

Critiquing Pro-Lifers

by Jeremy Sloan
Collegian Staff

The word "abortion" brings to mind rallies, heated arguments - even violence. Truly, the proponents and opponents of legal abortion have found little common ground.

But one goal should seem desirable to both camps, as well as to the persons who hold a position somewhere in between. Nobody should wish to place a young woman in a position in which she feels forced to have an abortion.

One side effect frequently cited by critics of abortion is this: that a woman who undergoes an abortion suffers a certain amount of psychic trauma, in some cases, a great deal.

We fight and even kill over the question of a fetus' moral status, but we should recognize that a medically safe abortion can do a psychological harm all its own. Likewise, I suggest that the consequences of not having an abortion may be emotionally damaging to a woman.

Should not any moral position on abortion try to do the least

possible harm to all parties involved?

Aside from the question of whether or not a fetus is a legitimate subject for moral consideration, i.e. a right to life, we should also concern ourselves with possible harm to the pregnant woman, who is certainly worthy of moral consideration.

When we take the potential emotional harm to a pregnant woman as a cause for concern, then it appears that the religious right has largely failed to support those girls and women among its membership who do in fact become pregnant.

While officially advocating alternatives to abortion, the "pro-life" movement has done very little to see that those young women who do in fact become pregnant are treated with compassion.

I have seen the opposite, rather. I have seen unwed mothers become the victims of derision and even ostracization by the very groups which take a stand against abortion.

I speak not as an outsider, but as one who was raised in a strict Catholic family. In many,

compassion becomes the basis for all dealings with others in the Christian faith.

Actually, anyone with a concern for the psychological and emotional well-being of a pregnant woman ought to be highly critical of the treatment of unwed mothers within much of the religious orthodoxy.

The Christian ideal of forgiveness is admirable. Unfortunately, I have seen more malice toward pregnant teenagers and other "unwed mothers" than I have seen support and compassion. And I am sorry to say that much of this malice came from those who claimed to oppose abortion for any reason.

Abortion is, as I have stated, an emotionally traumatic event, one which is often compounded by a deep feeling of guilt.

However, I would go so far as to say that a pregnant teenager in a Christian community, who chooses to continue her pregnancy, faces more emotional violence than does another teen who decides to abort.

A pregnant teenager within America undoubtedly faces some abuse and ridicule from peers,

quite possibly from her parents, and maybe even from the official mechanisms of the community.

I should and will give you an example, from my own experience within the religious orthodoxy.

I graduated from a small, parochial high school in southwest Pennsylvania. During my senior year, a member of my class became pregnant. In my small school, this quickly became public knowledge.

She suffered. In a school where pro-life rhetoric was a fully ingrained part of the curriculum, she was made to regret that she had continued her pregnancy. She faced insults, rumors, and the subtle cruelty which only high school students can inflict.

Another pregnant girl, the year after I graduated, was asked by the school's administration to leave. She was dismissed after she became visibly pregnant, on the grounds that she might give the school a bad image.

Would it not have been better for this high school, which so strongly condemned abortion, to become a positive example by encouraging its students to support their choice?

What message do such actions convey to a pregnant teenage girl? They seem to me to recommend this solution: have an abortion and do so quickly before anyone finds out about the pregnancy.

For as long as there have been civilizations, there have been people consenting to sex when they weren't "supposed to" be doing so. Each culture has dealt with this in a different way. Some take a lax approach; others kill the offending parties.

What ought the Christian religious right advocate do, which inflicts the least harm to its members and still retains the integrity of its underlying moral principles? Treat the "sinner" with compassion - by edict of Christian scripture.

I intend no argument on the moral status of a human fetus. But I assert strongly that as long as the "pro-lifers" tolerate an atmosphere in which unwed mothers are openly subject to abuse, the movement will be ultimately self-defeating.

Fighting Crime

by Dave Barry
Syndicated Columnist

Americans are very upset about crime. It has become such a serious problem that even the U.S. Congress has taken precious time away from campaign fund raising to pass a tough Anti-Crime Bill, which will make the streets safer for decent, law-abiding citizens by imposing harsh mandatory minimum penalties on Sen. Bob Packwood.

But government action alone is not the answer. I believe that, to fight this crime wave, we need to remember what our pioneer forefathers did when they were settling the Wild West, and there were few lawpersons around to defend civilians from the cattle rustlers and the gunslingers and the highway persons and the roving outlaw gangs of Amway distributors.

In those days, ordinary civilians sometimes had no choice but to form posses, saddle up their horses and bring lawbreakers to justice at the end of the barrel of a gun. I realize that what I'm about to say is highly controversial, but maybe it's time we did the same thing. That's right: If the police can't protect us, then maybe it's time we exercised our constitutional

right to keep -- and bear -- horses. A criminal is going to think twice about entering your bedroom if he knows there's a horse in there. Especially if he (the criminal, also the horse) has new shoes.

Another option, of course, is to buy a handgun. This is a controversial issue, so let me state out front that whatever YOU think about the handgun issue, it is my firm belief that -- and you may call me a courageous individual if you wish -- you are 100 percent correct. But whatever opinion we jointly hold, we need to consider the implications of a handgun-related news item that was reported recently by Tom McNiff of The Ocala (Fla.) Star-Banner.

This item, which I am not making up, describes a tragic incident involving a Marion County, Fla. commissioner named Norm Perry, whose wife, Betty, was getting ready for a weekend visit to Miami. Needless to say, Norm was nervous about this, because Miami has a reputation for having a bad crime problem.

AUDIENCE: How bad is it?
It's so bad that this punch line has been stolen. (Rim shot, answered by gunshots.)

Seriously, I happen to live in South Florida, and the crime

situation down here is really not that bad, as long as you take certain basic precautions -- locking your doors, avoiding poorly lit areas, moving to Idaho, etc. But life down here can be unnerving. For example, a while back we rented one of those warehouse storage lockers, so we could store some of our stuff in there for a couple of



years before throwing it all away. The rental guy asked me to sign a piece of paper, and he said (this is a real quote):

"This just says you're not going to use it to store any, like, drugs or human bodies."

I looked at him.

"You'd be surprised," he said.

You would be surprised. Here's another true Miami story:

On Thanksgiving Day, some workers were trying to fix a clogged toilet at a rental duplex, and they found A PERSON IN THE SEPTIC TANK. (This person was deceased. Fortunately for him.) Police don't know how the body got there, but it's a safe bet that it wasn't an accident, unless we're talking about one of those EXTREMELY high-suction toilets.

But getting back to Commissioner Perry and his wife: The Star-Banner reports that, at Commissioner Perry's suggestion, Mrs. Perry was planning to take a handgun with her to Miami. As she was packing, however, she discovered that the gun was jammed; so she brought it to Commissioner Perry, who was standing in front of his closet, deciding on what to wear. He was working on the gun when suddenly, unexpectedly, it went off.

You have probably already guessed what happened: The bullet -- in yet another of the senseless tragedies that we read about all too often these days -- went through nine of Commissioner Perry's dress shirts.

"Those shirts are \$25 to \$30 a piece," he told The Star-Banner.

A terrible waste, you say?

Yes. But sometimes you must pay a price for vigilance. In today's crime-ridden society, there could very easily have been a criminal hiding in the back of Commissioner Perry's closet, planning to steal enough money to afford air fare to Miami. And this criminal could easily have been penetrated by Norm's bullet, which would have meant that he (the criminal, also the horse, if Commissioner Norm kept one in there) would no longer be roaming the streets and victimizing innocent people. Instead, he would be successfully suing Commissioner Perry for millions of dollars.

So let me just state, as a South Florida resident, how grateful I am to Commissioner Perry for caring enough about his wife's safety to want to send her down here with a handgun. The one thing we need more of down here is armed people, which is why, on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, I am urging EVERYBODY who is thinking of visiting South Florida to feel free to bring the weapon of his or her choice, although we do remind you that, before you travel with a gun, you should take the standard precaution of test-firing it in Commissioner Perry's closet.

Also, flush with care.