

Is Human Life Sanctified by the life-giving Spirit or the life-giving Womb?

—by In Kyu Park

When I heard about the Sanctity of Human Life Sunday (January 21, 2007), I was reminded of the Report received by the 217th General Assembly of the PC(USA). There was one sentence in particular from the trinitarian paper that I distinctly recalled. It reads: “The overflowing love of God finds expression in the biblical depiction of God as compassionate mother (Isa. 49:15; 66:13), beloved child (Mt. 3:17), and life-giving womb (Isa. 46:3)” (The Trinity: God’s Love Overflowing, 385-87). This is the Trinity, portrayed in a new and novel way, seemingly well-suited to the American culture of the 21st century.

It is no secret that we are living in an age of feminism and religious pluralism. And it is understandable that the General Assembly would instruct the Department of Theology and Worship to produce materials to introduce female imagery of the Holy Trinity into the worship of the triune God. In fact, it was reported that the attending commissioners and others offered their prayers in the name of the triad “Mother, Child, and womb.”

However, to symbolize the third Person of the Trinity as a womb is Binitarism, not the Trinity. The three hypostaseis, or “Persons,” of the Trinity ought to be represented equally and distinctively. The key here is three “ways of being.” In other words, the trinitarian formula requires the triad to be equal in every aspect of existence and yet distinct, not only in

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In the Beginning

Watercolor by Colleen A Nagle an artist who has joined the fight for the unborn around the world. Lithograph available for purchase at irishgal522004@yahoo.com

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Theology & Worship hosts end-of-life conference

“In Life and in Death We Belong to God: The Congregational Continuum of Care in the Presbyterian Church”
March 12-14, 2007 • The Washington Duke Inn • Durham, NC

“A blockbuster event” is how Dr. Richard Payne, Medical Doctor at the Institute on Care at the End of Life, Duke Divinity School and Duke University Medical Center, describes this cooperative effort between the Office of Theology of the PC(USA) and Duke University. According to Charles Wiley, Associate for Theology, Office of Theology & Worship, there are two reasons for the conference:

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Statement of Purpose

Presbyterians Pro-Life seeks to be a prophetic witness to the Presbyterian Church (USA), upholding the sacred value of human life and the family. We believe the Scriptures teach that God, who made us in His own image, has forbidden us to shed innocent blood.

Therefore, Presbyterians Pro-Life is committed to protecting the right to life of every human being from the moment of fertilization to the moment of natural death. In decisions about life and death, the sanctity of life of both mother and child must be respected, and every effort to preserve their lives should be made. This leads us to stand against abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, and any other practice which would devalue human life.

Presbyterians Pro-Life is convinced that a return to the Biblical teaching concerning the sacred value of the family is essential to recovering respect for the sacred value of individual human lives. God has ordained the family, the basic social unit of all human institutions, to propagate, protect and nurture human life.

Presbyterians Pro-Life is committed to strengthening the bonds of family love and nurture, and to protecting innocent life.

Presbyterians Pro-Life (PPL) is composed of lay and clergy members of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

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Human life sanctified...

the divine inner life but also in our experience of God. Any symbols of the Trinity must contain this concept, otherwise symbolism loses any real meaning.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not a convoluted mess of changing rules, as some would have you believe. Rather, it is based on simple, coherent logic that was settled during the early trinitarian controversies. In fact, it is precisely because of these logical rules that the doctrine of the Trinity remains the most conservative of all Christian dogmas. The basic elements of the doctrine have existed mostly unchanged since its inception.

Accordingly, I do not see any possible way to parallel the triad "Mother, Child, and womb" with one another. While "Mother and Child" are personal, interpersonal, and personalizing, the term "womb" not only lacks a sense of divine personality, it lacks any personality. Therefore, "womb" can only be considered an ill-fitting metaphor in the doctrine of the Trinity. And without the third, the Report's Mother and Child is only a binary couple. (Cf. the logic of J. Moltmann, *Trinitat und Reich Gottes*, p. 185.)

Other arguments strive to support the theistic concept of the womb as the third Person of the Trinity using ancient Asian teachings and Greek ideas of reproduction. However, here the theories are not centered on monotheism, but rather the sense that the nurturing womb-deity is one of many gods. Again, the term is not quite accurate for our talks of the triune God.

Subjectively, I understand the awe and respect that we, as living creatures, feel for the womb. It is, after all, the cradle where life is formed and where one touches his or her mother before ever touch-

ing anyone else, including the father. It is our home in every sense of the term; it is where we for the first time experience love, before all the precious things we ever encounter in our home, hometown, and home-country. However, who among us thanks the womb rather than our mothers? Again, the "womb" carries far less symbolic power than the "mother" does. There is no way to balance our experience of the two. Certainly I, for one, would refuse to parallel the love of my mother with that of her womb. The vital distinction here is that to the Christian the womb is merely an instrument of life; it is not the creator of life.

The important question then is: Who is the originator and source of life? I confess, as a follower of the Nicene Creed, that the Holy Spirit is "the Lord, the giver of life," both physically and spiritually. Christians have worshiped the life-giving Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed itself was practiced but not formulated until the 4th century. Church historians do not know the exact date when the Creed was officially accepted by Christians. For ages, the Nicene Creed has been affirmed almost universally by the Christian Church, including the Presbyterian Church (USA). It is unclear how contemporary Christians all over the world will react to the revamped, binitarian idea of the womb symbolizing the life giver, as presented by the Presbyterian Church (USA). And I am not quite sure if the elevation of an organ to a role currently occupied by the life-giving Spirit will help Presbyterians enhance the sanctity of life in the womb.

Here I recall an interesting discussion among New Testament scholars long ago. The apostle Paul, unlike the Twelve, had found himself in a dilemma, required to present his apostolic credentials. He

was called, converted, and commissioned by the glorified Lord. The story of Paul's experience on the road to Damascus is proof enough for average Christians to uphold his apostleship but usually scholars dig into a deeper level.

Paul is thought to be defending his apostleship by making reference to his life implanted in the womb of his mother. In support of this idea, New Testament scholars quote Galatians 1:15-16 where Paul writes, "But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man"

How have scholars related the passage above to Paul's divinely commissioned appointment to be a missionary? (New English Bible, a British scholarly work, correctly translates the term *apostolos* of Romans 11:13 as "missionary.") Scholars have determined that Paul equates his apostleship with the divine call of two great prophets of the old covenant. Isaiah (49:1) declared to the nations: "Before I was born the Lord called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name." Jeremiah also recorded (1:5) what he had heard from the Lord: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart."

Some scholars are ready to suggest that Paul was commissioned more highly than Jeremiah and Isaiah. Others, of course, question Paul's higher standing. And scholarly discussion goes on. However, what is unchallenged is the place of the divine calls. The calling took place within the wombs of their

mothers, where God had formed his servants. The English use of and NIV translation of "from birth" sets the stage for misunderstanding. Paul does not mean that God sets him apart from the point of his birth. What Paul and the others are saying culturally is "when I was in the womb of my mother" and thus a better translation in this context is "even before birth."

The calling took place within the wombs of their mothers, where God had formed his servants.

So, what is so important about these debates among New Testament scholars? What does this mean for a Christian living

in America, especially during a time when life within the womb is cherished so much less than life outside of it? The lesson is this; the triune God acts upon life in the womb. If the scholars are right, and we are "set apart" for this time and this place, then any life within a woman's womb is very dear to

God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Giver of life has plans for life in the womb even before its birth (Cf. Genesis 25:23 where the twins in Rebekah's womb were referred to as two nations; Luke 1:41-44 where the baby in Elizabeth's womb reacts joyfully to the visit of the baby in Mary's womb). The triune God loves with an overflowing love those lives inside of the womb and cares for them providentially.

Further, God's overflowing love is not limited to the life in the womb. Life does not have to be formed in the womb to receive God's love. He sanctifies the life formed even in a plastic tube. God loves equally all human lives outside of the womb on earth. This is supremely demonstrated in the life

of the Son, the second Person of the Trinity. He died on the cross and was raised from the dead to save those inside and outside of the womb. Praise God for Americans, who perhaps more than anyone else in the world, have practiced their love for those outside of the womb. But I have to say that their love for those inside of the womb is limited. The actions of some Americans are inconsistent. It is contradictory to say "I honor life outside of the womb but have less regard for life inside of the womb." The Giver of life loves equally all human lives.

God's overflowing love is directed to life rather than to the womb. God loves man and woman not because they are born of the womb but because He Himself placed and formed them in their mother's womb. The womb is a divine instrument for us to be nourished and loved for a while before we move on to the earth. Sensing certain similarities, some ancient

The Giver of life has plans for life in the womb even before its birth.

writers poetically thought of the earth (land and sea) as a womb. This does not mean in any sense, however, that the womb is the giver of life.

The womb is only an instrument of the life-giving Holy Spirit, and never a giver of life.

If the source of life is the triune God, and the womb is nothing but a necessary cradle where God shapes and forms life to receive His love, then it is not the womb that sanctifies the life, but God who sanctifies life in the womb. In turn, it is the God-given life that sanctifies the womb and not vice versa. The sanctity of life flows from God to human life and from human life to the womb. Or at least the womb receives its sanctity

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Family by Choice



Dean & Beth Weaver are the parents of six children--- a diverse blend of races, birth circumstances, personalities and interests--yet unequivocally **family!**

Dean Weaver, one of the leaders of the New Wineskins Association of Churches and the father of six, clearly knows a thing or two about families. He will often use a family metaphor in referring to the relationships within the church. The recently installed pastor of Memorial Park Church, a large suburban congregation in Allison Park, PA, has a large extended family. He often refers to the relationship between NWAC (New Wineskins Association of Churches) and EPC (Evangelical Presbyterian Church) as being like “meeting a distant cousin for the first time and discovering you have much in common — you are family.”

Beth Weaver teaches the three younger children in home school and juggles the usual chauffeuring and scheduling challenges typical of the parents of teen-age and younger children. A cheerful, warm, nurturing mom, Beth anchors the family, capably managing the home when Dean is called away by his duties in NWAC.

Hannah (17), Jacob (15), and Rachel (13), were born into the Weaver family. They are bright and gifted children in spite of the recent challenge of moving from a smaller community, where they knew all of their classmates, to a much larger school where they are still seeking their special niche.



Beth & Dean listen attentively to one of the children

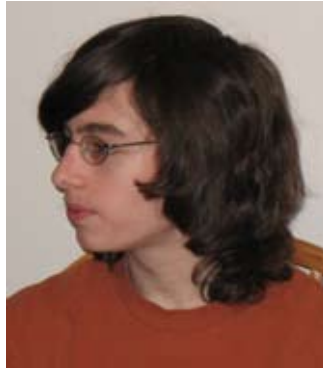
A few years ago, Dean traveled to St. Vincent on a mission trip and learned of the multitude of children living there without parents. A large percentage of mothers are unmarried. Many give birth to children from multiple fathers. Sometimes mothers abandon the children to go off and live with another man. Children often wander the streets or are raised by an Auntie or neighbor who takes them in out of compassion, but may not have

the means to provide adequately for them. When he returned to his home and church in Buffalo, New York, Dean began proceedings to adopt a child from St. Vincent and Sarah (now 9) became a part of the Weaver family. Dean began to lead his church in providing homes through adoption.

On a subsequent trip to Sierra Leone, West Africa, Dean was visiting an orphanage for some of the unfortunate children who had been left without parents in the wake of a civil war that had ravaged the country for years. There he met a little girl named Isatu. He was charmed by her and during his stay she was always with him. They formed a strong bond although proceedings had already begun for her to be adopted by another family. When Dean left the orphanage he told the administrators to contact him if anything should fall through in Isatu’s adoption. When Dean returned home and shared with Beth his attachment to Isatu and his knowledge that he would pray for her every day for the rest of his life, Beth fell in love with



Rachel (left) loves music; Hannah (right) prefers basketball



Jacob's wry sense of humor keeps the family laughing



Sarah has a quiet gentle nature



Isaac's name means "laughter." It suits him!



Isatu's smile lights up a room

her too and began fasting and praying with a friend for Isatu. Not long after that the orphanage contacted Dean. Isatu's Auntie, who was legally responsible for her, had refused to sign the adoption papers---something which occasionally happens in foreign adoptions. Due to timing and paperwork, the other family planning to adopt her had to withdraw, allowing Dean & Beth to begin the process to adopt Isatu. In the meantime, Dean worked with members of his church to place a total of 6 children from the Sierra Leone orphanage in homes within his congregation, and 10 or more children found homes in the local community.

Though the circumstances and places of their births are diverse God has clearly called them together to be one family

Early in the morning on the day that Isatu's Auntie was to sign final relinquishment papers, the orphanage administrator called Dean and said, "There is a complication with the adoption. Are you sitting down?" Dean's heart fell anticipating that Isatu's Auntie had refused to sign the papers again. Instead he was told, "There's a brother." The aunt was

insisting that the brother and Isatu be kept together as family. Dean turned to Beth "I have a surprise," he said. "You have a son!" Beth responded with laughter. "His name is AbuBakkar," Dean said. Beth laughed even harder. "We'll call him Isaac," Dean said. Isaac means "laughter." So Isatu Hope (8) & Isaac AbuBakkar (12) were added to the Weaver family. That this family was intended by God and that they love each other is clear to all who know them. Though the circumstances and places of their births are diverse, God has clearly called them together to be one family---strategically placed by God to model "family" to the Church.

The Weaver's enjoy a good video game!



End-of-life conference

1) an expressed need for assistance from congregations and pastors in dealing with end-of-life care, and 2) a specific directive for such a conference from the 213th General Assembly in 2001. (see sidebar)

On a recent conference call with PPL's Executive Director, conference planners from the Office of Theology and Worship, and Duke University Institute on Care at the End of Life, stated clearly that attendees will explore the theological, medical and practical dimensions of end-of-life care and walk away with knowledge they can use to improve care for members in their congregation and community. Dr. Wiley clearly stated that the conference is about care and not about end of life issues (i.e. euthanasia and assisted suicide).

Dr. Payne, a physician in pain and palliative care echoed Wiley's explanation of the focus of the conference and described the speakers as "theological superstars" and "medical superstars." Payne hopes the conference will promote dialogue across the medical and pastoral communities.

Theologians, church leaders, and health care professionals will lead workshops on:

- Creating/equipping congregational care teams for end-of-life care
- Building community through advance care planning
- Fundamentals of palliative care
- Ministry in times of crisis
- Understanding grief & being with people who are grieving

Plenary Sessions will feature the following topics and speakers:

Aging from Fate to Calling - William F. May, Ph.D., Senior Fellow, Institute for Practical Ethics and Public Life, University of Virginia.

The Church as a Caring Community: Formation in Practices of Caring- Keith G. Meador, M.D., Th.M., M.P.H., Professor of the Practice of Pastoral Theology and Medicine, and Director, Theology and Medicine Program, Duke Divinity School.

Grief and Lament in Faithful Care - Emilie M. Townes, M.A., D.Min., Ph.D., Andrew W. Mellon Prof. of African American Religion & Theology, Yale Univ. Divinity School; President-elect, American Academy of Religion.

For information or to register online visit: www.iceol.duke.edu/pcusa.

Presented by: Duke Institute on Care at the End of Life and Presbyterian Church's (USA) Office of Theology and Worship and Office of National Health Ministries.

History of the End-of-Life Conference

The 213th General Assembly called for "a national dialogue on theological issues related to end-of-life care." The GA specifically instructed that the conference was to include "the articulation of a biblical ethic within the bounds of historic Christian faith that encompasses both pastoral care and palliative care."

The conference was to be held in 2002-2003 and followed with presbytery-wide dialogues in 2004-2005. Resources generated from those dialogues were to be included in a report to the 218th GA in 2006.

At the 2006 GA, Theology and Worship requested and was granted a two year extension for planning a conference on end-of-life care.

Instructions from the 2001 GA about the sequence of events and the input into policy development on end-of-life were very specific.

- Resources were to be made available as an aid to pastoral teaching and care.
- Churches and presbyteries were to express findings resulting from their studies to the GA offices.
- These two sources would "serve as a basis for any policy development at the GA level."
- Efforts at policy development were to be delayed until 2006 so that the 218th GA could review resources generated and communications sent from lower governing bodies. GA was then to determine whether there was a need for a policy on end-of-life and whether a consensus existed that would guide policy development.

Human Life Sanctified...

from God. Human life is sacred not because it is implanted in the womb but because it is given by God who alone is holy. If there cannot be two "Holinesses," then the real source of sanctity is the triune God alone. Otherwise, the sacredness of the womb loses any real ground.

If the triune God alone is the

source of the life that is being loved in the womb, and if the third Person of the Trinity is the life-giving Spirit in appropriation as taught in the Nicene Creed and affirmed universally by the Christian Church, including those churches in the tradition of ecclesia reformata, the life at any stage of his or her existence in those two "wombs," is equally precious to the triune God. As children of God we have to follow His

footsteps by consistently loving all lives both inside and outside of the mother's womb without discrimination.

Rev. In Kyu Park is the pastor of University Presbyterian Church in Akron, Ohio. (A Korean Congregation)

ACSWP re-write of human life paper secret

A Paper adopted by the General Assembly of the PCUS in 1981 is being re-written by ACSWP. The original paper wrestled with abortion, euthanasia, human experimentation, capital punishment and war.

In its concluding postscript a 1981 paper titled, "The Nature and Value of Human Life," states that it is crucial that the church wrestle with life issues. The paper's authors caution, "It is especially important that the Church should furnish an open climate [emphasis mine] for the moral discussion of these issues." (GA Minutes, 1981, pp. 285-304)

How ironic it is in the light of that statement that a request by PPL's Executive Director to observe a meeting of the team drafting a re-write of that 1981 paper was denied.

The denial was not based on any of the four reasons deemed appropriate for closing a meeting according to the Open Meeting Policy approved by the 213th General Assembly in 2001:

In certain circumstances, ... meetings may be closed. These requirements apply:

a. Subjects dealt with must be limited to property negotiation, personnel, civil and criminal litigation, or security.

(See Open Meeting Policy www.pcusa.org/ga213/mediaguide/meeting.htm#policy)

Nor could ACSWP's denial of the request be justified by the language related to closure of non-business meetings which seeks to limit reporting but maintain openness in regard to observers. In fact ACSWP's own policies regarding pre-General Assembly documents allow observing while trying to:

"retain the role of participant for elected members who are responsible for the documents and other work."

No, the denial was based on an interpretation by the Stated Clerk of policy found in ACSWP's operation manual regarding the sharing

of documents. The manual states ACSWP may close meetings and work groups when they are working on papers.

All papers of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, its subgroups and task forces are confidential until released by action of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy or the Coordinating Committee (as authorized by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy). (www.pcusa.org/acswp/respect.htm)

General Assembly's Open Meeting Policy assigns the Stated Clerk's office with interpretation

"It is especially important that the Church should furnish an open climate for the moral discussion of these issues."

(The Nature and Value of Human Life, GA Minutes, 1981, pp. 285-304)

when there are disputes. About a year ago ACSWP requested an opinion on whether they could refuse to share draft documents with observers.

In his opinion the Stated Clerk made the point that the GA Open Meeting Policy does not address draft documents. He reminded ACSWP that "the work of the Church is strengthened when it is done in a spirit of openness and trust."

In his denial of PPL's request, Chris Iosso, ACSWP Coordinator, quoted what he determined to be the "pertinent point" in the Stated Clerk's opinion:

"5. The Clerk draws a distinction between documents being consid-

ered for action by an entity, division, committee or task force and those being discussed by a writing/drafting team that lacks authority to act on a document, but rather is charged with preparation of a document that will be proposed for action by an entity, division, committee or task force."

PPL responded by clarifying that the request was to observe the meeting, not to obtain the document and drew his attention to #2 in the Open Meeting Policy.

(2) It is the policy of the General Assembly, the General Assembly Council, its divisions and Finance and Technology Office, and the entities and work groups related to them, that their meetings shall be open to all interested persons.

Iosso responded that "Rev. Tammen concurs in seeing point 5 of that interpretation as determinative" and that I could take it up with him if I wished. Rev. Mark Tammen is Director of the Department of Constitutional Services for the Stated Clerk's Office.

Iosso also expressed concerns that PPL might have unfair influence on the writers. It's hard to see how that could occur since observers are not allowed to talk. PPL did offer to provide feedback if they wanted a pro-life take on their paper, but presumed they would not accept that offer.

I was assured that the drafters of the paper cover the theological spectrum of the church but received no reply when I asked if those names are public information.

A breakfast meeting was suggested and I hope that opportunity will be realized. In the spirit of the 1981 paper and Joan Rivers I wonder, "Can we talk?"

I Believe....In the Resurrection of the Body.....

—By Gerrit Dawson

With these final clauses of the Apostle's Creed, Christian commitment to life from the moment of conception is under-girded and Christian hope in the face of death, even death by violence, is affirmed.

On the one hand, the Apostle's Creed implies that life in this body is of everlasting significance and therefore must be tended, guarded and nurtured. It braces us with the reality that no human being is discardable or neglectable. On the other hand, the Creed comforts us with the hope that life goes on beyond the bounds of this world. Though we may fail to protect life here, that failure is not eternal. There is more life to come. The forgiveness we seek is grounded in the sacrifice of Christ once for all in the past and also in the future he has established where the consequences of even our worst actions will be resolved.

The Resurrection of the Body

Our Christian belief in the resurrection of the body is a very different precept than the idea that what makes us essentially human is our immortal souls which continue after the body is discarded. Our gospel shocked the culture of Greek thought which prevailed during the years the New Testament was written. The body was understood to be a prison for the soul. The goal of spirituality was to slip the bonds of corrupt, weak flesh through developing the mind or enacting mystic rituals. So the gospel seemed foolishness to educated Greeks. What kind of God, would actually take up residence in a stinking human body? The resurrection of Jesus in his body seemed contrary to everything they believed about spirituality. Even granting that God had come to the world in a body, why would he ever keep that body after death?

In that culture, bodies were often burned after death. There was no need to honor or preserve what had been only a hindrance to true life. By contrast, Jews and Christians tenderly cared for the bodies of those who had died. This was not done with some naïve idea that only an intact, preserved corpse could be resurrected. Rather, it was a matter of honoring the body because we have our lives in an embodied existence. Though these bodies will be healed, vivified and transformed to something more splendid than we can imagine, they will yet be our bodies. We will not be airy spirits floating on clouds with harps. We will be more real, more substantial, than we have ever known ourselves to be.

In a passage that has been crucial to the theology of the resurrection of the body, Paul declared, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Phil. 3: 20-21). We are going to be like Jesus. Jesus was raised and ascended in the same body in which he was crucified. Yes, he has been glorified and outfitted for heaven. But he has not forsaken his body. Because we are going to be like Jesus, we know that our bodies will likewise be transformed and decked out for life in glory.

With his usual clarity, C. S. Lewis writes:

He goes "to prepare a place for us." This presumably means that

He is about to create that whole new Nature which will provide the environment or conditions for His glorified humanity and, in Him, for ours...It is the picture of a new human nature, and a new Nature in general, being brought into existence. We must, indeed, believe the risen body to be extremely different from the mortal body: but the existence, in that new state, of anything that could in any sense be described as "body" at all, involves some sort of spatial relations and in the long run a whole new universe. That is the picture—not of unmaking but of remaking. The old field of space, time, matter, and the senses is to be weeded, dug, and sown for a new crop. We may be tired of that old field: God is not.¹

The hope of the resurrection of the body in the future is the basis for our high regard for the body in the present. Even the most disfigured, diminished or diminutive human body is valuable for it is precisely the object of God's eternal love and included in the future transformation he has promised. We do not consider embryonic human beings to be mere lumps of protoplasm. We do not consider that bodies worn out with age and disease are discardable because they are drains on our resources. We pour concern and attention even into "losing causes" of broken or unwanted bodies because of the Triune God's valuation of our embodied life.

Threads of Love

One of the most moving and tangible ways I have seen belief in

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1960), 153.

.....The Life Everlasting



the resurrection of the body affirmed is through the ministry of Threads of Love. Sissy Davis recalls,

“In the fall of 1993 a pediatrician from Earl K. Long Charity Hospital in Baton Rouge contacted my pastor with a request for help. She saw a need for tiny burial gowns for patients who were born prematurely and were too sick or too tiny to survive.”

A group of women began sewing these little gowns. It proved to be a powerful ministry in the lives of the families who had lost their babies. Sissy continues,

“The ministry is about healing and binding hearts together of parents at a time of uncertainty about their baby’s health, or when they lose an infant. Our mission is to show parents the love of Christ at a time when their personal pain is hard to endure and let them know that God is faithful.”²

Threads of Love is now an international ministry with hundreds of chapters of women sewing gowns for the little ones. So, what seems like a waste, sewing beautiful garments for those who died before they ever lived in this daylight world, is actually a powerful affirmation of love. The bedrock belief in the resurrection of the body makes possible such care.

Limits to our Madness

Belief in the life everlasting also gives us powerful hope in the midst of a violent world. Choices are made which do not honor the body, protect the weak or bind up the broken ones. Rather, infants are killed within the womb, children are allowed to starve, the elderly

are neglected, the best and the brightest fall in the crossfire of greed, addiction and human warring madness. We can do terrible things to one another. But there are limits to our power. We cannot harm beyond this life.

Martin Luther wrote, “The body they may kill; God’s truth abideth still.” There are boundaries to the reach of even the most cruel, most powerful, most demonically possessed human beings. We do not go on forever in this present age. The dictator will die. The wicked perpetrator’s strength will fail. We cannot reach into heaven and harm the little ones any further who have already gone there to await resurrection. The life everlasting means that there is more than this world. Much more life is to come. The corruption of the present age will not have the final say. The light will dawn, and God’s everlasting kingdom will come.

Resurrection and Forgiveness

Precisely because life, and life in the body, matters so much, abortion and euthanasia are grave sins which scar the soul of those who commit the acts. But precisely because of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, forgiveness for these acts is real. Let’s consider how this works.

God came to us in a body. The Son of God took up our humanity. In our name and in our skin, he lived out the perfect faith and obedience required of us. In our name and on our behalf, he bore the penalty for the sins we have committed,

in his body on the cross. His flesh was torn and his blood was spilled. Moreover, in his soul he experienced the very hell of God-forsakenness which we deserve. He died for us, as God in embodied human existence. This death took away our sins. Even our sins unto death have been paid for.

In his resurrection, Jesus completed his work on the cross. He not only paid for sins committed. He overcame the power of sin in our lives. He conquered death. Jesus opened heaven for us. He secured the future kingdom of God in which there will be no more tears or dying, nor more betrayal or hatred, but life everlasting.

So we have a Savior who has really paid for the sins of abortion and euthanasia. He has also created a future in which the consequences of those sins will be reversed. Those murdered will live again. Those who have committed murder can, through him, be reunited and even reconciled with those against whom they sinned. Love and harmony, even when broken by violence, can be restored in Christ in the life everlasting. Our sins are not forever, neither in penalty nor in consequence, when brought to the Savior who died on the cross and rose in the body unto everlasting life.

Gerrit Dawson is pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Baton Rouge, and co-moderator of New Wineskins Association of Churches. This article is the last in a series written by Gerrit Dawson and Mrs. Terry Schlossberg.

² <http://www.threadsoflove.org/>



The issue that will not go away

—by Don Elliott

My congregation has been through a gut-wrenching struggle in the past six months about many issues: homosexuality, ordination, biblical authority, Christology, property, per capita, denominational commitment, cultural accommodation, the future, etc. But one issue that refuses to go away is abortion.

*I*n one of the many meetings held within our congregation, I made the point of being pleased with the late term abortion decision at this past General Assembly. Our discussion had been focused on the gay ordination issue and the PUP Report approved in Birmingham, so I wanted to show that there was some good news that came from the highest governing body of the church. So I crowed about the late term abortion decision, the effective work of Presbyterians Pro-Life at the General Assembly, the number of effective and wise commissioners, and the strong vote received on the floor. But then a member asked a very simple question, “Don, is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) still pro-

choice?” I answered, “Yes,” and there was a tangible groan in the room.

Abortion is the issue that will not go away — not in the middle of the gay ordination debate, not after a good late term abortion decision by our General Assembly, and not in a church that desires to be biblical and faithful.

The reason abortion will not go away is because God is God and we are not. The Creator has given and continues to give life. The Father sustains life. The Son saves life. The Spirit sanctifies life.

The reason abortion will not go away is because God is God and we are not. The Creator has given and continues to give life. The Father sustains life. The Son saves life. The Spirit sanctifies life. There is

not any situation where we can step in, thinking we know best and take life matters into our own hands without biblical warrant. Granted, there can be many rationalizations with each situation, every personal choice, and all the cultural pressure; but they all show themselves to be shallow and superficial when we take into account God’s perspective. Life is a precious gift from God and we are to honor and protect it as such.

So if abortion is the issue that will not go away, then we who are pro-life are not to go away either. Wherever we might be, we need to stand for life. Whatever the issue getting the front-page headlines might be, we need to go to page two and know that abortion will be there. Whenever we are confronted with thinking that life is not important, we need to then remind ourselves of our God and how he looks at life.

By the way, to my congregation I gave a fuller answer. We need to rejoice in incremental victories. We need to be committed for the long haul. We need to know there will be set backs as we move toward righteousness. We need to be faithful no matter what. We don’t see everything right now. We need to trust God in the darkest times.

Because.....abortion is the issue that will not go away.

Don Elliott is pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Corinth, MS and President of PPL.

Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me. (Isaiah 49:16, NAS)

From Women's Lib to PPL: Schlossberg's story on DVD



*F*rom the Women's Liberation Movement of the sixties to a call "to reclaim the truth on this matter of abortion," Mrs. Terry Schlossberg traced her own pilgrimage at PPL's event held at the 217th General Assembly. "Carrying my own baby in my arms, I proudly affirmed every women's right to abortion," Schlossberg shared. "Even if I had not chosen abortion myself...I certainly wanted to be a thinking woman, even if I didn't think much about abortion."

"And then a friend invited me to join a Bible Study. I made a commitment to read the Scripture every day and make it a matter of prayerful study...I was undergoing a change of heart...I no longer believed abortion was a good."

Terry's change of heart became a sense of call which led her to serve 18 years as PPL's Executive Director. To hear Terry Schlossberg's story for yourself in her own words order the DVD on our website or using the form below. (suggested contribution \$20)



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Every Reader Response

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- ___ PPL's "Life Support" prayer ministry brochure
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- ___ A copy of Not My Own: Abortion and the Marks of the Church, by Terry Schlossberg and Elizabeth Achtemeier (suggested contribution \$10)

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Woman to Woman: “Value Added”

—By Marie Bowen

“Value added.” The phrase has been echoing in my head since Christmas. Gift cards are the latest trend in gift giving. They allow the receiver to choose their own gift, limited of course to the value added to the card by the giver.



It amuses me to imagine how my now deceased grandparents might have reacted to the gift of such a card. I can almost hear them say, “What kind of gift is this — a piece of plastic?” On the surface, gift cards appear valueless. Indeed, sometimes no evidence of the monetary value that has been added is included. The receiver must then go to the store of origin and have the card scanned to learn of its value.

Thinking about gift cards prompted me to question the way we value persons— sometimes not seeing the “value added.” Sometimes we need to go to the Origin of Life and “scan” that person in the light of Scripture to realize their worth.

Hayden was like that for me — a precious gift from God whose value I did not immediately realize. A student in my piano class for severely limited students, Hayden was born with Down Syndrome. Expectations from school officials

for these students were low; the class was to be a fun-filled activity.

Hayden was indeed unlike any “normal” middle school student. She listened when I was speaking! When given a task she bent over the keyboard and worked and she was always disappointed when class ended. She was unfailingly cheerful and enthusiastic.

Only once did I see Hayden without joy. I noticed the change immediately. Her body telegraphed disappointment. Her demeanor was so markedly atypical that I asked her Aid whether she was ill. The Aid responded quietly, “Her name is Hayden.” I rapidly rewound the tape in my head to find the meaning behind her words. I realized I had called Hayden by the wrong name at the beginning of the class. “Hayden,” I said, moving close beside her, “I am so sorry I called you by the wrong name. Of course I know who you are! I won’t forget again.” Hayden beamed, utterly transformed. I was totally forgiven

as Hayden gave me an enthusiastic hug and whispered, “I love you!”

God revealed in Hayden a “value added” that far exceeded my expectations! Her quick forgiveness has continued to roll like a snowball through my life, re-shaping my understanding of forgiveness, unconditional love, and God’s purpose for His “gift cards” in my life.

Current PC(USA) policies on abortion and stem cell research reflect that we do not appreciate the value God has given in each human life. As my German Mennonite grandparents might have tossed a gift card in the trash with an “Ach, what is this?” — our denomination stubbornly insists it does not know when life begins. Granted, it is hard to see “value added” in a microscopic blastocyst. But Scripture is plain that God has purposes for our lives from before birth. It is time to submit the unborn to the “scan” of Scripture and find Christ’s “value added” that makes each gift of life inexpressibly precious.

Presbyterians Pro-Life

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