

Bumper To Bumper

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Published 3/18/06

Strolling Santa Monica's 3rd Street Promenade with my very expectant wife, the bumper-sticker merchants were amassing their armory in preparation for South Dakota's alleged siege on Roe v Wade.

I don't recall ever having a bumper-sticker. They seem incomplete—and the more complete ones have led me into near accidents. I try to be a thorough reader.

Occasionally I recklessly try to catch up with, and profile, the driver. Perhaps they'll want to pull over and we can discuss their bumper-sticker. With the limitations of information afforded us on bumpers, maybe we just misunderstand each other.

Here is my effort to propitiate the pro-choice frustration and give the inside story of what pro-lifers see when they read pro-choice bumper-stickers. Since it is always helpful to accurately understand the thinking of those with whom you disagree, this should benefit everyone.

Against Abortion? Don't Have One is concise and clear. Keep your ethics to yourself! The Libertarian in us all appreciates this. But does it always work? How would these slogans fly? *Against Clubbing Baby Seals? Turn In Your Bat. Against The Tobacco Companies? Don't Smoke. Against War? Don't Start One.* The real question is what should be restricted to personal ethics and what should be a crime?

Hence the following.

Keep Your Laws Off My Body. No U.S. Intervention Into Women's Wombs. U.S. Out Of My Uterus. These seek to paint the grotesque Orwellian picture of the Washington Monument surgically invading the woman's sanctum sanctorum. In my lectures to the underground church in China I met one pastor who had been in a labor camp for voicing a similar sentiment; but in a substantially different political landscape. In China the government requires abortions for families that become too large. Now that's invasive.

Here's the watershed. If the unborn is a human being, then to terminate the unborn is to terminate a human being, which (I think all would agree) should be a crime. The question is, and always will be, when does life begin? I am not going to pursue that here, suffice it to say there is disagreement. Pro-lifers are unmoved by these bumper-stickers because their system of ethics is such that they believe life begins at conception. They are, therefore morally compelled to believe that abortion is, not merely unethical, but a crime.

It's not enough to tell pro-lifers to keep their ethics to themselves. A movement, for example, to allow parents to terminate one-year-olds would (I pray) be resisted by all. For the members of this crazy movement to assert that, in their opinion, life doesn't begin until thirteen months would be insane, even if they found a new word to describe the baby. Their bumper-sticker might read *No U.S. Intervention In My Crib.* Some sins are crimes.

The following bumper-stickers, *Pro-Child, Pro-Family, Pro-Choice* and *I'm Pro-Choice And I Pray* attempt to demonstrate the higher moral ground the pro-choicers are seeking to take. When I first saw *I'm Pro-Choice And I Pray* my mind was swept to the baptism scene in the Godfather. To whom is one praying that allows this system of ethics? The historic atrocities done in the name of religion were spearheaded by people who prayed.

Be A Voice For Choice, Every Child A Wanted Child and *A World Of Wanted Children Would Make A World Of Difference* is what poker players call a 'tell'. Implicit in this message is the idea of unwanted children who must be done away with. This is a dangerous philosophy for twelve to fourteen year-olds.

The confusion of *How Can You Be Both Pro-Life And Pro War?* and *Unless You Oppose The Death Penalty, Don't Tell Me You're Pro-Life* can be speedily untangled. Innocent babies should be protected and convicted murderers should be put to death. Innocent babies should be protected and hostile governments seeking to attack, enslave, torture and kill the innocent should not be tolerated.

If You Can't Trust Me With A Choice, How Can You Trust Me With A Child? was the most famous pro-choice sticker for a long time. In a pro-lifer's ears this translates, *If You Won't Give Me The Right To Kill My Child, How Can You Trust Me With My Child?* One is inclined to respond, "Obviously, you can't be trusted with either."

Finally I saw a bumper-sticker with a drawing of a little girl about my oldest daughter's age, about eight or nine. It read, *My Parents Are Pro-Choice*. I'm always suspicious when movements have eight-year-olds as spokespeople. How many children under 11 are savvy enough to stay on top of the war effort or principles involving constitutional law or *Roe v Wade*? But it did make me wonder what an eight-year-old might have to say.

Then it hit me. I know what they would say. I had never discussed the abortion issue with my eight-year-old daughter. But when my wife miscarried last year at about eight weeks we sat down to explain to our children why mommy was no longer going to have a baby. When it dawned on my little girl what we were trying to say, she summed it up the way any child would: "The baby died?" followed by tears.