

Editorial: Standing for Life

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In this issue of the journal we remind our readers of the sad legacy of *Roe v. Wade* that was enshrined into law thirty years ago. As the years have passed, it has become apparent that *Roe* has bequeathed to us the culture of death. Those who warned us that *Roe* would open the door to further moral slippage have been proved right. Some may have thought that Francis Schaeffer was hysterical or fanatical in warning us about the dangers of abortion, but now his words seem prophetic.

Whether we think of euthanasia or of cloning, the moral vacuity of our generation is depressingly evident. Some defend ardently the lives of snails and whales, and would hesitate to crush the eggs of birds, and yet they insist that killing unborn human beings is legitimate. Compassion for the baby being formed in the womb is absent, even though ultrasound technology enables us clearly to see life in the womb. We can see the marvelously crafted little fingers and hands, hear the heart pulsate with life, and watch the baby suck his thumb. Still, many demand that the mother has the right to snuff out the life of the baby. It seems that for many in our society, the autonomy of the self trumps the life of the child and the “right” to choose is exalted as the supreme good in our society. Many even support partial birth abortion, where the baby’s legs and arms have emerged from the womb and are joyously kicking and moving. The doctor inserts a catheter into the head and sucks the brain out of the child, collapses the skull, and slays the child. The support for such a procedure demonstrates the extremes of the pro-abortion movement, for they tolerate no com-

promise on the right to choose.

One of the most remarkable stories of our day, however, is the staying power of the pro-life movement. It has persevered for thirty years, even though there have been discouragements and setbacks along the way. We can compare the pro-life movement to the civil rights movement. We celebrate the accomplishments of the civil rights movement, for to our shame we had deprived African Americans of justice, and certainly there is still progress that must be made. Nevertheless, the civil rights movement was largely supported by the academic establishment and the media. Influential sectors of the upper and middle class supported the civil rights movement, and those that opposed civil rights were often uneducated. The pro-life movement, on the other hand, has suffered from the disadvantage of being outside the cultural mainstream. As a whole the academic elite and the media have strongly endorsed the pro-abortion cause. They are committed firmly to the right of women to do what they wish with their unborn children. Pro-life advocates are depicted as religious fanatics who want to impose their morality on others. It is often suggested that the violent fanatics on the fringe of the pro-life movement characterize the movement.

And yet pro-lifers have continued to carry the torch in support of life. When it was charged that they did not care for mothers, they started thousands of crisis pregnancy clinics. When they are told that they cannot possibly win the day, they continue to plead for the lives of little ones—of those defenseless human beings who are mercilessly and violently slain. Their hope

is that they will turn the tide of our culture, that people will awake from their insanity, and that our culture will realize that killing the unborn contradicts the fundamental rights of our society: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But Christians in the pro-life movement sustain themselves not merely by the hope of success; they raise the flag in support of the unborn, not because we are promised success, but in order to be faithful to God. We cannot and must not be silent when murder occurs, even if large sectors of our society approve of such carnage. Love for God means that we demonstrate our love for others, especially for those who are defenseless and hurting—especially for those who are put to death and who have no voice in the public square. The unborn cannot demonstrate for their rights. They cannot protest in the streets. If those supporting the culture of death had their way, the killing would all take place behind closed doors and no-one would need to know about such unpleasant and messy business. We have a responsibility before God to cry out for the little ones, to condemn brutality, and to stand up for life.

Our hope is that this issue of the journal will be one small voice in support of life. Frank Beckwith demonstrates convincingly that the reasoning of the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* was remarkably flawed, and hence the intellectual foundation for *Roe* is lacking. Scott Rae provides evidence that the ethical slide did not stop with *Roe*, but that the moral legacy of *Roe* is spilling over into other issues. Russell Moore rehearses the history of evangelicals in the struggle against abortion, delineating both our failures and faithfulness and gives some advice for the coming thirty years. Ken Magnuson raises a matter that is often ignored by evangelicals. What is

the relationship between contraception, the acceptance of children, our sexual ethic, and abortion? His article is an important first step in the discussion among evangelicals, and we can hope that the matter will be discussed even more fully in the future. We learn from Ben Mitchell that our view of life is ultimately theological, and the fundamental question is whether we view all persons as those made in God's image. Finally, R. Albert Mohler contributes the sermon in this issue with an insightful exposition of Psalm 139, explaining its implications for the present moment in history that we inhabit. The issue is rounded out with the forum and book reviews.