

ABORTION, THE MARGINALIZED, AND THE VULNERABLE: A SOCIAL JUSTICE PERSPECTIVE FOR REDUCING ABORTION†

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Note to readers: This paper was presented at a public forum at Arizona State University sponsored by the Division of Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies. This was one of two pro-life presentations. There were also two pro-choice presentations: one by the CEO and state president of Planned Parenthood, the other by a medical school professor who is a regional ACLU board member. The intent of the conference was to foster civil dialogue and find common ground. The dialogue was surprisingly cordial. The fact that the conference organizers hired two armed guards to be present for the entire evening speaks of how ugly and counterproductive this debate has become, and how antagonistic some “anti-abortion” responses are to a truly “pro-life” perspective (valuing all life as God does).

As an evangelical leader, I was greatly encouraged and deeply saddened by what I experienced at this conference. I was greatly encouraged at the positive response from numerous listeners, including several Planned Parenthood staff members who said they had never heard a pro-life presentation like this and were deeply moved and challenged. One academic told me later in the evening that he/she grew up in a conservative Christian church and was shamed for asking questions about the poor and needy. Thus, as a young adult he/she “left the church and never went back.” This individual went on to say, “If growing up I had heard the social justice message I heard from you tonight, I don’t think I would ever have left the church.” This response highlights the tragic consequences of evangelicals failing to teach and live out biblical moral priorities surrounding justice/mercy. It also speaks of the positive opportunities that arise when we do.



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I. Abortion, Human Rights, and Social Justice¹

I have been active professionally with the issue of abortion for many years. I became involved in the pro-life movement as a young minister and seminarian. This flowed from my conviction that all life is sacred and should be valued and protected, particularly those who are most marginalized and vulnerable. This is a historical Christian conviction, one that caused Christians over the centuries to risk their lives to protect the defenseless and weak and to fight against oppression. I was, and am, deeply concerned at the individual² and societal³ harm that comes from devaluing any human life, particularly “the other”—those different from us. History is replete with tragic examples of what happens when those with greater power determine that a certain race, age, caste, religious group, or gender is of less value and hence can be marginalized, exploited, or even exterminated. I have

1. As a biblical ethicist, I derive my understanding of “social justice” primarily from biblical teaching on “justice” and “mercy.” “Mercy” is an active commitment to alleviate human suffering regardless of the cause. “Justice” is an active commitment to insure that all humans, particularly those with the least status and power (since they are most often recipients of injustice) are treated with value, respect, and fairness. It also means standing with the oppressed, fighting against oppression, and confronting oppressors. On biblical definitions of “justice” and “mercy” see Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 235–280; and Ron Sider, “Justice, Human Rights, and Government: Toward an Evangelical Perspective,” in *Toward an Evangelical Public Policy*, ed. Ronald J. Sider and Diane Knippers (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 163–193.

There is a growing body of evangelical scholarship demonstrating that justice and mercy, especially for the vulnerable, oppressed, and broken, is a canon-wide moral priority in Scripture. See Ron Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, 5th ed. (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2005); Glen H. Stassen and David Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Dowers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003); John Stott, *Human Rights and Human Wrongs: Major Issues for a New Century*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999); and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983). The following summarizes the biblical data supporting this thesis. (1.) It encapsulates what God desires of his people (Mi 6:8; Jas 1:27) and “what it means to know God” (Jer 22:3, 13–17). (2.) It offers some of the surest evidence of conversion and godliness (Jb 29:12–17; Ez 18:5–17; Mt 25:31–46). (3.) It forms the criteria for particularly rich blessings (Is 33:14–17; Lk 14:12–14) and harsh judgment (Ex 22:22–24; Ez 22:27–31). (4.) It lay at the heart of Jesus’ ministry and message (Lk 4:18–21).

2. This is most obviously true for the approximately 1.2 million fetuses that are aborted annually in the United States, but abortion also causes grave consequences for the women who undergo them, their family and partners, as well as those who perform and assist with the procedure itself. On the rarely discussed emotional trauma experienced by those who work in the abortion care industry, see Rachel M. MacNair, *Prism Magazine* 16 (November/December 2009): 8–16.

3. There is considerable evidence that legalized abortion not only harms the millions of unborn children who are aborted, but devalues life for the living. For instance, Vincent Rue documents the increase in child homicide and abuse since abortion has been legal in America, and summarizes the research, stating, “acceptance of abortion erodes instinctual parent-child bonding, increases parental aggressiveness against their defenseless offspring, and thereby increases the probability of subsequent child abuse,” “Death by Design of Handicapped Newborns,” *Issues in Law and Medicine* 1 (1985): 207.

witnessed firsthand the results of genocide, exploitation of the poor, and horrific gender violence in East Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And often, injustice that is created by devaluing and dehumanizing one specific group in one specific manner will unleash a host of additional unanticipated injustices. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words written from jail were brilliant and prescient: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."⁴

This leads us to the tragic irony of much of the abortion debate. And there is tragic irony on both sides of the issue. I will start with the pro-choice camp. At the heart of historical pro-choice ideology is the commitment to liberate and protect women in the context of male oppression. (And there is overwhelming evidence that patriarchal-inspired oppression of women has been, and continues to be, one of the greatest scourges of human history.⁵) In a world where since the dawn of history those rights have been systematically threatened and denied through male oppression and patriarchal systems which devalue women, the legal right to abortion is seen as inextricably connected with women's basic human right to self-determination, particularly over their bodies, health, and sexuality.⁶ Andrea Dworkin articulates this plainly:

[T]he practical reality is that as long as sex is forced on women, women must have the right to abortion, absolutely, no matter what it means, no matter what you think it means. Abortion is ideologically central to understanding women's condition. What abortion means is the absolute right to control the reproductive functions of our bodies.⁷

Thus, abortion is seen as a social justice issue. Recent "third wave" feminism has enlarged social justice concerns to non-Caucasian women. This is reflected in the argument that outlawing or restricting abortion unjustly impacts minorities.

There are many tragic ironies in this type of pro-choice application of social justice to abortion. I'll note just a few. African-Americans have experienced as much or more egregious injustice than any ethnic group in America, with an estimated five million perishing just from the process of being shipped to the New World as

4. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963. See also King, *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: New American Library, 1964).

5. There is so much careful documentation from multiple disciplines applied historically from every corner of the globe that I will merely cite two recent non-academic sources here: Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York: Knopf, 2009); and Ron Sider, "Gender and Justice Today," *Priscilla Papers* 21 (2007): 4–8.

6. For a concise defense of abortion as a basic human right, see Center for Reproductive Rights, "Women Have the Right to Abortion," in *Feminism: Opposing Viewpoints*, Christina Fisanick, ed. (New York: Gale Group, 2008), 110–17.

7. Andrea Dworkin, *Letters from a War Zone* (Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 1993), 144.

slaves.⁸ Yet currently more African Americans are killed by abortion than the other seven leading causes of death combined.⁹ African American women have almost five times the abortion rate as compared with white women, in large part due to their lower socioeconomic status, limited resources, and marginalization.¹⁰

In much of the world, particularly Asia, abortion has often been utilized as an expression of patriarchal devaluing of women with astoundingly destructive consequences for females and the broader society. For instance, due to the overwhelming preference for males, who are considered more desirable, there are an estimated one hundred million “missing females” in the world, primarily because they were aborted or killed shortly after birth, leading to great gender disparities particularly in India and China.¹¹ This gender birth disparity has particularly increased among the more affluent who have access to ultrasound technology and hence can choose to abort female fetuses. A recent Chinese Academy of Sciences report warned that at the current trajectory, one in five young Chinese men will be unable to find a bride in the next decade because there will be thirty to forty million more young men than women.¹² In other words, China may soon have a young male population the size of the whole young male population of America with little prospect of marriage because their female peers have been killed since they were not considered to have as much value as males. We are already seeing this gender disparity in China and elsewhere in Asia lead to increased physical violence, rape, and global sex trafficking.¹³ Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Let’s now move to the pro-life camp. The pro-life movement has also been driven by a commitment to human rights in the face of perceived egregious injustice. In this case, the taking of an innocent human life by someone with more power who

8. Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 5. For an analysis of the issue of mortality rates surrounding the Atlantic slave trade, see Herbert S. Klein and Stanley L. Engerman, “Long-Term Trends in African Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” *Slavery & Abolition* 18 (1997): 36–48.

9. Heidi Unruh, “Life, Hope and a Future: Healthcare and Abortion,” *Evangelicals for Social Action*, available at: <http://www.worddeednetwork.org/Article.asp?RecordKey=4EBB5E0F-65E6-4412-8750-DE210BA4CDA9>.

10. Ibid. Susan A. Cohen, “Abortion and Women of Color: The Bigger Picture,” *Gutmacher Policy Review* 11 (2008): 2. It should be noted that Dr. Alveda King, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s niece, is heavily involved in the pro-life movement and helps direct Priests for Life African-American Outreach (<http://www.priestsforlife.org/africanamerican>).

11. Amartya Sen, “Missing Women—Revisited: Reduction in Female Mortality Has Been Counterbalanced by Sex-Selective Abortions,” *British Medical Journal* 327 (2003): 1297–98.

12. “Gendercide: The Worldwide War on Baby Girls,” *The Economist*, March 4, 2010; Wei Xing Zhu, Li Lu, and Therese Hesketh, “China’s Excess Males, Sex Selective Abortion and One Child Policy,” *British Medical Journal* 338 (2009): 1211.

13. “Gendercide: The Worldwide War on Baby Girls”; Laura J. Lederer, “Female Feticide and Its Impact on Human Trafficking,” *Prism Magazine* 18 (March/April 2010): 8–12.

simply determined that unborn life was of lesser value. In human rights terms, we pro-lifers see abortion as the strong devaluing, marginalizing, and violating the weak, denying them their basic human rights in a most complete and final manner.

Yet tragic social justice ironies are not limited to the pro-choice movement. “Pro-life” means the valuing of all human life whatsoever, giving particular attention to the care and protection of the weak and marginalized. Yet all too often it means “valuing only the lives I deem valuable.” I confess that for many years my understanding of being pro-life was minimalistic. I prided myself on placing a high value on the life of the unborn, but didn’t extend the same concern and value to babies once they were born, particularly the poor and ethnic minorities. All too often those of us in the pro-life movement are, at best, known for only being anti-abortion, and, at worst, for being anti-social justice.¹⁴ For instance, of the 113 members of Congress that the nonpartisan Children’s Defense Fund identified as “the worst” for children, all are pro-life.¹⁵

Many pro-lifers have been scathing in their criticism of President Obama, in particular noting that one of his first executive orders overturned the “Mexico City Policy” which had barred federal funds from going to international organizations that performed or promoted abortions. I was also deeply disturbed by this action. But these same pro-life critics have been glaringly mute in acknowledging that one of President Obama’s first executive actions was robustly pro-life. He ordered an immediate ban on the use of torture to interrogate enemy prisoners.¹⁶

This pro-life schizophrenia is particularly acute here in Arizona. I could give various examples related to our current pro-life elected officials, but I will offer just one. Joe Arpaio has been the Maricopa County Sheriff since 1992, having been elected to this office five times in a row. He has been extremely popular

14. Glenn Beck, an influential conservative talk show host and author provides an extreme, recent example of this. Beck, who is staunchly pro-life, told his listeners in March of 2010 that if their pastor spoke of social justice from the pulpit, they should immediately leave that church for those are merely “code words” for socialism and fascism. For an excellent rebuttal from a leading evangelical social justice ethicist, see David P. Gushee, “Glenn Beck vs. God: The Bible Speaks for Itself,” *The Huffington Post*, March 17, 2010.

15. Cristina Page, *How the Pro-Choice Movement Saved America: Freedom, Politics and the War on Sex* (New York: Perseus, 2006), 45. This Children’s Defense Fund congressional scorecard can be found at: <http://www.childrendefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/2004-cdfac-congressional-scorecard.pdf>. This reflects data from a 2004 scorecard, but the current situation remains virtually unchanged.

16. Ironically, the pro-life Bush administration was willing to use “harsh interrogation tactics” on enemy combatants, including techniques such as waterboarding, which had previously been prosecuted by the United States in war-crimes trials after World War II; see Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti, “In Adopting Harsh Tactics, No Look at Past Use,” *New York Times*, April 22, 2009. For an excellent evangelical ethical assessment of the immorality and ineffectiveness of torturing prisoners, see David P. Gushee, *The Future of Faith in American Politics: The Public Witness of the Evangelical Center* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 121–39.

with pro-life social conservatives. He has won particular respect from pro-lifers for going (unsuccessfully) all the way to the Supreme Court in his efforts to restrict county prisoners from getting abortions. So how “pro-life” are adults treated in Arpaio’s jails?

He boasts about being “America’s toughest Sheriff” for his “tough on crime” approach, which has included chain gangs, pink underwear for male prisoners, a tent city (where prisoners are housed year-round outdoors in tents even in the summer when temperatures can reportedly reach 150 degrees in the top bunks), and for extremely aggressive pursuit of undocumented immigrants.¹⁷ John Dickerson, one of my seminary students (who for the record is a social conservative and strongly pro-life) while a journalist for the *New York Times*, wrote a carefully researched investigative article on Sheriff Arpaio and the living conditions in the Maricopa County jails. This award-winning article was entitled “The Price of Inhumanity.” Dickerson documented numerous chronic, life-threatening conditions in the county jails, resulting in Sheriff Arpaio having had fifty times as many lawsuits filed against his jail system as the New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston jail systems combined, costing taxpayers over forty-one million dollars. Dickerson cited the findings of an independent auditor who stated “[t]he current correctional healthcare program at Maricopa County is not in compliance with the basic healthcare rights provided to inmates under the U. S. Constitution” and constitutes “cruel and unusual punishment.” Dickerson concluded that “at least 11 inmate deaths have directly resulted from Arpaio’s refusal to heed such warnings.” The unborn have seemingly more value and deserve human rights that we persistently deny to unworthy prisoners. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

But a proper and robust pro-life posture is that every human being has intrinsic value and possesses innate human rights regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or social status. This should apply to the born as well as the unborn, citizens and immigrants, rich and poor, pro-life proponents as well as abortion providers and post-abortive women. And we should be particularly careful to protect the human rights of the vulnerable and marginalized. Thankfully, more and more American religious pro-lifers are developing this broader social justice understanding of what pro-life means.¹⁸

17. On Sheriff Arpaio’s response to immigrants, see Ryan Gabrielson and Paul Giblin, “Reasonable Doubt,” *East Valley Tribune*, July 9–13, 2008. Gabrielson and Giblin received a Pulitzer Prize for this five-part investigative series which concluded that the Sheriff’s immigration program, particularly his saturation patrols launched in immigrant neighborhoods, “has brought MCSO into violation of federal rules on racial profiling, caused 911 response times to soar, and pushed the agency into financial crisis.”

18. See for instance the recent column by Nicholas Kristof, “Learning from the Sin of Sodom,” *New York Times*, February 28, 2010. Two significant works which support and reflect this thesis are: David Gushee, *The Future of Faith in American Politics* and Ronald J. Sider and Diane Knippers, eds., *Toward an Evangelical Public Policy*.

At the same time, more pro-choice advocates are recognizing that pro-life human rights concerns must not be entirely dismissed, that there are numerous negative consequences of abortion; thus, we need to reduce its frequency. Naomi Wolf, a pro-choice feminist, argues,

I will maintain that we need to contextualize the fight to defend abortion rights within a moral framework that admits that the death of a fetus is a real death; that there are degrees of culpability, judgment, and responsibility involved in the decision to abort a pregnancy... and that we need to be strong enough to acknowledge that this country's high rates of abortion—which ends more than a quarter of all pregnancies—can only be rightly understood as what Dr. Henry Foster was brave enough to call it: “a failure.”¹⁹

Clearly pro-life and pro-choice adherents have very different understandings of how social justice should be applied to abortion, particularly whose rights take precedence. But the good news is that in spite of our weighty, passionate differences on the legality and morality of abortion, both sides are driven by a concern for social justice. And both sides want to see abortions reduced. And therein lies fertile ground for united efforts to reduce abortion in America.

II. Applying Social Justice to Reduce Abortion Prevalence

I would now like briefly to suggest three broad social justice activities to reduce abortion rates. It would take extensive analysis to develop the application of these categories, so I will simply seek to provide “big picture” suggestions supported by the literature.

A. Material (Physical) Assistance

Abortion is a serious procedure with serious consequences. I believe most women who have abortions know this all too well, but feel they lack any other viable option. As Frederica Mathewes-Green, a pro-life feminist puts it, “no one wants an abortion as she wants an ice-cream cone or a Porsche. She wants an abortion as an animal, caught in a trap, wants to gnaw off its own leg.”²⁰ Providing material assistance in the form of financial and healthcare resources demonstrably reduces abortions. The latter also reduces unplanned pregnancies, which are

19. Naomi Wolf, “Our Bodies, Our Souls,” in *The Ethics of Abortion*, 3rd ed., ed. Robert M. Baird and Stuart E. Rosenbaum (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2001), 180.

20. Frederica Mathewes-Green, *Real Choices: Listening to Women: Look for Alternatives to Abortion* (Ben Lomond, CA: Conciliar Press, 1997), 11. This statement was quickly embraced and cited by both sides of the debate—Planned Parenthood in its Public Affairs Action Letter and by the Pro-Choice Network Newsletter as its quote of the month.

highly correlated with abortions—40 percent of unplanned pregnancies in the United States are terminated by abortion.²¹ In terms of health care, we should note that the United States has the highest abortion rates in the developed world, much higher than countries such as Japan, Germany, and Britain where there is widespread public acceptance of abortion, far fewer practicing Roman Catholics or conservative Protestants, and where abortions are provided for free. T. R. Reid has demonstrated that the critical difference is that all of these other countries provide some form of affordable universal health care.²²

The correlation between poverty and elevated abortion rates is undisputable. The abortion rate among women living below the federal poverty level is more than four times that of women above 300 percent of the poverty level.²³ Thus, it is not surprising that surveys of women who have had abortions reveal the vast majority did so because they felt they lacked the resources to have a child, or having a child would compromise their existing and future economic resources. Roughly three-fourths of the women felt they could not afford a baby at that time, were concerned they would not be able to finish school, or were concerned that a baby would seriously impede their employment.²⁴ Political scientist Joseph Wright has taken this much further and through careful socioeconomic analysis quantified the impact of economic assistance on abortion rates. He found that a two standard deviation increase in economic assistance to low-income families (roughly \$100 per person) was correlated with a 20 percent drop in abortion rates in the 1990s. Nationally, this translated into approximately 200,000 fewer abortions. Additionally, 4 percent higher male employment was associated with a 21 percent lower abortion rate.²⁵

B. Social Support

Material assistance and social support are closely related and equally important. They are social justice activities because they both relate to the provision of

21. "Facts on Induced Abortion in the United States," Washington D. C.: Guttmacher Institute, July 2008.

22. T. R. Reid, "Universal Health Care Tends to Cut the Abortion Rate," *The Washington Post*, March 14, 2010.

23. "Facts on Induced Abortion in the United States," Guttmacher Institute.

24. Lawrence B. Finer et al., "Reasons U. S. Women Have Abortions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives," *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 37 (2005): 110–118; Mathews-Green, *Real Choices*, 189–201. Similarly, worldwide studies find that the second most common reason women report for having an abortion are socioeconomic; Akinrinola Bankole, Susheela Singh, and Taylor Haas, "Reasons Why Women Have Induced Abortions: Evidence from 27 Countries," *International Family Planning Perspectives* 24 (1998): 117–127.

25. Joseph Wright, "Reducing Abortion in America: The Effect of Economic and Social Supports," *Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good* (November 2008): 7; http://catholicsinalliance.org/files/CACG_Final.pdf (accessed March 18, 2010).

necessities that women facing crisis pregnancies often lack. Social support is a pivotal and complex need often misunderstood by those who have little experience working with women facing an unwanted pregnancy. Since pro-life adherents view the unborn as vulnerable, valuable, tiny children who should be preserved and protected, we might glibly draw the conclusion that most women who have abortions simply don't value children. The facts suggest otherwise. In reality, the factors that motivate a woman to have an abortion are frequently complex and multifaceted. Often, women with an unwanted pregnancy are conflicted because they value children, but feel they do not have the emotional or other resources to care for a child (or an additional child) properly. Sixty percent of women who have abortions already have at least one child.²⁶ They may in turn feel shame over this very conflict. This helps explain why so many women apparently feel they cannot resolve the conflict created by an unwanted pregnancy through giving the child up for adoption. For instance, in surveys of almost two hundred pregnancy center directors across the United States, out of twenty-seven possible responses, the number one reason the directors gave for their clients having abortions was "adoption appears too difficult" (emotionally or practically).²⁷

Women facing an unwanted pregnancy are often conflicted over the negative impact having a child might have on their other relationships. It is particularly difficult when a pregnant woman feels that continuing her pregnancy will imperil her relationships with the most important people in her life or that those people will be unwilling or unable to assist her in the demands of parenting. Such relational conflicts are primary factors in abortions. When Mathews-Green went around the country and conducted "post-abortion listening groups" and talked with women about the factors that led to their abortion, the number one reason cited was their relationship with the baby's father, and the second leading factor was pressure from parents.²⁸ In surveys of pregnancy center directors, the second most common reason cited for abortion was the husband or partner was "absent, undependable, or insufficiently supportive."²⁹

These findings demonstrate the tremendous need women facing a crisis pregnancy have for strong social support. Material assistance will be of very limited long-term value, and could prove counter-productive, if it is not tied to social support. This is the area where pro-life advocates have perhaps done some of their best work by providing counseling, mentoring, life coaching, etc., for women in crisis pregnancies and for young mothers.

26. "Facts on Induced Abortion in the United States," Guttmacher Institute.

27. Mathews-Green, *Real Choices*, 12.

28. *Ibid.*, 173.

29. *Ibid.*, 12.

C. Addressing Abuse

Pro-life discussions of abortion have frequently assessed it as a form of child abuse, but few have assessed abortion as a result of abuse. This is most unfortunate, since research shows there is an astounding correlation between physical and sexual abuse and elevated abortion rates. For instance, in one study of clients in an abortion clinic, the majority of women (50.8 percent) self-reported that at some time in their life they had experienced physical or sexual abuse.³⁰ When they become pregnant, women who are experiencing intimate partner violence are much more likely than non-abused women to have an abortion.³¹ Childhood sexual abuse, in particular, has been shown to greatly increase rates of sexual promiscuity, which in turn greatly elevates unplanned pregnancy rates, which in turn leads to greatly elevated abortion rates.³² For males, having experienced or witnessed abuse in childhood is also directly related to increased rates of abortion because this dramatically increases the likelihood that these males will impregnate a teenage girl. For instance, compared to adult peers who report no childhood abuse, males who experienced sexual abuse at ten years of age or younger are 80 percent more likely to get a teenage girl pregnant. Males who were sexually abused in childhood and experienced or witnessed physical violence in the home are 110 percent more likely to get a teenage girl pregnant.³³

Finally, it is important to note that abuse is not only highly correlated with first time abortions, but plays an increasingly significant role in subsequent abortions. One study found that “women presenting for a second or subsequent abortion were more than 2.5 times as likely as those seeking a first abortion to report a history of physical abuse by a male partner or a history of sexual abuse or violence.”³⁴

30. Anna Whitehead, and Janet Fanslow, “Prevalence of Family Violence Amongst Women Attending an Abortion Clinic in New Zealand,” *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology* 45 (2005): 321.

31. Dore Hollander, “Does Abuse Lead to Abortion?” *Family Planning Perspectives* 30 (1998): 203; N. N. Sarkar, “The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Women’s Reproductive Health and Pregnancy Outcome,” *Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology* 28 (2008): 266–71; Lena Widding Hedin and Per Olof Janson, “Domestic Violence During Pregnancy,” *Acta Obstetrica & Gynecologica Scandinavica* 79 (2000): 625–30.

32. Joseph M. Boden, David M. Fergusson, and John L. Horwood, “Experience of Sexual Abuse in Childhood and Abortion in Adolescence and Early Adulthood,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 33 (2009): 870–76; Thea van Roode et al., “Child Sexual Abuse and Persistence of Risky Sexual Behaviors and Negative Sexual Outcomes Over Adulthood: Findings From a Birth Cohort,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 33, Issue 3 (2009): 161–72.

33. Robert F. Anda et al., “Abused Boys, Battered Mothers, and Male Involvement in Teen Pregnancy,” *Pediatrics* 107 (2001): 19.

34. William A. Fisher et al., “Characteristics of Women Undergoing Repeat Induced Abortion,”

III. Final Case Study

In an article on how to reduce abortions, evangelical ethicist Glen Stassen uses a case study from his former community in Louisville, Kentucky.³⁵ His wife and one of his parishioners were nurses at Louisville and Jefferson County's Teenage Parents Program (TAPP) for pregnant teenage students. In 1998, the year of this study, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that in Louisville 75 percent of pregnant teenagers younger than fifteen years old, and 39 percent of teenagers fifteen to nineteen years old, had abortions. In contrast, only 1 percent of the twelve to nineteen year-old girls at TAPP had abortions. Furthermore, these girls had much lower school dropout, drug abuse, and suicide rates than their peers. Almost none of the girls got pregnant again while they were still in school. How did they achieve these stunning results? Stassen explains, "TAPP gave pregnant teenagers a way to continue school while taking care of their babies, and while building an economically viable future. The clear result was that they chose not to have abortions." TAPP provided child care while the girls were in class. The girls each worked one class period each day in the nursery, receiving hands-on expert child care instruction. Social workers provided counseling and helped the girls address individual needs and plan their future. Nurses and doctors provided OB/GYN care and medical counseling. If this case study is any indication, providing material assistance, social support, and addressing abuse are proven ways to dramatically reduce abortions.

Conclusion

Pro-life and pro-choice adherents have very different understandings of how social justice should be applied to abortion, particularly whose rights take precedence. Yet, in spite of our weighty and passionate differences on the legality and morality of abortion, both sides are driven by a concern for social justice, and both sides want to see abortions reduced. Therein lies fertile ground for united efforts to reduce abortions in America. Thus, I suggest the three broad social justice activities I outlined above to reduce abortion rates: material (physical) assistance, social support, and addressing abuse. I, like many of you, have devoted my life to social justice causes because I believe that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. I am sustained by the flip side of this principle, which I also believe to be true: justice anywhere challenges injustice everywhere. May we work together to assist those in need to reduce the number of abortions in America.

Canadian Medical Association Journal 172 (2005): 640.

35. Glen Stassen, "What Actually Works: The Right Supports Can Reduce Abortion Rates," *Sojourners Magazine* (June 2009), 18–20.