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David Alton on 50 years of legal abortion



WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Abortion Act at 50: The Bill that wiped out millions

by **David Alton**

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A blunder by the Bill's critics opened the floodgates to abortion (PA)

Only 29 MPs foresaw that the Abortion Act would create a deadly, lucrative new industry

At 11.04am on Friday October 27 some of us will gather in Parliament Square to mark 50 years since Royal Assent was given to the 1967 Abortion Act. A law which was intended to allow abortion in certain circumstances became an elastic law, a law with catastrophic consequences. At the time only a handful of MPs recognised it as a dangerous and slippery slope.

Those 29 MPs who voted against its Second Reading did so because they contested the repeated claims that the law would only be used in extreme and tragic circumstances. They were right.

In the half century that has elapsed since its passage a staggering 8,894,355 unborn babies have lost their lives – one death every three minutes; 20 lives ended every hour. With routine and repeat abortions, what was once a crime has become a lucrative industry.

The sums are staggering. Over the past decade, an eye-watering £757,832,800 of taxpayers' money has been paid to the private sector abortionists. The *Times* reported that the boss of Marie Stopes International (MSI) – which we pay millions of pounds to carry out abortions in Britain and overseas – received a phenomenal £420,000 in one recent

year alone (four times the Prime Minister's salary). Twenty-two of their employees were paid more than £100,000.

As these operatives oversee the tragic, industrialised destruction of human life and fuel the conveyor belt that abortion has become, what are the implications for the unborn child, their mothers and society?

Last year the Care Quality Commission criticised MSI after finding dead unborn babies in open bins. Think, too, of the 32-year-old Irish mother Aisha Chathira, who, in 2012, died from a heart attack in a taxi caused by extensive internal blood loss after she had an abortion in an MSI facility in London.

But beyond the death toll, much else has flowed from this law.

The medical profession has been subverted, with the Hippocratic Oath quietly dropped from medical courses because of its explicit condemnation of abortion. Preferment in gynaecology and obstetrics has become virtually impossible for those who refuse to comply.

Conscience has been subverted, as evidenced by the dismissal of two Catholic midwives in Scotland who refused to become complicit in ending the lives of unborn children. Free speech has been subverted, with speakers like Tim Stanley refused a platform at Oxford University because of his pro-life views. Non-compliant journalists, pharmacists, environmental scientists, blue collar and social workers have been forced from their jobs, while Jacob Rees-Mogg was recently told he should resign from Parliament for daring to defend the right to life. Political parties have made it a question of ideology. All of which smacks of a coercive liberalism worthy of a totalitarian state.

Once the sanctity of human life has been thrown into open trash bins it leads to one enormity after another: the creation and destruction of more than three million human embryos, with only four per cent seeing the light of day; the grotesque manufacture of animal-human hybrid embryos; and attempts to legalise euthanasia.

The sloganeering culture of death endlessly demands rights but ignores duties towards the weak and vulnerable. It elevates "choice" above all other considerations, debasing language and brooking no opposition.

This culture claims to be on the side of equality and non-discrimination. Yet it takes no action when little girls are aborted merely because of their gender or when a disabled person can be aborted up to and even during birth (as 90 per cent of all babies with Down's syndrome are).

This culture builds on the eugenics promoted by the campaigner Marie Stopes, who railed against the "diseased and feeble minded" and "the very lowest members of the community". It also builds on the remarks of peers, in the 1967 House of Lords debate, who described children with disabilities as "Mongols", "spastics", "monstrosities", "abnormal", "subnormal", "retarded" and "defective".

This culture refuses to break the financial link between the abortion industry and independent counselling, and to provide help for women caught in crisis. It prefers to bribe Northern Irish woman with offers of £1,400 for every baby they abort in England rather than give them equivalent funding or help to save the child or to promote adoption.

It extends its tentacles into other societies by denying charities – like Samaritan’s Purse – funding for their humanitarian work in West Africa unless they agree to undertake abortions, and by funding programmes like the brutal one-child policy of forced abortions in China.

This culture ignores the inconvenient findings of scientists like Professor KJS Anand, one of the world’s leading experts on foetal pain, that in the light of “incontrovertible” evidence “it seems prudent to avoid pain during gestation”. It refuses to look at the accumulating evidence of the physical and psychological effects of abortion on women.

It creates its own untruthful narrative, illustrated by the recent remarks of the president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists that abortion is just like having a bunion removed. When George Orwell wrote in 1984 that “The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command,” he had people like her in mind.

This, then, is where the 1967 Abortion Act has taken us and these are the arguments that will be ignored as media cheerleaders celebrate these 50 years with distorted and one-sided programmes that caricature opponents as misogynist, unthinking, unfeeling bigots.

But as the scales are falling from people’s eyes, the tide of history is turning; and, looking to the future, these heart and head arguments are slowly changing minds.

As we contest the belief that the ending of a life is just another choice, the anti-slavery movement’s patient and dedicated reformers and abolitionists can teach and inspire us.

It took decades to shift opinion, and for Parliament to accept that it wasn’t simply a “choice” to own another human being as a slave. Martin Luther King’s niece, Dr Alveda King, who had two abortions that she now bitterly regrets, tells us that in our generation “the right to life is the greatest human rights cause of our times”.

Opinion polls repeatedly show that the public want the law made more restrictive – and not decriminalised. Hundreds of MPs – not 29 – now want the Abortion Act reformed and many are pro-life. They simply need to be more PC: politically courageous.

Yes, I wish that more people believed in the transcendent nature of the sanctity of human life, but I admit that this is dependent on a belief in God. However, the good news for the unborn is that science has caught up with faith and is the game-changer. In an editorial, *Nature* magazine spelt it out clearly: “Your world was shaped in the first 24 hours after conception. Where your head and feet would sprout, and which side would form your back and which your belly, were being defined in the minutes and hours after sperm and egg united.”

And every time the scan allows us to gaze through a window into the womb we know that this is no bunion but a new member of the human race.

Prove to me that life does not begin at conception and I will change my mind about protecting that new life. Until then, I will continue to insist on Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – that everyone “has the right to life” – and hope that before another 50 years have passed, our laws and attitudes will reflect these truths.

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