

FANATIC RELIGION IS BAD NEWS:

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THE ABUSE OF BIBLE & REASON TO SUPPORT ANTI-ABORTION

I'm not paranoid, they really are ganging up on me. In the past few days, three pregnancy services clinics (called by my enemies "abortion clinics") hereabouts were sprayed with bullets, resulting in an as-yet-unknown deaths & many nonfatal wounds. A few months ago, Catholics & Muslims at the world conference on population & development formed an alliance to oppose the most effective means of population control, viz., contraception & abortion. The Pope's current bestseller overreads "Thou shalt not kill," a commandment specifically against murder, to include abortion, on the ground that he agrees with the expansion of "murder" to include abortion. Now Catholics & Evangelicals have formed a social-action alliance ("Evangelicals and Catholics Together," ECT), their agenda including massive efforts to make abortion illegal. The new Congress will quickly prove less protective of women's rights, especially the right to an abortion. And the Religious Right, with its fanatic rage against abortion, is growing in numbers & influence. No, I'm not paranoid, but I am anxious &--this is this Thinksheet's burden--angry about the abuse of Bible & reason to fire the self-righteous fury of those who are so radically "pro-life" as to justify, or at least excuse, pro-death action against "baby-killers" & clinics which include abortion in their pregnancy services.

1 First, let's have a look at how the New International Topical Study Bible (Zondervan/89) treats abortion: "The Bible makes no direct reference to abortion" (correct, p.669). NIV, with its conservative spin, is as scholarly as is liberal-spin NRSV. (Instance of NIV spin: Is.7.14 is trd. not from the original, Hebrew, which has "a young woman," but from the LXX [Greek, "virgin"], with no fn. to inform the reader of the switch to the early Christian Bible, which had the LXX for its OT.)

But the Study Bible is sufficiently informed & honest to admit that the Bible is **silent** on abortion. What to do? The editors could have followed the biblicist rule, in other connections often favored by evangelicals, "Where the Bible is silent, we are silent." But their project was to make the silent Bible speak against abortion. Notice how they went about it:

ASIDE to those who think what I'm discoursing on is not important: It's now Jan.2, & the bullet-sprayer, caught, is known to have been a Bible-sprayer, in his anti-abortion demonstrations screaming Bible verses--beginning the catena of Scripture quotations, in the clinic where he committed multiple murders, with "In the name of the Mother of God!" (Fearful of stirring up more anti-abortion violence, Boston's Card.Abp. Bernard Law called off his New Year's Eve anti-abortion rally.) What need does the Bible have of enemies when it has such friends?

2 "There is only one Old Testament passage dealing with the life of the fetus--the law concerning a pregnant woman who accidentally loses a child when caught between two fighting men": Ex.21.22 (also p.669, in the "Abortion" N[ote]; same p., the other quotes in this discussion of NIV). Again, true. But now see the next sentence: "Clearly God does affirm in his Word his deep concern for the unborn."

Evidence? The next sentence purports to provide it: "The Old Testament heartily declares that conception is a gift of God." Evidence (with refer. to context of the Note, viz. Ps.139.13: "...you knit me together in my mother's womb.")? Next sentence: "God fashions a baby in the womb of her [sic] mother, and plans her days. In fact, David relates his sinful nature to the time of his conception, and God's care for the unborn also begins at that point."

3 Look sharp: A woman gets accidentally kicked & has a mis & the kicker is legally liable to pay a fine to--her? no--her husband, whose property rights have been violated. From that secular situation, I can't make it all the way to God's "concern for the unborn," can you? Similar fines were imposed if an owner's domestic animal is injured or killed: the focus is solidly on property rights, not at all on gored ox or aborted fetus. Pressed so, the anti-abortion fanatic will widen out to God's concern for chn. & animals (e.g., the last v. of Jonah), or even for

the whole creation; but neither of those expansions will support the protection of the fetus by sacred (inviolable) sanction.

4 Suppose now that our fanatic eisegete (perverting reason, as all fanatics do, in this case to read anti-abortion into the Bible) insists, by one or more expansions, that God's "concern for the unborn" is an implicate of the doctrine of creation. What a thicket our rationalizer has fallen into!

(1) The Creator's concerned about pregnant rats & hungry cats; about mosquitos & a bat that eats 600 of them per hour; about all the species threatened with extinction because too many human impregnees are giving birth instead of experiencing abortion by God (=miscarriage) or human "abortioners." "Creation" is a game all can play & none can win.

The theological error here is patent. Darwin was right: no moral conclusions can be drawn from the observation of "nature," which is "creation" only when viewed from within God. In the Bible, God as Redeemer-Deliverer-Savior is primary; God as Creator is secondary-derivative, a conclusion-revelation from the experience of him as the One who restores, heals, forgives, provides a new chance, a new birth, a new hope, a new world--who "makes all things new." To argue from creation independently of redemption is an error of inattention, parallel with the linguistic error of treating a metaphor as reality because one has forgotten it's a metaphor (e.g., "God is good," treated as though "Goodness is god"; or [Mary Daly is right here] "God is Father," reversed as radical patriarchy ["Father is god"].) (Important distinction: between discursive metaphors, which we are free to use or dispense with, & revelation-privileged metaphors, which are givens in our Christian community [e.g., "God is good" & "God is Father"].).

(2) In the NIV argument, the taboo control-word is "gift": every human fetus, indeed every zygote ("conception"), "is a gift of God." Ergo this absurdity: The law forbids zygotic medicine (experimentation to learn more of the earliest stage of the human being) even though God aborts most zygotes! And this absurdity: God gave every pregnant rape victim the gift of her pregnancy! Some God! One I could not respect, to say nothing of worship. And what are we to say of "natural" horrors: are they, by virtue of being natural, gifts of God?

Well, then, are no fetuses gifts of God? All fetuses accepted gratefully as gifts from God are gifts from God: the metaphor is transactional, not ontological. Further, what dignity the fetus has is societal: both unborn & born human beings are in-community, their lives dependent on community decisions (for life or for death [abortion, capital punishment, war]).

(3) Proof-texters such as that anti-abortion murderer (above) care not for context. The context of the Psalm's v.13 is devotion: the devotee is gushing on his Deity without rational restraint. As a fanatic, he has "nothing but hatred" (v.22) for those he considers opponents of God and therefore his own "enemies." (The mentality was that of the Spanish Inquisition, which correlated with high devotion, as in the case--again--of our clinic murderer, whom neighbors knew as "very religious.") (KJV v.22 is "perfect hatred," the only occurrence of the Bible's most intense expression of hatred. A short step from such hostility to escalating violence, a straight-line movement to murder.)

(4) The only cross-ref. the NIVTSB (study Bible) gives to Ex.21.22 is Is.46.3, which NIV takes as expressing God's concern for zygote onward: "I have upheld since you were conceived"; but the Heb. cannot support this ref. to conception, as even the KJV shows. What we have here in NIV is a clear instance of deception, of translators' dirty politics on the right, which enrages me as much as when (as in "inclusive language" bowdlerizing of the Bible) it's on the left.

(5) As devotion unrestrainedly sees God's care as time-comprehensive (thus including the moment when the devotee's was only a single cell), so profound repentance sees one's sin: David was a sinner-zygote (Ps.51.5), that's how thoroughly rotten that guy saw himself as being. I believe in original sin, & this text should never have been used to prove it! Please consider the attitudinal context (mood) & literary form (in all the above instances, Hebrew poetry)!

5 I cannot close without stating that our humanity-threatened **biosphere** concludes, I am convinced, against all traditional anti-abortion argumentation.