Dismemberment and choice

by Michael R. Heaphy, M.D.

For the last few years, it has been commonplace to hear conventionally enlightened people soberly and confidently announce that they are not pro-abortion but, rather, pro-choice. Because of the generality that is implicit in the unqualified word "choice," it is logical to examine the pro-choice argument from a broad perspective.

To make a *pro-choice* argument is to assert a liberty to perform an action, X, without bothering to explain why X should be legal, without acknowledging the nature of X, and sometimes, without permitting the name for X to cross one's lips. Illogically, "choice" is both the premise and the conclusion. The pro-choice argument for abortion is that abortion should be legal because women have a *right to choose*. The problem with this argument is that an unqualified right purely and simply to *choose* could be used to advocate legal status for drunk driving, cannibalism, or anything else. Unless one believes that all conceivable actions should be legal, it is not reasonable to base advocacy of legality for a particular action on *unqualified* choice.

To understand what abortion is all about, it is useful to redirect our attention from the abstract plane down to a more practical level. Such a real-world viewpoint can be achieved by considering the day-to-day work of a physician who does little else with his professional life except abortions. For example, in my own state of Ohio, there is the practice of W. Martin Haskell, M.D.

Depending on the size of the unborn child (or should I use one of the sanitized terms — like the "conceptus"?), Dr. Haskell employs various techniques. If the fetus isn't too far along, Haskell can probably use the suction curettage method in which a sharp curette is used to reduce the fetus into chunks small enough to be sucked out of the uterus.

Later in pregnancy the fetus is too large for this method. Such cases provide Dr. Haskell with many of his referrals. He is an expert at killing human fetuses at five and six months' gestation. He uses laminaria to dilate the cervix in a three-day procedure, then simply goes in, makes a direct instrument attack on the fetus, kills it, and takes it out.

Of course, the head is usually crushed in this D&E (dilation and evacuation) procedure. An unripened cervix just doesn't expand enough to pass a five- or six-month head. If the unborn baby is big enough, the arms and legs may have to go too. The fetus is typically dismembered and removed piece by piece in a D&E abortion. The parts are often inspected to make sure an arm or a leg hasn't been left in the mother.

Presumably the "conscientious practitioners" of abortion (as the AMA now calls them — in slight departure from its own earlier description of them as "modern-day Herods"), would be loath to admit to killing unborn children. They would rather say that they *terminate pregnancies,* an odd assistance for a process that invariably terminates itself.

As long as the discussion is couched in such genteel terms, there isn't much room for primitive, natural words like "arm" and "leg." They are gaucheries. On the other hand, if we could simply introduce a few Choice words into the vocabulary, then our mass media would not longer need to shy away from the topic of abortion techniques. The unborn child won't be called a child but just a "fetus" (Latin for "offspring"), and the arm is only a "potential arm" or, say, a *"brachium."*

Dr. Haskell operates abortion facilities in Cincinnati and suburban Dayton. When Yvonne Brower, a University of Cincinnati student, called to inquire if she could observe abortions to gather information for a term paper, the clinic manager was magnanimous. On September 21, 1989, Miss Brower observed Dr. Haskell killing fetuses at the Women's Med Center, which he owns, in Kettering, Ohio. The events of that morning prompted Miss Brower to file a complaint with the police.

The following excerpt from the police report is of interest:

"She stated that by 11 o'clock she had already observed two "D&E" three-day procedures on two patients. She stated on the third patient, however, the abortion was different....The patient's water was already broken and she spontaneously gave birth prematurely before the proper D&E procedure could be done. She stated that the baby was delivered feet first very quickly through the birth canal. The head was on its way out when Dr. Haskell reached over and got his scissors and snipped the right side of the baby's common carotid artery."

Even then, Miss Brower stated, the newborn infant was not exactly dead. The police report again:

"The complainant stated that the baby was still moving when she looked at it once again...it was breathing shallow breaths, as was evidenced by the chest moving up and down. She stated that she could also observe the baby's hand having slow, controlled, muscular movements, unlike the short jerky twitchy motions she had seen and learned to expect when the baby was already dead before it came out of the birth canal."

The *Dayton Daily News* reported this story on Sunday, December 10, 1989. In the *Daily News* Dr. Haskell described the event in question in this way: "It came out very quickly after I put the scissors up in the cervical canal and pierced the skull and spread the scissors apart. It popped right on out...the previous two, I had to use the suction to collapse the skull."

Haskell also said Miss Brower "quite possibly" misinterpreted what happened in the abortion. Miss Brower, however, said she saw Dr. Haskell perform 15 abortions the day before and two others that morning. "So it's not like I hadn't seen any before," she said.

Dr. Haskell was questioned by the police. He maintains that when he does abortions he always causes the death of the fetus to occur just before delivery rather than after. The prosecutor did not bring charges.

Of course, if killing the unborn, at the moment when Haskell *openly admits* to the act, is not merely *not illegal* but rather a "fundamental right," it would be remarkable for virtually the same act to constitute legal homicide a few seconds later. *Legal* homicide or not, however, it would seem clear that a direct, intentional, and lethal assault on a human fetus must constitute a *homicide-in-fact* in that old-fashioned, as-long-as-words-have-meanings sense that even our federal judges are not quite able to change. It would be rather surprising if some abortionist did not proceed to act on the logical basis that the result is the same whether one kills the fetus and then takes it out or takes it out and then kills it.

At present, good people in America are working to undo a decree that has transformed an entire class of human beings into constitutional outlaws suitable for discretionary killing. The idea that something so grandiose and Platonic as "choice" will be lost to our people if this killing is prohibited is as ludicrous as suggesting that the American people are already deprived of the same ideal by the prohibition of burglary or rape. The abortion struggle is of pivotal importance for humanity because it is about the value of human life and the value of truth. If that seems too abstract, then consider a more concrete approach: Recall that it is also about crushing unborn babies' skulls and ask whether or not it is OK to do that.

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by Kristen J. Gee
8 years old

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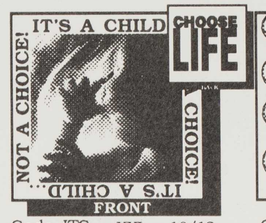

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AC. AIDS THE ANSWER ISN'T MAGIC IT'S JESUS
AD. MEDICAL FACT: LIFE BEGINS AT CONCEPTION! ABORTION KILLS CHILDREN
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AF. WE VOTE PRO-LIFE
AG. EQUAL RIGHTS FOR UNBORN WOMEN
AN. ADOPTION NOT ABORTION
M. I ♥ BABIES... BORN & UNBORN
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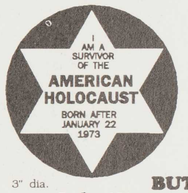

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