

I Used to Be Pro-Life (July 2042 Eutyclus Report)

by Eutyclus Bailey

[Editor's Note: The following article was written on July 10, 2042 by Eutyclus Bailey, author and former North American pastor. Because of amazingly quick Internet access and the exponential growth of micro-processing speeds, Next-Wave is now able to publish this column forty years before it was actually written. This gives us the chance to get an unknowingly futurist perspective on where things are heading from this pragmatist writer observing his own times.]

I used to be “Pro-Life” as most Christians in my generation used to say. And, again like much of my generation, I slowly changed my mind about things. I suppose the way I changed went like this:

Near the turn of the century this hot-button issue was still largely confined to the realm of back-room politics and heavy-handed right-winger stump speeches. I didn't speak about it up front at my church, and while my denomination was formally opposed to our nation's abortion laws—we didn't often do much about it. This was especially the case when it got personal.

Let me give an example. I have an old friend named Ralph Faust who lived just down the street in the seventies and eighties. “The Reagan-Cosby Years” as I like to call them. We were the same age, born in 1974, two years after Roe vs. Wade. That year the abortion-rate reached its highest frequency, with half of those conceived that year being aborted (an admittedly horrible thing, though in time curbed by relaxed church positions on contraception).

When Ralph and I were both seven, his parents separated, and then six months later they divorced. This was not uncommon—in fact about 40 percent of my generation grew up with divorced parents, and then more than half of my generation proceeded to copy the practice once we were married. The quandary with Ralph was that his parents were church-people. His Mom was a church secretary and his Dad was a church elder elected to the board. They were what I would likely have later described as “key” people. Now, today in the 40s that wouldn't make anyone blink, but back then we still had a bit of lingering “old ways” in which upstanding church citizens weren't supposed to get divorced. At least not while attending your church.

Everything was neatly resolved, however, when Ralph's Dad moved out to the other side of town and started attending another church. It was a similar church to Ralph's, and nearly the same size, and so after a few years his Dad was voted onto the board again. Everyone there, of course, only knew about his prior marriage from the comments his Dad gave about it. No one really asked him about it though... not wanting to give offense. It's really just a personal issue in his past, something he must have dealt with since he seemed like such a good Christian man. Regardless, there were several single women in his new church that didn't mind the thought of having an available single man around that actually had a job. Ralph's mom continued as secretary at her church and although rumors circulated about her infidelity, perhaps even within the church, being the root cause of the divorce, again no one wanted to pry. Certainly with her being in such close proximity with the pastoral staff they could counsel her, it was thought. She and the counseling pastor seemed particularly close.

About a decade later, in his late teens Ralph was having his obligatory Christmas Eve dinner with his Dad across town. “So, Pops, it's great to see you again for our yearly visit” was the greeting Ralph gave as his Dad opened the door, “gonna give me that palmtop computer you promised me?” Ralph introduced his new girlfriend, Tina, to his Dad when he noticed that there was other company in the living room across the entryway. As the tall, slender man stood up to walk his way, Ralph's Dad said, “Well, son, I want you to meet Scott. I fell in love 18 months ago... and

now that you're practically grown up I just don't think it's fair for me to hide it anymore." Ralph's stomach bile churned while his brain's more moderate views on the issue tried to suppress what he had always told himself were discriminating attitudes. "Ummm, okay... then, Scott, meet my girlfriend Tina," Ralph struggled to reply. Tina felt the need to suggest she wasn't awkward in this situation and for some reason blurted, "My uncle is gay too!"

The church initially had some adjustments to make about their board member's new lifestyle arrangement—once it became public. Of course, most of the "key people" knew for some time about Ralph's Dad, but what were they going to do about it? It was the way God made him for goodness sakes! Besides, he kept it quiet. But now that he was attending church with Scott arm in arm—some kind of official response was merited in the church, and since his denomination adopted a "let each church decide" policy in 2005, they would. The Church conference voted on an official policy for "Members Who Have a Proclivity Towards and/or Who Are Practicing Homosexuals." Scott was found out to be an investment banker with a hefty monthly contribution to the church and a real talent on the guitar. Ralph's Dad ended up serving on the board of elders for another 10 years.

Tina got pregnant exactly one month after Ralph and she were married in 2010. Dumb luck, Ralph called it to his mother. Her reply rhymed his. Tina was two semesters into Law School and Ralph was working full-time at the Gap Pets™ store in the mall in order to put her through school. They were living in "Dad and Scott's" basement to save money and if a baby came along that would be 5 under the same roof. This did not fit into their plans in the least bit. Luckily for Ralph and Tina they had just taken an "Issues and Answers from the Bible" class at his Mom's church. Their position largely eased and they were basically "on the fence" after learning more about the lack of Biblical outspokenness on the issue... believing, as in the end nearly everyone had been saying to one degree or another, it just depends on the situation. Their situation seemed a fitting exception to the already gray rule.

Ralph and I still get together for a Guinness® after Saturday night service from time to time and catch up. He had three girls who I dedicated when I was his pastor after Tina established her law practice. One of them grew up to be a pastor and his youngest one is getting ready to leave for Yale. He's so proud.

Looking back at the turn of the century from today, it seems to me that the abortion issue followed the path of other social issues in the church. When I was a kid people realized that good people still sometimes get divorced. Any marriage can be a victim of it. In the first few decades of the century people started to realize that good people are sometimes gay. Even those of us who thought it a sin had to admit that we sinned to—especially the straight ones among us who had slept with more than one person or had multiple wives over the years—was it any different? Once we got over the butterflies in the stomach on the issue the logic was pretty straightforward. At one time I was against abortion too, but eventually most people in the American church realized that good people still sometimes terminate a pregnancy. Any young woman can be a victim of an unplanned pregnancy. And even if it seemed a sinful thing to end whatever life is growing in the mother, I've sinned many times myself in simply harboring hatred in my heart, which Jesus called murder. Jesus never spoke of choosing to end a pregnancy as being murder. Wow! Just writing that line reminds me of so many bumper stickers and billboards from 40 years back. How crass!

I don't mean to say that ending a pregnancy is a good thing. It's unfortunate, for sure. Perhaps I simply think like one of our great presidents, "abortion should be legal, but very rare."



Born in 1974, Dr. Eutychus D. Bailey served as a pastor in the early decades of the 21st century. He “now” writes a column on the state of the mid-century church & culture, which is being retrieved by Next-Wave from the future because of recent technological advances. Depending on your time-travel ISP speed, you may be able to reach the old codger by interacting with him at “Ask Eutychus” in the Next-Wave message board.