

**Appropriating Aushwitz: The Holocaust as Analogy and Provocation
in the Pro-Life Movement**

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In the winter of 1985, two young men stood trial in Pensacola, Florida. Charged with placing bombs in three abortion clinics, the defendants offered their Christmas morning attack as “a birthday present for Jesus.”¹ Substantial physical evidence, along with the boys’ confessions, left little reasonable doubt about their guilt, so their lawyers employed a novel tactic. Speaking to the jury in final argument, their attorney asserted that there had been no crime at all. The bombings were justified, even heroic:

Forty years ago, if they [the bombers] had sabotaged concentration camps, they would be heroes. In World War II my father commanded a rifle company that liberated Lansburg, where Hitler wrote Mein Kamph. My father saw pile upon pile, thousands of emaciated bodies. Why did they do it? Because our Supreme Court in its omnipotence says we can [kill] as long as we’re nice about it.²

Perhaps the spectators, judge, and jurors were surprised to hear the Nazi holocaust invoked by a Christian lawyer on behalf of Christian defendants who acted in the name of a predominately Christian movement. But to the defendants and their supporters, there was no surprise at all. By 1985, the holocaust comparison had long been a staple of the pro-life movement – used widely in its literature as both a passing reference and extended analysis. Politicians and pro-life leaders – from Right to Life founder and president Dr. J.C. Willke to Surgeon General C. Everett Koop and Ronald Reagan himself – regularly explained their opposition to abortion by invoking the Holocaust.

¹ All information and quotations from the 1985 trial of the Pensacola bombers comes from Dallas Blanchard and Terry Prewitt *Religious Violence and Abortion*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1993. NEED PAGE NUMBER

² Blanchard and Prewitt, p. 139.

This chapter traces the use and evolution of the Holocaust analogy in the pro-life movement. Pro-life activists likened abortion to the Nazi Holocaust from the earliest days of the movement. But equating the deaths of millions of fetus to the deaths of millions of Jews developed into two more controversial claims. The first is that the Holocaust resulted from German society's adoption of the "new ethic," a belief that only persons whose lives do not inconvenience others deserve to live. The "new ethic," according to these theoreticians, was first manifest in the killing of feeble-minded and disabled Aryan Germans, and only later in the genocide of Jews. Later elaborations of this argument asserted that widespread abortion caused the "new ethic" to take hold in Germany. Further, physicians, who promulgated the new ethic, willingly participated in the slaughter of "useless eater." In this history of the Holocaust, utilitarianism, not long-standing anti-Semitism, caused the Nazi atrocities, and physicians, rather than Hitler or the Gestapo, were the historical villains.

Pro-life architects of the holocaust metaphor employ this version of history to make a second argument: just as abortion led to the Nazi Holocaust, American physicians are currently engaging in the same acts as the Nazi doctors who preceded them. Abortion providers have not stopped with terminating pregnancies; rather, they experiment on the fetuses they abort, kill defective infants, sell fetal body parts, and euthanize the aged. Although the public is largely deceived about the nature of their acts, Americans' indifference renders them as guilty for a holocaust as Germans were for the Jewish genocide. Thus those who perform abortions, as well as those who defend the legality of their actions, are Nazis in our midst. This was not an isolated claim. It was elaborated in

William Brennan's *Abortion Holocaust: Today's Final Solution*, a book frequently recommended in pro-life writings and quoted by President Ronald Reagan.

If abortion is a holocaust, how shall it be stopped? The mainstream pro-life organizations, such as National Right to Life, advocated change through the political process: electing legislators who would support a pro-life agenda, particularly the passage of a constitutional amendment protecting fetal life. The perceived failure of this approach spawned a direct-action arm of the pro-life movement, which offered two strategies for action. One was provided by Randall Terry, leader of the nation's most prominent direct-action organization, Operation Rescue. Operation Rescue sought to stop abortion by blockading abortion clinics, a tactic modeled on the non-violent civil rights protests led by Dr. Martin Luther King. Yet in his 1988 book *Rescue America*, Terry made contradictory arguments about the obligations of Christian Americans faced with the abortion holocaust. He argued that America would face the same punishment that God inflicted on Judea if those who committed child murder were not in turn killed. But the implication that the people he repeatedly called "baby killers" should be slain was overridden by the political necessity of keeping the rescue movement non-violent. Terry urged American Christians to follow the historical example of the Ten Boom family, who had defied an immoral Nazi government by sheltering persecuted Jews.

Operation Rescue spawned a splinter group that drew a different lesson from the Holocaust. The American Coalition of Life Activists (ACLA) valorized Bonhoffer, a man executed for attempting to assassinate Hitler. In *A Time to Kill*, Rev. Michael Bray, a founder of the ACLA, argued that just as a person would kill to protect an innocent child, so lethal force could and should be used to protect the innocent preborn and stop

the abortion holocaust. The holocaust metaphor justified violence against abortion providers, including Jewish ones. When Dr. Barnett Slepian was murdered, supporters of his assassin labeled him “killer, Nazi, Jew.”³

The argument that abortion is a holocaust, like the argument that abortion is analogous to slavery, deracializes the victims of historical atrocities to equate them to aborted fetuses. The Holocaust as imagined and re-written by pro-life advocates became a framework for understanding abortion in the contemporary United States and a mandate for social action. As the Holocaust metaphor was elaborated it became a defense for murder. Yet the history of the Holocaust metaphor itself is closely tied to the history of the pro-life movement, and in particular, its relationship to the Republican Party. This chapter examines three phases of the Holocaust argument: first, its use prior to 1980, second, its book-length elaborations in the early 1980s and employment by Ronald Reagan to appease a deeply disappointed conservative political base, and finally, its appropriation by Operation Rescue and the American Coalition of Life Activists.

The Holocaust Metaphor in the 1970s

The claim that abortion is a holocaust appears in the very first public pronouncements of pro-life activists. In October 1970 the Value of Life Committee released the following press statement:

In a permissive age our young are being cozened into believing that life has no value unless planned convenient or genetically perfect. We see disturbing parallelisms between American Anti life philosophy in 1970 and the restricted anti life concepts propagandized by Goebels a short one-third of a century ago. To those who remember with horror the anti life smoke that drifted sky ward from the chimneys of Belsen and Buchenwald – we similarly recoil at the anti life smoke now rising from chimnies [sic] in hospitals in several states in our land of

³ Lungen, Pual. “Jewish MDs targeted?” *Canadian Jewish News*, November 5, 1998. p. 1.

the free. It rises from the incinerated remains of thousands of embryonic Americans [sic]....⁴

Anything but a radical organization, theologians, physicians, and attorneys constituted the Value Life Committee's membership. The Harvard theologian who led the Committee probably wrote this statement. The Value Life Committee abandoned the Holocaust analogy after becoming Americans United for Life, but the metaphor stayed with the pro-life movement.

The argument that abortion is a holocaust appealed partly because of the magnitude of death. Pro-life literature routinely cites the number of fetuses who have died since abortion was legalized. In 1979, an advertisement run by the South Dakota Right to Life Corporation declared one tragic consequence of *Roe v. Wade* to be, "over 6,000,000 million [sic] unborn children destroyed – a holocaust now as great in number of lives as that perpetrated by the Nazis."⁵

The second appeal lay in the issue of personhood. The Nazi state deemed the handicapped and racially undesirable unworthy of life and killed them. Pro-life rhetoricians claimed that the United States Supreme Court did the same by finding that the word "person" in the Fourteenth Amendment does not include the unborn.⁶ In Willke's words, "But if this growing being is a *human* being...he or she must be granted the same dignity and protection of life, health, and well-being that our western

⁴ Value of Life Committee, Williams Collection, Box 5. Oct. 21, 1970

⁵ "January 22 – The Day the Angels Wept." Bette L. Ellis Collection, Folder 1

⁶ "What is the Key Question?" Pamphlet c. 1977, distributed by ForLIFE, Inc. of Minneapolis, MN. Private collection.

civilization has always granted to every other human person.”⁷ Now a human was a “person” only if he or she is “wanted, useful, or not too badly damaged.”⁸

Pro-life advocates argued that when fetuses are declared non-persons, other groups will lose their right to life. In Willke’s words, “the logic and reasons for the destruction of those weakest, least conscious, smallest and most innocent humans among us by abortion can be applied just as logically and legally to the weak, only partly conscious, oldest, and most dependent or defective among us by euthanasia.”⁹ Abortion is a slippery slope and abortion rights supporters have the elderly in their sights. In the early 1980s, another South Dakota Right to Life advertisement warned, “Don’t Ever Grow Old – or sick or financially dependent.” Children who find abortion acceptable will greet their parents’ aging in the company of “a new breed of social engineers” who would “point out their right to privacy and how it would be better, ‘for [their parents’] own good,’ to be dead than to feel ‘unwanted.’ As evidence for this claim, South Dakota Right to Life asserted, “with the economic success of abortion, profiteers plan for euthanasia.” The history of the Holocaust also foretold an impending spate of euthanasia: “the first gas chambers in Germany were not in concentration camps – but in hospitals. With the value of human life demeaned by rampant abortion and compulsory sterilization, leading psychiatrists and physicians went on to eliminate over a quarter million ‘unwanted’ Germans. This program pre-dated Hitler’s rise to power.”¹⁰

Note this advertisement’s two claims: first, abortion led to the Holocaust, and second, physicians started it. South Dakota Right to Life did not invent these arguments.

⁷ Willke and Willke, Handbook on Abortion, 1979 p. 5.

⁸ What is the Key Question? c. 1977

⁹ Willke and Willke, Handbook on Abortion, 1979, p. v

¹⁰ Don’t Ever Grow Old. Bette Ellis collection, Folder 1, South Dakota Right to Life.

The most credible statement of physicians' culpability in the German Holocaust – and of their current malevolent intent – came from a remarkable source: the Surgeon General of the United States. In *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, first published in 1979, C. Everett Koop, along with theologian Francis A. Schaeffer, asserted that infanticide was common in America because of the devaluation of human life which allowed rampant abortion. Further, physicians who engaged in infanticide were motivated by the same ideology as Nazi doctors, and acted in the same way. Finally, they argued, German physicians had not only facilitated the Holocaust, they helped cause it.

Originally published when Koop was a pediatric surgeon, the book was revised and reprinted after Koop's appointment by Ronald Reagan. Koop and Schaeffer did not accuse American physicians of perpetrating a holocaust, but their book made two important contributions to that argument. First, Koop was a credible source for the assertion that doctors committed infanticide. Just as abortion had become an "accepted form of birth control," killing children after birth had become acceptable – indeed, for some it was a goal.

For over a decade pro-infanticide forces have been preparing us to accept legalized infanticide. Legalized abortion has made infanticide the next logical step in the devaluation and destruction of innocent lives. Technology such as amniocentesis and ultrasound has enabled us to diagnose a variety of handicaps in the womb. We can legally kill a handicapped child or any child up to the day it is born. But what is the difference between killing a child two days before it is born or two days after its birth?¹¹

Koop and Schaeffer quoted advocates of infanticide to demonstrate this supposed effect of abortion. The most famous were Nobel laureates Watson and Crick, the men who discovered the double-helix structure of DNA. They quote Watson saying, "if a child were not declared alive until three days after birth, then all parents could be allowed the

¹¹ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 48-49

choice only a few are given under the present system.” Crick is also cited saying, “no newborn infant should be declared human until it has passed certain tests regarding its genetic endowment and that [sic] if it fails these tests it forfeits the right to live.”¹² While pro-life literature does not mention Watson and Crick’s attitudes about abortion, these statements about infanticide are repeatedly invoked as proof of abortion’s effects.

As evidence of infanticide, Koop and Schaeffer cite instances when pediatric surgeons decline to operate. When surgeons who could save a life decide not to, or acquiesce to parents’ refusal of surgery, they choose death for another person.¹³ Only a short step separates denying life-saving surgery to selecting groups of individuals for death. Consider the causal links proposed in the following:

The next step is to destroy human individuals or groups of individuals because they are unwanted, imperfect, or socially embarrassing. Senility, infirmity, retardation, insanity, and incontinence are conditions that come to mind. Obviously, when one comes to that practice, he has gone far beyond even so-called mercy killing. He has entered the same realm as that of Nazi behavior during World War II. This is essentially what abortionists are doing with unborn babies – because many of these abortionists have no medical concern for whether the unborn babies live. To have these babies is merely inconvenient, uneconomical, or perhaps embarrassing. Carrying this practice to its logical conclusion, we come to death selection and genocide.¹⁴

Thus a physician who does not operate on an infant with severe birth defects has decided that this imperfect individual should not live – perhaps because his care would place too great a burden on the mother. She does not want to be inconvenienced. Such a physician would be capable of selecting other people with inconvenient defects, like insanity or incontinence, for death. If a woman seeks an abortion because she is poor, unmarried, wants to continue her education or career, or because of fetal birth defects, she is aborting

¹² Koop and Schaeffer, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*, p. 40. c. 1979, 1983

¹³ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 39

¹⁴ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 56

for reasons of convenience. A doctor who grants her request is, in Koop and Schaeffer's argument, killing for reasons of convenience – like Nazis did.

Koop and Schaeffer's other contribution to the abortion=holocaust argument concerned the culpability of physicians. In addition to claiming that American physicians who perform abortions are acting like Nazis, they assert that America is in danger of repeating Hitler's crimes because doctors bore responsibility for the Holocaust.

The important thing to remember is that the medical profession took a leading role in the planning of abortion and euthanasia. It seems likely that had it not been for the example and active role played by German physicians in the practice of euthanasia, Hitler's progress in the extermination programs would have been slowed if not stopped.¹⁵

Koop and Schaeffer do not argue that abortion caused the German Holocaust – that argument would come later. But they assert a common cause of abortion, euthanasia and genocide. That cause is “humanism,” a doctrine which denies that “God gives the standards of value, and His absolutes are binding on both the ordinary person and those in all places of authority.”¹⁶ Humanism unleashed “sociological law,” which is “what most people think at that moment of history.”¹⁷ The steps from humanism to Holocaust are short indeed. Humanism “rejects the doctrine of the Creation [and] therefore rejects the idea that there is anything stable or “given” about human nature.” Humanists embrace a “determinist-evolutionist” view of the world, which “encourages manipulation of nature, including tinkering with people, as the only way of escaping from nature's bondage.”¹⁸ Genetic engineering” follows, where “the uniqueness of people made in the image of God

¹⁵ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 65

¹⁶ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 7

¹⁷ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 6

¹⁸ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 8

is thrown away.”¹⁹ And that “is a chilling reminder of Hitler’s Germany, which was built on the social conclusions logically drawn from the Darwinist concept of the survival of the fittest.”²⁰ Having abandoned Christianity, humanists devalue human life, and spread a doctrine that “has given us no limits to prevent us from sliding into an even worse devaluation of human life in the future.”²¹

Koop and Schaeffer thus place Christianity squarely in opposition to abortion. This was a significant change: the Catholic Church downplayed the religious aspect of their abortion opposition to diffuse claims that their attempts to alter law and policy violated the separation of church and state. Koop and Schaeffer, in contrast, claim that the Christian view is “of immense importance in understanding evil in the world. It is possible for Christians to speak of things as absolutely wrong, for they are not original in human society. They are derived from the Fall.”²² This place of Christianity in politics reflected an important historical moment: the emerging coalition of Evangelical Protestants and economically conservative Republicans who constituted the New Right.

The Holocaust Metaphor in the Early 1980s

Ronald Reagan’s election was a watershed moment for the pro-life movement. Pro-life supporters anticipated his administration with great hope; within three years they were greatly disappointed. Reagan’s first term witnessed the development of the holocaust metaphor in three book-length treatments: Kent Kelly’s *Abortion: The American Holocaust* and John Powell’s *Abortion: The Silent Holocaust*, both published in 1981, and in 1983, William Brennan’s *The Abortion Holocaust: Today’s Final*

¹⁹ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 9

²⁰ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 9

²¹ Koop and Schaeffer, p. 81

²² Koop and Schaeffer, p. 110

Solution. Ronald Reagan also granted presidential approval to the holocaust metaphor in 1983.

All the abortion-as-holocaust books claim that legalized abortion leads to mass murder, and all vilify physicians who perform abortions. Kent Kelly's contribution to this argument is the elaboration of the "Nazi mentality," defined as "an acceptance of the unwarranted extermination of human beings as a national necessity."²³ While citing the repeatedly-reviled argument that abortion costs less than welfare, Kelly explains:

The pro-abortionist feels strongly enough to kill for his or her belief...Politicians say we should kill for the economic good of our nation. The drain from indigent welfare children makes their extermination a national necessity. The U.S. Supreme Court and the feminists say we should kill for the constitutional good of our nation. The preservation of a woman's rights makes this killing a national necessity.²⁴

The murder is vast in scope: "in this nation, we long ago surpassed Hitler's six million."²⁵

Kelly attributes this mass murder to two sources: "humanism," and "fun and profit."

Like Koop and Schaeffer, Kelly claims that the humanist vision centers on man rather than God. Humanists believe that "God has no place" in government and use the school system to indoctrinate children.²⁶ In addition to abolishing religious education in schools, the humanist plan for America includes legalizing homosexuality, soft drugs, pornography, and voluntary euthanasia, and relaxing divorce laws.²⁷ Humanists shun the bible, which opposes abortion, as the source of truth. Instead, society has accepted the killing of "unborn babies" for "fun and profit." The "profit" in this claim is the "abortion

²³ Kent Kelly, *Abortion: The American Holocaust*, p. 3

²⁴ Kelly, p. 4

²⁵ Kelly, p. 5

²⁶ Kelly, p. 25

²⁷ Kelly, p. 26-27

business,” which Kelly claims will generate a “quarter of a billion dollars” in 1981.²⁸ While abortion providers are motivated by profit, women who get abortions just want to have their “fun.” Because “sex is fun” it “explains the murder for fun mentality.”²⁹ Women abort for “convenience.” And, Kelly makes clear, these women are not poor. Instead, “sixty-seven percent are white and most of these are upper middle class women who go to the more expensive clinics.”³⁰

Kelly’s argument is inflammatory. As he explains in the introduction, “intellectually honest people do not prejudge a book by its cover,” thus one with qualms about the cover, which depicted the United States in blood red with a swastika in its middle and the word “abortion” dripping red above it “flunked the objectivity test.”³¹ Kelly’s book is neither well-argued nor lucid, but *Abortion: The Silent Holocaust*, written by Jesuit scholar John Powell, is both.

How the New Ethic Caused the Holocaust

From its inception the pro-life movement struggled to discredit the argument that women should be able to abort if their child would be born with severe birth defects – the very issue that brought Sherry Finkbine’s thalidomide-damaged pregnancy to public attention in 1962. In 1970, remember, the Value Life Committee claimed that Americans had come to believe that “life had no value” unless it was “genetically perfect.” This assertion developed into the claim that abortion proponents want society to subscribe to a “quality of life” or “new” ethic, which is selfish and materialistic. The pro-life movement, in contrast, champions the “sanctity of life” or “old” ethic. The “new ethic”

²⁸ Kelly, p. 105

²⁹ Kelly, p. 101

³⁰ Kelly, p. 105

³¹ Kelly, p. 1

concept first appeared in a 1970 editorial in the *California Journal of Medicine*, which warned that “the process of eroding the old ethic and substituting the new has already begun. It may be seen most clearly in changing attitudes towards human abortion.”³²

Abortion holocaust theorists claimed that the “new ethic” had dire consequences in Germany and also will here.

The new ethic as source of the Nazi holocaust is best explicated in John Powell’s 1981 book, *Abortion: The Silent Holocaust*. Powell contends that Germans fell prey to the “Hegelian” utilitarian principle that “whatever solves a problem on a practical level must be considered moral.”³³ This new ethic replaced a moral system devoted to the sanctity of life. “There is the traditional, human pro-life ethic, which sees every human life as valuable in itself. It offers loving acceptance and care to every human being...It assumes that every life is worth living.”³⁴ Once instituted, the new ethic replaces the life-affirming heritage of western civilization with the proposition that a quality standard be set “which every individual must meet; if a given life fails to meet this standard, it becomes disposable and will be rejected.”³⁵ In a materialistic culture, humans become objects to be discarded if they are no longer useful or functional.

The new ethic, according to Powell, first appeared in the German medical establishment’s advocacy and practice of euthanasia of the mentally “defective.” As euthanasia became more commonplace, Germans accepted the new ethic. “The seeds of destruction in Germany were planted in the growing acceptance of the Hegelian

³² Reprinted in Appendix C Human Life Review, vol.8 no. 1 (Winter 1982) p. 90, GET ORIGINAL CITATION

³³ Powell, p. 26

³⁴ Powell, p. 130

³⁵ Powell, p. 131

pragmatic morality.”³⁶ With public acceptance of euthanasia, the Nazis could introduce more killing. Thus acceptance of the new ethic led to Hitler’s program of mass extermination. “The principle had been officially established: ‘Whoever is not wanted must die.’ They (the Jews) are not wanted. Therefore they must die. It was the airtight logic of the Hegelian ethic.”³⁷ Central to Powell’s argument is a proposed chronology of ideology and action in Germany; the “new” ethic preceded Hitler, opening the door for his ascendance and policies.

Having established that the new ethic caused the Nazi holocaust, Powell argues that the same ideology is the basis of claims for women’s right to terminate pregnancies if motherhood is too great a burden. “A world shaped by the quality of life ethic... forbids anyone to be a burden on pain of death.”³⁸ This justification for killing will expand to groups beyond the pre-born. Powell cites a pro-life activist who explains, “Once you permit the killing of an unborn child, there will be no stopping. There will be no age limit. You are setting off a chain reaction that will eventually make you the victim.”³⁹ Proponents of the New Ethic leave standards of worthiness ambiguous – “the parameters are vague but negotiable” – to better serve the interests of those in power.⁴⁰ The powerful then decide who lives and who dies. “It puts your life in my hands if I am in control, and my life in your hands if you are in control.”⁴¹ The pro-choice claim that women should have the right to control their body is thus a claim that those with power should be allowed to kill those who are helpless.

³⁶ Powell, p. 28

³⁷ Powell, p. 27

³⁸ Powell, p. 134

³⁹ Powell, p. 134

⁴⁰ Powell p. 133

⁴¹ Powell, p. 134

Powell grants the new ethic agency: “The New Ethic would knowingly and willingly lay its human sacrifices on the alter of ‘quality of existence’ to ensure the creation of a master race, just like the one Hitler envisioned and hoped to produce in his dreams for the Third Reich.”⁴² This dangerous ideology begets violent action: “The outrageous decision of the Supreme Court to legalize abortion-on-demand has opened the floodgates of death and unleashed the fury.”⁴³

While the new ethic had agency, it also had agents. Persons in the media and judiciary, as well as those in medicine, promote the ideology that “motivated the medical practitioners of Germany’s Third Reich.” “New Ethic proponents feel that total victory is near. Soon the sensitivities of the general public will be sufficiently desensitized, people will ‘get used’ to it, and the killing of undesirables, whose lives do not meet the required standards, can proceed without sticky litigation in the courts.”⁴⁴ Now that abortion is legalized, “proponents of the New Ethic...are pushing for the killing of the deformed, the retarded, the handicapped, and the aged.”⁴⁵ These people are heartless. During the last hours of his dying mother’s life, Powell says he imagined “some (proponents of the New Ethic) who would say: ‘She’s a vegetable. Give her an injection. After all, she’s eighty-eight. She is only an expense now.’”⁴⁶

New Ethic proponents did not stop at advocating killing. One of Powell’s contributions to the argument that contemporary abortion is the same as the Holocaust is the assertion that physicians experiment on the fetuses they abort. Because of this, he claims, physicians prefer prostaglandin abortions. Unlike other methods that mangle and

⁴² Powell, p. 134-135

⁴³ Powell, p. 39

⁴⁴ Powell, p. 56-57

⁴⁵ Powell, p. 170

⁴⁶ Powell, p. 141

burn the “baby”, “this method may also result in the delivery of an intact little body which is still alive and can be used for later experiments.”⁴⁷

Finally, Powell’s book is notable for its photographs. The cover – picturing a red rose -- is far less incendiary than those of the other two abortion holocaust books. Shunning the usual pictures of mutilated fetuses, Powell’s book is illustrated with appealing color photographs of women, children, and elderly people – *white* women, children, and elderly people. Like the pro-life images examined in the previous chapter, photographs in *Abortion: The Silent Holocaust* reinforce the image of abortion as an act of white women. Seventeen children are pictured in the book: sixteen are white, the other Asian. These images implicitly support Powell’s argument that abortion killed wanted babies: “In fact, black markets for healthy, white babies are constantly being uncovered.”⁴⁸ Five pictures show elderly people, also all white. In this world where all people are white, all mothers are married: every visible female left hand bears a wedding ring. In the world of abortion statistics, however, 30% of abortion recipients were black and 77% unmarried in 1980.⁴⁹

How Abortion Caused the Holocaust

The argument of William Brennan 1983 book, *The Abortion Holocaust: Today’s Final Solution*, might be surmised from its dedication: “This book is dedicated to the proposition that a knowledge of the kinship between past and current atrocities represents an indispensable step towards halting the modern resurrection of one of history’s most monstrous chapters.”⁵⁰ Brennan did not argue that abortion is like the Holocaust; in his

⁴⁷ Powell, p. 147

⁴⁸ Powell, p. 107

⁴⁹ Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Feb. 11, 1983, vol. 32 no. 5, Table 1.

⁵⁰ Brennan, 1983

version of German history, abortion caused the German Holocaust, and specific events in the slaughter of the Jewish race are now happening in the American slaughter of the unborn race.

Brennan claims that the advocacy and practice of abortion caused the Nazi holocaust. In 1975, the Willkes argued that while abortion was never legal in Germany, its widespread acceptance in the 1920s allowed physicians to begin killing “other classes of human beings who were also socially burdensome.”⁵¹ Brennan revises the Willkes’ version of history by asserting that the Nazi perpetration of mass genocide began with destroying fetal life. “The Nazi regime ushered in an era of unprecedented legalized destruction. The unborn comprised the first category of victims earmarked for killing under legal auspices.”⁵²

Brennan’s considerable revision of Holocaust history demonstrates that what happened in Germany and what is happening in America are the same. First, they are equally brutal. In Germany, “Millions of human beings were brutally exterminated: shot to death, asphyxiated by gas, or burned alive...what is being done to scores of unwanted unborn human beings...is every bit as cruel and inhuman.”⁵³ The same historical events in the same sequence happened in both nations. Hence the question, “What were some of the most common devices employed to legalize the killing of unborn children in pre-Nazi German and pre-Roe v. Wade America?” is answered, “the staging of mass demonstrations in support of abortion law abolition, an emphasis on the dangers of abortion attributed to quacks and butchers, and grossly inflated maternal death rates

⁵¹ Handbook on Abortion, 1975 edition, p. 115

⁵² Brennan 1983, p. 17

⁵³ Brennan, 1983, p. 1.

attributed to illegal abortions.”⁵⁴ The American abortion holocaust replicates the “technological, bureaucratic” aspects of killing that distinguished the Nazi Holocaust from other mass killings.⁵⁵ Jews died in the gas chambers in from three to fifteen minutes; a skilled abortionist can “vacuum the unborn to smithereens” in less than eight. Killers work in decorated and sanitized environments: flower beds gave the Treblinka train station a “neat and cheery look,” while plants and bright colors in abortion clinics create a “cheerful and anxiety-free environment.”⁵⁶ Adults and children were killed with phenol injections to the heart in the “treatment room” at Aushwitz; babies are killed in the “procedure room” in the United States.⁵⁷ Nazis emptied ghettos; NARAL describes vacuum suction abortion, which “tears apart and sucks out the destroyed remains of living growing bodies” as “the uterus...is gently emptied.”⁵⁸ Nazi doctors experimented on inmates; in America, “barbaric experiments [are] performed on unborn human guinea pigs.”⁵⁹ The lure of money and academic prestige motivated mercenary German physicians; in America: “the increased status and financial rewards associated with high professional rank in academic medicine is coming to depend on how many unborn victims can be salvaged for research and scholarly output before, during, or after destruction.”⁶⁰ Brennan caps his argument with a photographic montage of “actual pictures of past and current atrocities.”⁶¹ In this five page section the photograph at the top of each page is of a victim or victims killed in concentration camps; each photo

⁵⁴ Brennan, 1983, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Brennan, p. 37

⁵⁶ Brennan, p. 39

⁵⁷ Brennan, p. 128

⁵⁸ Brennan, p. 117

⁵⁹ Brennan, p. 69

⁶⁰ Brennan, p. 75

⁶¹ Brennan, p. 170

mirrored by the picture of a dead, late-term fetus in a pose similar to the body above (see photographs).

De-Racializing the Holocaust

Pro-life appropriations of the Holocaust elicited outrage from the American Jewish community. One Holocaust survivor wrote: “For purposes of this political campaign, they help themselves at the expense of cheapening the memory of those murdered men, women and children...It must be noted that...neither the voices of the prestigious leaders of the Vatican – nor the voices of “Value of Life” persons – were heard on behalf of these tortured lives.”⁶² The Reverend Howard Moody castigated Catholic Cardinal Cooke for referring to abortion law reform supporters as “Nazis,” asking, “Isn’t it a little presumptuous for the Cardinal to stir up memories of a regime in which Nazis put Jews to death in the name of Christian anti-Semitism?...The Nazis were not so much *enemies* of the Christian church, but rather agents for the practical application of an established social logic reinforced by the sanctions of God’s holy will.”⁶³ Yet in pro-life accounts, as we have seen, the social logic that led to the Holocaust is the new ethic, not anti-Semitism.

Brennan attempted to diffuse accusations that pro-life appropriations of the Holocaust are anti-Semitic in the opening of *The Abortion Holocaust*. “To point out that today’s medical abortionists are doing the same thing to the unwanted unborn as the Nazis did to their victims does not have the remotest connection to anti-Semitism. There is nothing inherently anti-Semitic about emphasizing how other victims, in addition to

⁶² Letter from Regina Barshak, attributed to The Boston Globe, March 17, 1972 and reprinted in a NARAL release. NARAL MC 313 Box 1 Folder 26

⁶³ “Fetus Power: Seeds of Religious Hatred,” by Rev. Howard Moody. Attributed to The Village Voice, May 13, 1971. NARAL MC 313 Box 1 Folder 23.

Jews, have undergone persecution, degradation, and annihilation.” Accusations of anti-Semitism are “diversionary devices,” mounted to deflect attention from the horrors of abortion.⁶⁴

While Kelly and Powell argue that the utilitarian ethic, rather than anti-Semitism, caused the Holocaust, Brennan specifically invokes the memory of the Jewish victims and argues that race played an important role in the Nazi holocaust. To make the argument that both the holocaust and contemporary abortion are predicated on racism, Brennan redefines race so that fetuses are one.

Brennan recasts abortion as a “racist” campaign by offering several definitions of race, including: “we are all members of the same human race,” and, alternatively, “any group, class, or kind, especially of persons.”⁶⁵ With this definition, any grouping of people can constitute a race – be they African-Americans, elementary students, women, or fetuses. Brennan applies this construction of “race” to define racism. “Racism enters the picture when a hierarchy of worth is imposed on classifications used to distinguish groups of human beings from one another.”⁶⁶ Racism consists of anything that reduces the humanity of a group of individuals. Brennan thus describes abortion as an act that minimizes the humanity of fetuses and labels it “racism.”⁶⁷

Brennan preempts criticism of this contention, maintaining that pro-abortionists’ racism is not readily apparent because they take pains to hide it from public view, veiling it in obfuscatory language.

⁶⁴ Brennan 1983, p. 5 CHECK CITATION

⁶⁵ Brennan 1983, p. 91

⁶⁶ Brennan 1983, p. 92

⁶⁷ CHECK THIS AND USE OR DELETE: This argument has grown in popularity. It is currently employed by the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform in their Genocide Awareness Project – the most widely circulated form of abortion-holocaust rhetoric. The project travels the country and consists of posters juxtaposing pictures of aborted fetuses with slaughtered Jews and lynched African-Americans. www.cbrinfo.org.

Today's abortion proponents are much too calculating in their manipulation of language to acknowledge such a fact. Rather than overtly subscribe to a master race ideology, they have exploited a far more subtle but equally malignant distinction: the born-unborn dichotomy.⁶⁸

Having defined the unborn as a race and abortion as racism, Brennan asserts that the division between the born and unborn is analogous to the Aryan/non-Aryan distinction. "According to this principle of differentiation, the born, especially adults in good health, are analogous to a master race, while the unborn, especially the unwanted variety, occupy the lowest position as did the Jew in Germany.⁶⁹ In fact, fetuses are worse off: "they constitute the most *absolutely oppressed minority* in history."⁷⁰

Thus Brennan, like other abortion holocaust theorists, capitalizes on the victimization of the Jewish people. He simultaneously undermines it by claiming that the Holocaust was rooted not in anti-Semitism, but in abortion and euthanasia. Expanding the idea of racism to include everyone makes the concept meaningless. Brennan extinguishes anti-Semitism by universalizing it.

Euthanasia and Infanticide in the 1970s and 1980s

A series of cases made the argument that abortion causes euthanasia and infanticide compelling to pro-life supporters. In 1975, twenty-one year old Karen Ann Quinlan collapsed into a coma. After several months, her father ordered the hospital to take Karen, who had suffered irreparable brain damage, off her respirator. As Karen was not brain-dead, the hospital refused to carry out the order. The Quinlans went to court, where eventually they were awarded guardianship of their daughter and allowed to

⁶⁸ Brennan p. 93

⁶⁹ Brennan, p. 93

⁷⁰ Brennan p. 198

remove Karen's respirator. Right to die advocates considered this a major victory.⁷¹

What happened next made Quinlan a pro-life icon. Karen did not die when her respirator was removed: she lived, albeit in a vegetative state, until 1985.⁷² Pro-life newsletters used her story to galvanize opposition against what they saw as her attempted murder.⁷³ Quinlan was a perfect symbol: denied the right to life by her parents, she struggled to stay alive, proving that euthanasia was imposed, not desired.

In the 1980s, discussion of infanticide eclipsed euthanasia in pro-life appropriations of the holocaust. Newborn euthanasia lends itself best to the abortion=holocaust theory for two reasons. As the infant is the closest form of life to the fetus, pro-lifers can make the strongest case that infanticide follows directly from abortion. And, according to the abortion holocaust argument, the first euthanasia performed in Germany was perpetrated against disabled children.

A dramatic case in Indiana initiated a national debate about infanticide. In April of 1982, "Baby Doe" was born with Downs Syndrome and an intestinal obstruction that prevented him from digesting food. His doctors wanted to operate, but the child's parents refused.⁷⁴ The hospital went to court to obtain permission for surgery, but the baby died before the matter was settled. The "murder" of Baby Doe received extensive press coverage.

The pro-life movement was outraged by the Baby Doe case and focused their attention on what they considered an inevitable outgrowth of abortion. The Summer

⁷¹ Humphry, Derek. *The Right to Die: Understanding Euthanasia*. Eugene, Oregon: The Hemlock Society, 1986, p. 107-8.

⁷² Humphrey, p. 107-108

⁷³ Voices for the Unborn Newsletter, July and December issues, 1980.

⁷⁴ Knepper, Kathleen. "Withholding Medical Treatment from Infants: When Is It Child Neglect?" 33 *University of Louisville Journal of Family Law*, 12(1994-95).

1982 issue of the *Human Life Review*, the pro-life movements' premier intellectual journal, was dedicated to the Indiana baby.

Indeed, we might well dedicate this issue to little Baby Doe, for there is much in the following pages that has been inspired by him – and virtually nothing that is *not* related to the moral collapse which his pitiful death symbolizes. So we *do* dedicate this issue to Baby Doe, a gesture at least as efficacious as the ‘treatment’ afforded him by his doctors, and the hospital in which he lived out his six-day agony of starvation.⁷⁵

Several articles drawing the connection between abortion and infanticide appeared in the volume. Editor-in-chief McFadden insinuated that Baby Doe’s death showed the revival of Nazism in America. McFadden wrote in his introduction to Gary Crum’s article about a Nazi physician:

Professor Gary Crum must have thought he was writing generally about history long past, and specifically about a doctor long dead. We were fascinated when we got his article, and thought it was well worth printing – important lesson in it, etc., and of course many see the same problem looming ahead, etc. – again, we couldn’t know how timely it would be right now...Perhaps our Indiana readers will want to share this text with their Supreme Court justices.⁷⁶

Ronald Reagan and the Holocaust

Politicians employed the Holocaust analogy as early as 1976, when Representative Robert Bauman, advocating the ending of federal funding for abortions, asserted:

Mr. Speaker, the argument of inconvenience can be extended to the elderly or to the ill, those who just happen to be in the way of the majority, those who disagree. We saw in Nazi Germany the ultimate flowering of that pernicious and lethal doctrine. And who here wishes to announce their belated endorsement of Adolf Hitler’s “final solution”?⁷⁷

⁷⁵ McFadden, John. “Introduction.” *Human Life Review* vol 8, no. 3 (Summer 1982), p. 2

⁷⁶ McFadden, p. 2

⁷⁷ NARAL 84-M10/Box 1/Hyde-Bauman FIND CONGRESSIONAL RECORD CITATION

In 1983, the leader of the free world endorsed the holocaust metaphor. In preparing for his reelection campaign, President Ronald Reagan published “Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation” in the Spring issue of *Human Life Review*. Reagan’s ten-page essay emphatically stated his Administration’s continued opposition to abortion. “Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation” did not espouse the extremist opinions of fringe zealots. Rather it expressed, in the most mainstream way possible, the sentiments of pro-life advocates. It is significant, then, that Reagan invoked both John Powell and William Brennan in his essay and claimed, “We should not rest until our entire society echoes the tone of John Powell in the dedication of his book, *Abortion, The Silent Holocaust*.”⁷⁸ In April of 1984, as the election approached, Reagan republished his article as a book entitled *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*. In its second incarnation, Reagan’s 3600 word article was accompanied by two equally brief essays: one by Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, and the other by *Human Life Review* editor, Malcolm Muggeridge. While Reagan only briefly invoked the Holocaust, Koop’s “The Slide to Aushwitz” and Muggeridge’s “Humane Holocaust” amplified the holocaust argument in Reagan’s essay, rendering the entire book into an abortion-as-holocaust document.⁷⁹ One can infer that Reagan’s campaign managers believed this book would resonate with their desired audience.

The publication of Reagan’s essay had much to do with his inaction on the agenda of the Christian Right that elected him. The pro-life movement had heralded Reagan’s presidential candidacy as an unprecedented opportunity in the battle to protect fetal life. He was certainly the most sympathetic candidate since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision,

⁷⁸ Reagan, 1983, p. 12

⁷⁹ Ronald Reagan, 1984. *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*. New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

explicitly stating that abortion constituted the murder of children. Accordingly, Reagan was only candidate endorsed by the National Right to Life Committee PAC in 1980.⁸⁰ In a 1980 campaign speech to pro-life supporters, Reagan told the audience that although they may not be able to endorse him, “I endorse you.”⁸¹ Reagan remained a vocal opponent of abortion, although his actions sometimes disappointed his pro-life supporters.

The Republican Party swept the 1980 elections.⁸² The *National Right to Life News* ran this headline: “Pro-life Gain: President, 10 Senators, & More.”⁸³ Reagan had campaigned on a promise to appoint only Supreme Court justices willing to overturn *Roe*.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the political moment had finally arrived for the pro-life movement to seriously pursue a long-awaited goal: the passage of a Human Life Amendment to the Constitution. In the next two years the movement would meet defeat and disappointment on both fronts, creating bitter splits among pro-life advocates.

Reagan’s first opportunity to fulfill his campaign promise came quickly, when Justice Potter Stewart, one of seven Justices in the *Roe v. Wade* majority, retired. Pro-life supporters waited expectantly for Reagan to name his adamantly anti-Roe nominee. They felt utterly betrayed when Reagan announced his nomination of Arizona judge Sandra Day O’Connor.⁸⁵ Pro-lifers found O’Connor’s position on abortion conspicuously ambiguous. As a state senator she had cast several votes that pro-lifers saw as troubling, if not pro-abortion. Pro-life leaders were appalled when O’Connor

⁸⁰ Gorney, Cynthia. 1998. *Articles of Faith: On the Frontlines of the Abortion Wars*. New York: Simon and Schuster, pp. 336-337.

⁸¹ IS THIS RIGHT?? Jeffries, John and James Ryan, 2001. “A Political History of the Establishment Clause,” 100 *Michigan Law Review* 279, 343.

⁸² Petchesky, Rosalind. 1984. *Abortion and Women’s Choice*. New York: Longman Inc. p. 256

⁸³ Gorney, p. 337 GET RTL Newsletter

⁸⁴ Arkes, Hadley. 1982. “A Lover’s Lament.” *Human Life Review* vol 8, no. 3 (Summer), p. 132

⁸⁵ Find the NRL issues about this. Arkes, p. 132

refused to clarify her position during her confirmation hearings.⁸⁶ *National Right to Life News* labeled O'Connor a "pro-abortionist."⁸⁷ Jerry Falwell, leader of the Moral Majority, urged "all good Christians" to oppose the O'Connor nomination. But Republican support for the Arizona judge was strong: Arizona Republican Senator Barry Goldwater quipped, "All good Christians should kick Jerry Falwell in the ass."⁸⁸ O'Connor was confirmed 99 to 0; the pro-life movement felt that their president and his party had stabbed them in the back.

A devastating defeat in the Senate confounded pro-lifers' dismay with Reagan and the Republicans. As Reagan's first term began, hope ran high among abortion foes that the Senate would pass a Human Life Amendment. First introduced as a concept in a 1973 *National Right to Life News* article, the amendment would add a provision to the Constitution stating that human life began at conception – thus effectively banning abortion. Between 1973 and 1980 the Amendment was introduced at various times, but with little hope of its passage. The New Right's overwhelming victory in the 1980 elections altered this calculus. Thus movement leaders were stunned when their two proposals – Senator Jesse Helms' "Human Life Act" and Senator Orin Hatch's proposed constitutional amendment -- failed in quick succession in September of 1982. The Senate tabled the Helms bill, and the Hatch amendment was voted down, even though pro-life supporters had mustered all their resources behind it. The political moment was squandered. One Missouri pro-life activist wrote: "Both pieces of legislation would have protected unborn children if they had been passed. . . . Many thought that 1982 was the year

⁸⁶ Rees, ?.1983. "Questions for Supreme Court Nominees at Confirmation Hearings: Excluding the Constitution," 17 *Georgia Law Review* 913.

⁸⁷ Gorney , p. 424 GET NRL ISSUES, especially one about Reagan being stupid or deceitful

⁸⁸ Tribe, p. 167 FIND THIS

for pro-life.”⁸⁹ The moment of greatest enthusiasm and hope in the pro-life movement’s history ended in its greatest failure, severely testing pro-lifers’ support for the Republican Party and its president.

The disappointment over O’Connor and defeat in the Senate fragmented the pro-life movement in unanticipated ways. In 1983, many fewer people than expected showed up at the National Right to Life Committee’s annual convention, amid profound disagreement about Right to Life’s decision to push for a vote on the constitutional amendment and the pro-life movement’s embrace of the New Right.⁹⁰ But the organization’s problems transcended political strategy: radical activists responded to political defeat by founding organizations whose tactics centered on forcibly shutting down clinics rather than trying to influence fickle politicians. Reagan inherited a political problem from these defeats. In March 1983, the National Pro-Life Political Action Committee released results of its poll of 1400 pro-life activists, 68% of whom thought Reagan had done a fair or poor job on the abortion issues and only 55% of whom planned to support Reagan’s bid for a second term.⁹¹ The release of Reagan’s essay the following month, and the book published the next year, greatly heartened his pro-life supporters.⁹²

While Reagan’s essay only once mentioned the word “holocaust,” when read together the three essays in *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation* articulate different aspects of the theory that abortion is a holocaust that will lead America to repeat Germany’s crimes. Reagan’s essay is primarily about abortion, claims a link between abortion and infanticide, and only once invokes the word “holocaust.” Koop concentrates

⁸⁹ Gorney, p. 375

⁹⁰ The Wanderer June 22, 1983, copy in NARAL files, citation missing

⁹¹ National Pro-Life Political Action Committee, March 4, 1983, NARAL document, citation missing.

⁹² See for example the review in Lifeletter #6, published by the Ad Hoc Committee in Defense of Life, Inc. NARAL files, citation missing

on infanticide – caused by abortion -- the next step on the slippery slope. Muggeridge explains how abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia relate to the Nazi holocaust, arguing that America is beginning to live it.

Reagan presented themes utterly familiar to those in the pro-life movement. Starting with the scope of death, he noted that the “more than 15 million unborn children [who] have had their lives snuffed out by legalized abortion” represented more than ten times the deaths of American soldiers in war.⁹³ Everyone should care about the deaths of unborn children, for when the value of one category of human life is diminished, all human life is diminished. This was proven, Reagan claimed, by the Indiana Courts’ decision to allow Baby Doe to starve to death “because the child had Down’s Syndrome,” which meant that “retardation was the equivalent of a crime deserving the death penalty.”⁹⁴ Unborn children were dying because some in American refuted a “sanctity of life” ethic in favor of a “quality of life” ethic. Quoting the 1970 essay that introduced this argument, Reagan continues, “the social acceptance of abortion is a ‘defiance of the long-held Western ethic of intrinsic and equal value for every human life regardless of its stage, condition, or status,’” an ethic shared by America’s founders.⁹⁵ Baby Doe died because “infanticide...flows inevitably from permissive abortion as another step in the denial of the inviolability of innocent human life.”⁹⁶ The link between infanticide and abortion is particularly well illustrated by “[l]ate term abortions, especially when the baby survives, but is then killed by starvation, neglect, or suffocation.”⁹⁷ And, Reagan

⁹³ Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation, p. 15

⁹⁴ Reagan, p. 18, p. 23 (death penalty)

⁹⁵ Reagan, p. 25, on founders p. 27

⁹⁶ Reagan, p. 31

⁹⁷ Reagan, p. 32

continues, William Brennan has shown that “there are “terrible consequences...when a nation rejects the sanctity of life ethic”:

The cultural environment for a human holocaust is present whenever any society can be misled into defining individuals as less than human and therefore devoid of value and respect.⁹⁸

In the midst of this moral calamity, “we must not lose heart. This is not the first time our country has been divided by a Supreme Court decision that denied the value of certain human lives.”⁹⁹ At first many did not recognize the “moral crisis” wrought by the Dred Scott decision, which “denied the full humanity of our black brothers and sisters.”¹⁰⁰ Reagan quotes Abraham Lincoln, whom he described as “the great champion of the sanctity of all human life in that day,” who warned that if the principle enshrined in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal “does not mean a Negro, why not...say it does not mean some other man.”¹⁰¹

Although America had to fight “a terrible war” to guarantee the inalienable rights of black people, Reagan claimed that Americans could preserve the right to life of infants and the unborn through other means. The Supreme Court, after all, reversed a mistaken decision when they decided *Brown v. Board of Education*. In the meantime, Reagan promised full support to Hyde and Jepsen’s Respect Human Life Act and to a constitutional amendment to protect life. Further, he pledged legislation that would make hospitals receiving federal funds post notices stating that failure to feed handicapped newborns violates federal law. And while promising no federal assistance to poor women, he noted that “pro-life people have already taken heroic steps...to provide for

⁹⁸ Reagan, p. 29

⁹⁹ Reagan, p. 19

¹⁰⁰ Reagan, p. 19

¹⁰¹ Reagan p. 27, 29

unwed mothers.”¹⁰² Finally, Reagan offered the adoption option. Citing Mother Theresa as saying “if you don’t want the little child, the unborn child, give him to me,” Reagan noted that many couples sought to adopt a child. A photograph of Mother Theresa cuddling a white baby accompanied this statement.¹⁰³

C. Everett Koop’s essay, “A Slide to Aushwitz,” repeats many arguments from *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*. Originally written in 1977, Koop revised the essay after Baby Doe’s death. Koop asserted that *Roe v. Wade* unleashed a destructive force that “might ultimately herald the decline and demise of our civilization,”¹⁰⁴ and that his fears that abortion would lead to infanticide have been realized. The denial of treatment to defective infants meant that physicians were making life and death decisions based on their estimation of an individuals’ inherent worth, thus placing society on the slide to Aushwitz.

We are rapidly moving from the state of mind where destruction of life is advocated for children who are considered to be socially useless or have non-meaningful lives to a place where we are willing to destroy a child because he is socially disturbing. . . . Destructiveness eventually is turned on the destroyer and self-destruction is the result. If you do not believe me, look at Nazi Germany.¹⁰⁵

Koop suggested that while infanticide is increasing, and must be addressed, it can only be understood in a larger and terrifying context.

I view what we are experiencing now as a dynamic situation which can accelerate month by month until the progress of our downhill momentum cannot be stopped. Therefore, I guess I favor the title: “The Subtle, Slippery Slope to Aushwitz.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Reagan, p. 35

¹⁰³ Reagan, p. 37, Not surprisingly, the other child pictured in the book, a March of Dimes poster child, was also white

¹⁰⁴ Koop, p. 43

¹⁰⁵ Koop 1984, p. 66

¹⁰⁶ Koop 1984, p. 67-68

Physicians, who once facilitated the slide to Aushwitz, now threaten America with their silence about infanticide. Koop placed the onus of the Holocaust on the medical community.

I can well understand that there are people who are led to starve children to death because they think they are doing something right for society or are following a principle of Hegel that is utilitarian for society. But I cannot understand why the other people, and I know there are other people, don't cry out...I am concerned about this because when the first 273,000 German aged, infirm, and retarded were killed in gas chambers there was no outcry from that medical profession either, and it was not far from there to Aushwitz."¹⁰⁷

Malcolm Muggeridge, author of the book's third essay, "A Humane Holocaust," also accused doctors of promoting death. Opening with a discussion of heart transplant surgery and its effect on the value of humanity, within five sentences Muggeridge linked heart transplants to the formation of a physically perfected master race. Because doctors see humans as merely bodies,

Babies not up to scratch would be destroyed, either before or after birth, as would the old beyond repair. With the developing skills of modern medicine, the human race could be pruned and carefully tended until only the perfect blooms – the beauty queens, the mensa I.Q.s, the athletes – remained."¹⁰⁸

While Koop suggested that a holocaust loomed in America, Muggeridge enhanced the parallel to Nazi Germany. Like earlier writers, Muggeridge asserted that the Holocaust began with euthanasia: "The origins of the holocaust lay, not in Nazi terrorism and anti-Semitism, but in pre-Nazi Weimar Germany's acceptance of the euthanasia and mercy-killing as humane and estimable."¹⁰⁹ Doctors bore responsibility, for they organized the euthanasia program in the Weimar Republic. "Initially, the holocaust was aimed, not against Jews or Slavs, but against handicapped Aryan Germans,

¹⁰⁷ Koop, p. 70

¹⁰⁸ Muggeridge, p. 81-82

¹⁰⁹ Muggeridge, 1984, p. 85

and was justified, not by racial theories, but by Hegelian utilitarianism.¹¹⁰ While the Nazis slaughtered “astronomical” numbers of people, the same thing is already under way in America, where abortion on demand is accepted and euthanasia of the old, while not legal, “is being practiced on an ever-increasing scale.”¹¹¹

Reagan’s publication of a book that detailed the abortion=holocaust argument lent unprecedented legitimacy to its claims. One might also assume that Reagan’s book, with its blatant holocaust themes, not to mention its denial of anti-Semitism as the cause of the Nazi Holocaust, would be received as inflammatory. But few outside the pro-life movement paid attention to its holocaust message. Coverage in the *New York Review of Books* and in *Booklist* does not even mention the essays by Koop and Muggeridge, nor did the *National Review*’s summary of the book’s themes.¹¹² For some, the inclusion of the Koop and Muggeridge articles made Reagan’s essay appear more moderate. “Koop and Muggeridge are combative, with fast and loose references to Aushwitz and Nazi Germany...But surprisingly, Reagan presents a clear and thought-provoking position without stooping to demagoguery.”¹¹³ The book was a smash hit in the pro-life press. The literary journal of *The Wanderer* heaped praise on *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*.¹¹⁴

Rescuing the Innocent from the Abortion Holocaust

¹¹⁰ Muggeridge, p. 88

¹¹¹ Muggeridge, p. 89, 90

¹¹² Kasser, Robert. “Your Host of Hosts.” *New York Review of Books* June 28, 1984 p. 38-40 and *Booklist* vol 80, March 15, 1984 p. 1011. Williamson, Chilton. “The Right Books.” *National Review* August 24, 1984. p. 58

¹¹³ Eichenwald, Kurt. “Review of Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation.” *Washington Monthly*, July/August 1984, p. 60

¹¹⁴ Monaghan, Patrick. “Professional Compassion.” *Reflections: The Wanderer Journal of Literature and Culture* v. 3, no. 2 (Winter 1984), p. 12 NEED MORE EVIDENCE

While Reagan's assurances of his pro-life sentiments pleased abortion opponents, some were deeply frustrated by the political process. A decade of agitating Congress for a Human Life amendment had yielded nothing. The number of abortions in America only kept increasing; in 1984 there were 1.4 million abortions.¹¹⁵ Picketing and praying in front of clinics in an attempt to dissuade pregnant women from entering did not keep most from doing so. In the mid-1980s, a new tactic took hold within the pro-life movement: the rescue mission. Modeled on the civil rights movement's tactic of the sit-in, rescuers would attempt to stop the operation of abortion clinics by blocking entry, or, better, filling the clinic with so many seated protestors that it could not function. Operation Rescue led the mass movement of direct action protest. Its founder, Randall Terry, claimed to have led the first rescue in 1986, but clearly he did not pioneer the technique. In 1979, the Catholics United for Life newsletter republished an article entitled, "A Case for the Sit-In." Chiding those in the pro-life movement who objected to clinic blockades, it noted that "the sit-in gives stronger witness and is more effective in its results."¹¹⁶

By 1988, when Randall Terry published his book *Operation Rescue*, the pro-life movement had a new religious face. Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network, and Jerry Falwell, the Baptist pastor who founded the Moral Majority, authored the book's forewords. Falwell declared "non-violent civil disobedience" to be "the wave of the future for the pro-life movement in this country." Further, Operation Rescue merited support because "man's laws permitting abortion are

¹¹⁵ Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Sept. 29, 1989, vol. 38 no. 38, Table 1

¹¹⁶ "A Case for the Sit-In," attributed to the National Catholic Register, March 18, 1979. The article appears in an undated newsletter from Catholics United for Life, pages 2 and 3. Private Collection, held by author. On the history of clinic rescues see also Gary Wills, "Evangel of Abortion," *New York Review of Books* June 15, 1989, pp. 13, 18-21

in clear violation of God's higher laws."¹¹⁷ Another foreword, by Dr. D. James Kennedy, urged readers to "not repeat the lessons of the German church in the 1930s and 40s that stood apathetically by and watched as the unwanted of their generation were marched off to unspeakable death."¹¹⁸

Brennan had argued that the abortion holocaust was the same as the Nazi Holocaust; that events in America mirrored those in Germany. Randall Terry cited biblical mandate more than German history, while routinely referring to the "abortion holocaust" as "a holocaust of such major proportions that it's now five times greater than the Nazi slaughter of the Jews."¹¹⁹ Terry joined Brennan, Powell, and Kelly in accusing abortion providers of evil, in the process conflating abortion with infanticide.

As a result of *Roe vs. Wade* and subsequent court decisions, a baby could now be legally aborted up until the day of birth. Infanticide is practiced in most hospitals with more than four thousand children murdered every day...Abortionists have now entered into the ghoulish practice of harvesting organs from aborted babies – babies who are often still alive!...An alarming number of elderly and disabled people are already being starved to death – a painful and agonizing way to die.¹²⁰

Terry did not reproduce Brennan's strategy of re-interpreting the German Holocaust to prove that abortion providers perpetrated evil – their wickedness is assumed. Instead, Terry saw the Holocaust as a template for Christian action. He asked, "how do we view the German Christians who stood by and did nothing to rescue Jews from mass slaughter?" Holocaust history provided two better models to emulate. First, Terry extolled the "courage and faithfulness" of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was a pastor executed for his part in a conspiracy to assassinate Hitler, a fact which became important when the American Council of Life Activists adopted the Holocaust metaphor.

¹¹⁷ Foreword by Jerry Falwell, in *Operation Rescue*, by Randall A. Terry. c. 1988, Randall A. Terry.

¹¹⁸ Foreword by Dr. D. James Kennedy, *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Terry p. 23 (abortion holocaust), p. 22 (Jews).

¹²⁰ Terry, p. 20

Terry ignored Bonhoeffer's attempted murder, instead explaining that Bonhoeffer "smuggled Jews to safety and freedom, and finally was martyred for his work against Hitler."¹²¹ For Terry, the more important model for action is the Ten Boom family. This family engaged in "illegal rescue work" by "hiding Jews and other hunted humans from their slayers."¹²² The brave actions of the Ten Boom family shows that "there may be times when Christians will have to defy civil authority in order to remain true to God."¹²³

Christians face the same dilemma in this era of abortion. "One and one-half million children a year are murdered on the altar of convenience, pleasure, and 'freedom of choice' while most Christians sit idly by and look the other way."¹²⁴ But God watches as "precious, innocent children are ripped apart by the abortionists' deftly maneuvered instruments...He watches as they slowly go into shock and die at the hands of hired killers."¹²⁵ What will God do? What should Christians do?

To answer these questions Terry invoked Biblical references to claim that God punished the Israelites who engaged in child sacrifice as well as those who failed to kill the children's killers. "A bloodguiltiness is imputed to entire nations where innocent blood is shed *and unavenged*."¹²⁶ The "whole Jewish nation came under the curse of bloodguiltiness," he claimed, because "under the Mosaic Law, in order for the nation to be free from bloodguiltiness, the murderers had to be killed."¹²⁷ God commanded "the people of the land to judge and stone the killer," when an Israelite sacrificed a child to an idol. God destroyed Judea when the Israelites failed to carry out His word.

¹²¹ Terry, p. 30

¹²² Terry, p. 106

¹²³ Terry, p. 111

¹²⁴ Terry, p. 122

¹²⁵ Terry, p. 123

¹²⁶ Terry, p. 142

¹²⁷ Terry, p. 143

What did this mean for “abortionists and their accomplices – those who willingly offer their children and those who know but do nothing to stop this holocaust”?¹²⁸ Terry claimed it meant that “because abortion goes on unstopped...all the citizens in the United States will experience the judgment of God.”¹²⁹ Indeed, they already were: “the recent outbreak of judicial and legislative persecution against the church...is God’s judgment.” God punished Israel by allowing their conquest by pagans; in America “churches and/or church schools could be required to hire their quota of homosexual employees or face discrimination charges.”¹³⁰

Given this Biblical precedent, one might imagine that Christians’ only possible action would be to kill doctors who provide abortion, women who have them, and those who defend the practice. Indeed, Terry returned to the Holocaust analogy and charged that American Christians “need to display the same spirit as [the] brave German Christians who actually fought against the Nazis for years,” and to do so they must “‘declare war’ on the child killing industry.”¹³¹ The war will be waged by “front-line soldiers who are willing to place their bodies where the battle rages...men and women of conscience who will join in rescue missions and surround the places of death to prevent the killers from reaching their intended victims.”¹³² Terry shuns those who would respond to seeing a “child you love” have “his arms and legs ripped off” by writing to their Congressman, instead of “physically intervening [to] save the life of that child.”¹³³ Yet amid this carnage, Terry offered the non-violent civil rights movement as the

¹²⁸ Terry, p. 153

¹²⁹ Terry, p. 156

¹³⁰ Terry, p. 161

¹³¹ Terry, p. 183

¹³² Terry, p. 184

¹³³ Terry, p. 194

appropriate model, claiming that the suffering of civil rights activists had “forced politicians to take action.”¹³⁴ Similarly, if massive numbers of Christians were jailed for blockading abortion clinics, politicians would pass a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion, because what they “fear most is social unrest and upheaval.”¹³⁵ Terry thus argued that Christians “must obey God rather than men,” defy the state and break the law, in order to influence politicians.¹³⁶

A Time to Kill

The contradiction between arguing that one must physically intervene to stop baby killing and claiming that one must do so in a peaceful manner finally erupted in violence directed against doctors who performed abortions and a split in the pro-life movement about the meaning of such violence. In March of 1993, Michael Griffin fatally shot Dr. David Gunn at a Florida abortion clinic. Later that year, Rachelle Shannon shot Dr. George Tiller. Most pro-life supporters recoiled in horror; Operation Rescue demanded that its members renounce violence. Some refused. A group of people signed the “Defensive Action” petition, which defended the use of lethal force to protect the unborn, and left Operation Rescue to form the American Coalition of Life Activists. Their ideology was elaborated by Reverend Michael Bray, a founder of ACLA, in his 1993 book *A Time to Kill*. Like *Rescue America*, Bray’s book is steeped in biblical mandate, and draws lessons from slavery, the holocaust, and the civil rights movement.

Michael Bray served prison time for bombing abortion clinics in 1985. In explaining his action he says:

¹³⁴ Terry, p. 197

¹³⁵ Terry p. 198

¹³⁶ Terry, p. 99

Curt Beseda (an abortuary demolitionist, put behind bars since the fall of 1984) and I were discussing tactics of rescuing the preborn one day. He said of sit-ins: “That is a fine thing to do for puppies.” Yes, and it is also a fine thing to do to gain the right to eat at lunch counters, as in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. But is it a sufficient response to childslaughter?¹³⁷

In Bray’s opinion, no. But unfortunately, “a vast number of Christians have jumped to the other side of a line that should separate Christians from pagans...on the question of forceful intervention, they have withdrawn into an abject schizophrenia.”¹³⁸ The law that allows a person to intervene to save the life of a child should also apply to force used to defend the preborn. If a man is charged with “terminating a serial killer,” meaning a physicians who performed abortions, a minister’s duty is to “proclaim the legal personhood of the preborn.” To do so affirms that “the doctrine of justifiable homicide applies to the case of the preborn because he is a person.”¹³⁹

Bray cited slavery and the Holocaust as precedent for the actions necessary to stop abortion. But his chosen martyrs attempted or accomplished murder. Nat Turner, for example, led several slaves in a rebellion that killed 31 adults and 24 children and horrified the public. Now, Bray noted, Turner is praised for “his heroic efforts to stop slavery. And his execution is lamented more than the deaths of the innocent children.”¹⁴⁰ In Bray’s judgment, the slaves had “less justification in seeking their own freedom than had Griffin and Shannon in attempting to spare the lives of others.”¹⁴¹ In a more recent era, Bray recalled, Dietrich Bonhoeffer attempted to assassinate Hitler because “the fanatical devilish forces within National Socialism left no alternative’.”¹⁴² Similarly,

¹³⁷ Michael Bray, *A Time to Kill*, p. 16

¹³⁸ Bray, p. 108

¹³⁹ Bray, p. 120

¹⁴⁰ Bray, p. 87

¹⁴¹ Bray, p. 88

¹⁴² Bray, p. 96

when a “Ukrainian doorkeeper” who was sheltering a group of Jews killed his brother-in-law before he could turn in the refugees, he demonstrated that defending the innocent justified use of lethal force.

Those who oppose killing abortion providers, as well as those who try to defend the preborn through public persuasion, are deluded. Indeed, “it is only the distorted moral vision of those blinded by their own tolerance of evil which leads them to loathe the godly use of force.”¹⁴³ While abolitionists sought to change minds by arguing against slavery, and students in Munich were executed for distributing anti-Nazi literature, the actions of Turner and Bonhoeffer were better. “[W]hich kind of liberator did the slaves and Jews prefer? What kind of protector would people in wombs like to have outside the chamber?”¹⁴⁴

Bray praised the heroes of the movement to protect the unborn. Some were motivated by the Holocaust. For example, when Jim Demers spent a year on a kibbutz “he began to see a parallel between the plight of the unborn and the victims of the Nazi Holocaust.”¹⁴⁵ In response, Demers entered a hospital and destroyed a uterine aspirator. Declining to pay for “the killing machine,” he told the sentencing judge that a prison sentence would tell others, “when you see a black man being lynched, walk away; when you see a Jew being gassed, don’t make a ruckus; and in this case, when you know that a helpless child is in danger of being suctioned apart in your neighborhood, turn your back.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Bray, p.98

¹⁴⁴ Bray, p. 98

¹⁴⁵ Bray, p. 130

¹⁴⁶ Bray, p. 130, 131

In 1995 (YEAR?) the ACLA published the “Deadly Dozen” list and “The Nuremberg Files.” The Deadly Dozen list appeared on posters listing physicians who were “wanted” for “crimes against humanity.” Two abortion providers had been murdered following publication of their names on “Wanted” posters – Dr. David Gunn in 1993 and Dr. John Britton in 1994. When the ACLA issued the Deadly Dozen poster, the FBI offered federal protection to doctors whose names appeared there. The Nuremberg Files website collected information on physicians, clinic workers, lawyers, judges, and politicians who supported abortion rights, purportedly to be used as evidence in their impending trials for crimes against humanity. The site served as an apparent hit list of abortion providers, providing their addresses, spouses and children’s names, and other information facilitating the stalking of abortion providers and their families. The link between the Nuremberg Files site and terror was clear: the site color-coded the names of physicians who performed abortions. Wounded physicians’ names were colored in gray; murdered physicians were crossed out with a black line. Minutes after Dr. Barnett Slepian was murdered his name was crossed off the Nuremberg Files website.¹⁴⁷

As suggested by the name “Nuremberg Files,” claims about the Holocaust were integral to the rhetoric of the American Coalition of Life Activists. The Nuremberg Files website explained that they were collecting files about the activities of abortion providers to circumvent the problem of lack of evidence that, they claim, had allowed Nazi war criminals to go free:

One of the great tragedies of the Nuremberg trials of Nazis after WWII was that complete information and documented evidence had not been collected so many war criminals went free or were only found guilty of minor crimes.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ CHECK CITATION Gegax Trent and Lynette Clemtson, “The Abortion Wars Come Home,” Newsweek November 9, 1998, p. 34.

¹⁴⁸ The Nuremberg Files, assessed 10/17/01 at <http://209.41.174.82/atrocidity>

In addition to the list of abortion providers, the Nuremberg Files pictured aborted late term fetuses. The viewer was urged to look at these photographs “of human beings who have been slaughtered in ways that would have caused Nazis to blanch,” and to resist complicity in “such atrocities.”

The Nazis reappeared in the Deadly Dozen posters, which accused the listed physicians of being “Guilty of Crimes Against Humanity.” In a fantastical reinterpretation of the word “choice,” the posters claimed that “abortion was provided as a choice for East European and Jewish women by the (Nazi) National Socialist Regime, and was prosecuted during the Nuremberg Trials...as a ‘war crime.’”¹⁴⁹

Did these posters and website endanger physicians’ lives? The courts thought so. Planned Parenthood and some of the listed doctors sued the ACLA; the US District Court for the District of Oregon found that the language of the posters violated the Freedom of Entrance to Clinic Act (FACE), and awarded the plaintiffs damages of \$108 million. The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit upheld the original finding that the posters and web site constituted a true threat of force against the listed physicians, and thus that the speech therein was not protected by the First Amendment.¹⁵⁰

In 1994, *New York Times* chronicled the harassment of Dr. Joseph Booker, Jr., then the only physician providing legal abortions in the state of Mississippi. In January of 1995, Bookers name appeared on the Deadly Dozen list; clearly he was an ACLA target.¹⁵¹ Four federal marshals protected Booker, because they feared violence from C. Roy McMillan, a man who signed the “Defensive Action” petition defending the murder

¹⁴⁹ assessed at lektrik.com/PPvsACLA/ex0001.htm

¹⁵⁰ 290 F.3d 1058

¹⁵¹ 290 F.3d 1058 p. 6 on date of publication, poster accessed at www.lektrik.com/PPvsACLA/ex0001.htm

of Dr. David Gunn and who, according to the Times, claimed “that it is ‘not a sin to go out and shoot an abortionist.’”¹⁵² One reason why is the Holocaust.

Would it have been wrong to go into Auschwitz in the middle of the night and burn the building down knowing they were ready to bring in the next group of Jews in the morning?...No, it wouldn't be wrong. It wouldn't have been wrong to have blowed it up if you knew there were security guards in there. Or to shoot the guards when they came to work to do the killing. If I were to be beheaded or decapitated, and I was innocent of a crime, I would want somebody to take some measures to protect me. Just like if I'd been a Jew in Nazi Germany.¹⁵³

Dr. Booker, the threatened physician, referred to McMillan as “that lunatic.”¹⁵⁴ It is perhaps reassuring to offer mental illness as explanation for murder for extreme political beliefs. Yet more disturbing than the issue of McMillan's mental stability is that of the extremity of his beliefs. The tactic and advocacy of shooting doctors placed McMillan and his compatriots at the far extreme of the pro-life movement, but the rhetorical tactic of likening abortion to the Holocaust was, within the pro-life movement, utterly mainstream. Between 1992 and 1994, the National Right to Life News published four articles and political cartoons equating abortion with the Holocaust, comparing abortion clinics with Nazi gas chambers, depicting President Clinton as the puppet of the Nazis, and arguing the slippery slope from abortion to holocaust.¹⁵⁵ Pro-life murderers did not invent the Holocaust analogy to justify their attacks on abortion providers. They simply capitalized on a metaphor that had been refined and elaborated by abortion opponents for decades.

Clinic bombers and doctor killers used the Holocaust analogy to justify violence, but did the analogy encourage violence? That we cannot say. Yet if pro-life adherents

¹⁵² NYT Sunday, October 30, 1994. Section 6, page 47.

¹⁵³ NYT, 10/30/94

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵⁵ National Right to Life News, vol 20, no. 8 p. 20; NRTL News vol. 21, no. 1-2, p. 9; NRTL News vol. 21. no. 1-2, p. 11; NRTL News vol. 21 no. 7, p.22

are truly convinced that American abortion matches the horrors of the Holocaust, and that fetuses are the same as murdered Jews, then the only moral response would be to stop it by any means necessary. Anyone who believes in the personhood of the unborn has reason to be horrified by abortion. The pro-life movement used the Holocaust to communicate this horror. Their version of the Holocaust gives form to these concerns, amplifying their moral legibility. However, the pro-life revision of the Holocaust omits the Gestapo and Wehrmacht, and ignores anti-Semitism. In fact, the pro-life movement erased much of the history of the Holocaust, leaving only rampant evil – an evil incarnated in the form of doctors who provide abortions.