

BROKEN SEX: GETTING IT RIGHT ON ABORTION BEGINS AT HOME

by Marvin Olasky

James Bond's license to kill meant that he could annihilate hordes of bad guys, but it was his license to fornicate that made more of an impression on me and millions of other baby boomers. Bond movies and others glamorously taught during the 1960s and thereafter that the good life is sleeping with lots of different women. One result is that lots of my contemporaries, Christian or not, are still greatly conflicted about sex.

Some of us publicly avow a Biblical worldview but, when it seems that no one is watching, fall back into the Playboy bait-and-switch philosophy. The bait is physical pleasure and a sense of psychological conquest. The switch becomes evident over time when young bodies become old and loneliness swamps lust. Purely through God's grace I've been married nearly 30 years instead of trying to build up stats concerning one-night or one-week stands, but it was a close call and I still remember the appeals on the other side.

A bunch of baby boomers, thinking we can have both family and adultery, advocate—sometimes by word but more often by semi-secret deed—"open marriage." That doesn't work for two reasons: It violates God's commands, and it violates the nature God gave us. (We're made in the image of a jealous God who can't stand spiritual adultery, so why should anyone think we can smile through physical adultery?) Sometimes choices really are either/or: Become attached to one person or practice non-attachment with many.

Churches are supposed to be the alpha that leads us to the omega, the starting point for godly redirection that propels us toward the finish line. Instead, some church members pursue adultery and others wink at it, while the ABCs of alienation, brokenness, and confusion take their toll. Some church members become debilitated by disease or

complicit in an abortion, but even those spared such traumas generally become sad, perhaps never understanding the long-term satisfactions they have missed.

We don't have solid data about the frequency of adultery, but pollster George Barna found the divorce rate among evangelicals similar to the overall divorce rate, with most of the divorces among "born-again" coming after they accepted Christ—and you can bet that many of those divorces came after adultery. Ron Sider tells a story about one church in which "a man and a woman from two different married couples had an affair, divorced their spouses, married each other, and [continued] in good standing in the congregation in spite of their defiance of Jesus' teaching and the destruction of two families." That's all too common.

This is a tragedy for many reasons. It's a tragedy for the man and woman, for their families, and for other couples in the church who may have troubled marriages and now think there's an easy way out. It's also a

tragedy for younger people in the church who have raging hormones and the acuity to ask a logical question: If middle-aged folks who should be settled down don't follow the rules, why should we? In other words, those who ignore "Do not commit adultery" are aiding and abetting those who ignore the command just before it, "Do not murder."

Our paramount message on Jan. 22 should be "Choose life," but pro-aborts are right to say that our parallel message has to be "Abstain from sex outside marriage." A few married couples choose death, but the overwhelming majority of abortions come when the father and mother are not married to each other. We can lower the abortion rate by offering compassionate help and developing laws that protect the unborn, but the front line is abstinence from extramarital sex—and older adults need to set a good example.

Evangelical pro-life efforts suffer when only 22 percent of non-Christians have a positive view of

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evangelicals generally. Part of the animosity can be laid at the feet of press bias, but many wounds are self-inflicted by actions that seem hypocritical. Societal reform always begins at home. Justin Martyr reported in the second century that conversion to Christ made a difference: "Those who once delighted in fornication now embrace chastity alone." If a watching world sees that sexual life inside the Church isn't distinctive from that outside, we have little hope of stopping abortion.

Mr. Olasky is the Editor in Chief of WORLD magazine. His article, "Broken Sex," originally appeared in the January 21, 2006 issue of WORLD.

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CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

Today is the Third Sunday in Lent, March 19. Today's Gospel lesson is John's account of Jesus cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem (2:13-22). In this event in Jesus' public ministry, He discovers in the Temple the selling and buying of animals to be sacrificed, and the

exchanging of money to be spent. With "a whip of cords" in hand, our Lord drives animals and people out of the sacred space, scatters the coins of the money-changers, and turns over their tables. To the remaining pigeon sellers, he

demands: "Take these things away; you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade."

What is going on here? The Temple's priesthood and pilgrims have made their peace with selling and money-changing in the Temple, with the common profaning the sacred. Scandalized by it all, Jesus takes matters into His own hands and stops the corrupt arrangement, which has turned a holy house of prayer into a convenient house of trade. He cleanses the Temple.

UNITED METHODISM'S PRESENT PEACE WITH ABORTION

With the profaning and cleansing of the Temple in mind, consider The United Methodist Church and abortion. It is hard to avoid the claim that our church has made its peace with abortion. United Methodism starts with an ambiguous, pro-choice paragraph on abortion in the Social Principles (Book of Discipline, Paragraph 161J). Then our church, through the General Board of Church and Society and the General Board of Global Ministries/Women's Division, affiliates with the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, a pro-choice political outfit

that lobbies to maintain abortion rights in American society. Next, the Council of Bishops remains silent on the tsunami-force tragedy of abortion in American life—over 44,000,000 children lost, and millions of women wounded in many ways, since 1973. Finally, most levels and sectors of the church remain nervously unwilling to discuss life and abortion. Year after year, this arrangement continues. To be sure, every fourth year General Conference marginally amends, in a pro-life direction, the Social Principles' paragraph on abortion. Even so, in the main, United Methodism seems to have made its peace with abortion. An uneasy peace, perhaps. But a peace nonetheless.

Ms. Linda Bales, a staff member of the General Board of Church and Society, offers this description of United Methodism's compromise position on abortion: "The United Methodist Church Social Principles acknowledge this tension between '[unborn human] life v. life [of the mother]' and, ever since the Supreme Court ruling Roe V. Wade, has supported the legal option of abortion with certain restrictions. Debates on when life begins, when women should control decisions over their reproductive decisions, and whether fetuses are entitled to certain rights have

festered and created open sores on our souls. How can we, as compassionate, caring followers of Christ, create a world where all children are conceived willingly and where they can be born into a world that is ready to

feed them, shelter them, nurture them, and provide for their care?

"The number of abortions in the U.S. is declining. This is good news. The General Board of Church and Society strongly supports efforts that decrease the number of unplanned pregnancies: increased access of women and men to family planning and reproductive health services, education and health care for girls, and comprehensive sex education. Two current pieces of legislation before the U.S. Congress, Focus on Family Health Act (HR 4188) and the Prevention First Act (S 20), are backed by GBCS through its advocacy work. We must work together as a church to prevent the circumstances in which women feel compelled to consider terminating a pregnancy." ("S. Dakota Abortion Ban Prompts UMs to Work for Prevention," www.umc-gbcs.org, 03/13/06).

Ms. Bales' claims, in so far as they recognize that the number of abortions should be minimized, are to be commended. However, they also suggest that United Methodist teaching on abortion and Roe v. Wade are acceptable as they currently stand. Therefore, to a large extent, she helps to sustain our church's present peace with abortion.

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A PEACE THAT IS CHALLENGED

Some 55 Roman Catholic Democrats in the US House of Representatives now have “a statement of principles,” which was released in February. Their statement includes a paragraph that resonates with the claims of Ms. Bales: “We envision a world in which every child belongs to a loving family and agree with the Catholic Church about the value of human life and the undesirability of abortion—we do not celebrate its practice. Each of us is committed to reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies and creating an environment with policies that encourage pregnancies to be carried to term. We believe this includes promoting alternatives to abortion, such as adoption, and improving access to children’s health care and child care, as well as policies that encourage paternal and maternal responsibility.” (www.house.gov/delauro/press/2006/February/catholic_statement_2_28_06.html)

Perhaps this statement suggests a peace that some Catholic Democrats made with abortion.

Pushing back against the statement from the Catholic Democrats, Cardinal William H. Keeler, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, and Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio declare, in part: “While it is always necessary to work to reduce the number of abortions by providing alternatives and help to vulnerable parents and children, Catholic teaching calls all Catholics to work actively to restrain, restrict, and bring to an end the destruction of unborn human life.” (www.usccb.org/catholicpubliclife.shtml) Clearly, some of the Roman Catholic Church’s leadership is not about to make peace with abortion in America.

So where does that leave The United Methodist Church, which seems to have found a way to coexist, if somewhat uneasily, with abortion in America? A great stride forward is for United Methodists to be or to become discontented, very discontented, with our church’s present position on, and response to, abortion. To recognize that the Temple needs to be cleansed, so to speak, is a moral-theological achievement in our denomination. That does not suggest the making of whips and the driving out of people. But it does suggest that, with regard to life and abortion, some significant changes in denominational teaching, ministry, and public witness are in order—sooner rather than later, we pray. We hope. We trust. (PTS) ♥

PLEASE JOIN US ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH IN PRAYING AND FASTING FOR LIFEWATCH’S CONTINUING MINISTRY.

FROM DUKE: TIME FOR A NEW MORAL DISCOURSE?

Friday, March 3. Duke University, Durham, NC. It was the day before the UNC-Chapel Hill men’s basketball team came to town. No wonder the Duke campus was peppered with posters, issued by the Durham Fire Marshal, that read “Bonfire Expectations.” (As it turned out, the posters were unnecessary. The Duke Blue Devils lost the game to the Carolina Tar Heels. Fewer, or no, bonfires would blaze in Durham that Saturday night.)

Among the devout and the informed, religion and politics trump, or should trump, basketball. On March 3 at Duke University, they did—at least they did the day before the game. On that day and on that campus, the American Values Summit: Southern Voices on Faith, Politics and the Common Good was

held. This religion-and-politics event was filled with sermons, speeches, workshops, and discussions. The stated “mission” of the summit was to “[bring] together a nonpartisan group of students, community leaders, and faith leaders

to explore how a broader conception of morality can reshape local, state, and national public policy.” This mission was “driven by the conviction that many moral issues resonate in America, and discussions of faith and morality should address more issues than just abortion and gay marriage.” (www.americanvaluessummit.com) That is, the proposal of a new, or renewed, moral discourse about politics was the purpose of the summit.

A DISCOURSE CORRUPTED

In the gothic beauty of Duke Chapel, Reverend Canon Dr. Samuel Wells, the Dean of the Chapel, welcomed the hundreds of summit participants. His welcoming words contained a theme that would run throughout the day’s events: moral discourse about politics in America is now deeply flawed and severely limited. Furthermore, Dr. Wells claimed that “Christianity has been, and is, part of the problem in America.” Indeed, he continued, “Christians have made a mess of it.” The issue is power, he declared, and power is rightly exercised to set people free. Presumably, he might have added, a moral discourse that would serve truth would also serve freedom.

The day’s opening sermon was preached by Rev. William J. Barber II, who is the pastor at Greenleaf Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Goldsboro, NC and the president of the North Carolina NAACP. Rev. Barber’s stirring sermon suggested that the prophetic element is now largely absent from American politics and moral discourse. Why? Because the Church in America is behaving as if it is

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the chaplain of the state, and because religion is presently serving as a cover for various forms of oppression of the weak, Rev. Barber charged. (Exactly how the prophetic task, which relies on a “Thus says the Lord” certainty, fits in with public moral discourse begged for clarification.)

Rev. Jim Wallis, the author of God’s Politics: Why the Rights Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get It and the long-time editor of Sojourners, provided the keynote speech of the summit. He continued the critique of current moral discourse. Rev. Wallis restated the summit’s charge that the Religious Right, while using religious and moral language, narrows its concern to the issues of abortion and homosexuality, and tends to neglect issues related to poverty, war and peace, and creation. This adds to the confusion about “values” in America, he said. Furthermore, this polarizes the Right and the Left. This polarization, he lamented, robs American public life of the religious-moral riches that are available to, and should be employed in, the public arena.

There is no doubt that moral discourse, in American public life, now leaves much to be desired. The culture wars and the political wars of our day have poisoned such discourse. It is in need of antidote and healing. To be sure, some of those on the Religious Right have been overly zealous in their claims. But also, it must be admitted that some on the Religious Left have been equally zealous without reason. So the dissatisfaction with the current state of the discourse and the call for a new, or renewed, moral discourse make more than a little sense.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW DISCOURSE

If there is to be a new moral discourse in American politics, what should it sound and look like?

Rev. Barber hinted that it should be tied to neither a political party nor a political agenda. When asked if he is a liberal or a conservative, he replied that he is a Christian. Rev. Wallis picked up the nonpartisan ideal by noting that, in political life, religion should function as a bridge, not a wedge. Furthermore, he stated that American society is not eager for the Religious Right to be replaced by an ascendant Religious Left; instead, society is ready for a moral center that is “not mushy” but “deeper.”

The Biblical principles of justice, righteousness, and love should be the foundation of the new moral discourse, according to Rev. Barber. These should be taken as “absolute values,” though he noted that the word values admits too much elasticity. These

foundational principles lead to concern about not only abortion in America but also disease and starvation in Africa.

Underlying the new moral discourse about politics would be the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Faith motivates people to tackle problems that seem overwhelming, such as the reality that three billion people live on less than two dollars a day, said Rev. Wallis. Hope acts against the evidence of the day and watches the evidence change. Wallis added that hope avoids cynicism—which opposes what is wrong, does not believe things will change, and therefore refuses to engage in activism for change. Critical love of the nation—not uncritical love and not loveless criticism—should motivate the new moral discourse, according to Rep. David Price (D-NC), who quoted the late William Sloane Coffin, Jr., during a panel discussion at the end of the day.

In addition, the new moral discourse must have an accompanying ethic of responsibility. “We are the ones we have been waiting for,” Rev.

Wallis challenged. People who join this new discourse need to be “capacity builders,” said Wallis, using a term from the non-profit world. The discourse might well begin in ministries, which can create models for the larger society to see, which can lead to movements for political and social change.

The day concluded with an “Interfaith Panel on Faith and Morality in Public Affairs.” During the panel discussion, Rev. Jim Abrahamson, the teaching pastor of the Chapel Hill Bible Church, described contemporary moral discourse as a “food fight,” in which those who are doing the slinging are lacking humility. Rev. Abrahamson said that the challenge for those involved in a renewed moral discourse is two-fold: first, to state a set of principles of the common good; and second, to conduct reasoned argument about how, through public policy, to best apply and implement those principles.

Rev. Abrahamson also contended that the Church’s public faith, which is an essential contributor to public moral discourse, must always oppose idolatry. In particular, the idolatry of the nation state (which the Right can promote) and the idolatry of philosophical materialism (which the Left can advance) should be exposed and critiqued for what they are.

Finally, Rev. Jim Abrahamson asserted that the Bible requires interpretation in the course of public discourse. Biblical passages should not be quoted and deployed, in public life, against an opponent. Instead, Biblical verses should be quoted and discussed, in

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public, as a part of the moral discussion. (For example, comments such as “Micah is my favorite prophet for foreign policy,” and “Micah is right, and Rumsfeld is wrong,” might well be considered out of bounds.)

This new moral discourse will not spring from the Spiritual But Not Religious community, which Rev. Wallis called a new denomination in America. Nor will it come from those attracted to the “heresy” called the “prosperity gospel.” It will emerge from religious communities in which deep theological and moral commitments are nurtured and nuanced.

COMMENTS IN CONCLUSION

Reviewing the summit as a whole, one could respond: the American Values Summit at Duke has been made necessary by political liberalism and the Democratic Party accepting and advancing a pro-choice agenda on abortion. Since this occurred over thirty years ago, many long-time Democrats have found themselves forced out of their party and watched in dismay as: their former party declined in power; political liberalism developed an understanding of humanity that is consistent with the precepts of “autonomous individualism,” and inconsistent with community and covenant; and many of those on the liberal side of the aisle drifted away from moral-religious understandings and toward the language of the naked public square. Now, over three decades after *Roe v. Wade* and with the political realignment it generated, liberalism and the Democratic Party are working to regain a moral-religious language they have lost. The American Values Summit at Duke was one such work site.

“Pro-choice arguments are effective, if the fetus is not a person,” Rev. Jim Abrahamson asserted a couple of times during the panel discussion at the end of the summit. After Rev. Abrahamson’s repeated assertion, a stunned silence blanketed the auditorium. Perhaps this indicated a strong sense, among summit participants, that, like it or not, abortion is the galvanizing moral and political issue of the day. Therefore, abortion might well be the first, though not the only, issue that tests the resilience of a new, or renewed, moral discourse.

There could be a long, spirited debate about whether or not left-of-center political forces have completely divested themselves of moral and religious resources. After all, bishops and denominational church-and-society bureaucracies churn out political statements, laced with moral and religious language, with some regularity. But in charity, that debate should be set aside. In its place, this question should be asked and addressed: Will a new, or renewed, moral discourse, resembling the one sketched by the American Values Summit, emerge in American public life? In large part, that

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depends on the generosity, civility, and wisdom of those who would join the discourse.

(Speaking of generosity and civility,

or the lack thereof, the aforementioned basketball rivalry might also become the subject of some kind of moral discourse about sports. Such a conversation could begin with a review of the recently published book, with the funniest title of the year, [To Hate Like This Is to Be Happy Forever: A Thoroughly Obsessive, Intermittently Uplifting, and Occasionally Unbiased Account of the Duke-North Carolina Basketball Rivalry](#) by Will Blythe.) (PTS) ♥

TO DUKE: LET’S TALK MORALLY

Versions of the following editorial first appeared in the [Durham Herald-Sun](#) (April 17, 2006), in [The Carteret County News-Times](#) (April 21, 2006), and in the newsletter (May 2006) of St. Peter’s United Methodist Church in Morehead City, NC.

At the end of Lent and at the beginning of Easter, the Duke University lacrosse team’s disgusting behavior and alleged crimes forced the entire Duke community into the difficult Lenten practice of self-examination. This university-based self-examination started with questions: How could these sordid incidents, admitted and alleged, have happened? Why did they occur? What personal and social harms did they inflict?

Comments and commentary, from and beyond the Duke community, have provided some thoughtful answers to these questions. Duke University President Richard Brodhead, Reverend Canon Dr. Sam Wells of Duke Chapel, Dr. Timothy B. Tyson of Duke Divinity School, Dr. Anthony Hatcher of Elon University, and others have offered helpful analyses of, and insights on, the matters at hand.

But the challenge facing Duke University is to discuss and understand the recent actions of the Duke lacrosse team in moral terms. To be sure, history, politics, sociology, economics, and law have made, and will make, significant contributions to the developing discussion. But morality and the language of right and wrong should make the strongest contribution.

That said, it must be admitted that moral discourse, in public, does not come easily these days—particularly on a university campus. There are many fashions and forces that marginalize or quiet public moral discourse. For example, the legal principle of privacy has been elevated to the societal dogma of privacy. The privacy dogma encourages each person to exercise nearly absolute freedom over against any and all moral claims.

In addition, the great political divide of our time has, at times, resulted in moral shrillness on the Right and moral silence on the Left. The recent American Values Summit at Duke [see the article above] attempted to initiate a correction to this moral drift in American politics.

Furthermore, strident declarations based on the identity politics of gender and race can easily overwhelm thoughtful, reasonable moral discussion.

Then there is the problem that contemporary society and the university have with truth and especially moral truth. Morality, when separated from truth, is for each person to create according to personal preference; therefore, public discourse about morality becomes nearly impossible.

Finally, most religious communities and their theologies today seem incapable of discussing morality in public, for too often they are into a “spirituality” that is far too precious to engage the harsh realities of the world and the university.

All of these factors, in society and university life, work against public moral discourse. They do not entirely silence moral discussion, but they certainly make it quite difficult to achieve.

A more moral discussion of the matters related to the Duke lacrosse team would involve at least two dimensions. First, there is the dimension of personal morality and immorality. The personal immorality of the lacrosse players—the drunkenness, the sexual degradation, the racist comments, the violent threat, the apparently conspiratorial silence—deserve decisive denunciation by leaders within the Duke community. These were not trivial, little mistakes. They were gross immoralities. The second dimension involves institutional morality. Does Duke University, in its established policies and regulations, have sufficient moral structures to discipline students who engage in immoral behavior? If so, does the university also have the moral will to discipline such students? Several campus panels have been established to address such matters.

All too often today American citizens and institutions rely on the law and the courts to resolve messy, conflicted situations. In the case of the Duke lacrosse team, the law should and will play a strong role in the process of resolution. However, whether or not crimes were committed by team members, repugnant immoralities, that were personally and socially destructive, were most certainly engaged in by those who should have known and acted better. Furthermore, whether or not crimes were committed by team members, Duke University has the moral responsibility to discipline them for their breach of moral boundaries.

The challenge facing Duke University is moral in character. The discussions and actions that follow should be morally weighty—for the good of players and dancers, Duke and Durham, and the larger society. (PTS) ♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

- Laity and clergy, please slow down for a moment and consider this question: would you like to do the Lifewatch ministry a big favor? If so, please suggest to your church’s missions committee, at its next meeting, that Lifewatch be added to the ministries supported by your congregation in 2007. When you do this, propose a generous amount; then, over time, follow your congregation’s budgetary process to make sure that your suggestion is added to your church’s 2007 budget. If you do this, you and your church will certainly help support Lifewatch’s witness to the Gospel of Life within The United Methodist Church and beyond.

- Dr. Amy Laura Hall, who is a professor of theological ethics at The Divinity School at Duke University, recently joined the Advisory Board of Lifewatch. Her careful theological-ethical analyses will be most helpful to the witness of Lifewatch within, and beyond, The United Methodist Church. Welcome, Dr. Hall!

- Christian Homes and Special Kids (CHASK) exists “to encourage families with special-needs children, in ways that glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and to find Christian homes for children with special needs.” For more information on this ministry of mercy, see www.chask.org.

- On March 26, at the New Bern District Lay Rally in New Bern, NC, Reverend Forrest J. Robinson reminded those present of history’s dark, long shadow this side our Lord’s return in glory. Holding us in rapt attention, Rev. Robinson, a retired (but very active) United Methodist minister who is over 80 years old, told in gripping detail of his encounter with the Holocaust.

Three of Rev. Robinson’s experiences were especially memorable. First, there was the liberation of the concentration camp at Nordhausen, Germany. Upon entering the Nordhausen camp with his Army infantry division, Robinson was shocked, as never before or since, by what he saw and smelled. Dead bodies were everywhere. Rotting under the sun on the large concourse. In three, large, deep pits. In the rows of beds of what was called a “hospital,” where a few of the nearly dead were discovered. The sight and the stench of death, the surrealistic sounds of a radio (a Glen Miller number followed by a news report of FDR’s death), and the remembrance of a sister’s birthday were too much for Robinson. He cursed God to the heavens and bent over to vomit. Later, his mind refused to remember what he had experienced for the next two weeks.

Second was Rev. Robinson’s meeting with a Nazi officer. Then at another location in Germany, Robinson was processing prisoners of war. Twelve Nazi officers emerged from the woods. One was the

stereotypical model of a Nazi officer—tall, blonde hair, intelligent. Having been to school at Oxford, this officer spoke perfect English. Oddly, this Nazi officer was wearing horse-riding pants. Under the bulk of one of his trouser legs, a pistol was discovered.

Third was Rev. Robinson's experience of the official end of World War II. Days later, Robinson was in a small German town. The noise of war was all around: sniper shots, machine gun fire, an occasional bomb blast. Suddenly, the noise stopped. Silence set in. The war had ended. Then the carillon, from the Lutheran church at the center of town, played wildly. A Nazi soldier and Robinson, who minutes earlier would have been trying to kill each other, put down their weapons and met in the middle of the street. With locked arms, they marched to the church, which was full of local citizens and soldiers from both sides. "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" was playing on the organ and being sung by the large congregation in several languages at once. For Robinson, it was a "Pentecost experience." Then and there, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10) helped bring a sense of forgiveness to Robinson for his having cursed God.

Why mention Rev. Robinson and his recent presentation in New Bern, NC? For two reasons. First, it is good to be reminded that abortion in contemporary America is not the first instance in history in which human dignity has been assaulted on a massive scale. The Holocaust involved the government and the military of the Third Reich, through coercion, taking the lives of millions of

innocent people. And abortion in America now involves individual people, through choice, taking of the lives of millions of innocent little people. Both the Holocaust and abortion are attempts to de-humanize entire classes of people. Both are attempts to erase human dignity from people created in the image of God. Such attempts—horribly grim as they are—were, are, and will always be unsuccessful in the end. After all, human dignity, because it is given to each human person by God the Creator, cannot be erased.

Second, Rev. Robinson deserves mention in Lifewatch so that others might be given the opportunity to invite him to make his powerful presentation to their congregations, district gatherings, or annual conferences. Rev. Forrest J. Robinson can be reached at: 1113 East Tenth/ Winfield, KS 67156/(620)-221-9436.

- Addressing the general assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life, Pope Benedict XVI had this to say: "The love of God does not distinguish between the newly conceived infant still in [his/her] mother's womb, the baby, the youth, the grown adult, or the elderly, because in each of them He sees the sign of His own image and likeness." (Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, news summary, March 3, 2006, information@spuc.org.uk)

- The following letter might be of some interest to the Lifewatch community.

16 December 2005

Dear Paul,

BOOK ORDER FORM: ① THE RIGHT CHOICE: Pro-Life Sermons; ② THE CHURCH AND ABORTION: In Search of New Ground for Response; ③ THINKING THEOLOGICALLY ABOUT ABORTION; ④ HOLY ABORTION? A Theological Critique of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice; and ⑤ THE JERICHO PLAN: Breaking Down the Walls Which Prevent Post-Abortion Healing.

I wish to order: ___ copies of The Right Choice (\$12.00/copy); ___ copies of The Church and Abortion (\$5.00/copy); ___ copies of Thinking Theologically about Abortion (\$7.00/copy); ___ copies of Holy Abortion? (\$8.00/copy); and ___ copies of The Jericho Plan (\$8.00/copy). These prices include shipping/handling.

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I read with appreciation your essay in the recent Lifewatch [“The United Methodist Church: Moving Toward the Gospel of Life,” December 2005], and thank you for your generous attention to some of the things I have written.

Permit me to raise a question about the use of Luther at the end [p. 5], however. Luther’s understanding of “the Word” gave a theological license for the princes and electors to assert their sovereignty against the papacy. There is, in fact, a terrible egotism in his statement, and many others like it. While he says the Word did it all, he is also saying that his interpretation of the Word was the effective agent for turning the world upside down.

You and I do not have what St. Paul calls “the principalities and powers” on our side in this struggle...

I pray the coming holy days of Christmas will be filled with grace and glory for you and yours.

As ever,
(The Rev.) Richard John Neuhaus, President
The Institute on Religion and Public life
156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400
New York, NY 10010

- This is from Dr. Donald Charles Lacy, a United Methodist clergyman and author who heads up the Lacy Institute for Ecumenism (LIFE). His December 2005 letter to the LIFE associates contained these very kind words about Lifewatch: “This quality publication is published by the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality. Its editor is one of our Associates... The most recent issue (December 2005)

carries a brilliant presentation entitled ‘The United Methodist Church: Moving Toward the Gospel of Life.’ He says two encyclicals by Pope John Paul II entitled ‘The Splendor of Truth’ and ‘The Gospel of Life,’ plus the Catechism of the Catholic Church, are unexcelled sources.”

- From Priests for Life comes this prayer: “Lord God, I thank you today for the gift of my life, and for the lives of all my brothers and sisters. I know there is nothing that destroys more life than abortion, yet I rejoice that you have conquered death by the Resurrection of your Son. I am ready to do my part in ending abortion. Today I commit myself never to be silent, never to be passive, never to be forgetful of the unborn. I commit myself to be active in the Pro-Life Movement, and never to stop defending life until all my brothers and sisters are protected, and our nation once again becomes a nation with liberty and justice not just for some, but for all, through Christ our Lord. Amen!” ♥

Our Mission:

Out of obedience to Jesus Christ, the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS) “will work to create in church and society esteem for human life at its most vulnerable, specifically for the unborn child and for the woman who contemplates abortion.” Therefore, TUMAS’s first goal is “to win the hearts and minds of United Methodists, to engage in abortion-prevention through theological, pastoral, and social emphases that support human life.”