

## THE TWO ROSARIES OF REASONING ON ABORTION

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It's Martin Luther King Day, & after participating in yesterday's anticipatory celebration, I have freedom-liberation on brain & in heart. God's freedom from the evil forces in the universe, including in humanity (Kazantzakis' central theme, including in his THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST), the biosphere's freedom from its only intra-terrestrial threat, viz, humanity. Humanity's freedom from what the old baptismal formulas call "sin, death, and the devil." The freedom of both minorities and majorities from each other's every-loomng tyranny, both instances of the freedom of the weak ("unempowered") from the strong ("advantaged") & vice versa....This comes together with Goodwife Loree's taking a rosary to a dying Methodist (she as responsible for Hospice pastoral care on Cape Cod, thinking he might find spiritual comfort through the touch of a sacramental he'd known & used before his conversion to Methodism)....All the above came together with the Craigville VI Colloquy theme, to produce this Thinksheet's title.

1. President (four days from now) Bush wants "a kinder, gentler America," & the abortion controversy promises to make us a meaner, bitterer America. As the gutsiest of our "social issues," it's the hardest internal test of our democracy to arrive at an amicable settlement of an issue or to live with its unsettlement (almost certainly the latter). Pray hard, think hard, try to speak soft (to compensate for the fact that I can't, & mustn't, except in interpersonal situations).
2. The context is the content, the order is the intent. This Thinksheet's intro intentionally thus reveals both my content & my intent. You can see, eg, that I care relatively little about the future of humanity--relative, ie, to the biosphere's; & relatively little about the future of the biosphere, which may turn out to be a failed divine experiment--relative, ie, to God's future. You can imagine, then, how far down the line of my priorities is that class of human beings whom I cannot know personally, viz, zygotes-embryos-fetuses!
3. Every zygote is a unique human being, & few zygotes become individual human beings (most failing--by miscarriage, by embryonic or fetal natural death, or by abortion--to become neonates). Yes, every individual is unique, but only those unique human beings get to be individuals who are jostled about among other unique human beings: "individual" is the social antonym of "social": God makes individuals not in mother's womb but in society's womb (including "Mother Russia" & "Mother Church"). (The same unique/individual distinction applies to every grass seed.)
4. What do I mean by a rosary of reasoning? A rosary is (1) sacred, thus appealing to the transrational (that of the real that's unavailable to reason), and (2) circular, a closed string of beads, emblematic of a enclosed paradigmatic world with its own internal logic irrefutable from beyond the charmed circle. Now, I'm not against rosaries, I'm for them as wise devisings combining the tactile, the attentional, & the intentional. But when Khomeini uses one with the fifty names of Allah (the first one being "The Compassionate"!) & then commits mayhem on the minds & bodies of his own people, something's missing. Like everything else, rosaries have their downside. The downside of my pro-choice rosary is that it's easily abused to support abortion (as in Japan, where 53% of embryos-fetuses are aborted) as only one among many conception-&-birth prevention procedures; & also to lessen the social sanctions against promiscuity.
5. The downside of the pro-birth (with rhetorical insult, "pro-life") rosary is manifold. For a starter, consider this bogus logic, which I've extended to reveal its flaws: (1) The fetus is a "unique individual" (misunderstood as an intensive tautology). (2) Each "unique individual" is a God-made "person" called to eternal fellowship with God (a claim equally applicable to the hundreds of billions of dead human zygotes). (3) The unrepeatable is inherently sacred. (4) The sacred is inviolable. (5) The willful death of a human being is murder. (6) Abortion (& war? & capital punishment?) being the wilful death of a unique, individual, unrepeatable, sacred human being, of infinite meaning & "ultimate value\*," abortion is murder, & (7) aborters, or at least abortionists, should be judged under the criminal code vis-a-vis murderers....\*Jim Wallis, introducing the Nov/80 SOJOURNERS "special issue" on abortion....The phrase is his; the spelling out of the seven beads on the pro-birth rosary is mine.
6. Just think of the much more raped & polluted condition of earth were God not

(to cop a phrase from the antiabortionists' lexicon) "in the abortion business"! As early as sixteen years ago, the (Rockefeller) Federal Commission on Critical Choices put the **environment** at the top of the list, & that they were right in giving the threats to the biosphere priority over all other human problems has become steadily clearer through the intervening years. To take a single but horrific instance, Brazil's rain-forests have been suffering a blight so serious that it's easily visible even by the higher satellites; their blight is us, the flow of human flesh, which Brazil with its 2,000% inflation seems powerless to stop even though the world's atmosphere is being degraded & 90% of the world's species of flora & fauna are facing extinction. Facing this & many another ecological nightmare, let's also face this: **Every abortionist is a worker together with God.** Every abortion is a victory for the biosphere against its enemy number one. Yes, there are other perspectives for viewing abortion. I'm saying this is one. Holistically, globally, it is the most important. And the one that causes the greatest revulsion, repentance, humility: our flesh is the world's most serious disease!

7. Except for members of the International Flat-World Society, humanity has made the Copernican shift from geocentricity to heliocentricity: facts undermined the Ptolemaic paradigm, & it collapsed. Now we face an even more consequential paradigm shift (call it **Copernicus II**), from anthropocentricity to biocentricity, from the narcissism of centering in our species to the realism of centering in the biosphere. Will the facts erode our narcissism fast enough so it collapses before irreparable, irreversible damage is done to our planetary mother & home? I fear not. Humanity's psychospiritual inertia is too great. The technology for population-control improves every year, but so does the resistance: even many Christians are committing the sin of fetolatry (fetus-worship). Further: To primitive taboos against intervention in the procreative process, Christianity as a conversional religion adds the burden of overemphasis on the individual, the goal & subject of conversion. Our Christian religion, in most ways the best among the world's religions, is here a net negative, a liability, a hindrance to our moving into God's future. See how dismal the prospect: Christians must be asked to repent of their religion in order to be faithful to their faith. Not many of us, I fear, will respond to the Spirit's call to come up higher into the new paradigm, let's call it **ecothology**.

8. How answer the charge that those of us who **promote** abortion instead of only permitting or of proscribing it are hard, insensitive, maybe even misanthropic? My answer: Our enemies on this issue, those willfully blind to the truth that "new occasions teach new duties," are less kind to humanity. For their failure to promote abortion & their fight against even permitting it weighs on the scale to increase the tonnage of human flesh & accordingly increase human misery by (1) an exponentially degraded bio-support-system, (2) starvation on a scale previously unimaginable, and (3) triage ecowars of the shrinking advantaged to defend themselves against the expanding unadvantaged (eg, S.Africa's B/W proportion increasing, in less than one generations, from the present 1:5 to 1:17). If humanity does not act swiftly to shut down the babyfaucet by all means, including abortion, we'll soon face the Hobson's choice of all sinking into degradation (if the advantaged compassionately "identify" with the unadvantaged, which the old version of Christianity recommends) or some enjoying (vicariously? representatively?) privileges earth can't extend to many, certainly not (by categorical imperative) to all --"can't" in the sense of biospherically dooming even if physically possible (which it isn't). Bioethicist Willard Gaylin weeps over the "terrible irony" that already we can't afford life: life-saving has become too expensive except for a very few. Hobson's Choice + Sophie's Choice (triage: shall we draw lots to see who lives, as the disciples did [Ac.1] to replace Judas?). How allocate shrinking resources among expanding humanity? How face constrictions when we've been taught to hate & deny limits? How dispose of our offal when we're (WG) "running out of out [as in "Throw the garbage 'out'"]"? Can the liberal church demythologize "the sacredness of the individual" so as to theologize the humanity-in-biosphere sustainable system? Can we free ourselves, in time, from thralldom under Enlightenment "rights" into the freedom of biblical "responsibilities"?