

## The Pastor's Desk: 1989 – 1993

### Abortion-Euthanasia

In front of our church we had a sign and some small white crosses as telling reminders of Canada's abortion tragedy. Why the sign and the crosses? Why continue to protest the abortion practice when the right-to-life movement has clearly not made any spectacular headway against pro-abortion crusaders? We dare not stop our protests. The abortion issue affects all of us. If society refuses to protect the unborn why should it protect the weak, the terminally ill, the elderly? It is therefore no surprise that our society is now readily discussing euthanasia and assisted suicide as pro-choice issues.

One of Canada's leading spokesman against abortion was the distinguished Christian philosopher and author George Parkin Grant (1918-1988). His earliest comments on abortion were apparently those recorded in the notebook he kept in 1956-57, under the heading "Remarks about abortion": "The argument that it is murder seems to me irrefutable-unless the mother is to die ... if one does not believe human personality is sacred, what does one believe?"

Grant was an astute observer of the Canadian scene. He shows the background of our current moral malaise. The abortion debate and the consequent increasing carelessness about the dignity of human life must be put into the framework of Canada's process of secularization. In his book *Philosophy in the Mass Age* (1959), Grant points out that Canada's old systems of meaning have disappeared. He notes that Protestantism no longer has a clear appeal to the Bible as the source of meaning, as honestly and directly held by the large part of English speaking Canada a hundred years ago. "The mass of people," says Grant, "no longer find in it that unambiguous meaning within which they can live their lives." God seems absent today.

Grant observed a marked shift in moral standards. He wrote that for the pro-choice advocates, abortion has become a matter of convenience, a permissible act and practice when the need arises. He counteracted this argument by saying that the objective moral law does not depend on what we think. Moral standards are not relative but absolute. And he quotes Cicero who said, "Only a madman could maintain that the distinction between honourable and dishonourable, between virtue and vice is only a matter of opinion."

### Euthanasia

Euthanasia is frequently in the news. The Washington State voters defeated a proposal that would legally protect doctors who perform active euthanasia. Our House of Commons has joined the debate. Some MPs want to give "qualified medical practitioners" the right to commit euthanasia. Some want to protect physicians from being charged with a criminal offence for withholding treatment that would keep alive patients who want to die. These are scary developments.

Euthanasia or mercy killing has been defined as "an attempt to cause someone to die whom one believes would be better off dead." The widespread clamor for mercy killing has

a direct link to abortion. When the life of the pre-born is no longer considered sacred, why should the life of the suffering elderly be respected? Pro-abortionists argue that the provincial health system should pay for abortion. Pro-euthanasia advocates argue that the rising health cost and an increasing elderly population should lead to society's re-evaluation of one's right to die." Or as Dr. Christian Barnard called it, "a good death."

Our highly individualistic culture has put a premium on rights. The pro abortionists' theme "It's my body and I'll abort that. fetal tissue if I want to," has become "It's my body and I'll die if I want to." Our culture does not know how to handle suffering. David Neff wrote, "Cut from its biblical roots, our society seems pain-illiterate, unable to read the handwriting of either God or nature in the experience of anguish."

As a church we should state clearly and positively that no one has the right over his/her own life. Our life belongs to our Creator. We have no right over our own body. No one, as Scripture says, lives to himself, no one dies to himself (Rom.14:7). Our times are in the hands of God (P.31:15). But as we oppose abortion and euthanasia, the church must offer an alternative.

We must show Christ's compassion to the suffering, and help those who cannot help themselves.

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