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Paul Cameron

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# Abortion, Capital Punishment and the Judeo-Christian Ethic

Paul Cameron, Ph.D.

*The author is affiliated with the Fuller Graduate School of Psychology. His investigation was funded, in part, by a grant from the Human Life Foundation*



There are two polar views of abortion. From the extremity of the liberal quarter, abortion is seen as a private patient-physician decision based exclusively upon the desire of the woman to become unpregnant. From this perspective, the abortion decision is simply unrelated to questions of morality or of our social system's regard for the value of human life. Rather, the individual decision to abort is seen as being of much the same quality as the desire to rid oneself of an unwanted feature. Certainly, abortion is viewed as being orthogonally related to the evolution of social ethics (e.g., the 1973 Supreme Court construal of its abortion decision as falling under the "right of individual privacy"). Extreme liberalism casts abortion as "just getting unpregnant."

From the extreme conservative viewpoint, abortion is a human life-taking enterprise. Since legalization of abortion is the legalization of human life-taking, abortion is a wedge that consequently tarnishes or imperils the degree to which human life is held sacred in our society. Some writing from this perspective views abortion as the possible start of a misanthropic holocaust (e.g., Diamond, 1977).<sup>1</sup>

Curiously, if the issue under consideration were to be switched from abortion to capital punishment, an almost complete "flip-flop" of the conservatives and liberals might be observed. The same arguments that the conservatives advance against abortion rain from the

mouths of liberals, while the opposite obtains for many conservatives. Many liberals point to a "foot in the door" anti-life mentality when they argue against capital punishment, and refer to the quality of life for the mother when they stand for the sacrifice of the life of her issue. On the other end of the spectrum, many conservatives use the same wedge argument against abortion, but similarly refer to the quality of life for the living (or, perhaps, justice for the victim) when they seek the death of a felon. Elements of both camps are, therefore, not adverse to taking *some* human life, nor in invoking the "quality of life" argument to justify their respective position. Further, they both employ the wedge argument, albeit at different points along the life-cycle. Conservatives argue that the taking of *innocent* human life puts the wedge in motion, but that the destruction of guilty human life has no such effect. Liberals contend that the wedge is unaffected by the destruction of nascent human life, but begins to proceed with the taking of full-fledged life, guilty or not.

A third, less complex model competes for attention in the debate. This viewpoint, often dubbed "pure pacifist," casts human life as sacred, ignores the fine distinctions and fine exemptions of both the conservatives and liberals, and sees both abortion and capital punishment as wedges leading to further misanthropy and human life-taking. A relatively well-known statement of this position was made by Senator Hatfield during the Vietnamese War when he opined that:

Abortion is a form of violence. That is the undeniable reality. It is the destruction of life. It furthers the dehumanization of life. It cheapens life. There is no single characteristic of our society that troubles my inner self more than the degradation, the cheapening, the dehumanization of life that we see all around us today. That is what is at the heart of the terrible inhumanity of our policies in Indochina. Human life became cheap, and easily expendable — especially Asian life, which somehow seemed less valuable than American life. We justified policies by talking about body counts. And we destroyed all sensitivity to the sanctity of human life. That is what happened at Attica. That is what happens whenever we heed the frightened and vengeful pleas for "law and order" that would have us crush the lives of others. The same holds true for capital punishment. The State cannot be so arrogant as to take away that ultimate right of every citizen — the right to life. . . . We have suffered so many assaults on the sacredness of human life that our conscience is insensitive and numb.

The pacifist position links abortion, capital punishment, war, and preparation for war as mutually supporting thrusts against the value of human life in a society.

The wedge argument advanced by both the liberals and conservatives "dips into" the pacifist position for support. Both conservatives and liberals cite various major theoreticians of the pacifist position (e.g., Jesus, Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., St. Francis, Schweitzer) to buttress their particular wedge argument while neglecting the overall thrust of the pacifist position. Further, numerous less extreme posi-

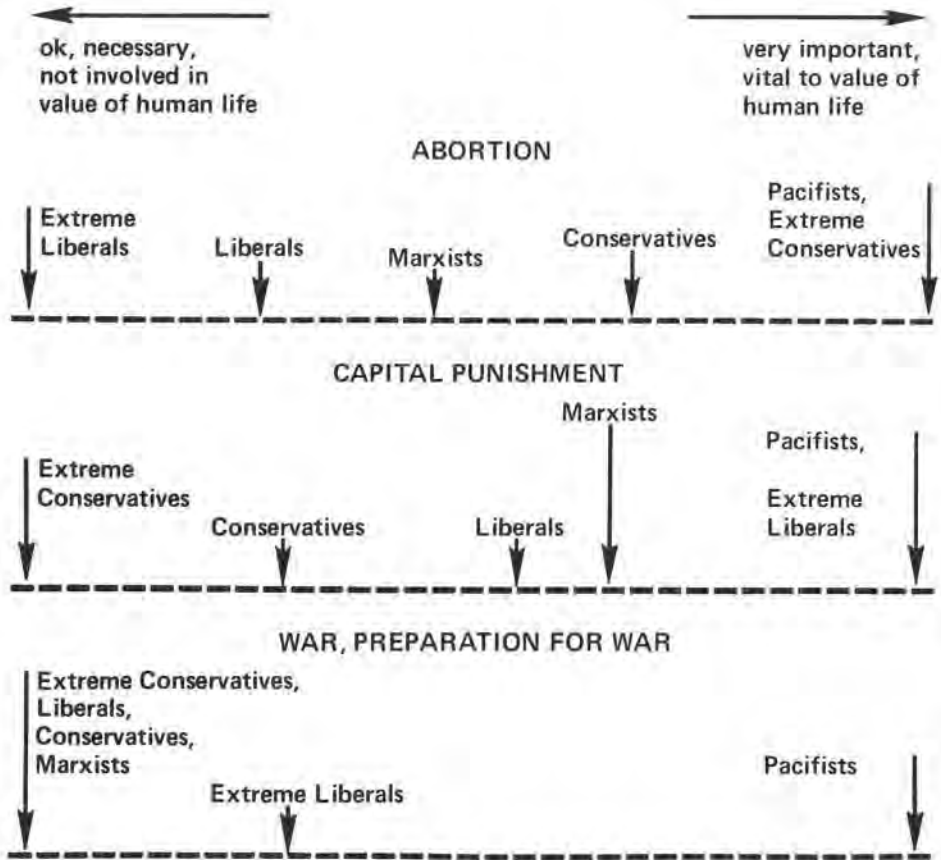
tions have been taken by both liberals (e.g., Denes's, 1976 "Abortion Is an Unfortunate Last Resort Method of Birth Control")<sup>2</sup> and conservatives (e.g., Lincoln's, 1975 "Why I Reversed My Stand on Laissez-Faire Abortion").<sup>3</sup>

Marxists advance the fourth major analysis of abortion. For them, abortion's legalization is contingent upon capitalist society's need for members. In the newly capitalist societies of the 17th through 19th centuries, being surrounded by markets resulted in a general need to expand the workforce. Thus abortion was made illegal in the U.S. around 1825-1845 because she was in an expansionist phase of capital accumulation and marketing possibilities. The 1973 reversal is seen as a similar response to a now declining need for workers, due to increased competition from other countries and the displacement of human labor by mechanization. Capital punishment, from the Marxian standpoint, is wrong because it is disproportionately exacted from political activists and the poor. Marxists are not pacifists, but inveigh against capital punishment as crimping polarization and organization of society along Marxist lines. Marxists are not opposed to capital punishment *per se* (all of the major Marxist parties went along with some of the executions in the early years of the USSR), and tend to be neutral to somewhat supportive of abortion's legalization (in the U.S., the Socialist Workers' Party, a Trotskyite version of Marxism, has recently campaigned for the right to abort; the Socialist Labor Party, a fundamentalist, De Leonist version, has been neither particularly enthusiastic nor unenthusiastic about abortion). Marxism does not buy into the wedge argument and posits no necessary link between any given human-life-taking activity and other human-life-taking activities. Rather, oversimply put, each social policy, although linked to every other social policy, is "tied" by economic rather than "how is human life treated" bonds.

The liberal, conservative, and Marxian schools of thought agree upon the necessity and desirability of war under certain conditions. The pacifist position finds the value/sanctity of human life in danger from many quarters, including militarism, war, abortion, and capital punishment. A summary of their positions, issue-by-issue, is sketched in Figure 1.

The Marxist perspective is borrowed from by some in both the conservative and liberal camps. In commenting on the state of California's non-funding of Medi-Cal abortions the *Los Angeles Times* opined that "abortion, which should be a private choice for each woman, becomes a public issue because . . . some people don't have the money to pay for medical treatment that better-off people can afford. As a matter of public policy, our nation has said that the poor shall not suffer in this manner. Abortion is medical treatment. . . . There is always the argument that we hate to make — that it will cost the state more in welfare costs to bring up many of the children who will be born if state abor-

**Figure 1**  
**Liberal, Conservative, Marxist, and Pacifist Views of:**  
**ABORTION, CAPITAL PUNISHMENT,**  
**WAR, PREPARATION FOR WAR**



tion aid is cut off. . . . As the legislature moves through its deliberations, it must remember that any society is judged by the manner in which it treats its weakest members. If law makers can punish one group today, whose rights will they abridge tomorrow?" (June 30, 1978). Further, after the non-funding took place, ". . . the legislature has committed an act of willful brutality. The harsh and arbitrary conditions that it has imposed on abortion eligibility for women under the Medi-Cal program smack of political gutlessness, medical ignorance, social irresponsibility and moral vindictiveness. . . . Most people

think state-funded abortions for women who could not otherwise pay for them are a good thing. . . . And so the legislature, putting aside what is right, what is decent, and what is socially necessary, has moved California backward. . . . There is a fundamental and inescapable injustice in this situation, an injustice that in its flagrancy and contempt for individual rights sickens the spirit and depresses the mind" (July 7, 1978).

While this rather shrill argument issued from the liberal camp, clearly only a few words would have to be changed to make it a "pro-life" statement (i.e., casting the "weakest members of society" as being the fetuses rather than poor women; considering the "punishment" being exacted of helpless fetuses rather than poor women, etc.). Further, in addition to the cost-accounting analysis, the *Times* salvaged from all moral barrels (e.g., "decent," "right," "socially necessary," "contempt for individual rights"). Also, there are appeals to a kind of empiricism ("most people think," "abortion is medical treatment") which, from the right-to-life quarter, would be made with the same, but opposite, force (e.g., Noonan, 1973, interpreted the University of Michigan's Institute of Social Research poll as finding 58% in favor of strict control of abortion).<sup>4</sup>

While for Marxists nothing transcends economics, the liberal, conservative, and pacifist positions claim to have noted underlying social psychological truths that transcend the kind of economic system the individual inhabits. The liberals hold that abortion, being the destruction of, at worst, only potential humanity, has no real bearing upon other possibly lethal social policies. Yet capital punishment, involving the exacted death of a real person, has direct bearing on the possible growth of lethal social policy. The conservatives declare that abortion, being the destruction of innocent human life, bears upon other possibly lethal social policies. Since capital punishment is exacted of only the guilty, it does not have any relationship to the possible growth of lethal social policies toward the innocent. The pacifists claim that human life is all of a piece, and that the destruction of *any* part imperils the existence of every other part. Therefore the kinds of mentality apt to be created to "handle" either capital punishment or abortion ought to make the other more possible, and be associated with diminution of the value of human life.

The arguments from each of the three non-Marxist camps are plausible, but none is flush with empirical evidence to buttress its analysis. Yet each appeals to a kind of empiricism. For instance Wogaman (1975), writing from an extreme liberal stance contended: "I suppose anybody could locate many people who combine advocacy of liberalized abortion with disrespect for the sanctity of life in general. . . . But would it not be equally easy to find people with a deep abhorrence of war and other forms of social violence [supporting abortion]? . . . The abortion debate is not really between one group of

people who are committed to the sanctity of life and another group of people who have regrettably become callous and selfish.”<sup>5</sup> Here, Wogaman contends that if he were to apply some standard of “respect for human life,” approximately the same proportion or amount of respect would attend those who supported and those who opposed abortion. Further, he implies that the women who have abortions do so out of no less concern for the value of human life than those who do not have abortions. “Whenever it is implied that abortion is proposed out of a cheapened attitude toward life, it must be replied that this simply is not so. Those of us who concur with the Supreme Court’s decision regard it as a landmark of humane spirit and practical wisdom. The *Los Angeles Times* also made empirical claims (e.g., “most people think”) and other spokespersons from other positions could be cited who make similar quasi-empirical claims (e.g., Sobran, 1978),<sup>6</sup> but the glaring fact is *no set of reasonably gathered evidence to support claims of lethal tiedness or non-tiedness exists!* Assertion — louder and longer — is made to carry the weight of the argument (the *Los Angeles Times* editorial finds a parallel in almost any issue of the *Right to Life News*). A number of ethicists have noted this empirical lack. For instance, Patrick Coffey,<sup>7</sup> in critiquing the wedge argument as it is employed in the euthanasia debate, cited the statements of Beauchamp (1977):

If for example, rules permitting active killing were introduced, it is not implausible to suppose that destroying defective newborns (a form of involuntary euthanasia) would become a common and accepted practice, that as population increases occur the aged will even be more neglectable and neglected than they are now, that capital punishment for a wide variety of crimes would be increasingly tempting, that some doctors would have appreciably reduced fears of injecting fatal doses whenever it seemed propitious to do so, and that the laws of war against killing would erode in efficacy even beyond their already abysmal level.<sup>7</sup>

Coffey also cited the statements of Sullivan (1975): “Once the respect for human life is so low that an innocent person may be killed directly even at his own request, compulsory euthanasia will necessarily be very near” as being based upon “gratuitous assumptions about how the perverse tendencies in human nature will become unleashed (1978).”<sup>9</sup> Without exception, each claimant in the debate says, in effect, “my experience is pretty broad, and it seems to me that: a) being an aborter and/or standing for free choice in the abortion decision goes along with a disrespect for life, or b) being in favor of abortion/ having an abortion, is unrelated to respect for human life, or c) some other relationship.” Human theorizing has to start somewhere, and casually observing “what seems to go with what” is a good, empirical beginning. But we often “see what we want or expect to see,” and when the debate gets as heated as the abortion/capital punishment/militarism issue, systematic, less “personally involved” observation is useful. These *are* issues that can be graced with a more

systematic empiricism. What *does* go with what in the abortion debate? What kinds of attitudes and social policy recommendations are correlated? Do women who obtain abortions hold attitudes toward human life that differ systematically from women who have not aborted? *These* are potentially answerable questions (as opposed to questions such as "Do fetuses think?"). The modern populace is generally disinclined to accept the assertions of a theologian (e.g., Wogaman) regarding empirical realities; social scientists have been called upon to fill this particular role. So utilizing the methods and techniques of contemporary social science, I and my students have attempted to gather the kinds of systematic empirical evidence that would help resolve the controversy. While I believe that our findings are of tremendous importance, it would be negligent to mention a number of caveats before reporting our results. First, while our sample was large (2,251), relative to most social science studies (which probably average around 50), it is still not large enough nor widely dispersed enough to be dogmatic about its results. Some variability would be expected were more midwesterners or easterners included. Secondly, there is a "built-in" ambiguity in any human communication, questionnaires included. People do not always construe a question in just the manner we expect them to, so there is always some linguistic "slippage." The "solution" to these problems is the same one scientists always invoke — larger numbers of subjects with a multiplicity of questions and observations. But even with these cautions in mind, I believe it fair to characterize our study as a solid one, considerably better than most appearing in the journals, but with ample room for improvement.

### The Study

Our investigation took place over a three-year period (spring, 1976 through summer, 1978) and included persons aged 12 through 94 residing in Maryland, Michigan, and California; 59% of our respondents were female. Generally, the questionnaire was self-administered, with the interviewer leaving and then coming back for it in half an hour or so. Since there were 60 items, and space limits the reproduction of the entirety, only a few will be provided to give a sense of what was asked. Note that the questions were cast so as to provide a *range* of options leading from repression of the social policy under question, to expansion of the policy. The abortion item was "In your opinion, how should abortion be dealt with?(Choose one): It should be illegal and heavily penalized; It should be illegal and lightly penalized; It should be generally illegal but legal when there is the added consideration of rape, the health of the mother, or probable birth defects; It should be legalized but discouraged; It should be legalized; It should be legalized and encouraged when rape has occurred and/or when the mother's



health is endangered and/or when the child will probably be born defective; It should be legalized and strongly encouraged. Another question was "How should our society handle capital punishment?" (Choose one): Possible punishment ought *never* to include the death penalty; The death penalty should not exist, but life imprisonment that *means* life imprisonment should exist; The death penalty should exist as an option for heinous crimes, but on a case-by-case basis (there might be extenuating circumstances); When the death penalty is applicable, it ought to be applied — period; The death penalty ought to exist and should be applied to criminals more frequently. Another query was "When, in your opinion, does human life begin?" (Choose one): at conception; during the third month following conception; at the quickening, when life is felt by the mother; at the sixth month of pregnancy; at birth; a few days before birth; a few months before birth. Other items included opinions about social policy toward homosexuality, infanticide, euthanasia, suicide, and fetuses which survive abortion. Respondents also were asked whether they had obtained an abortion, participated in taking human life, smoked, attempted suicide, how frequently they had obtained traffic tickets or gotten into accidents, and whether they got high on drugs or alcohol regularly.

### What We Found

Instead of listing our results as correlation coefficients as is standard practice in professional reports, it will probably make more sense to most if the relationships we found are summarized. One more word of caution — the correlations in the study ranged from a high of .42 to a low of .10. Correlations of this magnitude are about "average" in personality research (the correlation between height and weight averages about .50), and indicate that we are dealing with a "real" relationship — one to which we might profitably attend — but not that "if a person feels this way about abortion then we will *know* just how they will feel about capital punishment, etc." Correlations of this magnitude enable us to make "better guesses" about how given people will register on other issues if they registered a certain way on this particular issue. For instance, those who smoked more frequently chose more "liberal" options regarding abortion, but plenty of smokers were "conservative" in their opinions regarding abortion, so that if you knew only that a person smoked, you would have about a 2% better chance of guessing what his or her position on abortion would be than if you just "took a shot in the dark." This may not seem like much, but it is the "stuff" out of which social science theories are made (and consider how frequently someone who believes a certain thing surprises you in regard to how he or she feels about another issue, even

when you would “bet” that if they felt *that* way about abortion, then surely they would . . . ).

So with the above warning in mind, persons who more frequently chose abortion-increasing kinds of options also more frequently:

- believed life begins at or after birth,
- believed life ends sooner for those, either conscious or unconscious, living on intensive care in the hospital,
- were willing to “pull the plug” on a five-year old (or whatever age) conscious person on life-support systems,
- believed that homosexuality should be legitimized,
- believed that suicide should be made legal and/or encouraged for the old or defective,
- were willing to allow the ill or old to choose to die,
- believed that infanticide should be practiced,
- believed that capital punishment should exist (and should be applied more frequently),
- were smokers,
- claimed to get high on drugs or alcohol regularly,
- claimed a lower degree of love for humanity,
- believed that only robust premature infants should be treated, and
- believed that infants who survived abortion should be allowed to die.

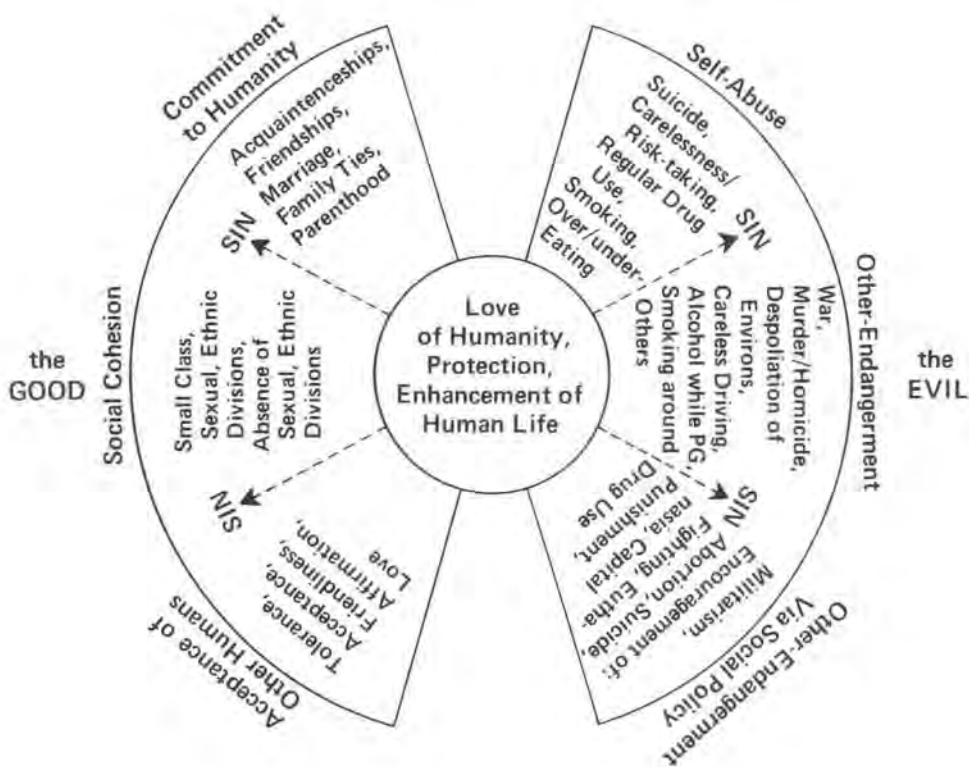
How do our results bear upon the abortion/capital punishment/militarism debate? Right off, it is clear that *those who would try to save the life of the fetus are also more apt to be interested in saving the life of the felon!* Further, a host of human life-saving social policies are “linked” in the thinking of Americans. Why is this? And what bearing has this upon the Judeo-Christian ethic? Before proceeding, a sketch of the Judeo-Christian ethic appears in order, then the results will be studied with it in mind.

### The Non-Mystical Components of the Judeo-Christian Ethic

Any religion might be separated, for convenience, into two components: the mystical and the ethic, for day-to-day social functioning. Religions stemming from a common basis might heatedly differ on the mystical components of their faith while largely agreeing on the non-mystical elements. For instance, orthodox Jews rather sharply disagree with orthodox Christians on the nature of God (i.e., the “Trinity”) and both, in turn, with the Mormon conception of God. Yet aside from the mystical components which appear beyond empirical testing, they find considerable agreement on the day-to-day, non-mystical material. A considerable degree of interfaith cooperation occurs by downplaying the mystical differences and accentuating these ethical similarities.

And what are these similarities? Obviously this is a topic which has occupied numerous theologians and thinkers for many centuries, and it would be presumptuous of me to claim "This is it, period." However, I have discussed it at greater length elsewhere (Cameron, 1978b, 1979) and feel the following captures its "essence,"

Figure 2  
THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN ETHIC



First, it must be borne in mind that the Judeo-Christian ethic is oriented toward the *general*, not individual welfare. If the interests of the collectivity clash with those of the individual, the interests of the collectivity take precedence. Generally, individual sacrifice in service of the interests of the collectivity is the norm. Whenever there is a

choice between individual betterment and collective betterment, the collective choice is the "correct" one. Similarly, when either individual harm or collective harm is at issue, the individual is to accept the pain.

*The Good* is represented in the ethic by those kinds of things/activities/relationships/attitudes which tend to promote social cohesion and generalized human betterment (Figure 1). Thus family ties, friendship bonds, or acts of giving or dispersal of goods are "good things" because they promote bondings and reciprocities. Marriage is a good thing because it joins two individuals who might otherwise be separated into the social matrix. Further, it provides a model of reciprocal caring and sharing. Childbearing is likewise a good thing, because it concentrates parental attentions upon other humans (their progeny), and motivates the parents to make the world a more pleasant place for their children. Since a "more pleasant place" is more apt to be created by seeking generalized betterment, generally the motivations of parents are toward the good, and their actions in service of their children are apt to benefit most of those in society. Further, the habits of cooperation and accommodation that parents are apt to acquire in pursuit of their goals, as well as their attempt to model "the good" for their children, are likely to be beneficial for human society as-a-whole. One kind of "sin" then, is the retreat from good. Divorce is generally a sin, because it disunites or separates and models such and further, tends to lead to both personal and social confusion and alienation.

The other "side" of the ethic concerns lethality. The ultimate evil is the premature killing of a human being or beings (that is, where man intervenes to take human life, rather than letting God "call the person home or to account"). War is terribly evil; murder is evil. Further, those kinds of social policies that would tend to or actually involve the taking of human life are also evil (e.g., abortion, capital punishment, infanticide, euthanasia, etc.). When the presence of human life is questionable, such as *in utero*, the "benefit of the doubt" is cast in favor of the possible life. Public knowledge of the life of the fetus is impossible for all but the vegetative functions. But out of concern lest human life be taken (which would be the worst evil), and out of a sense of building cohesion and love, the fetus is entended *de jure* membership in the human community, and the Judeo-Christian ethic opposes abortion.

Since each person "owns" a human life, he is to treat himself, in light of the ethic, as a valuable representative of humanity. As such, he is not to take his life, nor to abuse himself (such as by habitual over- or under-eating, smoking tobacco, or getting "stoned" on drugs or alcohol). The more a person's behavior/habits tend to his own life's destruction or diminution, the more evil his behavior and the more he sins (e.g., a light smoker sins less than a heavy one). Similarly, indulg-

ing in activities which increase the chances of endangerment to others is evil. Driving recklessly imperils not only self but also others' existence and is more evil than solitary self-abuse. Smoking while pregnant is more evil than smoking while not. Obviously, the line between self-abuse and other-endangerment is not hard and fast. A person who smokes around others is not only harming himself, but it appears highly likely that he harms those subject to his second-hand smoke. Further, he provides a "bad" or "evil" example for others who may, partially on account of being exposed to his activity, be led to "go and do likewise."

While far from being all inclusive of human activity (there are no rules, for instance, regarding art or the flavors of ice cream), the Judeo-Christian ethic lays claim to a fairly heavy impression upon social and personal existence. Both intent and activities fall within its purview. Bad intent is associated with sentiments, feelings, attitudes or leanings which would tend to model, promote or implement either evil or a retreat from good. Active modeling in service of evil or retreat from the good is also sin. Even apart from the sin of non-belief, it is easy to see why everybody sins or can be considered a sinner.

Another aspect of our study pertains. Our respondents were asked whether they were Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, other, or none and also to characterize themselves as being "very devout," "moderately devout," "not very devout," or "not at all devout." If the above construal of the Judeo-Christian ethic is approximately correct, we would expect Catholics and Protestants who claimed to be "very devout" to be trying the hardest to live up to the ethic and therefore register as the *least sinful* relative to the less devout or secularists (e.g., those claiming to be "none"). Twenty-one percent of Christians (we combined the Catholics and Protestants) characterized themselves as very devout (and these Christians comprised 16% of the total sample), while 15% of the total sample claimed to be secularists. Eighty-four percent of the very devout claimed to love humanity (the highest proportion claiming love of any of the subgroups) compared to only 50% of the secularists who made the same claim. Accordingly, the very devout registered as the least lethal in their social policy choices in almost every area. Asked when life-support systems should be withdrawn from a conscious five-year old, with choices ranging from "never" to "24 hours," the very devout registered the highest frequency of "never" and secularists the lowest. The same relationship obtained for persons of any hypothetical age. Opinion of how society ought to treat homosexuality (a "lifeless" sexual orientation) traced the same pattern. Likewise for the issues of infanticide, abortion, euthanasia and suicide — very devout Christians most frequently opted for the life-conserving and secularists for the life-ending options. The only exception to this rule was capital punishment. Very devout Chris-

tians "tied" with secularists in being the most frequently opposed to capital punishment; Jews and less devout Christians were most frequently in favor of the supreme penalty.

In a sense, the nitty-gritty of lethality is whether one has participated in taking human life. In our culture, there are at least two common ways to join in. For males (mainly), there is the old standby — war. For females, our society provides abortion (and the armed services loom ahead). We asked respondents if they had ever "attempted to deliberately kill, had killed, or had participated in activities designed to kill other human beings." A sixth of the males and 3% of the females responded "yes." Very devout Christian males somewhat less frequently registered in the affirmative, but the differences were too small to consider conceptually significant.

When asked "Have you ever obtained an abortion?" 13% of the females and 5% of the males said yes. (Oh yes, males can; notice the "obtained"). There were significant differences between the devout and less devout female Christians. "Only" 8% of the "very," 15% of the "moderately," and 23% of the "other" Christians admitted to an abortion, as compared to 21% of the Jews and 25% of the secularists. The Judeo-Christian ethic is evident, but hardly prepotent in these findings.

Self-abuse generally traced the expected pattern. Only 13% of the very devout Christians smoked as compared to 33% of the secularists. Similarly, when asked about regularly getting high on drugs or alcohol, 6% of the very devout vs. 30% of the secularists claimed that they did. No differences emerged in rates of claimed suicide contemplations or attempts. About a fifth of the sample reported having contemplated suicide at one time or another (4% of these in the past month), and 6% of the men and 7% of the women claimed to have made at least one suicide attempt.

Other-endangerment was indexed in our study by claims of recklessness in driving habits and reports of numbers of traffic tickets and accidents in which the respondent had been involved over the past five years. While there was a hint that very devout Christians might be somewhat better/safer drivers, the evidence fit a "no difference" answer the best.

The study indexed social cohesion by inquiring into the person's marital history. Here, the Judeo-Christian ethic "scored" fairly well. For those who had ever been married, very devout Christians reported the lowest current rate of separation/divorce (5%) while secularists registered the highest (19%). Fully 75% of the very devout were still in their first marriage as compared to 64% of the irreligious.

Taken together, the results of the survey suggest that our construal of the Judeo-Christian ethic is pretty close to accurate/true. However, there are significant departures from expectations in regard to the

ultimate in human life-taking, suicide and killing. Further, the evidence on endangerment of others, while not substantial enough to make a strong case one way or the other, does not take a theory-endorsing direction. Some of our results can undoubtedly be explained by noting that even the very devout are called to many different allegiances, Christianity presumably being one of the more important, though not necessarily overriding. Further, many of our questions concerned whether the person had "ever" done something. People change, therefore it is possible that some of the women who had abortions were not devout at the time, but subsequently became devout (unfortunately, I know of a number of instances where very devout Christians went ahead with an abortion, albeit with great guilt — small consolation for the fetus).

### Aborters and Capital Punishment

Another test of the possible linkage between abortion and capital punishment is provided in the attitudes of women who claimed to have obtained an abortion. These are women who have separated themselves from the rest of femaledom in at least the particular of having sacrificed one or more of their fetuses. If women who have aborted are compared with those who have not, then we would have a rough index of how those particularly "advantaged" by the legalization of abortion differ from those who are not. A more exact test would have been provided had we a large enough sample to separate those who aborted into those pleased and those displeased with their action. Further, just because a woman has not had an abortion does not certify her as a "life-treasurer" — undoubtedly there are many women who would have abortions if they found themselves inconveniently pregnant even as there are many who would not have an abortion under any circumstances. So it is well to bear in mind the gross nature of the comparison. Since the study was done over a period of time in six discrete samples, each such sample might be dubbed a "wave."

To perhaps no one's surprise, women who claimed to have obtained abortions more frequently endorsed liberalized social policy toward abortion in three of the six waves of the study. But while it "makes sense" for people to more frequently endorse an activity in which they indulged, it may be surprising to know that in two of the waves, aborters more frequently endorsed the reimposition of capital punishment! Further, in two of the waves, women who had aborted more frequently answered yes to the question "Would you serve as an executioner were the death penalty reimposed?" If aborters were compared with non-aborters relative to the above construal of the Judeo-

Christian ethic, overall, of 56 statistically significant differences or tendencies, in 55, aborters scored as more evil or less good than non-aborters!

If we examine men who claim to have "killed or to have participated in killing other humans" and compare them to men who claim otherwise, we would have another rough test of the possible linkage between abortion, capital punishment, and militarism (over three-fourths of those who answered "yes" to the question said it was due to participation in war). In three of the waves of the study, "killers" more frequently than non-killers registered as favoring more liberal abortion policies. In two of the waves the killers more frequently indicated support for reimposition of the death penalty, and in two of the waves killers more frequently said they would serve as executioners. Making the same test of killers vs. non-killers vis-a-vis the Judeo-Christian ethic, of 52 statistically significant differences or tendencies, killers logged as more evil or less good in 48.

### Abortion and Capital Punishment

It is extremely unfortunate that some questions about "defense" and war were not included in our questionnaire so that the pure pacifist position could have received a more adequate test. However, the results we obtained provide at least a "glimmer" of what might await a more complete study.

The conservative contention that while abortion and capital punishment both involve the taking of human life, the value of the innocent life as unrelated or even negatively related to the ethical value of the felon's life received little support. First, for the sample as a whole, *those who were most opposed to abortion were also those most apt to be opposed to capital punishment.* Second, while in the aggregate Christians were more frequently endorsing of capital punishment than secularists, the most devout of the Christians "voted" essentially as the secularists on the issue. If we accept that the devout of a movement are the major carriers and expressers of "the faith," then Christianity's "best" are more apt to be against *both* abortion and capital punishment. Further, that aborters should register somewhat more frequently for capital punishment poses no small problem about "bedfellows." While some humans in the past obviously sought out the company of women who aborted, it appears unlikely that many conservatives would enjoy doing so today. So from the perspective of general morality (as represented by the total sample's responses) or Judeo-Christian morality, there is a *positive correlation between being against abortion and being against capital punishment.*

The liberal argument that the life of the criminal represents denotably "real humanity" while the life of the fetus is merely vege-



tative received small buttressing. For the sample as a whole, *those who were most opposed to capital punishment were also those most apt to be opposed to abortion*. Perhaps the theoreticians of liberalism can manage the mental gymnastics requisite to separating these kinds of human life, but most people *do not*. True, the secularists, if they represent "liberalism's best" were the most set against capital punishment. But the "archest" of the arch reactionary Christian philosophy were as fierce in their opposition. Further, the secularists tested out as *less noble* in just about every other area. Then there is the matter of the aborters. These are the recipients of liberalism's attentions. Liberalism "owns" them, for weal or woe. The ownership may be "of necessity and in sorrow," but there they are — a moral embarrassment at best and a sad testimony to liberal circumlocutions regarding "real" human life.

The pacifist position which links all forms of violence against humanity, whether abortion, capital punishment, or militarism, fared best of the lot. To be sure, the linkages were modest, and many relationships which might be expected simply did not emerge (i.e., "killers" often did not register as less good or more evil than non-killers and the same was true for aborters). But all-in-all, considering that pacifism tends toward "ownership" of both the non-aborters and the non-killers, the results most frequently resonated with pacific philosophy. Secular pacific theoreticians may find more than a casual interest in the "high pacifist marks" earned by the very devout Christians and the "low marks" registered by secularists in every area but capital punishment. While everyone attempts not to "throw the baby out with the bath," expecting secular pacifism to generate much moral power may reflect just such an event.

As Karl Marx contended that "Everybody knows what freedom is," I would suggest that "Everybody knows what the good is." As its offering toward the good, liberalism champions the life of the felon — a *human* life. But in the U.S., were liberalism to "save" every probable victim from execution, only the lives of a few hundred a year could be presented as a moral oblation. Behind its back, liberalism would hide the 1½ to 2 million bleeding innocents. Since worldwide abortion probably accounts for about 20 million deaths per year and capital punishment for perhaps a few thousand, there is little doubt that from the Judeo-Christian perspective, conservatism has taken the better course. Were conservatives to make abortion illegal, perhaps half of the abortions would not be obtained. Yet few would feel comfortable in offering "a lesser evil" as token of good intent. And those who have participated in the legalized taking of human life have not been "added in." Both conservatism and liberalism share the killer's bed and Armageddon would render the saving of either the millions or the thousands superfluous.

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