

CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

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Abortion and the Presidential Campaign

by Jeff Fuller

In the most recent presidential election campaign, the issue of abortion received a few moments of limelight. Actually the word "limelight" is the incorrect word to use. It was more like a light sweeping back and forth looking for truth.

The statement of candidates was either: (a) that they believed that abortion was permissible and should be legal, or (b) that there was an exception clause to the belief that abortion was wrong, meaning "except in the case of rape, incest, or danger to the life of the mother."

In other words, abortion is acceptable if the couple created a potential life by accident, by infidelity or some other reasoning which justifies the act of murder. Yet, if the woman is raped or conceived a child due to relations with an immediate family member or if carrying the baby to full term creates a potential threat to the mother, then by all means abort the child.

Abortion advocates are at least not as hypocritical. They believe or propose that the formation of life within the womb is a non-life, a piece of tissue, a growth mass which is not considered a "baby" until this non-life, tissue or growth mass breaches the birth canal. They proclaim that, since this is the case, then abortion is the proper way to dispose of this unwanted non-life, tissue or growth mass. With this reasoning, this is especially true in the case of "rape, incest, or danger to the life of the mother."

While pro-choice advocates wave a banner for the rights of women to make a decision based on a firm clause, the pro-abortion camp waves a banner for all abortions including the clause. Both are doing so with the thought that women's rights are at stake.

For the purpose of this article, we assume that all of our readers know and understand fully that abortion has long-term ramifications and that they object to abortion in all forms. We clearly stand on solid ground as we stand with the truth of God's Word. The biblical mandate regarding abortion is clear: It is murder, and it is wrong.

This is where we deal with the exception clause, since there seems to be some well-meaning, educated and vocal individuals who advocate the clause. Why is abortion wrong except in certain situations? If abortion is murder, why do some condone murder in the event of "rape, incest, and the life of the mother"?

Rape and incest are evil acts, perpetrated in the most inhumane and degrading ways, and are the most unthinkable, unspeakable of all sex acts. Once it happens, it is a sure mental death for a woman and is, by the law of the land, sure punishment for the aggressor. But if a life is conceived due to such a sick act it seems to be even more devastating. The question stands to reason: Should a child conceived in such a manner deserve to be punished for such an awful act?

This child is still a creation of God. Just because the child is the result of a heinous act does not negate the fact the child is still under the watchcare of an all-seeing, all-knowing God. The scripture still stands: "I have formed you in the womb..." (Jeremiah 1:5)

With this in mind, the first two items of the clause do not hold water. Moving on to the third part of the exception clause we ask, "What about the 'life of the mother'?" If the mother is in danger, her life is at risk, does this mean we abort a life to save a life? Is this justifiable?

In some ways, through research and conversations with individuals during my 27 years of ministry, I am familiar with the potential of this situation. For instance, in the case of a mentally retarded or severely handicapped child, the potential to the health of the mother giving birth at full-term is very high, and the decision is not an easy one. For a couple who is able to trust God, their decision may be difficult, but they will find strength. It will be through the Word of God, prayer and an unyielding reliance on God's plan that the decision will be made. In the end, it is a medical decision, which many times is made in the moments when life hangs in the balance. In this author's humble opinion, this is a non-issue -- not a clear cut-and-dried reason to be admitted into the exception clause.

The latter cannot be so easily dismissed with little or no thought. There are struggles and doubts but, in the end, we are at God's mercy, and we place our lives in His hands to direct us in whatever ways He desires.

In the end, abortion is wrong: It is murder and is a curse on society. God gives life, and God takes away life. Praise be to God.

(Fuller is a member of the Christian Life Commission and pastor of Rockford Baptist Church, Rockford.)

*The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources.
The opinions in the Christian Life Report are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission.*

Confessions of a White Man Born in a Racist Culture

by Darryl Wood

John joined my high school class in the mid-1960s. He, along with a handful of other African-American students, enrolled in my previously all-white Alabama high school. They bravely challenged a sad social system. A smattering of black faces in a sea of white.

Although I never saw John being mistreated physically, he certainly endured verbal and social abuse. Few of my classmates wanted to sit beside him or engage him in conversation. Some called him inappropriate names behind his back and to his face. Mostly he got ignored.

Academically John lagged behind. I wonder now if that was because of lack of ability, inferior educational background or just plain disorientation at being thrown into a hostile atmosphere.

If I could find John now I would say, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry I was one of those who discounted you. I'm sorry I didn't try harder to be your friend. I'm sorry you had to endure the injustice of it all."

Most early-generation, white Baby Boomers can relate. We grew up in a time when public drinking fountains and restrooms were labeled "Colored" or "White." We did not eat in the same restaurants or attend the same churches or schools. As a boy, that's all I knew.

This environment produced in me ambivalence. I was not taught to hate people of color. But I wasn't taught to accept them either. Until John, they simply existed on the periphery. Our face-to-face encounters in school challenged my ambivalence.

Eventually I came to a place where I could no longer be a Peter, who ate with the Gentiles when only Gentiles were around and ignored them when Jews arrived (Galatians 2:11-16). The time came for me to make a choice: Either love all people or be a hypocrite. When I chose love, a new pool of wonderful folks invaded my life.

All these years later I have to ask, "Are we birthing a new generation of Alabamians in a racist culture?" To be sure, Alabama's problematic immigration issues need to be addressed in reasonable ways. But the rush to rid our state of "illegal" immigrants has produced a rhetoric that causes many to view all Hispanics with suspicion. The Christian community, however, is not charged with the enforcement of immigration law. Our duty is to convey Christ's love to everyone. A refusal to do so gains us hypocrite status. May God help us to say "No" to a new version of our racist past.

(Wood is pastor of First Baptist Church of Vincent and a member of the Christian Life Commission.)

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

January 20, 2013



A proper view of human life is incomplete without an understanding that it is God who creates human life. The Bible tells us God is intimately involved with the fashioning of every human (Psalm 139). And if we are a creation of the Most High God, we are precious in His sight. Innocent human life is to be protected -- no matter one's age or condition.

www.ilivevalues.com/issues/life



Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Romans 13:10a (NKJV)

Racial Reconciliation Sunday

February 10, 2013

"The redeemed have a personal obligation to work to have a society that reflects God's standards of right and wrong. Because racism and bigotry are clearly wrong, it is the responsibility of Christians and other people of faith to initiate the important work of racial reconciliation. Our desire should not be for our well-being alone, but for the well-being of all those whom God loves."

Richard Land, www.ilivevalues.com/issues/race



A Rock and Roll Conversion

by Jesse Conte



All I ever wanted to be was a rock star.

At age 24 with hair two feet down my back and an earring, I was the drummer in a rock-and-roll band.

Though I had grown up in a religious Italian-American family, I knew nothing about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

It was the 1980s, and my “day job” was at a music store in Huntsville. A colleague named Mark Warren was a member of a local evangelical church. He spoke to me about God.

I was unreceptive.

All the stories you hear about the worst part of the “rock-and-roll lifestyle” were part of my life: drugs, cigarettes and carnal relationships. By 1984, I was seriously considering suicide.

On the road for a gig in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, we pulled into a service station. The windows were down and, while we weren’t looking, someone placed an evangelistic tract on the back seat. I found it, quickly flipped through it, understood its clear message about how to go to heaven and avoid hell — and then tossed it out the window.

Later, sitting depressed in the back of a darkened night club, the rest of the band rehearsed as I planned my suicide.

In those moments of deep despair, I felt God say to me, “The success and peace you are seeking and desiring you will find in a one-on-one relationship with Jesus Christ.”

That wasn’t the moment when I accepted Christ. The next few days were a blur.

When I returned to Huntsville, Mark invited me to a revival service. During the invitation, He asked if I would like him to go forward with me.

As we huddled with the pastor, Mark was crying — his tears soaking my red-and-white pinstriped shirt.

I heard God say to me, “As Mark sheds his tears, so my Son has shed His blood for your sins. Go free.”

I looked at the pastor and said, “I am a free man.” I walked back to my seat. I never again did cocaine or tobacco. Christ had set me free from this bondage.

Later I moved to Montgomery, joined a Christian band and began work as a graphic artist. I also finished a degree in graphic design at Auburn University Montgomery.

Now as husband to my wife, Donna, and father to our three sons — Nathaniel, Jacob and Joseph — I want to be the godly man Christ wants me to be.

Our lives have been touched by two Montgomery churches. At Vaughn Forest Baptist Church I played drums for three years as part of the worship team. Back when we first joined, VFBC was a new church start — meeting in trailers, one of which was a mobile chapel provided by the State Board of Missions.

Now our family serves God at Montgomery’s First Baptist Church — also a strong missions-minded church, which started Vaughn Forest.

As a state missionary, I seek to honor God and help His kingdom by striving for excellence as the graphic artist on staff at the State Board of Missions.

Once I wanted to be a rock star. Now I just consider it an honor to serve the Rock of Ages as one of His ministers.

(Conte serves as an associate in Communications Services at the State Board of Missions.)

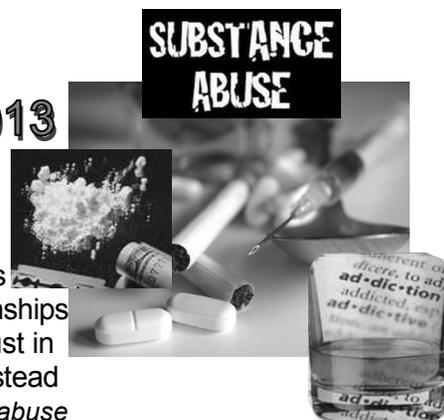
A Rock and Roll Conversion

March 17, 2013

Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday

It is God’s will that we be filled with the Holy Spirit, not alcohol or illicit drugs (Ephesians 5:18). Substance use and abuse negatively impacts our relationships with others and trashes our Christian witness. It signals we have placed our trust in something other than God and reflects an empty search for joy in chemicals instead of in Christ.

www.livevalues.com/issues/substance_abuse





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BIBLICALLY DEFINED MARRIAGE

“Southern Baptists have consistently affirmed our support of the biblical definition of marriage as the exclusive union of one man and one woman ... Resolved, That we deny that the effort to legalize ‘same-sex marriage’ qualifies as a civil rights issue since homosexuality does not qualify as a class meriting special protections, like race and gender; and Be It Further Resolved, That we encourage Southern Baptists everywhere to fight for the civil rights of all people where such rights are consistent with the righteousness of God.” -- “Resolution on Same-Sex Marriage” (The full text of all 2012 resolutions is available online at www.alsbom.org/convention)

Alabama Baptist State Convention, Nov. 13, 2012

ADULTERY AS FAILURE AND WEAKNESS

“Adultery is not a sign of strength. It is a sign of weakness. Adultery is not an indicator of healthy adulthood. It’s an indicator of juvenile behavior. Adultery is not a sign of self-controlled leaders. It’s a sign of out-of-control leaders. Adultery is not the badge of great leadership. It’s the badge of failed leadership.” -- Thom S. Rainer, “Adultery & leadership: lessons from the Petraeus-Broadwell scandal”

Baptist Press, Nov. 12, 2012

PROPER ROLE OF SCIENCE AND LAW

“Science is good when we participate in it to understand the world that God has made. Law is good when we recognize that it is the way that God and His Creation works. It is incumbent upon

us to understand the world in which we live and our place in it. But, when we try and use that knowledge to grasp at power for ourselves so that we can be in control or so that we can get what we want, then we are engaging in nothing more than Voodoo.” -- Alan Cross, “C.S. Lewis on Magic and Science as Twins”

www.DownshoreDrift.com, Dec. 3, 2012

PRAY TO REVITALIZE

“As we advance through the Praying Across Alabama effort, let us make praying for church revitalization a high priority. Without revived and recommitted Christians and revitalized churches, our ministries will be weaker, our influence will be anemic, our local areas needing to be reached with the Gospel will be negatively impacted and our state, nation and world will see less of a Christian witness. ... When God’s people are in a close walk with Him, their sense of mission is highlighted. Their witness is brighter and their God-given confidence is renewed.” -- Rick Lance, “A Call for Church Revitalization”

www.RickLance.com, Oct. 26, 2012

STUDENTS’ RIGHTS

“A student does not lose his rights to freedom of speech and freedom of religion protected by the First Amendment simply because he walks through the front doors of the school. ... Christian students also have the right to share their beliefs, evangelize, and invite students to participate in church activities so long as they are not disruptive or coercive in doing so.” -- Matthew Sharp, *Faith & Family Values*

www.erc.com, Sept. 6, 2012