

Abortion Won't End Until the Idol of Self Is Destroyed

Let's imagine for a moment that you find yourself in a difficult position—one that has led to abject panic about your future career, the fate of a valued relationship or whether you'll even be able to make ends meet. Let's also stipulate that your difficulty is largely your fault.

You made some short-sighted, bad decisions that precipitated the crisis, but questions of responsibility are moot now—all that exists is the crisis, the stress that has overtaken your life. To be sure, there's a way forward, a way out of the crisis, but even the most attractive options will require considerable commitment for most of a year—with potential for prolonged heartache.

Then, one evening you're offered a way out. Your most recent troubles can go away, for the cost of a few hundred dollars and most of an afternoon. The catch? Someone has to die.

Oh, it's not anyone you know or will ever know. They don't have family that knows them, they don't have spouses or children, and they'll be so thoroughly unmourned that no one will even have to pay for a funeral. Decide now, and they might not even feel pain. Wait longer, and they'll feel pain—but only for a little while.

You don't have to see the body. You won't know the person's name. No one will have to know what you did. Indeed, the law strictly protects your confidentiality. An anonymous kill ... then you're free.

Ask the vast majority of rational people if they'd kill another person to change their own circumstances for the better, and they'd quickly answer no. Put them in the actual situation, and we know that millions answer yes. We know

because of abortion.

For quite some time, we've conducted the abortion debate as if people weren't fallen, as if mankind's nature weren't inherently sinful. So we convince ourselves that if only mothers and their pressuring families or boyfriends knew that the child was a *child* and not just a "clump of cells," then they'd make different choices. We're heartened in this belief by some improvements on the margins, by slight changes in polling numbers—changes that coincide not just with patient pro-life advocacy, but also in astounding leaps forward in medical science, leaps that allow us to see inside the womb, to understand undeniable medical facts (that Kevin Williamson articulates) of the unborn child's separate genetic identity from his or her mother, and to even watch a tiny child reach from the womb to cling to a doctor's finger.

Yet abortions still happen, on a massive scale.

Why? Because people love themselves so much that they're willing to kill another person to keep a boyfriend, to maintain a standard of living or for many, many other reasons—none of which would ever justify killing another person outside the womb.

The fight for life of course has a critical political component. No just society allows one person to kill another for convenience. But this debate long ago veered from rationality and into the darkest part of the heart, to the most base and primal desire for self-interest. When people "Stand With Wendy," they—as Charles C.W. Cooke so eloquently put it—"stand with death." And here's the worst part: They know it.

The pundit looks at abortion and sees the need for persuasion. The pastor looks and sees the futility of persuasion absent repentance.

The precursor for abortion is the idol of the self. Mandatory

sonograms and other measures can impact the softer hearts among us—and are thus valuable for that reason alone—but abortion won't end until the idol is destroyed.

And for that, good pastors are far more necessary than even the best pundits or politicians.

David French *is senior counsel at the American Center for Law and Justice. This article is crossposted at National Review Online.*