are to be trained with the kind of even secular moral ethic of the Hippocratic Oath - how is that doctors could turn into the agents of death rather than the agents of life? It is because they buy into a worldview in which there is a gradation from life that is unworthy of life to life that is unworthy of life. Well, if you can do that in terms of Jews and in terms of gypsies and do that in terms of others - you can just declare that this is life unworthy of life, then you can certainly do it in stages of development, and that is certainly done in the United States.

Wednesday, January 28, 2009

The following is an edited transcript of a message preached by R. Albert Mohler, Jr. for "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday" on January 18, 2009. Today's installment is the fourth in the six-part series.

In the world in which abortion would make sense, we would have to talk about life as being potentially worthy, having potential dignity. We would talk about life as *perhaps* being worthwhile and worthy of protection. Immediately, you can see where that slippery slope leads as you then have to decide which life is worthy of life and which life is not worthy of life.

In the 20th century we can look at the long parade of horrible terrors, and one of the easiest to identify is the medical ethics of Germany before and during the Third Reich. There, the Germans actually had a medical philosophy - *Lebensunwerten Lebens* - "life unworthy of life," that formed the foundation for their murderous atrocities. The Germans actually came up with a gradation of life, from life that was definitely worthy of life to life that was definitely unworthy of life. And the life that was worthy of life was Aryan life. It was the life of those who were considered to be physically and genetically superior, who could contribute to the welfare and the defense and the policies of the Third Reich. And the life unworthy of life: Gypsies, homosexuals, the mentally retarded, the physically disabled, Jews.



We look back at the Third Reich and the German medical ethics that produced that and we ask how could it be that agents of medicine and doctors who trained with the kind of even secular moral ethic of the Hippocratic Oath - how is that doctors could turn into the agents of death rather than the agents of life? It is because they buy into a worldview in which there is a gradation from life that is worthy of life to life that is unworthy of life. Well, if you can do that in terms of Jews and in terms of gypsies and do that in terms of others, then you can certainly do it in terms of human life that is in various stages of development.

In the United States, we would be horrified to think that we would be the kind of people who would produce concentration camps, extinguishing people who we render to be "life unworthy of life." Well, we have not extinguished people on the basis of ethnicity and race, but we have done this very thing on the basis of stage of development. We have decided as a people - by the action of the Supreme Court and by the inaction of our political process - we have decided that we can allow unborn human life to be declared potentially "life unworthy of life."

You know, at the end of World War II, one of the most incredible things that took place was at the concentration

camps. As the allies penetrated into the core of Germany and German-held territory, they pressed further and further into the heart of the Third Reich, one mile at a time, and they eventually came to these camps of death. The interesting though, is that these camps were not alone. All around these camps were villages and German towns and communities under German control in Poland and elsewhere, and the people of these communities worked in these concentration camps - their job was a job of industrialized homicide.

At the end of the war, General Eisenhower ruled that these people who had worked in the camps and lived around them would have to walk through them. There are some incredible pictures and incredible footage of these German citizens - housewives and butchers and bakers and their children - had to walk through these concentration camps to see what they had done.

I believe there will come a day when Americans are going to have to walk through the abortuaries. We are going to have to come to understand that we have embraced "life unworthy of life" in the very core of our national experience. We have our own industry of murder.

Abortion only makes sense in a world in which not every human life is made in the image of God - some lives are worth living and some are not. That only makes sense in a world in which life is expendable and negotiable and tentative not only at its beginning but at its end. You see, you can never take one issue alone. As we said at the beginning, every issue is related to every other issue, every moral issue is related to every other moral issue, and every question is related to every other question.

You can't just talk about abortion, for these days we also have to talk about euthanasia. When we talk about the sanctity of human life, we speak of it not only at its beginning and its middle - but also at its end. The state of Washington, by referendum, the vote of the public, on November the 4th of this past year - the citizens of Washington voted to do what the citizens of the state just to their south, Oregon, did over ten years ago - they voted to legalize physician-assisted suicide. Life unworthy of life. You see, it is not only in the beginning in the womb. It is now at the end, where we are deciding incrementally, state-by-state, and as a national movement - we will speak of people at certain stages at the end of life now as too expensive to maintain, as life too meaningless to be protected.

In Nazi Germany, the "right to kill" became a "duty to kill," and the "right to die" became a "duty to die." We can see that same kind of logic creeping in this country, even in the cost of health care. In debates over health care, we hear conversations like this: "Well, just think about the fact that X percentage of the medical costs in this nation are devoted to persons in the last two years of their life. You see, if we could shorten that two year period, we could save a vast percentage of our medical costs."

But at what cost? And, of course, it is not just abortion and euthanasia, now we are facing a holocaust that is taking place - a mass extermination that is taking place - at the level of the human embryo. Because, with experimentation - medical research on human embryos - we now have the creation of human embryos for the purpose of destroying them for medical research. And here you see the insidious logic - the logic of the fallen world, not the logic of the Bible, not the logic of a world in which God is the Creator and every single human being is made in the image of God from the moment of conception till natural death. It is a very different world, and in this different world we say, "We can now create human beings because at the embryonic stage we really can't see them."

Going down that path, we then deny that they are human. We can come up with an argument to deny that they are human. We will deny their personhood - that they are human - and we will use them. We will take their genetic material and destroy them in order to promise medical advance and treatments."

Now, listen to me carefully, we long for the day and we pray for the day when there are successful medical treatments for Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's and diabetes. We long for the day when someone whose spinal cord has been severed can have the spinal cord be reconnected, and all of that can lead again to a functioning of the entire central nervous system and the mobility of the body and the control of the body because stem cells are reprogrammed. But the reality is that we do not have to use human embryonic stem cells. The fact that this country and its medical establishment is so determined to go after human embryonic stem cell research is evidence of the fact that we will go after life even when there are alternatives.

And, of course, it is not just these things. When you start looking at the sanctity of human life, it is under assault at so

many different levels and for so many different reasons and with so many different issues as labeled by the culture. But the one central issue that stands at the heart of it all is the issue of abortion. In a world in which abortion makes sense, all these other things will also make sense. In a world in which abortion does not make sense, none of these other things will make sense. And so as long as we tolerate abortion, so long as we accommodate ourselves to abortion, so long as we see abortion merely as a moral issue, we as a church will fail.

Click [here](#) for Part One of this message, click [here](#) for Part Two, or click [here](#) for Part Three.

Tomorrow: Abortion is a Gospel issue.

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