But from that very first Nativity, men and women refused to recognize the image of God in one another. Herod who, as king, ought to have been the father of his people, heard of the birth of the Savior and sent forth his army to slay every male child under the age of two. How much harder could a father's heart be? Herod didn't see the image of God in those children, he saw rivals to his own image as an earthly ruler.

In countless ways today, we are still blind to the image of God in our midst. This century began with World War I—the "war to end all wars"—and yet we have seen no end of war. In the past few decades, seldom has a Christmas passed without fresh blood being spilled in the land where Jesus walked. This year, the promise of peace was frayed again, with the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

In the Middle East of today, it is not uncommon for human beings to literally turn themselves into bombs to perpetrate acts of terrorism. Here at home, we see another kind of dehumanizing transformation. The child in the womb, the terminally ill, the handicapped infant—each is reduced to the status of a thing, to some kind of debit on the social balance sheet. Each is vulnerable in a nation that has turned its heart away from the message of Christmas and the sanctity of human life.

Oh how that turning away distorts everything else in this great nation! This summer, we witnessed the spectacle of Chinese women, victims of forced abortion and sterilization, being dragged in chains by Clinton administration officials to a Capitol Hill hearing. Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) scheduled those hearings in order to prick the nation's conscience. In October, nine of these women found refuge in Ecuador, because the Clinton administration had "no room in the inn" for them here. Last year, the Clinton State Department sent cables worldwide prodding U.S. ambassadors to pressure other nations to accept abortion on demand as well. It is not enough for the White House that this tragedy prevails here at home—recognition of the "image of God" in each new life must be blotted out everywhere.

At the "other edge" of life, the tragedies are just as profound. In October, Jack Kevorkian's death machine claimed yet another life, that of a cancer patient who, the Michigan coroner found, had no trace of the disease when she died. Her body was left outside the coroner's office in the back seat of an old car. This is what advocates of euthanasia call "death with dignity." Then, there was this past year's most atrocious act of callous disregard for human life, the cowardly attack on the federal building in Oklahoma City. How much lower can our hardness of heart take us?

Now, I am sad to report, 1995 is closing with all signs pointing to a sophisticated effort to remove the pro-life plank from the Republican Party platform. A little history may be in order here. In 1976, the "Party of Lincoln" adopted its first pro-life plank—a short statement that opposed the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe vs. Wade* and called for restoration of the right of the states to enact protective abortion laws. Four years later, as it nominated Ronald Reagan in Detroit, the GOP went further, championing the rights of unborn children and calling for "the appointment of judges at all levels who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life." This language has been part of the Republican platform ever since.[1]

Challenges to that platform have been mounted again and again, most recently by the group Republicans for Choice, founded in 1990 by Ann Stone, a "self-made millionairess"[2] who runs her own direct mail company. Miss Stone's group enjoyed a flurry of media attention, but its major impact was only to awaken pro-family Americans to the fact that no political gain is ever permanent. Groups like the Republican National Coalition for Life rose to the challenge and preserved the pro-life plank in the 1992 GOP platform. After the defeat of President Bush, many in the media attempted to convince the party that Republicans lost the White House because of their pro-life, pro-family positions. How ridiculous!

The 1994 Congressional elections blew away that baseless claim. Not a single pro-life incumbent in either party was defeated, and nearly four dozen new pro-life representatives and senators—men and women alike—were elected. In the past year, the new Congress has begun to move bill after bill to advance the pro-life position—with the latest being the resounding 288-139 House vote in November to ban partial-birth abortions.

Incredibly, despite these gains, some politicians, egged on by the liberal media are once again making an attempt to pry the pro-life plank out of the GOP platform. This time around, the odds against us are steeper. Five years ago, the campaign against the plank was spearheaded by a handful of liberal activists. Moreover, it was a cause without a candidate, as President Bush stood by the pro-life platform. In 1995, the threat to the platform comes not just from party liberals, but from some of our friends. This time around it almost had a candidate: the towering public figure of Gen. Colin Powell. Powell told ABC interviewer Barbara Walters in October that he was "pro-choice" on abortion. His nomination would have meant that no pro-life candidate would be on the ballot in 1996.

Some critics of the pro-life plank claim they want it removed only because it hasn't accomplished anything. They are wrong. The platform has upheld a standard. It has made it more likely that those running for office will stand for the pro-life cause. It will also help ensure that the next Republican President will appoint pro-life judges.

In the days to come, I pledge to you my best efforts to safeguard that plank—perhaps the only major political party statement in the western world in defense of human life. Indeed, the Family Research Council will do all it can to educate members of both parties on the devastating impact of abortion on demand. You see, it isn't a matter of real choice at all. For many women, abortion seems to be the only choice when the father of their unborn child closes his heart and turns his back. Alongside the floodtide of abortion, this nation now sees a million children born each year to single mothers, boys and girls who may never know the warmth of a daddy's bearhug or the comfort of fatherly advice.

The Family Research Council was founded to help reverse these trends and the curse they represent. From time to time, we may tire in that work, but then comes Christmas once again and the themes of our cause seem to resonate throughout this holy season. I promise you that as long as we are able, we will never give up in our quest to turn the heart of this nation back to its children, and to restore justice for America's families.