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## The Culture of Death is Losing Its Grip

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That line was echoed on the editorial pages of the nation’s leading newspapers. The Washington Post noted, “While the law exempts abortions, and its backers insist that it has nothing to do with the abortion debate, it provocatively defines an ‘unborn child’ as ‘a member of the species homo sapiens, at any stage of development who is carried in the womb.’” The paper’s editors dare not explain how they would define “a member of the species homo sapiens” less provocatively. At the same time, they do understand that any attention to fetal life undercuts the logic of abortion. “This definition does not coexist easily with the notion that killing one’s own fetus is a matter of constitutional right, which is one of the reasons the bill appeals to abortion opponents.”

Without doubt, The Washington Post remains one of the most fiercely pro-abortion newspapers in the country. But credit should be given where credit is due, and the paper’s editorial is actually far more accurate and meaningful than the editors must understand. Even the barest acknowledgement of fetal life obviously “does not coexist easily with the notion that killing one’s own fetus is a matter of constitutional right”—and that’s why the pro-abortion movement is now on the defensive. With sophisticated imaging technologies now taking us into the womb even at the earliest stages of fetal development, we are now confronted with the undeniable reality that a child lives in the womb. Those graphic pictures, a gift of high technology, have become a nightmare for the abortion industry.

The Post’s editors tried to put the law in a larger context. “This law does not impinge on abortion rights in any immediate sense. It is, however, part of a long-term pattern in which legal abortion is surrounded by criminal laws and other regulations that protect fetuses and define them in legal terms as separate individuals. This new law will aid criminal enforcement only marginally; it will be another unwarranted step toward making constitutionally protected abortion seem an anomaly in the context of law.”

The New York Times chimed in with its own lament, claiming that the passage of the Unborn Victims of Violence Act represented “an ominous new stage” in “the Republican campaign against women’s basic reproductive and privacy rights.” The Times headlined its editorial as “Reproductive Rights Assaulted,” and declared that the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, along with the Partial Birth Abortion Act, have a common theme: “Profound disrespect for women.”

Again, the editors of the Times reveal the contours of their own worldview. Concern for the fetus equals “profound disrespect for women.” The twisted nature of this deadly logic becomes clear when the editors of the Times, like their colleagues at The Washington Post, decline to indicate when they believe human life to begin. Once these editors—sitting

at the very apex of cultural influence—admit even the existence of the question, their pro-abortion logic begins to fall apart.

Even as the President signed the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, three different federal courts were poised to review the constitutionality of the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003. In Manhattan, U.S. District Judge Richard C. Casey asked Dr. Timothy Johnson, one of the abortion doctors challenging the law, if the fetus felt pain during a partial-birth abortion. When asked, Johnson first said he knew of no research on the subject. Earlier in the day, another physician had testified that fetuses sometimes survive dismemberment in the womb in the course of an abortion. “Simple question, doctor,” the judge pressed. “Does it cross your mind?” Johnson denied that he had ever considered the question. “Never crossed your mind?” the judge asked. The doctor answered, “no.”

We now face the inescapable fact that Dr. Johnson was either telling the truth or lying. Either way, we are looking at a moral monster. If he was telling the truth, we have a doctor performing abortions without even considering whether the fetus feels pain as it is dismembered in the womb. If he was lying, we have a doctor who cannot admit the truth—and knows that the fetus feels pain as he destroys it with blade and suction. Can America face this ugly reality?

The pro-abortion press just doesn't know what to do with this. Nicholas D. Kristof, editorial columnist for The New York Times, offered his support for abortion rights in a commentary published in the April 7 edition of the paper. Kristof claimed to find abortion “a difficult issue.” Why? Kristof's difficulty is that “a fetus seems much more than a lump of tissue but considerably less than a human being.” This is yet more evidence of the moral and intellectual vacuum at the heart of the pro-abortion movement. What is this being Kristof sees as “more than a lump of tissue but considerably less than a human being?” It's a human baby, Mr. Kristof—and nothing less than a human being, yet unborn.

This is why the abortion rights movement fears the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, the Partial Birth Abortion Act, and any other legislation that admits the existence of the fetus. If life does not begin at conception, when does it begin? Sen. Feinstein complains that the Unborn Victims of Violence Act “covers children who aren't children,” and she is betrayed by her own words. Just when does a child become a child? Nicholas Kristof claims to believe that the fetus is more than tissue, but less than a human being. Then, what is it, Mr. Kristof?

The pro-life worldview has integrity and credibility on this issue because we have answers to these questions. Human life begins at fertilization, when the egg and sperm exchange chromosomal information. Human life deserves possesses dignity and deserves respect from this moment onward. To make an arbitrary decision that human life begins at any other point is to surrender to the logic of the Culture of Death. That logic is breaking down before our eyes, and the abortion advocates know it.

In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its infamous Dred Scott decision [Scott v. Sanford], ruling that Mr. Scott, a fugitive slave, must be returned to his owner. The Court's decision stated that Mr. Scott was personal property, not a person, and was thus at the disposal of his owner. That case fueled the growing abolitionist movement and is now one of the most embarrassing chapters in the history of our highest court. Why? The decision led to the end of slavery precisely because it demonstrated the great evil lie at the heart of slavery—that African Americans were property, not persons. The nation knew that was a lie, and eventually the truth became undeniable.

The Roe v. Wade decision is this generation's Dred Scott decision. This time, the Court ruled that the fetus is just tissue, not a person. That awful lie is less believable by the day. The fetus is now in view and cannot be denied.

America's current Culture War is a Civil War fought on different terms and with different weapons—but it is no less important. Once again, nothing less than human dignity hangs in the balance.

