

ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

Dr. James P. Eckman, President Emeritus
Grace University, Omaha, Nebraska
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Planned Parenthood and the “Negation of Human Dignity”

In 1947 C.S. Lewis published *The Abolition of Man*, in which he charted the “negation of human dignity in the name of progress, or compassion, or humanity, or science.” He lived long enough to see the accuracy of his assessment: “For the power of Man to make himself what he pleases means, as we have seen, the power of some men to make other men what they please.” Planned Parenthood, in its harvesting of fetal body parts and in its view of the human being, manifests “the negation of human dignity” and an effort to “make men what they please.” Historian Joseph Loconte of King’s College argues that “there is a haunting familiarity to the arguments defending Planned Parenthood’s sale of body parts from aborted babies for medical research: an echo of another era of medical innovation amid moral ambiguity.” He is talking about the era of English anthropologist Francis Galton, who coined the term “eugenics” (“good birth”), as he championed the scientific methods of selective breeding and sterilization. Galton wrote that “What Nature does blindly, slowly, ruthlessly, man may do providentially, quickly, and kindly . . . As it lies within his power, so it becomes his duty to work in that direction.” Progressive political leaders in the early 20th century worked for and achieved sterilization laws in the various states and other procedures to improve the gene pool of America. “Human perfectionism was on the horizon,” they argued. Viewing the eugenics movement as a frontal “assault on the Bible’s teaching about human nature: a reduction of the individual to mere biology,” conservative and orthodox Christians protested. For example, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien insisted on “the unique moral status of the human person.” Undoubtedly, Tolkien’s creation of robotic orcs as servants of Mordor totalitarianism in *The Lord of the Rings* was directed at the dangers of genetic engineering. Thankfully, the eugenics movement in America died.

But, it is alive and well in 21st century America—in the logic of Planned Parenthood that permeates Postmodern American civilization. In the name of rights and liberties, the human being growing in the womb is now a means to an end. Columnist George Will writes that “The abortion industry’s premise is: At no point in the gestation of a human infant does this living being have a trace of personhood that must be respected. Never does it have a moral standing superior to a tumor or to a hamburger in the mother’s stomach.” Within Planned Parenthood and its political sidekick the Democratic Party, there is the “single unshakable commitment to oppose any restriction on the right to inflict violence on pre-born babies.” Both blatantly defend the limitless right to kill and distribute fragments of babies that “intrauterine medicine can increasingly treat as patients.” For both, the pre-born human is a means to an end; in Lewis’s words, it is the “negation of their human humanity” and “the power of some men to make other men [in this case pre-born humans] what they please.”

Consider further this “negation of human dignity”:

- Colleagues at a Texas Planned Parenthood affiliate jokingly called the storage freezer for the dismembered remains of aborted babies “the nursery.” For Planned Parenthood, POC usually refers to the “products of conception” but some jokingly see POC as “pieces of children.”
- Undercover videos released by the Center for Medical Progress (CMP) show Planned Parenthood staffers picking through the remains of unborn children and haggling over fees for their body parts and tissue.
- *World Magazine* reporter Jamie Dean cites a *New York Times* interview with Cate Dyer of Stem Express, who stated that fetal tissue accounts for about 10% of the company’s business, with an overall revenue of \$2.2 million; the company has seen a 1,300% growth in 3 years. In the *Times* article, Dyer described the remains of unborn babies as “biohazardous waste, discarded waste” and spoke of collecting “tissues from those waste products.”
- Planned Parenthood contracts with companies to collect and burn the remains of unborn children. The aborted babies are treated as “waste products.”
- Planned Parenthood’s president, Cecile Richards, in public statements and interviews, has not addressed these horrific examples of the “negation of human dignity.” She criticizes and lashes out at those who condemn their treatment of pre-born babies as politically motivated and defends these procedures as a “right,” as an example of “reproductive health” for women. She alludes to such critics and to CMP as part of a “war on women.” Columnist Kathleen Parker critiques the recent public relations campaign launched by Planned Parenthood. One ad features a breast-cancer survivor who says she would not have survived without the health care she received from Planned Parenthood. But, as Parker so eloquently demonstrates, Planned Parenthood only offers a manual breast exam; it performs no mammograms and refers women to other medical clinics for medical care. Such an ad, Parker argues, is “at least exaggerated if not purposely deceptive.” The other Planned Parenthood ad argues that defunding Planned Parenthood would strip women of health care. The defunding bills Congress had been considering would have no effect on women’s health care. All public funding would be shifted to federally qualified community health centers, which provide all women’s health care services except abortion, without regard to a person’s ability to pay. Parker cites one example—the state of Maine. Maine has 4 Planned Parenthood facilities and 135 community health centers. Nationwide, there are 9,059 community health care centers and only 669 Planned Parenthood facilities. Hence, Planned Parenthood’s ad is at least exaggerated, if not purposely deceptive.

Finally, permit me to address an outrageous claim that Planned Parenthood often makes about its abortion services: Even though Planned Parenthood performs hundreds of thousands of abortions every year, its family planning operations, they maintain, objectively prevent many more abortions. So, they argue, to oppose channeling dollars to Planned Parenthood is to be objectively pro-abortion!! Columnist Ross Douthat brilliantly critiques the entire Planned Parenthood argument: “It is not the pro-life movement that has forced Planned Parenthood to

unite actual family planning and mass feticide under one institutional umbrella. It is not the Catholic Church or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles or the Southern Baptist Convention or the Republican Party that have bundled pap smears and pregnancy tests and HPV vaccines with the kind of grisly business being conducted on those [CMP] videos. This is Planned Parenthood's choice; it is liberalism's choice; it is the respectable center-left choice . . . that's telling pro-life and pro-choice Americans alike that contraceptive access and fetal dismemberment are just a package deal, that if you want to fund an institution that makes contraception widely available then you just have to live with those 'it's another boy!' fetal corpses in said institution's freezer, that's just the price of women's health care and contraceptive access, and who are you to complain about paying for it, since after all the abortion arm of Planned Parenthood is actually pretty profitable and doesn't need your tax dollars?"

Douthat concludes: "Tell the allegedly 'pro-life' institution you support [i.e., Planned Parenthood] to set down the forceps, put away the vacuum, and then we'll talk about what kind of family planning programs deserve funding. But don't bring your worldview's bloody hands to me and demand my dollars to pay for soap enough to maybe wash a few flecks off." Hypocritically, Americans stand in horror at ISIS beheading nearly two dozen Coptic Christians on the shores of Libya; yet make no protest about the grotesque slaughter and dismemberment of nearly 60 million human beings since 1973. Through such silence, America has implicitly institutionalized its own "negation of human dignity."

See Joseph Loconte, "Planned Parenthood and the Eugenics Movement," www.nationalreview.com (17 August 2015); Jamie Dean in *World* (22 August 2015); George Will in the *Washington Post* (3 August 2015); Kathleen Parker in the *Washington Post* (3 August 2015); and Ross Douthat in the *New York Times* (5 August 2015).