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Executive Director's Commentary

### **The Economic Root of the Decision to Abort a Baby**

As a young man having not quite attained two scores of age, it is a lamented task to voice a difference of perspective with wisdom shared from older, wiser counsel. However, given the high stakes of unborn life in the movement to uphold pro-life values, I feel it is my responsibility to respectfully push back on a wide-spread sentiment that a vast number of pro-life advocates cite as the root of the problem of abortion. In fact, I only do so as I hope this insight may help unify pro-life advocates behind an effective holistic message recognizing spiritual foundations in the mental, emotional, social and physical factors of human behavior that are at the core of the pro-life movement.

In a recent conversation with a pro-life supporter, I was reminded that the root of abortion is sexual immorality given the widespread engaging of sex outside of marriage. So first and foremost, I whole heartedly advocate the need for sexual purity as a core behavioral factor of preventing most situations for having to choose life or abortion. However, when we consider the circumstances where even some married couples find themselves contemplating and choosing an abortion because of the various challenges an unintended pregnancy is believed to place on the marriage, I struggle to come to the same conclusion that if all sex only occurred in marriage, there would be no unintended pregnancies ending in abortions. While this is a significant behavioral factor, I do not believe that our attempt to address the root of abortion should focus on the direct actions that lead to pregnancy as the root.

First, consider from the Christian worldview that we often hear “money is the root of evil.” However, the correct scripture is that the *love* of money is the root of all (“kinds” in some translations) of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). Also consider from the Christian worldview that when God instructed Samuel to anoint a young David as the next king, it was not because of his appearance compared to his brothers but his heart as God looks at the heart while people tend to look at the visible (1 Samuel 16:7). I believe this means we must take our concerns for the root causes of abortion from the surface level of visible behaviors that lead to the situations of deciding to abort an innocent baby, to the deeper level of unseen conditions of the heart (and mind as components of the soul) that lead to the behaviors, and ultimately the ending of an innocent life.

To be accurate, I do recognized that the pro-life movement has indeed attempted to address many of the possible heart and mind level factors in making a decision to abort including: concerns for the reputation from the pregnancy situation; effects of parenting on desired lifestyle; tensions between the mother and father; deceptions of no personhood for human life developing in the womb; and the financial situation to support a child. Furthermore, in my assertion of the economic root of this issue, I also must point out the tendency to isolate the term economics to the direct financial concerns of income opportunity and purchasing behavior, and not necessarily these other factors of the decision to abort or not. However, it is important to consider that the various academic definitions proposed by researchers and economist have not been so narrow in a view of economics exclusively involving jobs and spending.

In 2009, Economics Professors Roger Backhouse and Steven Medema authored a historical retrospective of the various definitions of economics that have been argued

over the past decades.<sup>1</sup> They note one of the more widely recognized definitions by Lionel Robbins from 1932 which states that economics is the “study of human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses.”<sup>2</sup> They also emphasize various factors in economics for decision making processes, choices on individual and organizational levels, or even wants and desires of humans considering societal or political influences.<sup>3</sup> However, they especially highlight the perspectives that increasingly focus on the scarcity of means that influence choices and the expanding boundaries of economics given the concerns for market versus non-market factors.<sup>4</sup>

I believe this indicates for the pro-life movement that emphasizing the economic root to abortion starts with recognizing the range of influences on decision making and behaviors that ultimately determine a person’s means to an end. As to the specific concerns of scarce means, I don’t expect much disagreement that the most pertinent of resources that a parent has to expend to bring a life into this world are their time and energy in addition to finances. Therefore, the economic root of abortion continues in the decision a mother and father are making is in regards to the scarcity of their time, energy, and finances that must be consumed to parent a child as opposed to those resources being applied in alternative uses (not to mention the options of adoption).

Lastly, considering the alternative uses for scarce resources in the Christian worldview concludes the root spiritual cause of abortion as an economic issue. In the

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<sup>1</sup> Backhouse, R. E. and Medema, S. G. (2009). Retrospectives: On the Definition of Economics. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 23(1): 221-234

<sup>2</sup> Robbins, L. C. (1932) *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*. London: Macmillan.

<sup>3</sup> Backhouse & Medema, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Backhouse & Medema, 2009

gospels of Matthew (chapter six) and Luke (chapter 16), Christ warns that we cannot serve two masters. He makes this warning emphasizing the choice of selflessly serving the eternal purposes of building God's Kingdom with souls or the self-focused serving the temporary purposes of mammon. While mammon is mostly regarded as the riches or treasures of money, the context of the passage in Matthew also indicates that the souls of people in heaven are also regarded as riches or treasure. The context of the passage in Luke also indicates the priority for using mammon as a temporary means to an eternal end. This not only reveals a core issue in the scarcity of our time, energy, and existing financial resources in decisions between alternative uses for acquiring more resources ("microeconomics" if you will), but also the scarcity of our focus in the big picture of alternatives for applying economic resources to serve self or greater-than-self purposes ("macroeconomics" if you will). Thus, the economic root of abortion lies in our realization that the focus on greater-than-self ends concludes that the life of the unborn baby supersede any self-serving alternatives for which it seems logical to end the life of an unborn baby as the best means (even if believed as a humane mean citing a lack of personhood) to achieve those ends.

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