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## ANTI-ABORTION PRO-LIFERS AND ANIMAL PROTECTION PRO-LIFERS HAVE A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK TOGETHER

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I'd like to begin by thanking Sherry and Michael for writing *Beating Hearts*. There are so many important overlaps between abortion and animal protection, and they inform each other in profound ways. For years Peter Singer was a voice in the public wilderness doing this—so it is very good to have their work pushing this kind of conversation forward.

It was reading Peter Singer which converted me to animal protection, though I would go on to find even more persuasive support for it in my own normative tradition: Roman Catholicism. (I wrote a book on this called *For Love of Animals: Christian Ethics, Consistent Action*.<sup>1</sup>) I've been anti-abortion since I found out what abortion was, but I became a pro-life feminist when I learned about the history of abortion-rights activism. (More on this below.)

For those who aren't aware, I just wanted to mention that issues surrounding animal protection are exploding in Christian theology. The *Journal of Moral Theology* devoted an entire issue to animals two years ago<sup>2</sup>—the first time anything like this has happened. The Society of Christian Ethics now has a special interest group related to animal protection.<sup>3</sup> David Clough and Society for the Study of Christian Ethics in England just had an annual meeting devoted to animal ethics.<sup>4</sup>

The US Catholic Bishops and their Catholic Climate Covenant initiative is specifically moving against factory farming as a primary contributor to global climate change.<sup>5</sup> Also, just recently I was in the Washington DC offices of the Humane Society of the United States in a meeting of Catholic leaders strategizing about how best to mobilize Catholic support. Lots of exciting ideas and strategic planning were present. For everyone who is rightly excited about

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Camosy, *FOR LOVE OF ANIMALS: CHRISTIAN ETHICS, CONSISTENT ACTION* (2013).

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of Moral Theology*, June 2014.

<sup>3</sup> SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS, ANIMAL ETHICS INTEREST GRP. (July 4, 2014), <https://scethics.org/groups/%5Bog-id%5D/animal-ethics>.

<sup>4</sup> SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS, 2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE: CHRISTIANS AND OTHER ANIMALS, <http://www.ssce.org.uk/conference/2016-annual-conference-christians-and-other-animals>.

<sup>5</sup> Catholic Climate Covenant, <http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org>.

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Meatless Monday, we in Catholic world have the original meatless weekday, Friday, and we are going to work to bring it back.

In this meeting I made the case that what I'm calling "Pro-Life 2.0" could be wonderful allies in the animal protection movement. Activists in Pro-Life 2.0 are committed to working for protection of vulnerable populations from violence *wherever we find them*. More and more pro-life public figures are also becoming convinced by the arguments for non-human animal protection—including Matthew Scully—author of the book *Dominion*<sup>6</sup>, and speech writer for George W. Bush and Sarah Palin. Anecdotally, I can say that my students, who often come into my classes with a kind of "yeah, that's bad but what about personal freedom and choice" approach to both issues, are very open to converting away from that position to the side of legal protection for vulnerable and voiceless populations.

But let me now turn to two places where I'd like to press Sherry and Michael's arguments. The first has to do with what I take to be inconsistencies their views about the moral status of prenatal and neonatal children. (I tend to use the words "child" and "baby" at least as much as I use "fetus." No one, after all, has ever heard of a "fetus bump." This just isn't the way people talk in non-abortion contexts about the prenatal child.)

Once one rejects the view that all living members of the species *Homo sapiens* count the same, and instead pick another trait for what counts as having full moral status—of the kind that killing such a creature would be murder—one puts one's self in one of two uncomfortable positions. Either (1) newly born human children do not count as persons (they do not meet the standard for a "high" trait like rationality or self-awareness) or (2) many non-human animals, like rats, count exactly the same as human persons (they do not meet the standard for a "low" trait like sentience). The claim that "sometimes preference for one's own species is justified" is not only false, but a preference that would apply to *Homo sapiens* organisms before they have sentience.

I also wanted to address the distinction between ending a pregnancy and killing a prenatal child. I think this is a very important moral distinction, but both Peter Singer and I agree that one needs a massively important reason to refuse to sustain a person who you know will die without your aid—and that doing so without such a reason is a very, very seriously wrong (maybe close to the moral equivalent of killing). Most abortions, of course, are not refusals to aid—but are instead clearly aiming at death. (Which is why adoption is not a good option for many people—and why neonatal children who manage to survive abortion are often killed.)

But for those few abortions of pregnancy which are not aiming at death, one would need a very, very serious reason for them to be justified—especially when the dependence of that child on X was the result of a choice made by X. The Catholic Church's moral theology claims that "saving the mother's life" counts

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<sup>6</sup> MATTHEW SCULLY, *DOMINION: THE POWER OF MAN, THE SUFFERING OF ANIMALS, AND THE CALL TO MERCY* (2003).

as such a serious reason because it is proportionate: life for life. But can abortion of pregnancy as a form of birth control really rise to such a proportionate reason? It would seem not—especially when one makes the analogy to refusing to aid other kinds of child in other kinds of circumstances. One couldn't simply toss one's newborn baby out in the winter cold because she was, say, hampering one's ability to finish school. I suspect the only way this kind of argument make sense is if we do not consider the prenatal child to have the same moral status as other children—and we are back to the first point made above.

Finally, as a male, let me offer an apology on behalf of our gender for inflicting our extremist “abortion on demand” legal regime on the American culture. This was the result, of course, the result of a decision made by an all-male Supreme Court. And it should be noted that the most important activists and lobbyists which led to *Roe* were mostly male as well. Dr. Bernard Nathanson—though he would later have a conversion experience and become anti-abortion—was the primary founder of NARAL in 1969. The lower court cases designed to provoke *Roe* were funded by the *Playboy* foundation and Hugh Hefner—a man who, hilariously, referred to himself as one of the first feminists.

Like most male-created policies, abortion on demand has ended up serving the interests of men. Instead of having to change our economic structures so that people who can bear children can do so while being full participants in the culture, our patriarchal power structures have fought to preserve one of their most important allies: the disease-model of pregnancy. The default model for a person participating in our culture remains someone who cannot get pregnant. Insistence on abortion as necessary for the flourishing of women totally capitulates to this patriarchal model.

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine anything which has managed to preserve male privilege more than abortion on demand. We saw this, I think, when Texas passed its modest 20-week abortion ban—and the rise of the “Bro-Choice” phenomenon.

In light of these facts, it is worth noting that everyone from Linda Greenhouse (a deeply pro-choice person who covered SCOTUS for the *New York Times*), to Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg herself, have lamented the fact that the authors of *Roe* did not have women's issues as the basis of their decision. Instead their arguments focused on autonomy, privacy, choice—default positions which, as those of us concerned for social justice well know, overwhelmingly tend to benefit those with power. And abandon those vulnerable populations without power.

This, it seems to be, is why anti-abortion pro-lifers (especially those ascribing to the 2.0 version of the movement) could be such strong advocates for animal protection. We share a common skepticism of appeals to autonomy, privacy, and choice. We share a common argument that such appeals valorize those with power and makes it more difficult to see and hear vulnerable populations—especially when the dignity of those vulnerable populations is radically inconvenient for those who have power over them. And we share a special concern to lift up vulnerable populations who are not capable of speaking up in

their own defense, and try to be their voice in a culture which would prefer their reality remains hidden

In this way, it seems to me, those of us who are pro-life for pre-natal children and those of us who are pro-life for animals—while of course acknowledging the complexity presented in so-doing—should work together to give legal protection to both vulnerable populations.