

## **“There Was a Life That Had to Be Cared For”**

BY Dave Andrusko

“The human imagination can do many extraordinary things. But we can’t imagine love. Or perhaps I mean loving: love as a continuous state; one that carries on in much the same way from day to day, changing and growing with time just as people do. The great stories of literature are about meeting and falling in love, about infidelity, about passion. They are seldom about the routines of married life and having children.”

From “I’m not a saint, just a parent” by Simon Barnes, London Times, November 13

For years I have been fascinated by an insight Philip Yancey, one of my favorite writers, borrowed from theologian H. Richard Niebuhr. I have shared it so often and in so many settings, it’s odd that I did not think of using it in my role as editor of NRL News until last month.

Yancey writes, “Before its [the Rosetta Stone’s] discovery Egyptologists could only guess at the meaning of hieroglyphics. One unforgettable day, they uncovered a dark stone that rendered the same text in Greek, ordinary Egyptian script, and previously indecipherable hieroglyphics. By comparing translations side by side [since they knew Greek and ordinary Egyptian script], they mastered hieroglyphics and could now see clearly into a world they had known only in a fog.”

To 98% of the American people, the abortion debate is like that. It is shrouded in a fog of conflicting claims and counter-claims. What can unlock the “secrets”—tell them who has the legitimate claim to their allegiance?

For those who honestly don’t understand whether pro-lifers or pro-abortionists are right, what you might suggest to them is that they lay the conflicting claims side and side and use as the Rosetta Stone the way the two sides deal with the mother and child bond.

To pro-abortionists (on their best day), the unborn child is a appendage that can/ought to be cut off if “it” comes into existence at an inconvenient time. It’s hard to miss the staggering irony.

Six days a week and twice on Sundays, pro-abortionists accuse pro-lifers of forgetting/ignoring/overlooking the woman. Yet it is they who treat the woman in isolation.

They are the ones who insist on viewing the unborn as if the child, unbeknownst to the mother, were a trunk that mysteriously made its way onto the ship. As mere luggage, rather than a real human being, the unborn child can be tossed overboard without compunction.

We recognize the moral (not to mention biological) poverty of seeing the mother as if she were a solo passenger. This means our task is much more difficult, but far more rewarding.

We care about both. We want both to reach safe harbor.

But there are other categories of powerless people who need our help: babies born with serious disabilities and the medically vulnerable elderly, to name two. If I could, let me briefly talk about babies who used to be called "Baby Does."

When you read Liz Townsend's story on page 24, you learn the depressing news that a prestigious British think tank not only is recommending limited (or no) treatment for premature babies, it also expressly took disability into account when formulating its heartless guidelines.

But at least these children were allowed to be born. The same kind of advanced technology that allows parents to view their bouncing baby boy in utero also affords them the hitherto secret knowledge that Johnny won't be perfect. Overwhelmingly, the sentence for daring to be imperfect is death.

Simon Barnes and his wife, Cindy, chose otherwise. In a remarkably powerful excerpt from a new book that appeared in mid-November in the London Times, Barnes wrote about his five-year-old son, Eddie, whom they knew before he joined them outside the womb had Down syndrome.

Barnes, the lead sports writer for the London Times, refuses to be "canonized." The title of his piece is, "I'm not a saint, just a parent."

He is the first to admit how easily things could have turned out otherwise. "At the hospital, when they discovered on the scan that Down's syndrome was a possibility, they very kindly offered to kill him for us."

Had he been married to someone other than Cindy, Barnes writes, "and had that woman preferred to go the way of amniocentesis and termination, I have no doubt that I would have gone along with that, too, and treated parents of Down's syndrome children with a lofty pity."

But "They needn't have bothered," he writes. "The idea of not caring for something in your care is an abomination to her. The idea of not caring for her own child was impossible to contemplate. Amniocentesis? Not a chance, it puts the child at risk. And no matter what such a test would say about the child, she would go ahead. There was a life that had to be cared for."

"There was a life that had to be cared for." Not a bad motto for the Pro-Life Movement.

There will be occasions in the future when people who have formed no alliances will, in essence, throw up their hands in frustration. They will lament, "Who is right?" These situations should be seen for what they are: golden opportunities.

Your answer will be simple. You will ask them to consider which side refuses to choose death over life, refuses to puzzle over elementary human biology as if it were written in Sanskrit, would be incredulous if you suggested they could abandon their own, and refuses to give into despair.

I'll take our chances, won't you?