

"CONVICTION AND COMPASSION"
ATLANTIC BAPTISTS AND THE ABORTION ISSUE

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ABSTRACT

The United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces responded to the abortion issue during the period from the late 1960s until the early 1990s. The central focus of this thesis is upon a number of key leaders within the Convention whose contemplation of the theological and practical aspects of the issue helped provide the impetus for the Convention's formal adoption of a pro-life stance.

The changing of leadership within the Convention during the latter half of the twentieth century, from moderate liberal to conservative also impacted the the way the abortion issue was viewed. A transition occurs between the first attempt by the Board of Social Service to address the abortion issue which led to the moderately liberal orientation of 1973 Study Paper on Abortion, and the perspective of later thinkers such as Craig Carter and Stephen Dempster who develop a strongly conservative theological and practical approach to the abortion issue. These men play a significant role in leading the Convention to publicly adopt a pro-life orientation.

The approach taken by these key leaders shows an affinity with the 1921 Social Gospel Platform's concern for the well-being of families, especially mothers and children. The resolutions passed by Convention Assembly point to a continuation of this tradition of concern, as does the ensuing interest in the development and support of the Crisis Pregnancy Centre ministries which begins to materialize in the late 1980s.

Dedicated to my wife, Pauline, whose love, support, and patience
have helped make this thesis possible

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the abortion issue has provoked much debate in Canadian society. Changes made to abortion laws beginning in the late 1960s served to bring the issue to the widespread attention of society with the result that emotions have run high on both the pro-life and pro-choice sides of the controversy ever since. The Churches in Canada have found themselves embroiled in the debate, sometimes facing each other across the divide of public opinion.¹ The United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces (UBCAP) has taken an active role in this issue and has made its view as a Convention quite clear. However, this stance did not materialize overnight. Rather, it was the product of years of debate, discussion, and study.

This author has been interested in the abortion issue since the early 1980s believing it to be one of the most pressing justice issues of the present era. In the process of selecting a topic for a Master's thesis in the field of church history, the suggestion was made to consider how Atlantic Baptists have responded to the abortion issue. The suggestion was accepted and from that starting point, the present thesis has been developed.

Dealing with contemporary history presents its own challenges. One does not have the perspective of distance that comes with the passage of time. In the topic at hand, abortion, the issue is yet far from being resolved and its history is still unfolding. Naturally, this means that any effort at historical documentation

must accept the fact that it will be, of necessity, only a partial contribution to a more complete story which may one day be written. This will be, it is hoped, a first step towards filling a vacuum in this area of Atlantic Baptist history.

This thesis considers how Atlantic Baptists have dealt with the abortion issue in the period from 1968 to 1995. It attempts to trace the development of the issue from the time it first came to the forefront among Atlantic Baptists in the late 1960s, through the 1970s, a time of study, reflection and debate which culminated in 1983 when UBCAP took a public stance on the issue at its annual Convention Assembly. The development of a practical plan to respond to the abortion issue, not just in public pronouncements, but in deeds is the focus of the later 1980s and early 1990s.

The questions arise as to how Atlantic Baptists have viewed the abortion issue. What have been some of the important historical and social factors and how have Christian ethical and philosophical considerations contributed to the present stance which has been adopted with respect to abortion? This thesis attempts to demonstrate at least two major points. The first of these is that the pro-life response of Atlantic Baptists to the abortion issue shows continuity with a traditional concern for women and children, having its roots in the "social gospel" movement of the early 1900s, and especially showing an affinity for the goals of the 1921 Social Gospel Platform adopted by the Convention. The second point to be made is that this pro-life orientation was also the product of a growing trend towards theological conservatism among Atlantic Baptists, which itself produced a strong and articulate core of

leaders. This leadership in turn helped provide the thrust which led UBCAP to adopt a coherent perspective on the issue and then to move towards expressing this view in practical ways.

Atlantic Baptists have looked at the abortion issue through the lens of a long-standing interest in social action which in this century, has its roots in the "social gospel" movement. Since the early 1900s, Atlantic Baptists have made the welfare of families, and in particular, of women and children, a high priority. In the eyes of many Atlantic Baptists, the abortion issue has not developed into a polarization where the rights of the mother have been pitted against the rights of the child she carries, but where concern for both has been uppermost in their minds.

In the early part of the twentieth century, the social gospel movement exerted a powerful influence in how many Christian denominations looked at social issues. This was true among Atlantic Baptists as well. In 1921, the then United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces adopted a platform which reflected a strong emphasis upon the social gospel. This platform evidenced concerns in a wide variety of areas such as: fair distribution of natural resources, worker's rights (including equal pay for women doing the same work as men), and encouraged efforts by governments to work at removing the causes of vice in society. Of particular note for this thesis is the fact that at least six of the Platform's nineteen points related directly to the welfare of children. These points included the following:

1. Every child has the right to be well born, well nourished, and well protected.

2. Every child has the right to play and be a child.
3. Every child is entitled to such an education as shall fit it for life and usefulness.
4. Every life is entitled to a sanitary home, pure air, and pure water.
5. Every life is entitled to such conditions as shall enable it to grow up tall and straight and pure.
6. Every life is entitled to a place in society, a good opportunity in life and a fair equity in the common heritage.²

An interesting addition to these provisions is a related concern for women's issues as seen in Points 11 and 12:

11. Women who toil should have equal pay with men for equal work.
12. Widowed mothers with dependent children should be relieved from the necessity of exhausting toil.³

The emphasis given to children in the Platform gives credence to Darrell Feltmate's assertion that:

Much of the desire for social reform by the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces can be seen to have been focused in the protection of children. This is consistent with the historic Baptist emphasis on the strength of the family and the need to evangelize the children of the denomination. It should be remembered that salvation of the children was paramount in the considerations for their welfare. For the denomination, social action always had its roots in evangelism, even as it applied to children.⁴

In recent years, the emphasis has been driven less by evangelistic concerns than by biblical, theological, ethical, and scientific issues. This points to a second observation, namely, that the abortion issue led a number of key leaders among Atlantic Baptists to begin to grapple with some basic questions surrounding the nature and value of human life. Uppermost in their minds have

been the attempts to determine what it is that forms the basis for the value of human life and, at what stage of development does life become truly "human" with all the rights and protections afforded by law. These two closely interrelated issues helped stimulate the development of a biblically-based, pro-life perspective among a number of key Atlantic Baptist leaders. Concern over the abortion issue was heightened by the expansion of scientific knowledge which shed new light upon the intricate details of fetal development, while ironically, the laws restricting abortion which served to protect the baby before birth were downgraded and virtually abandoned altogether by 1988. These factors contributed to making the abortion issue a more compelling one in the hearts and minds of Atlantic Baptists. Their concern was heightened also by the increasing prevalence of abortion, and its growing acceptance within Canadian society to the point where many became convinced of the need to speak out upon what they perceived as an important and unavoidable issue of social justice which was calling for a Christian response.

This emphasis on developing a sound Christian response to the abortion issue is related at least in part, to the theological shift which occurred in UBCAP during the 1950s and 1960s. After a number of decades in which the Convention had moved somewhat to the theological "left" (during the first half of this century), a shift took place which began to move UBCAP back towards its more traditional evangelical moorings. In the 1950s this change began to be felt with the appointment of evangelicals such as J. Murray Armstrong and Henry A. Renfree to the post of General Secretary of

Convention. Prior to this time, it was not unheard of for efforts to be made at ensuring that those of an evangelical persuasion were kept off boards and committees of Convention.⁵ The return to prominence of evangelicalism within Convention impacted upon how Atlantic Baptists responded to the abortion issue. Theologically conservative views on abortion became commonplace and widely accepted within Convention, while from the left of the theological spectrum, by comparison, the silence was deafening. Within Atlantic Baptist circles to date, there has been no significant organized promotion of a position favouring unrestricted access to abortion.

Another transition took place in the 1980s, when Atlantic Baptists became more action-oriented with respect to the abortion issue. At first, Atlantic Baptists, like many other pro-life groups, tended to be fighting a defensive operation, mostly reacting negatively to the changes advocated by those elements in society which were seeking to decriminalize abortion and to make it widely accessible. A considerable period of time elapsed before Atlantic Baptists were successful in moving from this "reactionary phase" to the point where they had formulated and adopted a sound biblical ethic which could be applied pro-actively. During the 1980s this pro-active application began to be seen among Atlantic Baptists, not just in the adoption of resolutions opposing abortion, but also with the growing involvement in, and support for, the establishment of Crisis Pregnancy Centers in a number of communities in Atlantic Canada.

Thus far in this work, the word "abortion" has been used frequently. Before continuing, and for clarification, it would be

helpful to consider a definition. For the purpose of the present consideration of the subject, abortion is defined as the "expulsion of the fetus before it is viable. Abortion is termed accidental or spontaneous, when due to accident; artificial or induced, when brought on purposely;"6 This project concerns itself with the controversy surrounding artificial or induced abortion.

Before commencing to document how Atlantic Baptists have responded to the abortion issue, it is necessary to outline briefly the events of 1969 when the federal Liberal government under Pierre Trudeau introduced changes to the laws governing abortion in the *Criminal Code*. Prior to 1969, the fetus enjoyed the wide-ranging protection of Canadian law. Under the *Criminal Code*, any physician who performed an abortion could be subjected to prosecution at any time. Also the person procuring abortion was likewise liable to prosecution. The one exception was that if a person in good faith caused the death of the unborn child in order to preserve the life of the mother, that individual was not considered as indictable under the *Criminal Code*. The problem was, according to Monique Hebert, that "these provisions . . . had never been subject to a judicial interpretation in Canada,"7 and thus they remained somewhat unclear. Physicians were under the constant potential threat of prosecution with a penalty of life imprisonment if they performed an abortion for the law did not specify any form of defence.⁸

In the decade of the 1960s, there developed a growing feeling in some quarters that the restrictions of the *Criminal Code* were too stringent and did not allow for abortion to prevent "emotional damage" to the mother. In 1969, the Trudeau government

introduced a number of changes to the *Criminal Code*, including those provisions dealing with abortion. On June 27, 1969, Bill C-150 received Royal Assent. No longer was procuring an abortion a criminal offence, and certain provisions were also indicated whereby the unborn child could now be aborted without the physician performing the abortion being subject to criminal action. The new Bill provided for the establishment of "therapeutic abortion committees" in approved or accredited hospitals which would consider requests for abortions in cases where abortion was thought to threaten the mother's life or health. After this change in the *Criminal Code*, the number of abortions performed for what were deemed as "therapeutic" reasons increased significantly.⁹ This development helped to propel the abortion issue into greater public prominence in Canada. The Baptists of Atlantic Canada also were awakened to this growing controversy and compelled to come to grips with the need to formulate an appropriate response.

It is also useful to consider the kinds of issues about which Atlantic Baptist have felt compelled to speak out, particularly during the time when abortion was a growing concern in their midst. During the time frame covered in this thesis, from the 1960s to the mid-1990s, UBCAP passed a number of resolutions expressing its views on a wide variety of social concerns, a number of which are addressed more than once. In some of these pronouncements, echoes of the 1921 Social Gospel Platform were still discernible, such as a 1962 resolution urging governments to increase social assistance benefits for families with dependent children, as well as another in 1968 which encouraged the adoption of children and the

provision of foster care. Another related resolution was passed against family violence in 1994. Opposition was voiced against racism in 1963, 1968, and again in 1991; gambling was opposed in 1964, 1992, and 1993; preservation of Sunday as a day of rest and worship was promoted in 1963 and again in 1996. Issues of sexual conduct were also dealt with by Assembly. Opposition to homosexuality was expressed in 1987 and reaffirmed in 1996. Pornography was opposed by the 1990 Assembly.

The use and abuse of alcohol have been a major source of concern for Atlantic Baptists from the early years of the twentieth century to the present. More recent resolutions expressing their views have been passed in 1964, 1966, 1971, 1973, and 1989. Concerns over tobacco and drug use have also been added, in 1964 and 1969, respectively.

Other social issues which have have been addressed have included the negative impact of television programming on the family and society in 1971 and 1984; concern over world issues such as hunger, war, poverty and racial tensions in 1967 and the closely-related issue of the need for government assistance to developing nations in 1973. The 1991 Assembly which opposed free-standing abortion clinics also took aim at the growing acceptance and practice of euthanasia in Canadian society. The Social Gospel Platform certainly is by no means an isolated example of Atlantic Baptists' willingness to address issues of moral and social nature affecting Canadian society.

A few words should be said here regarding sources for this project. The *Atlantic Baptist* magazine is used as a major source of

material for the period of time under consideration. From its pages have been culled a large number of editorials, articles, and reports relating to the abortion issue. The *Atlantic Baptist*, although not the official voice of Convention, was certainly in a position to influence and shape the opinion of its constituency. Furthermore, the publication must be considered as reflective of at least a significant percentage of the views held within that same constituency.

Among the additional sources consulted, Convention Yearbooks were utilized to obtain reports and related information from the Board of Social Service/Social Action Commission and minutes of Convention Assembly. Minutes of Convention Council and of the Social Action Commission were consulted. The author undertook a number of personal interviews with individuals who were closely involved in the abortion issue. In a few cases, some relevant unpublished documents were supplied to the author by some of those interviewed. The personal papers of the Rev. Earle T. McKnight at the Acadia University Archives were extensively consulted.

Secondary sources for this topic were extremely limited. One such resource which was very valuable for this thesis was *Life and Death Choices*,¹⁰ which contains the Rev. Craig Carter's theology of human life and his application of this to the abortion issue. This work is consulted extensively in Chapter 4.

¹It is interesting to compare the position on abortion of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces to those of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the United Church of Canada. The United Baptist Convention has taken the most conservative,

pro-life position, while the United Church holds the most liberal, pro-choice stance. The Presbyterian perspective is found somewhere in the middle.

Of the three denominational bodies, the Presbyterians were the first to address the issue in a formal way at their General Assembly in 1967. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has opposed abortion on demand since that time, but has never advocated an outright ban on the procedure. The life of the mother was explicitly recognized as of greater importance than the life of the fetus, but this has been qualified by urging that that abortion be only used in cases where there has been serious threat to life or health of the mother. The threat to health was further defined as indicating the danger of prolonged mental or physical impairment.

The United Church of Canada began its policy formulation on abortion at its 1972 General Council, but did not reach a definitive stance until its 1980 General Assembly. Since the 1930s, the United Church has emphasized the importance of birth control and family planning, and this has continued to exert a dominant impression upon the denomination's handling of the abortion issue. Like the Presbyterians, the United Church has proclaimed its opposition to abortion on demand and affirmed the sanctity of human life before and after birth. However, United Church policy positions do not seem to indicate the same depth of comprehension of the moral and ethical components of the issue as do those of their Presbyterian counterparts. The United Church pronouncements repeatedly described the abortion issue as a moral dilemma and an ambiguous situation of conflicting rights. The life of the fetus is recognized as having inherent value and abortion is deemed acceptable only as "the lesser of two evils," in situations where the medical, social and/or economic factors make it the most responsible choice. Yet this produces a very broad category of potential reasons for abortion which, in conjunction with the conviction that the decision to abort is between the woman and her doctor, in essence means that the United Church's stance is, despite its claims to the contrary, decidedly "pro-choice." In more recent years United Church pronouncements on abortion have confirmed this, mainly having been focused upon urging governments: to ensure that abortion not be regulated by criminal code provisions; to provide education and services to prevent unwanted pregnancies and to ensure equal access to abortion in all areas of the country.

²A. J. Prosser, "Report of the Social Service Board," in *United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces Year Book*, (Saint John: United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces), 1921.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Darrell Feltmate, "*The Help Should be Greatest Where the Need is Most*," *The Social Gospel Platform of the United Baptist Convention of the Maritime Provinces 1921* (M. Div. Hon. Thesis, Acadia University, 1993), 99.

⁵Robert S. Wilson, "Atlantic Baptists Confront the Turbulent Sixties," in *A Fragile Stability: Definition and Redefinition of Maritime Baptist Identity*, ed. David T. Priestly (Hantsport, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1994), 152.

⁶*American Pocket Medical Dictionary*, 16th ed.; quoted in Earle T. McKnight, "Abortion As One Response to a Problem Pregnancy: A Study Paper," 1973, 1. [Emphasis in original].

⁷Monique Hebert, *Abortion: Legal Aspects* (Ottawa: Library of Parliament Research Branch, 1980; revised 1989), 1-2.

⁸*Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁹*Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁰Robert Duncan, ed. *Life and Death Choices: Canadian Baptist Perspectives on the Moral Dilemmas of Human Life Issues* (Mississauga, Ontario: Canadian Baptist Federation, 1991). Carter's material is found on pp. 22-48.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF THE CONTROVERSY

Atlantic Baptists first entered the abortion debate at the same time Canadian society did in the late 1960s. The abortion issue first makes its appearance in the *Atlantic Baptist* magazine in June of 1968 when Dr. Norman Guiou contributed an article entitled, "Canada's Abortion Problems." In this piece, Guiou, a Baptist from Ontario and specialist in obstetrics and gynecology, argued the need for his fellow Baptists to adopt a position strongly favoring not only the legalization of abortion, but also its promotion as a means for dealing with various social ills. Guiou's espousal of liberalized access to abortion reflected his desire to utilize the procedure as a method for preventing the birth of children conceived in rape and those who were mentally or physically "defective." He also advocated abortion as a means for alleviating economic strain on poor families and, in the case of unmarried mothers, argued that money spent on them for raising children would be better spent in support of medical research. Embracing what would become a classic pro-choice argument, Guiou claimed that liberalized abortion laws would reduce the number of deaths resulting from botched procedures performed by unskilled abortionists.¹

Guiou proposed a multi-faceted offensive against unwanted pregnancies which would include: the teaching of sex education in the home, church, and school; accessibility to birth control information and materials for families; and the amendment of laws

so as to allow for voluntary sterilization. Guiou dismissed opposition to abortion on biblical grounds as unfounded claiming that,

Every variant on the reproductive theme is mentioned in the Bible, yet there is no condemnation of induced abortion. Legal prohibition of abortion was unknown to most earlier cultures. Plato and Aristotle recommended it in certain conditions.²

The civil laws restricting abortion, Guiou claimed, could be traced to Augustine who had, "branded abortion as murder no matter how dire the medical necessity."³ Guiou concluded his article by urging Canadian Baptists to unite their voice with those from other groups urging the government to make changes to Canada's abortion laws.⁴

Several months later, an article in response to Guiou's radical views appeared in the *Atlantic Baptist*. The author of this response, Dr. M. O. Vincent, a Baptist with Maritime roots, took an approach different from Guiou's. While agreeing that such things as sex education, access to birth control, and liberalization of sterilization laws were indeed worthwhile, Vincent differed with Guiou over abortion's desirability as a solution to problems relating to pregnancy and the family. Instead, Vincent proposed twelve principles which he believed Baptists ought to adopt and work toward their implementation. These included:

- 1) The promotion of health and prevention of disease.
- 2) Physical and mental health for all existing members of the family.
- 3) Family planning and the right of individuals to have only children they want.
- 4) The child's right to "wanting" parents.
- 5) Appropriate measures to strengthen family life.
- 6) The preservation of a new life once it exists.

- 7) The ideal that all children should be physically and emotionally healthy and that Society [sic] has a need to prevent insofar as possible, the birth of predictably defective persons.
- 8) Minimizing the misfortunes that follow rape and incest.
- 9) Efforts to resolve the problems of the unmarried, pregnant girl.
- 10) Action to reduce poverty and social problems.
- 11) All appropriate means of restricting criminal abortions.
- 12) Controlling excessive population expansion.⁵

Vincent's perspective evinces similar concerns for the social conditions which often form the context in which the abortion issue is considered. Items 1, 2, 7, and especially 10 are reminiscent of the 1921 Social Gospel Platform's emphases in this area, suggesting Vincent's sympathy for the ideals expressed by the Platform.⁶

Vincent acknowledged the existence of uncertainty within the Christian community over the abortion issue and that even some of the points he was proposing were also being used by others, like Dr. Guiou, to advocate that abortion be made more readily available. Despite this apparent ambiguity, Vincent argued that the key issue determining how these principles ought to be applied with respect to the use of abortion focused upon the nature of the fetus itself. Said Vincent: "As Christians we accept the view of the sanctity of human life. Then we look to science to tell us when and where human life exists."⁷ Vincent's assessment went to the center of the resulting debate, for it was precisely the issue of "when and where" a life was human or not human that generated such a level of controversy. Vincent assessed the various positions concluding that scientific knowledge indicated that human life originated at

conception. As a result of his findings, Vincent articulated his own view of abortion:

Hence, I find myself committed to the sanctity of life as a Christian. Further, I believe that the scientific evidence at this time suggests that life begins at the time of conception. Further, in view of the sanctity of life, logic tells me that where there is any possibility let alone a strong possibility that this is life, that I should treat it as such. Therefore I see abortion as taking a life.⁸

Vincent saw the growing scientific evidence produced by embryology as strengthening the Christian understanding of the sanctity of life and arguing against the use of abortion, except in extreme circumstances such as to save the life of the mother. Noting that the American Baptist Convention had, in 1968, called for the implementation of abortion on request, Vincent made clear his rejection of their view, instead urging that Baptists ought to take a high view of the fetus's humanity and work for the implementation of the twelve principles he had proposed (see above).⁹

Interestingly, and as if to underscore the fluidity of the abortion debate in the minds of Atlantic Baptists, just two months later, Dr. Vincent authored another article in the *Atlantic Baptist* in which he expressed a somewhat altered perspective on the abortion issue. The article appeared in the issue of December 1, 1968, after he had attended a Reproductive Symposium sponsored by the Christian Medical Society. After the Symposium, Vincent felt that human life might come into existence as part of a gradual process. While still holding to conception as the starting point of human life, he added that "this does not establish the value of the new life and does not prove that this new life is of equal value to a fully

developed body and soul."¹⁰ He continued in setting forth his newly-modified perspective, postulating that "I now feel the foetus [sic] has great and developing value, but is less than a human being. It will be sacrificed only for weighty reasons."¹¹ Some of these "reasons" included possible threat to the mother's mental well-being, pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, and instances where the fetus was likely to suffer from a serious physical defect.¹² In all of this, Vincent's thoughts on abortion betrayed a certain sense of inconclusiveness not unlike that of many other Christians who likewise were beginning to struggle with this controversial issue.

As the abortion debate began to stir among Atlantic Baptists, changes were being initiated by Canada's lawmakers. The changes to the *Criminal Code* with respect to abortion were observed without comment by the Atlantic Baptists at this time. The *Atlantic Baptist* did not address the issue and no mention of the matter was made at the Convention level either at this time as reports of the Yearbooks are silent on the issue. This strongly suggests that among Atlantic Baptists, there was as yet anything but consensus on abortion and indeed, it is far from certain that the topic had even gripped the attention of many Baptists in Atlantic Canada. The Guiou-Vincent articles indicate a studied ambiguity about how to respond to the controversy, still in its infancy. Vincent's articles suggest that, at this time, opinions were still very much in a state of flux. Many years would pass before anything resembling a consensus of opinion on abortion would become a reality among Atlantic Baptists.

Following the passage of Bill C-150, a period of relative tranquility prevailed for Atlantic Baptists insofar as the abortion issue was concerned. But in January 1971, the *Atlantic Baptist* broke the silence when Rev. Fred W. Gordon addressed the abortion issue in an editorial. Gordon was responding to a call by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women for "abortion on request" for women pregnant less than twelve weeks, and for those farther advanced if the pregnancy endangered life or mental health of the mother, or if the child was likely to be born with serious mental or physical defect. Gordon acknowledged that while abortion to save the life of the mother was sometimes a necessity, he rejected any attempt at justifying of abortion to prevent the birth of a handicapped child, asserting that "many handicapped children have adjusted in marvellous ways, lived probably as happy lives as unhandicapped, and made significant contributions to society."¹³ At the same time he rejected abortion when done for what he termed the "purely personal reasons" of the woman involved.

Gordon's rejection of abortion was based in large part upon his belief that the fetus was human from conception onwards, and thus of intrinsic value. Gordon rejected as arbitrary and unfounded any attempts to designate a point in embryonic development when the fetus could be said to have changed from 'non-human' to 'human.' "When is the unborn a 'life'? Is it not a 'life' at 12 weeks but a 'life' at 13 weeks? If any later than conception, who can say just when?"¹⁴ Gordon asked. After this vigorous expression of opposition to abortion, Gordon proceeded to make a clear moral distinction differentiating contraception from abortion. The former

he held up as a commendable measure "to ensure responsible parenthood without denying a bodily function with which mankind has been endowed."¹⁵ Abortion, in contrast, involved "the responsibility of terminating a life already conceived."¹⁶ Gordon concluded by suggesting that those concerned about the abortion issue ought to make the recommendation of this Royal Commission the object of their attention.¹⁷ The federal government, as it turned out, chose not to implement these recommendations.

Gordon's editorial is worthy of note for it marks the first instance in which an Atlantic Baptist organization, in this case a publication, took a definite stance on the abortion issue. This was significant because since taking this stand in 1971 the *Atlantic Baptist*, when it has spoken out on this issue, has not wavered in its support for the right to life of the unborn child. The *Atlantic Baptist* took the first few steps in a direction which would help in shaping the opinion of its constituency. The definite stance taken by editor Fred Gordon in 1971 was made when consensus on the abortion issue among Atlantic Baptists was yet many years down the road.

Despite taking this strongly pro-life stance, the *Atlantic Baptist* did not jump into the abortion controversy with both feet. No substantial articles concerning abortion made their way into the pages of the *Atlantic Baptist* until a number of years later. The only exception to this observation occurred in 1974 when the publication's new editor Rev. George Simpson produced a book review of a work entitled *The Issues We Face . . . and Some Biblical Answers*. Simpson reported that the book's compiler, Bill Stephens "[made] it clear that he regards the rising number of abortion - 12

percent of live births in Canada - as a shocking national scandal."¹⁸ This dearth of commentary is somewhat surprising given the events in the abortion issue which transpired during this period. In the United States, the famous 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision of the Supreme Court resulted in a considerable loss of protection for the fetus when the right to have an abortion was granted to pregnant women. Also in that same year in Canada, Dr. Henry Morgentaler commenced his ongoing battle with the Canadian legal system, making public the fact that he had performed more than 5,000 illegal abortions in Montreal.¹⁹

A contributing factor to what is virtually six years of silence on abortion may be connected to a change in editors which took place in 1971 when George Simpson succeeded the retiring Fred Gordon. This transition in editorship was just one of many changes happening during that time. The 1960s and the early 1970s witnessed an era of transformation for Atlantic Baptists as they sought to redefine themselves not only in their stance on social issues like abortion, but also in terms of theology and denominational structure. The 1950s marked the beginning of a return to conservatism among Atlantic Baptists. Through the 1960s and 1970s, many issues of a controversial nature took their place alongside abortion in vying for the attention of publisher and church member alike and, under Gordon's editorship, the *Atlantic Baptist* did not shy away from addressing these matters. Among these were: ongoing concerns over the biblical orthodoxy of Acadia's theological faculty and the related issue of the inspiration of scripture; loss of Convention control over Acadia University as a

whole; change in the role of the United Baptist Bible Training School; the founding of Acadia Divinity College; concerns over ecumenism and UBCAP's involvement in the Canadian Council of Churches; and certainly by no means a minor issue, the wholesale restructuring of the Convention itself.²⁰ Perhaps the lack of coverage given to the abortion issue by the *Atlantic Baptist* during this time period is more readily understood in light of the existence of such a "full plate" of competing issues.

Perhaps also, it was the new editor's intention to steer a course away from some of the more contentious issues which had long occupied the attention of his predecessor. Describing the overall tenor of the publication during this time period, Robert S. Wilson observed that: "The pages of *The Atlantic Baptist* were remarkably silent on controversial issues under the editorship of George Simpson."²¹

Certainly this observation was true of the abortion issue during the first six years of Simpson's editorship, but in 1977, this changed dramatically, as will be discussed below. Perhaps the new editor's previous silence on the issue was less a mark of timidity and more the result of the cautious awareness of the ambiguity concerning abortion which existed within the minds of many during the 1970s, even within the conservative evangelical camp. Dr. Craig Carter, faculty member of Atlantic Baptist University in Moncton, New Brunswick, and former pastor who made a major contribution to the efforts at creating a pro-life consensus among Atlantic Baptists, noted that abortion became an issue among mainline denominations earlier than it did for the more evangelical ones like

the UBCAP.²² Even when evangelicals started to become involved in the early 1970s, some of their statements on abortion tended to be somewhat "fuzzy," revealing an uncertainty about how to approach the issue.²³

An illustration of this is found in the early response of UBCAP's Board of Social Service (later renamed the Social Action Commission) to the abortion issue. In the early 1970s, at the behest of the Board of Social Service, a Study Committee was formed under the chairmanship of the Rev. Earle T. McKnight, Baptist chaplain at the Nova Scotia Hospital in Dartmouth, with a mandate "to prepare a Study Paper to focus the concerns that Baptist people feel concerning one human problem - Problem Pregnancy - and to speak specifically on one response to that problem, viz., induced abortion."²⁴

Among the motivating factors for this study came in the form of a letter written to Dr. Alec Crowe, member of the Board of Social Service, from a Saint John physician, Dr. Anna Mary Burditt. In her correspondence, Dr. Burditt voiced her concern over the increasing number of abortions being performed in Canada following the federal government's 1969 relaxation of the *Criminal Code* restrictions governing abortion. The legality of abortion did not, in Burditt's view, endow it with moral sanction as she adamantly declared:

Whether or not we call abortion "murder" and at what stage we consider a foetus to be a human being seems to me to be only a matter of semantics. The fact remains that abortion is the deliberate destruction of human life. Is its acceptance not a complete change in the philosophy of Christendom? Have we

ever before accepted destruction of human life outside of war (where we "justify" it on grounds of self-defence) or capital punishment ("an eye for an eye")? And, if this does represent a philosophical change where does it lead us? The next obvious step it would seem to me would be euthanasia.²⁵

Burditt questioned whether Christians could accept "this destruction of life," predicting that the abortion issue would become an increasingly prevalent problem for the churches, and especially the pastors, to deal with. In light of her concerns, Burditt proposed a plan of action as a response to the abortion controversy. Included the following objectives:

- (1) A serious look by theologians and philosophers at the significance of abortion (I find myself greatly in need of such discussions)
- (2) Some guidelines for pastors in counselling their parishioners re abortion. (Perhaps they don't need them, but it seems to me that this is such a new problem that many pastors will have to wrestle with it in their profession as I am having to do in mine.)
- (3) Literature discussing this topic to be made available for women's' groups and/or individuals. The Women's Lib [movement] is turning out a lot of trash and filling the newspapers with some pretty jaundiced views of abortion. There is a great need for the church to provide us with some wholesome thinking on the spiritual and moral aspects of this problem.
- (4) Stimulation of discussion in church groups about marriage and family life. Possibly a conference with this theme would be valuable.²⁶

Burditt's letter was passed on to the Board of Social Service where its proposals were taken seriously, for in a letter dated November 3, 1971, McKnight responded to Dr. Burditt on behalf of the Board. In his reply, McKnight informed the doctor that the Board of Social Service had received her letter and it "has been under consideration ever since."²⁷ Indeed it had, for in McKnight's

personal papers, his agenda for the Board of Social Service meetings for February 8th and 9th, 1971, listed a number of objectives for a study on abortion as well as a suggested methodology for the inquiry. McKnight's plan advocated that the significance of abortion be thoroughly considered looking at its cultural, social, medical, psychological, philosophical, theological, and legal aspects. Then, an attempt be made to provide guidelines to assist pastors in counselling situations regarding abortion. The provision of moral and scientific information of relevance to church women's groups and for married couples was also proposed. Clearly, McKnight had taken Burditt's letter quite seriously, adopting many of her suggestions. One exception was that the Board had opted to wait before proceeding with a seminar on abortion until such time as it "had done a careful study of the subject and made a statement that could be of guidance to our people."²⁸

Advising Burditt that he was asked to conduct the study and to obtain contributors to assist him, McKnight invited the doctor's participation in this process.²⁹ In addition to Dr. Burditt and himself, McKnight's papers listed the following names as personnel for the Study Committee: Rev. Neil G. Price of Saint John; Dr. D. W. Johnston, Dartmouth; Dr. M. R. Cherry of Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville; Dr. Stuart Murray of Atlantic Baptist College, Moncton; Dr. M. O. Vincent, Homewood Sanitarium, Guelph.³⁰

The groundwork which was undertaken in the preparation of this Study Paper was quite extensive. Under the leadership of Rev. McKnight, the Board of Social Service conducted an investigation of the abortion issue by consulting a wide variety of sources and of

opinions. McKnight's personal papers reveal an impressive array of articles, pronouncements, and position papers on abortion from a plethora of sources encompassing religious denominations such as the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and United Church; medical and psychiatric associations, and even clippings of articles from magazines. In this process, the Board of Social Service cast its net far and wide to gather as much input as possible. From this information and the input of the members of the Board, a statement was formulated and by 1973, a Study Paper was drafted. The next step was to test how the Paper would be received.

In order to do this, McKnight distributed copies to a number of key people soliciting their views. A copy was sent to Rev. Stanley J. Harrison at Zion United Baptist Church in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. Harrison in turn, put the Paper under the scrutiny of a group of younger people comprised of six males and six females. Reporting back to McKnight later, Harrison noted that the group "felt that the report was good, and few criticisms were offered."³¹ Harrison did state two points of difference his group had with the Study Paper's recommendations, namely that it was felt that the doctor should not be the counsellor in the decision of whether or not to have an abortion, and that the Paper took a long time to reach a conclusion.³²

In a further letter to McKnight dated June 14, 1973, Harrison gave indication of his own perceptions of the document. Noting his own support for the Study Paper, Harrison stated that he "would take a stronger pro-abortion stand for myself, but you also know our people."³³ He encouraged McKnight to present the Study Paper

to Convention feeling that it was strengthened by having been worked through by people of different perspectives.³⁴

McKnight had sent copies of the Study Paper to both Dr. Anna Burditt and Dr. Norman Guiou. Dr. Burditt was quite blunt in her reply. Among her criticisms, she accused the authors of "adapt[ing] religion to currently popular modes of behaviour," and of being "much more influenced by the newspaper than by the Bible" Her assessment of the document was that it was a "biased, pro-abortion paper."³⁵

From the opposite side of the issue came the response of Dr. Norman Guiou. Guiou felt that the section dealing with the Christian doctrine of man and woman should be deleted. Guiou averred strongly that the conclusion should underscore the historical Baptist emphasis on freedom of conscience. According to Guiou, this should be the only conclusion of the Study Paper. He recommended this be done by moving the thirteenth point of the text to the end where the reading would be, "As Baptists, we insist on the rights of our members to freedom of conscience and appropriate action in this, as in all matters of faith and morals."³⁶

McKnight undoubtedly felt the pressure of being caught in the middle as his letter to Kendall J. Kenney of Bridgewater, Nova Scotia reveals: "I received a real scorching letter from Dr. Anna Burditt in Saint John accusing me and our committee of producing a pro-abortion paper that has many serious faults."³⁷ McKnight went on to lament that from the the other perspective, "Dr. Guiou says it's not pro-abortion enough," and that he recommended that the

sections of the Study Paper dealing with the Christian doctrine of man and the ethical standards proposed therein be deleted.

In its theological considerations, this Study Paper adopted a notably different perspective from Fred Gordon's aforementioned 1971 editorial in the *Atlantic Baptist*. Among the conclusions of the Study Paper was the assertion that the value of the fetus was closely connected with its degree of development and therefore the "dignity of the fetus is to be honored and protected with a zeal commensurate with its development."³⁸ Despite the problems which Gordon had pointed out earlier with such a view, the Study Paper asserted that:

The embryo is a human-being-in-the process of becoming from conception: its dignity is a developing one. We do not hold a funeral service for a miscarried (aborted) fetus; some do not hold a funeral service for a full-term baby who is stillborn. Humanity involves developmental relationships among living human beings for achievement of its real dignity. Termination of pregnancy is abortion, not murder.³⁹

Asserting that ultimately the decision of whether or not the fetal life ought to be ended rests with the mother, and that this ought to be recognized by law, the paper did try to give some limited consideration of the need to protect the fetus, concluding that the

dignity of the fetus is best served by the Christian community through raising the consciousness of society about that dignity, and attacking those social, educational, and spiritual conditions contributing to its willy-nilly appearance and then tragic termination.⁴⁰

The Study Paper's language with respect to abortion is noteworthy. "Termination of pregnancy" and "abortion" are used coterminously and the specific assertion is made that these are "not murder." More forcefully, it was emphasized that "If abortion at any stage or in any circumstance is interpreted by anyone as killing with intent (murder), it should be treated consistently with one's interpretation of other forms of killing with intent (e.g., war)."⁴¹ It is also worthy of note that the completed form of the Study Paper includes as an appendix, a statement on abortion from the American Protestant Hospital Association which was approved by the Association's House of Delegates in 1970. In "Pregnancy Interruption: A Policy Statement," the APHA adopted a very liberal approach to the availability of abortion. Curiously, the APHA's support for liberalized access to abortion was justified by its stated concern for the family unit:

Believing that the integrity of the family unit and the institution of marriage is jeopardized, if not destroyed by unwanted children, and believing that the condition of pregnancy and the bearing of children may cause physical suffering and mental anguish, and believing that social maladjustment may be related to or result from unwanted children, and those conceived out of wedlock, and until such time as totally effective and acceptable contraceptive material and techniques have been developed, pregnancy may be interrupted at the request of and with the informed consent of a woman, her legal guardian or nearest relative if she is under the age of consent.⁴²

The Policy Statement also made clear the APHA's support for freedom of conscience for those not wishing to obtain or provide abortions: "No woman should be compelled to undergo, or a physician to perform, a procedure that would interrupt pregnancy

if either has ethical, religious, or any other objection to such a procedure."⁴³ The APHA also proposed that abortion be made readily available to all regardless of economic status: "All reasonable efforts should be made to remove economic barriers that would prohibit the exercise of the option provided by this statement."⁴⁴

The orientation of this Policy Statement seems to have set the tone for the overall perspective of the Study Paper produced by the Study Committee. Both papers accepted abortion as a viable option to relieve stress upon the family or the mother resulting from an unwanted pregnancy. Both accepted the idea of an exemption from having, or providing abortion based on conscience. This curious mixture seems to highlight the ambiguity which appeared to prevail at this time. Abortion as a means to relieve stress on mother or family would not become an option that many within UBCAP would accept, yet the establishment of provisions to safeguard against undue pressure being placed upon pregnant women to have abortions and, at the same time, permitting health professional the freedom of conscience to exempt themselves from having to provide an abortion did become issues which were pursued by pro-life individuals within Convention during the 1980s and beyond.

In the working copy of the Study Paper, McKnight included notes in the margin which contained comments from Dr. Burditt and Dr. Guiou. The opinions of these two physicians were virtually diametrically opposed one another. McKnight's own comments reveal his leanings towards Guiou's perspective, although not giving the sense of full agreement with Guiou's more radical opinions. It

appears from this and from the overall tenor of the Study Paper that McKnight and, we may surmise, at least the majority of the members of the Board of Social Service at that time, tended to lean towards a moderately liberal orientation on the abortion issue. In essence, the conclusions of the Study Paper, especially in its advocacy that the decision to abort was ultimately in the hands of the mother, appear to reflect the adoption in principle of one of the key points of the movement for abortion on demand. Little or no emphasis was given to the unborn child's rights, these being "in process of development" and clearly subservient to the mother's decision whether or not to continue the pregnancy.

The Study Paper's emphasis on the rights of the mother as opposed to the rights of the developing child could arguably mark something of a departure from the way Atlantic Baptists had traditionally viewed the rights of mother and child (closely linked, if indeed inseparable), but it is probably more accurate to see the Study Committee's conclusions as more heavily influenced by the North American debate surrounding the question of whether or not the developing fetus is a human being. At the time, with limited but growing knowledge of fetal development, the Committee's conclusions reflected the prevailing uncertainty.

Another factor which clearly affected the stance taken by the Committee was that it had drawn quite heavily on material coming from theologically more liberal mainline denominations in Canada such as the United Church and the Presbyterian Church.⁴⁵ From the Canadian Baptists' own conservative and evangelical camp, very little material had been produced dealing with the abortion issue.

One exception to this was the Baptist Union of Western Canada (BUWC) which was studying the abortion issue at the same time as McKnight's group. In 1974, McKnight's correspondence indicates that an exchange of information took place between himself and Rev. Philip Collins, Coordinator for the BUWC's Committee on Church and Community.⁴⁶ There is a small modification in McKnight's thinking at about this time, but it seems to originate not from his contact with Collins, but from the influence of M. O. Vincent. As McKnight describes it in a letter to Collins,

Merv Vincent's statement that our culture has now swung to the point where there is some need for defence of the value of the fetus has given me cause to include in my thinking something of that emphasis⁴⁷

Apparently, McKnight's new willingness to put greater emphasis on the value of the fetus resulted not so much from a change of personal convictions, but more from his perception of a shift in the mood of public opinion. Despite this modification, McKnight's primary concern in the matter remained elsewhere:

the one great area that I feel needs attention now is serious study of the effect of being either an unwanted pregnancy and/or an unwanted baby on the life that follows pregnancy and birth as well as the pregnancy period.⁴⁸

McKnight remained emphatic that many social problems were "rooted in the factor of [the] unwanted mess in the first place."⁴⁹

When the conclusions of the Study Paper are contrasted with Fred Gordon's editorial stance, it can be seen clearly that during the 1970s Atlantic Baptists had not yet developed a consensus on how to respond to the abortion issue. The disparity of opinions

encountered, even within the Board of Social Service itself, is indicative that there was anything but unanimity.

During that same year, 1973, at least one voice among Atlantic Baptists who was a member of the Study Committee was publicly articulating a position which evidenced a much stronger opposition to abortion on demand compared to the Study Paper's more lenient stance. Dr. Millard R. Cherry, Principal of Acadia Divinity College, authored an article in the Acadia University student newspaper, *The Athenaeum*, in which he offered his perspective. In Cherry's view, a Christian approach to abortion involved at least two key concepts, namely, the sacredness of life and the doctrine of man. Under the first concept, Cherry postulated the following:

Christian faith asserts that God the Creator is the Lord and giver of all life (Gen. 1:11-13, 20-30; Jn. 1:4). Since all life comes from God, man is a steward of his life, his own and all other life, even subhuman life; and he is responsible to God for his stewardship. Any approach to abortion which ignores the divine origin of life and man's responsible stewardship of life is less than Christian.⁵⁰

To this he added the second concept that:

The Christian doctrine of man asserts that man is God's creature, created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7) Man is created capable of fellowship with God and has been given dominion over the rest of the created order. Each human fetus is potentially such a person. Abortion, which destroys this potential, raises the moral question of the extent of man's dominion. Does man's dominion extend to the human fetus?⁵¹

Cherry's response to his own questions led him to turn to the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." Noting that this injunction did allow for some exceptions, as in the cases where the

killing was accidental, justifiable homicide, killing in war, and capital punishment, Cherry then took up the question of whether or not abortion would be covered by this injunction. In order to answer this question, he observed, "one has to establish whether the fetus is indeed a person, and if a person, whether in certain circumstances the killing of the fetus is justified."⁵² Cherry turned to the scientific field of genetics to answer his own question:

Modern genetics has proven that the chromosome makeup of fetal tissue, its genetic makeup, is fixed at conception, one-half having come from the father and one-half from the mother. Genetically one is from the beginning what one continues essentially to be in every cell. The potential for future development is as great in the fertilized ovum as in the embryo, as in the fetus, as in the infant, as in the child. Human life is a process from conception to death. Abortion raises the moral question of whether there is a point in this process at which the value of the fetus becomes such that for society, the mother or the father, or for God, it is no longer possible to justify its destruction, or whether the fetus has had this value from conception. Since the potential is there from the moment of conception, it is difficult from a genetic point of view to justify the destruction of the fetus at any point of its development.⁵³

Cherry's opposition to abortion was somewhat less stringent in the "hard cases," meaning those situations when abortion was deemed necessary to preserve the physical or mental health of the mother, where the developing child would experience a "grave physical or mental defect," or where the pregnancy resulted from rape, incest, or other "felonius intercourse."⁵⁴ Cherry seemed to leave the door open in such cases as these, recognizing that there are times when,

The question of justifiable abortion confronts the Christian with that situation which in Christian ethics is known as 'the choice

between the lesser of two evils.' Many, if not most, ethical choices are of this nature. . . In like manner, abortion can only be justified on the basis that in a given circumstance the [death of the] fetus is a lesser evil than any other option.⁵⁵

Yet, while acknowledging the possibility of exceptions, Cherry offered the following opinion of the rights of the fetus: "It has a moral right to be born." He was however, despite the apparent qualification of his view, clear in his opposition to unrestricted abortion. Cherry urged that efforts be made to utilize political pressure to obtain legal restrictions against abortion: "To this end Christians must use moral persuasion and work for the enactment of adequate and just legislation. From a Christian viewpoint, no case can be made for 'abortion on demand.'"⁵⁶

The ambiguity apparent in Dr. Cherry's article of course is revealed by the broad range of categories in which he felt that abortion was at least a potential option, though by no means a choice to be made lightly. The call he made was clearly for a much more responsible evaluation of the circumstances in which abortion was deemed a necessity, or the lesser of two evils. Cherry's point of view clearly sought to strike a balance between concern for the mother and concern for the developing human life she carried. This was the approach which represented the traditional stance of Atlantic Baptists during this century and which would govern UBCAP's response during the next decade and beyond.

No clear consensus on abortion emerged from the early 1970s. This ambiguity of opinion which was apparent among Atlantic Baptists was further evidenced by how the Board of Social Service's (now renamed the Social Action Commission) Study Paper on

Abortion was received within Atlantic Baptist circles. In the 1975 UBCAP Year Book, the report of the Social Action Commission notes curiously that,

A study paper on Abortion was circulated to all ministers - almost no response was recorded to this paper - we would be happy to know if this kind of information has proved useful, or if other ways of informing our constituency should be considered.⁵⁷

The failure of the Board of Social Service's attempts at creating a consensus on the abortion issue left a gap in leadership into which the *Atlantic Baptist* quickly stepped. The driving force behind the *Atlantic Baptist's* new boldness was, at least in part, the result of an educational opportunity experienced by editor George Simpson. In May of 1977, at the behest of the Social Action Committee of UBCAP, Simpson attended the "Festival of Life" meetings of the pro-life organization, Alliance for Life, held in Ottawa. As a result, after a six-year hiatus, the abortion issue reappeared in the pages of the *Atlantic Baptist* with a vengeance as Simpson devoted an editorial in the June 1, 1977 issue and a front-page story in the August 15 issue to the subject of abortion.

In this editorial, Simpson indicated that his experience at the Festival had impacted his thinking about abortion which he characterized as "a blight [which] has fallen . . . in the Western World."⁵⁸ Citing abortion statistics which evidenced the growing practice of abortion in Great Britain, the United States, and Canada, Simpson asserted that in abortion, "Human souls [were] denied the God-given opportunity for life, development and growth of character."⁵⁹ Appealing to the findings of fetal medicine as

buttressing his argument for the humanity of the unborn child, Simpson called for a response to the abortion issue asking, "Will Baptists contend for the rights of the unborn?"⁶⁰ Simpson noted that "We are at the crossroads and surely all must feel deeply concerned about the escalating pressure for abortion on demand by pro-abortionists."⁶¹

It is evident that Simpson's call for action on the part of the Baptist constituency, was in large measure, a reaction to the activity of the pro-choice movement at the time. Yet in his opposition to abortion there was at least the beginnings of a realization that abortion was being performed, not merely on "fetal tissue" but on human beings who were being deprived of their opportunity for life. This renewed concern over the abortion issue during 1977 was likely also driven by the fact that in February of 1977, the House of Commons had received the report of the Badgley Committee which it had appointed with the goal of determining whether or not the 1969 abortion law allowing "therapeutic" abortion was being applied equitably across the country. The Committee reported that in fact the law was not being applied equitably.⁶² Undoubtedly, this finding could not but help stir up the abortion controversy in Canadian society, bringing it once again into the public forum and before the eyes of the editor of the *Atlantic Baptist*.

Two months later, in August of 1977, in another front page article, George Simpson continued his offensive against abortion. He accused the Liberal government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau of "subterfuge" in the strategy employed to amend Canada's

abortion laws, having included these amendments in a much broader omnibus bill passed in 1969. Simpson also called upon the federal government to heed the wishes of the millions of Canadians who had expressed opposition to the 1969 changes to the abortion laws.⁶³ Simpson then called upon Christians to develop a stance on the abortion issue that was not driven merely by the trends and pressures of society, but would address the issue theologically as well.

Simpson expressed his personal view that "Canadian abortion practices deny man's spiritual nature and eternal predestinarian calling. The attempt to dehumanize the unborn child is but a symptom of our ideological crisis and Christians must determine the issue of abortion on theological as well as sociological grounds."⁶⁴ Simpson argued that the Scriptures provided a clear view that human life is a gift of God and not the product of random chance and that the Christian gospel gives value to all human beings, including the weak and powerless. In accordance with this, he contended that "abortion denies the unborn the status of an individual person with human rights in this world." Simpson directed a pointed blast against the pro-choice advocacy of abortion as a means to eliminate the physically or mentally handicapped: "CANADIAN ABORTION PRACTICES DENY PERSONHOOD TO HUMANS IN THIS LIFE WHO DO NOT MEASURE UP TO ARBITRARY STANDARDS."⁶⁵ He cautioned against the potential weakening of respect for human life which might come about through the relaxing of restrictions against abortion. Going on to point out the abuses in the post-1969 practice of abortion in Canada, such as the

common practice by hospital abortion committees of "rubber-stamping" abortion requests, Simpson called upon Christians to translate the biblically-based right to life of the unborn into effective political and social action.⁶⁶

The significance of this event is that it marks a point where the Social Action Commission of Convention and the *Atlantic Baptist* began to march together. Prior to this, in the early 1970s, it appeared that these two bodies were travelling different roads; the *Atlantic Baptist* being staunchly pro-life, the Board of Social Service/Social Action Commission reflecting a more uncertain position. The convergence of these two entities under a common point of view suggested that a unified position on abortion for Atlantic Baptists as a Convention was closer to becoming a reality. However, there was still much more to be done before this came to pass.

Following George Simpson's 1977 editorial offensive against abortion, the controversy underwent something of a brief lull. Apparently the only significant mention of abortion which closes out the decade of the 1970s is a passing reference in the 1979 UBCAP *Year Book* in which the report of the Social Action Commission states that research was being carried out on the "termination of pregnancies and the question of Abortion," along with studies on gambling and lotteries, and literature in schools.⁶⁷ This period of comparative inactivity was, so to speak, the "calm before the storm."

The general lack of a response in the 1970s to the Board of Social Service's Study Paper on Abortion was a curious one indeed

for this document had been painstakingly prepared. A number of possibilities exist to explain this lack of response. Perhaps for many Atlantic Baptist pastors at the time, the abortion issue was either not yet a very strong concern, or it was one in which they felt some hesitation about involving themselves. It is possible, indeed likely, that many pastors were still experiencing a considerable amount of indecision about the ethics of abortion; indecision which the Study Paper on Abortion apparently had not succeeded in removing from their minds.

It is also quite possible that the position adopted by the Study Paper was one that was simply not in line with the biblical, ethical, and political views of many pastors and laypeople within the Atlantic United Baptist Convention. Theological conservatism tends to keep at arm's length anything that smacks of liberalism, whether in the theological or political realms. However, the social concerns of the social gospel are not by any means entirely incompatible with conservative, evangelical views. Traditionally, evangelicals have seen the importance of the social aspects of the Gospel and have sought to bring the message to bear against the evils of human society. The social activism of evangelicals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is solid evidence of this point. Among Atlantic Baptists, the social gospel and conservative theology have co-existed in relative harmony since the turn of the century. For the most part, the Convention has successfully avoided the fundamentalist-modernist split which in many denominations, tended to drive a wedge between traditionally closely related activities of evangelism and social activism.⁶⁸

One of the legacies of the social gospel's incorporation into Atlantic Baptist circles is seen in the ongoing concern for the welfare of mothers and children. Support for abortion on demand was not likely to have won the hearts and minds of a majority in this constituency, not only because it was perceived as the taking of the life of a child, but also because it was viewed as often being detrimental to the well-being of the mother. In addition, the resurgence of conservative theological perspective within Convention, with its concurrent emphasis upon the value of human life made in the image of God, mitigated against the widespread acceptance of any viewpoint that did not give clear recognition to the humanity and worth of the fetus. This conservative perspective on abortion, having its roots in the 1970s, at least as far as Atlantic Baptists were concerned, grew in strength, becoming more refined and coherent during the following decade. The conservative perspective found a ready ally in the *Atlantic Baptist* which promoted a pro-life view with increasing fervor. It would seem that the coalescing of these factors made it very unlikely that a "liberal" position on abortion would become accepted by Atlantic Baptists during this time period.

¹Norman Guiou, "Canada's Abortion Problems," *Atlantic Baptist*, 15 June, 1968, 4.

²Ibid. It is ironic that in his assertions about the status of abortion in antiquity, Guiou makes no mention of the Hippocratic Oath (460-357 B.C.) which clearly opposes abortion.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 4, 16.

⁵M. O. Vincent, "The Abortion Dilemma," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 October 1968, 1.

⁶Whether Vincent drew consciously upon the Platform or was unknowingly influenced by it is not certain. The former possibility seems likely, given the close similarity between his points and those in the Platform.

⁷*Ibid.*, 1, 2.

⁸*Ibid.*, 7.

⁹*Ibid.*, 1, 2, 7, 10, 13.

¹⁰M. O. Vincent, "Abortion Re-Viewed," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 December 1968, 1.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*, 10.

¹³Fred W. Gordon, "Abortion," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 January 1971, 4.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸George Simpson, review of *The Issues We Face . . . and Some Biblical Answers*, ed. Bill Stephens, in the *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 February 1974, 1.

¹⁹Angus McLaren and Arlene Tigar McLaren, *The Changing Practices and Politics of Contraception and Abortion in Canada, 1880-1980* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 137.

²⁰For a detailed discussion of these issues see Robert S. Wilson, "Atlantic Baptists Confront the Turbulent Sixties," in *A Fragile Stability: Definition and Redefinition of Maritime Baptist Identity*, ed. David T. Priestly (Hantsport, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1994), 149-169.

²¹*Ibid.*, 166.

²²See note 1 in the Introduction.

²³Craig A. Carter, interview by author, 24 May, 1994, Moncton, New Brunswick.

²⁴Earle T. McKnight, "Abortion: As one response to a problem pregnancy - A Study Paper," 1973, 2. [Emphasis in original].

²⁵Anna Mary Burditt, letter to Alec Crowe, 3 February 1971, E. T. McKnight papers, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, N.S.

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- 26Ibid.
- 27Earle T. McKnight, letter to Anna M. Burditt, 3 November 1971, E. T. McKnight papers, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.
- 28Ibid.
- 29Ibid.
- 30E. T. McKnight papers, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.
- 31Stanley J. Harrison, letter to Earle T. McKnight, 8 June 1973, E. T. McKnight papers, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.
- 32Ibid.
- 33Stanley J. Harrison, letter to Earle T. McKnight, 14 June 1973, E. T. McKnight papers, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.
- 34Ibid.
- 35Anna M. Burditt, letter to Earle T. McKnight, 18 April 1973, E. T. McKnight papers, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.
- 36Norman Guiou, comments and suggestions made on copy of Abortion Study Paper returned to Earle T. McKnight, 14 May 1973, E. T. McKnight papers, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.
- 37Earle T. McKnight, copy of letter to Kendall J. Kenney, Q.C., 12 June 1973, E. T. McKnight papers, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.
- 38Earle T. McKnight, "Abortion . . . A Study Paper," 2.
- 39Ibid., 3.
- 40Ibid., 2.
- 41Ibid., 5.
- 42American Protestant Hospital Association, "Pregnancy Interruption: A Policy Statement," 1970.
- 43Ibid.
- 44Ibid.
- 45Refer to note #1, in the Introduction.
- 46This information exchange between McKnight and Collins seems not to have significantly affected the work of the Study Committee or their BUWC counterparts, since both groups had

prepared their documents prior to this correspondence. McKnight's group had produced its Study Paper by March 1973, while Collins' committee published its document entitled, "Abortion," in December 1973. This report, 46 pages in length, was intended as a guide to assist BUWC churches in studying and discussing the abortion issue. The abortion issue was considered from a number angles, including its legal, historical, scientific, moral and ethical aspects. The publication was not intended to be taken as a policy statement by the BUWC, nor the Committee that produced it, which Collins makes clear in his introductory remarks.

⁴⁷Earle T. McKnight, copy of a letter to Phillip Collins, 14 March 1974, E. T. McKnight papers, Acadia University Archives, Wolfville, N.S.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Millard R. Cherry, "Campus Christians?" *Athenaeum*, 25 October 1973, 14.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Gordon Patch, "The Commission on Social Action," in *Year Book of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces 1975*, Part 1 (Saint John, New Brunswick: Lingley Printing, 1975), 43.

⁵⁸George Simpson, "Editorial," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 June 1977, 4.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Monique Hebert, *Abortion: Legal Aspects*, 21.

⁶³George Simpson, "Abortion on Demand: The Canadian Scene," *Atlantic Baptist*, 15 August 1977, 1.

⁶⁴Ibid., [Emphasis in original].

⁶⁵Ibid., [Emphasis in original].

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷McKnight, Earle T. and John S. Beers. "Report of the Commission on Social Action," in *Year Book of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1979*. Part 1 (Saint John, New Brunswick: United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1979), 173-174.

⁶⁸For a discussion of this issue as it relates to Atlantic Baptists the reader is referred to G.A. Rawlyk's, *Champions of the Truth: Fundamentalism, Modernism and the Maritime Baptists* (McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston, 1990).

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSENSUS

The 1980s witnessed decisive movement towards consensus among Atlantic Baptists as to how they viewed the abortion issue. The diversity of opinions and the emphasis upon studying the many aspects of the abortion problem during the 1970s gave way in the 1980s to the birth of a new attitude of resolution and action.

The *Atlantic Baptist* continued its promotion of the pro-life cause in another front page article authored by the Rev. David L. Smith in the March 1, 1980 edition. Smith, later Academic Dean at Providence Seminary, first discussed the arguments offered to justify abortion and dispensed with these in short order. He focussed upon the rights of the unborn child, asserting that the "right of a child to life should supersede any right that a woman may have over her own body."¹ He went on to ask, "Does the mother have the right to destroy the life of another human being simply because she is sheltering it?"² According to Smith, there was no question that Christians should be involved in the abortion controversy "because all life and death issues are religious decisions - that includes abortion. The whole debate is a moral one, and morality is a religious issue regardless of one's creed."³ Smith pointed to the worth of the individual as a guiding principle for Christians. Giving and taking life, he claimed, are the prerogatives of God alone as is the ownership of the human body. While Smith concluded that abortion "is an offence against God," he sounded a note of compassion toward those who had had abortions. In Smith's

opinion, firm opposition to abortion ought not to evoke harsh condemnation of those who had fallen prey to having made such a tragic choice.⁴

In the same issue as David L. Smith's essay, three other articles addressed the abortion issue. In the first, the pro-life organization "Coalition for Life" expressed its concerns over the reports of aborted babies being born alive and having been used for experimental purposes. Although these allegations were denied by acting Health and Welfare Minister David MacDonald, the article cited the opinion of neonatologist Dr. Andy Shennan who having read the reports, concluded that the allegations of live births was probably true. He condemned the experiments as "contraven[ing] all moral and ethical considerations"⁵

In the second article, editor George Simpson tackled the question of whether or not the abortion issue ought to be a political concern for Christians. The question was put and answered as follows:

Is the abortion issue a religious one? If so, should it be a political issue? The subject has been discussed in depth by evangelical and conservative Christian theologians. They seem to agree, for the most part, that abortion is not a religious issue as such, but that it ought to be an issue of concern to Christians. They also urge Christians to be concerned about mercy killing, since a general decline in respect for human life is leading to renewed calls for that as well.⁶

Although Simpson differed with Smith about abortion being a "religious" issue, they did share the view that it was a matter which required political action. To underscore this point, Simpson included, at the conclusion of his editorial, a paragraph describing

the Coalition for Life's documentation of the voting practices of members of parliament regarding the abortion issue.⁷

This issue of the *Atlantic Baptist* marks the first definite enunciation by an organ of UBCAP of the need for Christians to be involved at the political level. The article sounded a similar call for political action as M. R. Cherry had in his *Athenaeum* article seven years earlier. Simpson's editorial also amounted to a tacit endorsement of the Coalition for Life, a political action wing of the pro-life movement.

It is also evident from this point that the issues of fetal experimentation and of "mercy" killing were coming to the awareness of the editor of the *Atlantic Baptist*. The March 1, 1980 issue of the *Atlantic Baptist* also ran an unsigned article from the "Coalition for the Protection of Human Life" which detailed the legal status of the unborn in Canada, according to both civil and criminal law. Noting that the civil law appeared to recognize the personhood of the fetus while criminal law denied it, the article called for a resolution of this discrepancy "in favour of the protection of innocent human life."⁸ To achieve this, it recommended that the *Criminal Code* be amended to limit the performance of abortions solely to cases when the mother's life was in jeopardy from a continued pregnancy.⁹

In 1980, the issue of abortion at last reached the floor of UBCAP's annual Convention Assembly. The Social Action Commission brought forth a resolution on abortion which argued that on the basis of humanity's accountability to God and the Christian understanding of the importance of personhood, unborn

children ought to have the same legal protection as all other persons. The resolution proposed that abortion should be performed only to save the life of the mother and it also stressed the need for Christian counselling to be offered to those involved in the problem.¹⁰ The wording of this resolution proposed by the Rev. Bill Scott on behalf of the Social Action Commission was as follows:

Inasmuch as: God created man 'in His own image', Man in his freedom must face his responsibilities as accountable to God, and in the light of the Christian emphasis on the importance of personhood, the unborn child should be afforded the same protection as that afforded any other person. Therefore be it resolved that abortion be only performed when there is a clear threat to the life of the mother. Further, because of the moral, physical and spiritual realities, churches and pastors should offer to individuals Christian counselling and understanding based on the truth of God's Word.¹¹

In the course of the ensuing debate, Rev. Winston Clarke moved a more strongly-worded amendment in which he suggested that all of the first resolution following the word "abortion" be struck out and replaced by the following: "abortion is to murder an unborn child, without giving man and God the final opportunity to meet the threat to the life of the mother and also the threat to the life of the child."¹² The UBCAP Yearbook for 1980 reported that extensive discussion followed these resolutions but no vote was taken. Instead it was moved by the Rev. Vin Rushton that the original motion and the amendment be referred back to the Social Action Commission for further study. This was accepted by the Assembly.¹³ Evidently, the required degree of consensus had not yet developed to a point where the Assembly could speak to the issue with a united voice.

The September 15, 1980 issue of the *Atlantic Baptist* reflected upon the proceedings of the previous month's Assembly. In reference to the motion on abortion, George Simpson attested that in the preceding years the church had often acted superficially on social issues such as abortion in part because of faulty information. With the wealth of accurate information now available it was the responsibility of the church to inform itself properly and make its voice heard. Simpson directed his most pointed criticisms against the practice of abortion as a form of birth control as well as against what he saw as the scandalous profiteering on the part of abortion providers.¹⁴

The report of the Social Action Commission in 1981 also reflected upon the previous year's discussion. It noted that the debate on the abortion issue had drawn "a great deal of vocal interest." The report concluded that this preliminary effort to develop a definitive stand on the issue had been "presumptuous" and suggested that such resolutions ought to come from the level of the local congregation and the associations rather than from the top down.¹⁵

Despite the apparent setback to the Social Action Commission's efforts at persuading the Convention to take a definite stance on abortion, the following year witnessed a swift reversal owing in large part to developments taking place within the Canadian Baptist Federation (CBF). At its July 1982 meeting in Moncton, New Brunswick, the Federation adopted the following Resolution on Abortion:

Whereas in the beginning God created man in His image; and
Whereas Jesus commands His followers to protect the children;
and
Whereas the Scriptures speak abundantly and clearly of the
sanctity of every human life from the moment of conception; and
Whereas since the abortion law in Canada was changed in 1969
abortion has risen from hundreds annually to thousands and 10s
[sic] of thousands;
Therefore, be it resolved, that this Assembly oppose abortion for
any reason other than to prevent the death of the expectant
mother.¹⁶

The Federation's movement on the abortion issue coupled with a growing awareness felt in Atlantic Baptist circles for the need to adopt a definite public stance against abortion on demand made certain that the issue would not be dropped. According to Rev. Malcolm Purdy, two factors were very important in galvanizing this opinion. The combination of a growing awareness of the easy access to abortion at Halifax's Victoria General Hospital plus the reaction to the public posturing of prominent abortion advocate Henry Morgentaler, helped galvanize Atlantic Baptists to a point where they were willing to make a public stand as a matter of principle.¹⁷ Purdy himself played a significant role in the movement among Atlantic Baptists towards accepting a resolution against abortion. His activity in the abortion issue came as an outgrowth of his position as a member of the Social Action Commission, where he served as its Secretary for a number of years. The aforementioned motion which was accepted by the Canadian Baptist Federation Assembly in 1982 originated in a draft which Purdy had drawn up and circulated among some of those present. After some editing and modification, the draft was

proposed in the form of a motion which was accepted by the Assembly.¹⁸

Purdy's personal convictions led him to oppose abortion on demand, but for many years he had for the most part, kept his views to himself. This changed after he began to write a "Clergy Corner" column in the *Bedford-Sackville Daily News*. Perplexed by society's misplaced sense of values, Purdy felt constrained to speak out because, as he describes it, "I always scratched my head and wondered why society could get upset at the slaughter of seals and not at the slaughter of unborn children."¹⁹ Purdy gave expression to his views in his writings and received a very favorable response. He was contacted by, and recruited as a member in Nova Scotians United for Life, a Halifax-based pro-life advocacy group. Purdy's involvement continued to grow and while pastoring in Guysborough County, he helped to establish the Guysborough County Right-to-Life. In addition, Purdy's pro-life credentials also entailed a stint of service on the board of directors of Council for Life Nova Scotia.²⁰

Following the passing of the resolution by the CBF in July of 1982, the Social Action Commission and the Convention Council of UBCAP also approved the CBF resolution in September of that same year. All that now remained was the approval of Convention Assembly, but this had to wait until the following year. Finally at Convention Assembly in 1983 the CBF resolution was introduced by Dr. Keith Hobson. After another period of lengthy discussion, the motion was approved as follows:

WHEREAS in the beginning God created man in his image; and

WHEREAS Jesus commands His followers to protect the children, and
WHEREAS the Scriptures speak abundantly and clearly of the sanctity of every human life from the moment of conception; and
WHEREAS since the abortion law in Canada was changed in 1969, abortion has risen from hundreds annually to thousands and tens of thousands;
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Assembly oppose abortion for any reason other than the death of the expectant mother;
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we, the delegates of this 137th Assembly of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, acknowledge our concern not only for the life of the unborn child but also for the child's mother and the child after birth, and we commit ourselves to advocate for the provision of adequate spiritual, economic and social support for children and their family units as a sincere, compassionate Christian ministry.²¹

The final paragraph was introduced Rev. John Boyd with the intention of ensuring that the pregnant mother not be overlooked.²² Boyd's addition helped make the stance of UBCAP more well rounded than that of the CBF by virtue of the added clause encouraging support for the mother and the child extending beyond the actual event of birth. The adopted resolution provided Atlantic Baptists with a strong, yet balanced and compassionate stand on the issue of abortion, a stand which evidenced concern for the rights and well-being of both mother and child, not altogether unlike the spirit of the 1921 "Social Gospel Platform," with its tradition of concern for the needs of families, especially mothers and children.

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, the *Atlantic Baptist* did not report to any significant extent the 1982 Convention Assembly resolution. The reason for this is not apparent. After the passing of this resolution by Convention, the abortion issue largely recedes from the pages of the *Atlantic Baptist* until 1985. It appears that

other concerns were uppermost at this time, particularly the arms race and peace issues which were correspondingly prominent in Canadian society at this time during which the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union was becoming increasingly frosty.

But the lengthy struggle on the the part of Atlantic Baptists to formulate a public stance on abortion had at last come to its conclusion. For the first time within UBCAP there existed a level of unity of opinion on the issue which had allowed it to express firm support for the rights of the unborn child and opposition to abortion on demand, while at the same time expressing concern for the well-being of the mother. True, UBCAP did not seem to have an easy time in bringing itself to the point of making a public stance on abortion. Much reflection and discussion from the late 1960s until the abortion issue really came to the forefront of UBCAP's attention in the early 1980s and even then, the first major effort to put forth a public stance met with failure. It was not until the Canadian Baptist Federation (of which UBCAP is a member) took a stance, that the momentum for passing a resolution on abortion was enough to carry it to success. Atlantic Baptists now had a definite public stance on the abortion issue. It would now be their task to determine how to translate their philosophy into effective action in the social and political realms. This is the subject of the next chapter.

One cannot but notice a lack of any serious opposition to the development of a pro-life stance on the part of UBCAP. Apart from Dr. Norman Guiou's strongly pro-choice perspective, no prominent

spokesman for the opposing view is to be found from within the ranks of Atlantic Baptists. If there were any opposition to the pro-life view, it might have been expected to surface from within the ranks of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. The ABF, a small group of UBCAP pastors and laypeople situated somewhat to the "left" on the theological spectrum, did not mount any public challenge to the Convention's developing opposition to abortion. If anything, its members were at least cautiously supportive.

Rev. John Boyd, himself an ABF member, moved the ammendment to the 1983 resolution (above) which did not challenge the basic premise of support for the fetus' right to life, but sought to broaden the overall thrust of the resolution to include a statement of concern for the welfare of the mother and child after birth, as well as before. Boyd was not comfortable with either a "pro-life or pro-choice" label, but personally preferred to approach the issue from what he deemed a more "pastoral perspective" in which the facts of each individual situation were evaluated in a way that included the relevant theological and moral aspects. Boyd and fellow ABF member Rev. Hedley Hopkins sought to amend the wording of the 1983 resolution so that it would allow for the possibility that rape and incest could be considered potential grounds for abortion.²³ This was not accepted by the Assembly, but a statement of concern for mother and child was accepted, as noted above.

One other voice from ABF ranks is worth noting. Rev. Gerry Harrop in his 1989 book, *What the Bible Says*,²⁴ devoted a short chapter to the subject of abortion. Harrop began by considering the

Old Testament view of what constitutes a living being. Harrop first looked at the question of when human life begins:

Throughout the Hebrew Bible the presence of life is indicated by [the word] *nephesh*-to live is to breathe and to die is to stop breathing (Gen. 49:33; Job. 14:10; Acts 5:10).

It can be inferred then that the human individual is fully alive when she or he begins to breathe. Does this mean that human life begins immediately after birth? The truth seems to be that there is no one moment of time which can be differentiated as the beginning of life. The coming to be of an individual happens in series²⁵

Harrop rejected the legal fiction which placed the beginning of human life at the time when the fetus exits the birth canal and begins to breath. But at the same time, he disputed any suggestion that the Bible provided clear guidelines on the subject of abortion and in particular, Harrop denied that Psalm 139 and Jeremiah 1:4-5 could be used to support the pro-life cause: "These texts, though sometimes cited as anti-abortion proof-texts do not deal with the subject at all."²⁶ Harrop points to Exodus 21:22-25 as the only direct reference to abortion in the Bible. In this passage, if a pregnant women is injured as the result of two men involved in a fight and if she miscarries, the man responsible receives a fine. If the woman is killed however, the guilty party is to be put to death. Harrop interpreted this as evidence that "the lawgiver did not value the life of the fetus at the same level as the life of the mother."²⁷ On the other hand, Harrop found no scriptural warrant for the belief that at a certain point in development, the fetus crossed a line from "non-person" to "person." In supporting this, Harrop cited Luke 1:44 where a six-month embryo is called a *brephos* (baby), and Luke

2:12 the newborn is also called *brephos*.²⁸ The passage of time evidently did not change the term used to describe the fetus.

Harrop offered the following conclusion as to how this issue might be resolved, acknowledging what he felt was the limited scriptural counsel on the subject:

Any help the Bible can give is indirect and inferential. Human and animal reproduction is seen in the Bible as part of the order of creation. While any assertion of the full personhood of the early fetus is a theological judgment with little in Scripture or early Jewish or Christian thought to sustain it, the fact is that the potential life becomes an unborn child and, if not deliberately or accidentally interfered with, will become a human person. Therefore, whatever the law of the land, or absence of the law, the prospective Christian parent will, only in the gravest of circumstances, entertain the idea of abortion.²⁹

The language here regarding the duty of prospective Christian parents to consider abortion "only in the gravest of circumstances," bears a strong similarity to the orientation of the 1973 Study Paper on Abortion prepared by the Board of Social Service. But Harrop's view certainly betrays no sympathy for the radical pro-choice views of Dr. Norman Guiou who touted the desirability of abortion in cases of potential birth defects. Harrop's opposition to this was clearly stated:

Even if medical science reveals that this person will be born handicapped, incapable of living what we regard as a normal, healthy, intelligent and productive life, the parents may well decide that this life will be precious in a caring and supportive family and community.³⁰

He was even stronger in opposing abortion for the nebulous concept of "quality of life," which he found ominously reminiscent of the eugenics experiments of Nazi Germany. Yet for all these cautions

against abortion which Harrop issued, he seemed unwilling to make a definitive pro-life stance which included legal restrictions against abortion on demand. In the summary of this chapter, he introduced a high level of subjectivity into the discussion stating that "abortion should not be undertaken except for the gravest of reasons; only the prospective parents, especially the mother, can determine whether the reason is grave enough."³¹ In essence, Harrop appeared to agree with the view that abortion is an issue decided by a woman and her doctor. Harrop also puzzlingly added the following concluding observation:

The Bible does not teach that abortion is murder or infanticide and that, in each and every case, it should be considered a grievous sin or crime. Very few would argue that a doctor and his patient who abort a seven week fetus are doing a deed as dreadful and deserving of condemnation as that of taking the life of a seven week old child.³²

In making this statement, Harrop seemed to lapse into subjectivity, contradicting his earlier assertion, based on the references to Luke 1:44 and 2:12, that the linguistic evidence from the Bible did not support the idea that an increase in the "value" of the child could be based upon its developmental progress.

All in all, what Harrop had to offer in this chapter tended to display an ambiguity not unlike that which permeates the 1973 Study Paper. Yet, like that document's author Earle McKnight, it is not accurate to say that Gerry Harrop espoused a pro-choice orientation. Harrop's perspective was basically pro-life in determining the moral response to abortion, but stopped short of calling for this moral framework to be enforced by law.

From the evidence available, it does seem clear that an overall pro-life consensus has developed within the UBCAP. To date, no effective, organized pro-choice group has emerged to oppose Convention's stance. Even the somewhat "liberal-leaning" ABF has not expressed the desire or the effort to mount any organized opposition to the development of this pro-life orientation.

¹David L. Smith, "Abortion: The Christian Perspective," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 March 1980, 1.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 3.

⁵"Vivisection Draws Questions," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 March 1980, 2.

⁶George Simpson, "Abortion: Political Issue for Christians?" *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 March 1980, 2

⁷Ibid.

⁸"The Unborn's Legal Status," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 March 1980, 14.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰George Simpson, "Sackville Assembly 1981 to Discuss Abortion," *Atlantic Baptist*, 15 September 1980, 4.

¹¹"Minutes of the One Hundred and Thirty-Fourth Atlantic United Baptist Convention," in *Year Book of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1980*. Part 2 (Saint John, New Brunswick: United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1980), 56. [Emphasis in original].

¹²Ibid., 56-57.

¹³Ibid., 57.

¹⁴George Simpson, "Sackville Assembly . . .", 4.

¹⁵William Scott and George H. Snudden, "Report of the Commission on Social Action," in *Year Book of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1981*. Part 1 (Saint John, New Brunswick: United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1981), 218.

¹⁶Edward Britten and Ross Howard, "Report of the Commission on Social Action," in *Year Book of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1983* (Saint John, New Brunswick: United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1983), 179-180.

¹⁷Malcolm Purdy, interview by author, 7 June 1994, Saint John, New Brunswick.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹*Social Witness Resource Binder* (Saint John, New Brunswick: Social Action Commission of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1993), Section 3-18.

²²"Minutes of the One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Atlantic United Baptist Convention," in *Year Book of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1984* (Saint John, New Brunswick: United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1984), 41.

²³John Boyd, interview by author, June 1994, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

²⁴Gerry Harrop, *What the Bible Says* (Hantsport, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1989), 30-36.

²⁵Ibid., 31.

²⁶Ibid. 33.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., 33.

²⁹Ibid., 34.

³⁰Ibid., 34-35

³¹Ibid., 35.

³²Ibid., 36.

CHAPTER THREE

BEYOND CONSENSUS - FROM RESOLUTIONS TO ACTIONS

The silence on abortion came to an abrupt end in January of 1985. The background to this was the acquittal, in November 1984, of Henry Morgentaler and others who had been charged with performing illegal abortions at Morgentaler's abortion facility in Toronto.¹ The January 2, 1985 edition of the *Atlantic Baptist* emphasized child abuse, but did not directly include abortion in its main topic of discussion. It did, however, run an advertisement for the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada which included in part an "Open Letter to the Media" signed by *Atlantic Baptist* editor George Simpson. In it, Simpson condemned the events at the recent trial of Henry Morgentaler in which churchgoers and housewives were deliberately excluded from jury selection. Simpson equated the jury selection process as an attack on religious liberty since individuals were excluded from duty on the basis of their being churchgoers.²

In the following month's *Atlantic Baptist*, the front page carried an article by Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Executive Director Brian C. Stiller which was reprinted from the Fellowship's publication *Faith Alive*. Although not a Baptist himself, Stiller's article merits attention because of its prominence placement on the front page of the *Atlantic Baptist*. The author reflected on the outcome of the Morgentaler trial, cautioning against allowing frustration with the outcome of the trial to lead pro-life people into extremism and invective. He lamented the state of a country which

allowed secularism and humanism to dictate its moral norms, and condemned the use of abortion as a contraceptive.³

The December 1985 *Atlantic Baptist* contained an extensive article on the abortion issue written by Craig A. Carter, then pastoring two Baptist Churches in Prince Edward Island. Carter addressed the twin questions of why and how Baptists ought to involve themselves in the abortion issue. In terms of the "how" of involvement, Carter urged the three-fold strategy of education, ministry and witness. Self-education was necessary to counteract the media's pro-choice bias and to refute pro-choice sloganeering. This was to be supplemented by biblically-based sex education. Carter pointed to the need of an effective ministry to abortion victims, including pregnant women facing pressure to have an abortion and women suffering post-abortion guilt. Here Carter related the abortion issue to the impoverished economic status of many of the women having abortions:

If we, as a society, are ever going to adequately address social problems like poverty and child abuse we are going to have to first put the pseudo-solution of abortion behind us. In the long run, the best thing we can do for the poor is to fight legalized abortion and the cynical, cruel attitude that says the best way to deal with the poor is to let them kill off their own children so there will be fewer of them.

Christians need to set the example in compassionate, loving ministry to the poor. Is this not what the Old Testament prophets preached constantly?⁴

In terms of witness, Carter noted that Christian values and the conviction as to the sanctity of human life were increasingly under attack by secular humanistic proponents like Henry Morgentaler who were seeking to replace the traditional moral framework with

their own secular one. Carter urged his fellow Baptists to involve themselves in the abortion debate and to work together with other Christians in promoting respect for human life based upon a biblical basis.⁵

As for the rationale for Baptist involvement, first of all Carter stated that in the light of the increase in knowledge regarding fetal development within the womb, it was no longer possible to remain neutral on abortion which he saw as "the killing of a living, moving, growing, unborn child." Second, he predicted that an acceptance of abortion would create a "slippery slope" effect, undermining respect for life in other areas, and eventually allowing for infanticide against handicapped babies and euthanasia for "expendable" elderly persons. Third, Carter emphasized the need for active involvement as a means to give the Baptist pro-life stance more credibility. In such involvement he emphasized the need to avoid being labelled as extremists, but at the same time, to be willing to make sacrifices in the pro-life cause, including the willingness to adopt abused or handicapped children and "daring to offend powerful political groups like the National Action Committee On the Status of Women."⁶ Carter concluded with a sharp call to action on the abortion issue:

Abortion is a cheap, violent, cynical pseudo-solution to a host of complex and urgent social problems like child abuse, poverty, rape and the place of the handicapped in society. But abortion is not the only options [*sic*]. There is an alternative to abortion The alternative to abortion is simply Christian love.⁷

That same issue of the *Atlantic Baptist* also contained two other sizable articles on abortion. One of these summarized the views on abortion held by Baptists in Canada and elsewhere in the world. The article challenged the assumption held by some that the abortion issue was simply "a case of the Roman Catholic Church attempting to impose some esoteric foible of its own on the whole of society."⁸ Challenging such a view, it was noted that, "Protestant opinion on abortion has been divided and less clear-cut. But, in reality, the vast majority of Protestant denominations have taken a pro-life stand. In Canada only the United Church is totally pro-choice."⁹ The piece went on to describe how various Baptist groups in North America had taken a stand in opposition to abortion. The Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec (BCOQ) had at first adopted a somewhat liberal approach to abortion, but soon reversed their positions in favour of a pro-life stance. Their struggle to address the issue was not unlike that experienced by the UBCAP during the 1970s. Along with the UBCAP, BCOQ, the Baptist Union of Western Canada, and the French Baptist Union, the North American Baptists, the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists, the Baptist General Conference, and most of the independent and fundamentalist Baptist Churches, the vast majority of Baptists in North America supported a pro-life orientation with respect to abortion. This assertion was evidenced by the fact that according to the research done by Wynne Eastman of the BCOQ, over ninety percent of Baptists affiliated with the Baptist World Alliance held a pro-life orientation.¹⁰

The second article was a synopsis of the developments made on the abortion issue by Atlantic Baptists subsequent to the passing of the Convention Assembly's 1983 resolution opposing abortion. In April of 1985, a committee was established by the Social Action Commission for the purpose of preparing a pamphlet stating the position of Atlantic Baptists on abortion and providing a rationale for this position. The Committee chaired by the Rev. Craig Carter, proposed that not only ought a pamphlet be produced, but efforts ought to be made to educate Atlantic Baptists on abortion through conferences on abortion and related issues such as euthanasia. In addition, the Committee urged that presentations be made to the Federal and Atlantic Provincial governments outlining the opposition to abortion by Atlantic Baptists and their desire to see constructive alternatives to this practice. To add credibility to its public stance, the Committee urged that the publication of the pamphlet opposing abortion should be delayed until Atlantic Baptists had commenced their ministry to abortion victims.¹¹

Out of its deliberations, the Social Action Commission became aware of an organization known as the Christian Action Council (CAC). The CAC had been founded in the home of Billy Graham by a number of evangelical leaders and it had grown to become the largest evangelical pro-life organization. The CAC had from the outset promoted pro-life activism both at the political level and at the practical level, working to establish Crisis Pregnancy Centers across North America. The Crisis Pregnancy Center ministry caught the attention of Craig Carter and others in the SAC. Realizing as Carter expressed it that "for us to invent a program would be re-

inventing the wheel,"¹² it was decided that the Crisis Pregnancy Center model might be a viable option for ministry in Atlantic Canada. Carter was impressed, describing them as "viable ministry operations that were sharing the love of Christ, doing evangelism, as well as offering alternatives, crisis counseling, support, clothing, furniture, referrals, all these types of things."¹³ It was decided to invite the Rev. Curtis Young, the CAC's Executive Director to come to Atlantic Canada to facilitate some information sessions in the spring of 1986.¹⁴

In May of 1986, the *Atlantic Baptist* reported on this series of information workshops on abortion that were held in Halifax, Moncton, and Saint John. Held under the direction of the Social Action Commission and its special committee on abortion, Rev. Young was featured as special speaker. Young, ordained in the Evangelical Free Church and a graduate of the University of Illinois and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, had served as the Council's Executive Director since 1978. The *Atlantic Baptist* noted that Christian Action Council, founded in 1975 in response to the huge increase in abortion and abortion-related problems, had by 1986 assisted local church groups in establishing Crisis Pregnancy Centers in 245 communities in the United States and Canada. These workshops sought to present a biblical view of abortion and to put forth the crisis pregnancy center as a potential vehicle for local church ministry. Young made a strong case for the Crisis Pregnancy Centers, reporting that in excess of 80 percent of the Centers' clients choose to carry their baby to term after being counseled there. Special Committee on Abortion Chairman, Craig Carter, was also

involved in the workshops, presenting material on abortion to those attending and reporting on the successful operation of three Canadian crisis pregnancy centers he had visited on a fact-finding mission. The workshops appeared to have generated enthusiasm. Glowingly commenting on Young's claims regarding the Centers' highly favourable rates in deterring abortions, the *Atlantic Baptist* noted: "This is a tremendous success rate of lives saved and future emotional crisis avoided."¹⁵

The efforts of Craig Carter and the Prince Edward Island Association helped to carry the fight against abortion to a new level. Not satisfied with simply issuing public denunciations of abortion, this group sought also to offer positive and concrete alternatives. This new direction provided the dominant and ongoing thrust in shaping the response of Atlantic Baptists to abortion during the 1980s and 1990s assisting the development of Crisis Pregnancy Centers in a number of Maritime communities including Moncton and Halifax.

Carter's active involvement in the abortion issue really began during his early years of pastoral ministry on Prince Edward Island. The issue which moved him to action was the controversy surrounding a struggle for power at the Prince County Hospital in Summerside. At the time, a pro-life group was seeking to gain control of the Hospital's governing board. The group approached Carter hoping to garner his support and involvement. Before responding and committing himself, Carter deliberated seriously about whether or not he should involve himself. Carter was cognizant of the fact that among the various Christian

denominations operating in his area there was by no means a consensus of opinion on how to respond to the abortion issue. On one end of the spectrum, the Roman Catholics strongly supported the pro-life position, on the other end, the United Church people tended to oppose it. Carter's own constituency, the Baptists, tended to be either neutral or somewhat leaning towards pro-life. Carter's personal deliberations led him to see the importance of addressing the abortion issue not merely by denouncing it, but by looking for ways to provide positive alternatives:

I had to weigh carefully what I would do and as a result of that, I became dissatisfied with the idea that we should simply say 'no' to abortion without offering an alternative. As Christians, couldn't we do something positive? Couldn't we do something to transcend the political fight [of] 'yes and no' and offer a creative alternative?¹⁶

Carter did opt to involve himself in the pro-life movement, becoming part of a drive to recruit pro-life individuals to join the Prince County Hospital Corporation. The goal was to have enough pro-life members of the Corporation so that a pro-life board of directors could be elected. Although he participated in this effort, Carter felt that more needed to be done to promote the pro-life cause in more positive ways. Carter considered organizations such as Birthright and others which offered alternatives to abortion, but, because of the strong Roman Catholic orientation of these groups, and the resulting hesitation for Protestants to become involved with them, Carter felt the need to seek another alternative, one that would be more palatable to the evangelical protestant community. Carter shared his ideas first with the deacons of the Bedeque, P.E.I.

Church he was pastoring at the time, then with the P.E.I. Baptist Association which sent him to the Convention Council to make its views known and to press for consideration as to how alternatives to abortion might be developed.¹⁷

On April 23, 1985, Carter addressed the members of the Social Action Commission with a clarion call for action to combat abortion. Carter and the P.E.I. Association Council also called upon the Social Action Commission to form a committee to undertake the production of a similar pamphlet on behalf of the Atlantic United Baptist Convention.

Carter's brief outlined three major convictions as to the necessity for a strong public stand. First, a strong stance was felt to be necessary lest silence be counted as support for abortion-on-demand. Carter was unequivocal about this: "We need to take a strong public stand or else share in the responsibility for the continuation of the current terrible and unholy flood of destruction of human lives which is going on in Canada today."¹⁸ It was felt that a strong pro-life Baptist witness to youth, politicians, and the general public would help counteract the widely-held belief that only Roman Catholics opposed abortion on demand.

The second major point of Carter's brief was the necessity to speak out on abortion because this issue was perceived as "fundamentally a spiritual one." Believing that the control of the world system was in the hands of "a supernatural evil being . . . called Satan," and because of the long-standing trend towards secularization in society with the concomitant acceptance of "gross immorality and evil practices," Carter emphasized the need for the

Christian churches in Canada to take an active role as "salt and light" in combatting evils in society such as abortion. In addition to social and political action, Carter stressed the indispensability of prayer and revival to "save our nation from decadence and moral collapse."¹⁹

The third major reason for speaking out on abortion which Carter's brief cited was to counteract the confusion created by "pro-abortion propaganda." Accusing the pro-choice advocates of playing upon society's confusion and generally noncommittal stance on the abortion issue, Carter had to admit that many Baptists too, were among the confused and noncommitted. To rectify this situation, he called for a clear and decisive stance:

Courageous moral leadership is needed now while opinions are being formed and minds are being changed. The pro-abortionists are always emphasizing the "hard cases" and often play on people's emotions. All they need to do is neutralize opposition by keeping most people confused and they can achieve their objective. So we cannot sit back and wait to see how it all turns out before we take our stand. We have a democratic polity as Baptists, but leaders have to lead. Our Convention and Federation are on public record as opposing abortion in all cases except to save the actual life of the mother and you as a Social Action Commission should have no hesitancy in shouting that position from the house tops until directed to do otherwise by Convention Assembly.²⁰

Carter's presentation also included copies of a pamphlet addressing the abortion issue produced by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, which he commended as "a high quality, well researched and well stated position paper which gets right to the heart of the issue."²¹

The Commission then passed a motion recommending to Convention Council that a committee be formed to prepare a position paper on abortion and to report to Council at the September 1985 meeting.²² The committee which was formed for this task was comprised of the following members: Rev. Ross Howard, Chaplain of Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Charlottetown; Dr. Gary LeBlanc, Professor of Sociology at Atlantic Baptist College, Moncton; Mr. Loyal Brace of LaBonne Nouvelle Bookshop, Moncton, and former President of the Atlantic United Baptist Convention; Rev. Malcolm 'Mac' Purdy, pastoring in Guysborough County, Nova Scotia; Rev. Wayne Wright of Moncton; Mrs. Lillian Zeman and Mrs. Eugenie Trites, both of Wolfville and wives of Acadia Divinity College faculty members; and Rev. Craig Carter, who chaired the Committee. In September of the same year, after having met twice, this Committee reported to the Council of Convention with a number of recommendations for dealing with the abortion issue focusing specifically on the areas of education, ministry, witness and implementation.

Carter described some of the background history underlying the formulation of the document by the committee. The Report noted that the stance adopted by the UBCAP in 1982 brought Atlantic Baptists into a common anti-abortion position along with the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, the Baptist Union of Western Canada, the French Baptist Union and the umbrella Canadian Baptist Federation.²³ The Report cautioned against viewing the abortion issue in isolation from other social issues: "We must realize that abortion, while it is one of the paramount social

issues facing our churches and society, is nevertheless a by-product of a rejection of the Christian Doctrine of Man."²⁴ In addition to this assertion, the Report also decried the related problems stemming from what was perceived as society's cavalier attitude towards marriage and child rearing, permissive attitudes towards sexual expression, and the willingness to sacrifice a pregnancy for reasons of convenience, economic considerations, or where there is potential fetal handicap. The Report expressed the Committee's overall convictions for the need of a practical and constructive response to the abortion issue:

We need to see that the issue at hand is more than simply being opposed to abortion. We need to become pro-life. Our aims and our actions must be the promotion of life as God designed us to experience it. Abortion is a symptom of selfishness, the antithesis of what we are trying to promote. Often it is sought out of desperation, other times casually - but always out of a basically selfish motive.²⁵

Atlantic Baptists began to awaken to the realization that abortion could not be combatted solely on the basis of public denunciations. The conviction that human life was at stake in the issue mobilized them to look for ways to make an effective, practical response to the problem. The fact that UBCAP had not undergone a division between evangelical theology and social activism helped aid this development. The mid-1980s witnessed the beginning of this practical response to abortion which manifested itself in the development of the Crisis Pregnancy Centers. These Centers were set up with the purpose of reaching out to pregnant women and offering them alternatives to abortion. These were widely sponsored and promoted by the United States-

based Christian Action Coalition which, as noted above, had viewed this endeavour as a great success.

One of the more positive effects resulting from the promotion of the Crisis Pregnancy Center ministry was that it helped to mobilize more pro-life-leaning individuals into activity. Dr. Stephen Dempster, who had arrived in Moncton in 1984 to take up his teaching duties at Atlantic Baptist College, was one such individual.

During 1986, when UBCAP's Social Action Commission had invited the Coalition's Director Curtis Young to the Atlantic region, Dempster attended one of these presentations at Highfield United Baptist Church in Moncton where his interest in the project was piqued. It was determined at the meeting that a Steering Committee would be formed to study the feasibility of establishing a Crisis Pregnancy Center in the Moncton area. Dempster felt some hesitation at the time which he describes as follows:

At that time, to be honest with you, I was really debating the issue in my mind, because I really believed it [abortion] was wrong. But then what about the arguments . . . as to whenever the baby becomes human . . . and as a scholar, you want everything so "down pat" that you never make a decision.²⁶

Following the meeting, Dempster opted to join the Steering Committee which was comprised of eight individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds. Meetings were commenced two weeks later with the clear objective of working for the establishment of a Crisis Pregnancy Center in the Moncton area. Dempster was appointed as Chairman, serving in that capacity for a year and a half. The Committee undertook a survey of needs in the area, giving particular attention to the resources available for education and the

employment opportunities for young mothers. From this beginning, the Committee approached area churches to present their plans. In its presentations, the Committee used an eight minute film entitled, "Making a Difference," which was produced by the CAC. This was followed up by displays of fetal models, a talk by one of the Committees female representatives, and then a message by Dempster outlining the theology of the issue.²⁷

For Dempster, his theological perspective caused him to view the abortion issue as a fundamental human rights issue, one in which the powerless were being trampled upon. Dempster found himself asking, "How can I really argue against this if I'm not willing to do something about it?" He was convinced that theology must be followed up with action, lest it become mere hypocrisy.²⁸

Some of the first public meetings were sparsely attended but interest began to grow. A meeting in Moncton in autumn of 1987 drew the interest of a number of key pastors. A Board of Directors for the Crisis Pregnancy Center was established and the Rev. Craig Carter, who had recently moved to Moncton to assume his new duties as pastor of Sunnybrae United Baptist Church, was selected as Chairman. After having found a suitable location in a major medical center with the assistance of a number of local physicians, the Greater Moncton Crisis Pregnancy Center opened its doors in the spring of 1988. Judy Phillips, a nurse, was named as the first Director. According to Dempster, the Center has made a major impact, especially in educating teens about sexuality, emphasizing abstinence and chastity.²⁹

During this time period, the *Atlantic Baptist* also continued unabated its offensive against abortion on demand, despite a change in editors in 1985. George Simpson's successor as editor, Rev. Michael Lipe, stepped easily into the pro-life stance of his predecessor. Indeed, under Lipe's direction, the *Atlantic Baptist* became even more staunchly pro-life in orientation. Lipe's personal journey with regard to abortion issue predated his arrival in Canada in 1981 when he had worked as a school administrator and teacher in the southern United States. In teaching speech class, part of his methodology included the use of controversial issues like abortion as topics for student presentations and debate. At first, Lipe favoured easy access to abortion but as time progressed, he developed a strong opposition to the practice. By the time of his tenure as editor of the *Atlantic Baptist* (1985-1995), Lipe was thoroughly and adamantly pro-life and did not hesitate to place the abortion issue prominently in his editorials and reports.

The December 1987 edition of the *Atlantic Baptist* carried Lipe's report on the National Symposium on the Sanctity of Human Life conducted by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. A large number of speakers addressed the meetings on a variety of topics related to abortion and the sanctity of human life. Three delegates from the UBCAP were among those in attendance, in addition to five other persons from Atlantic Canada.³⁰ The *Atlantic Baptist* published in the same issue as Lipe's report the Fellowship's "Declaration on Human Life." Acknowledging that evangelicals had allowed abortion to exist in Canada with little opposition or constructive alternatives, the Declaration called for Christian action

to combat the practice. The Declaration viewed the fight against abortion as part of an overall struggle to improve "all of life." In the words of the Declaration itself:

We are called to oppose the destruction of human life, to seek a Biblically just social policy and to be servants in loving, Christian action. We are committed to a comprehensive Christian ministry which speaks to all of life including exploitation, unemployment, the breakdown of the family, child abuse, pornography, racism and idolatrous materialism.³¹

It is interesting to note also that despite the fact that the United Baptist Convention did not have membership in the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, it seems clear that the editorial position of the *Atlantic Baptist* was very much in harmony with the Fellowship's stance regarding abortion and the magazine felt quite at liberty to promulgate the latter group's statements and report on its activities.

Close on the heels of this National Symposium came the judicial ruling which caused a major set-back for those championing the cause of the unborn. In January of 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered unconstitutional the section of the Criminal Code governing abortion. This decision evoked disappointment and anger among pro-life Canadians including Atlantic Baptists. Michael Lipe's editorial of March 1988 was a sternly-worded castigation of this ruling. Lipe claimed that "Murder is a horrible thing. But it is not really so bad if it can be made impersonal . . . if we can be removed from the blood and the cries of agony. At least that is what the highest court in the land decided in January."³² Lipe blasted the Supreme Court itself, sarcastically denigrating it as a "wonderful

body of political appointees, those at the top of the patronage heap," who like their counterparts in the United States, were part of the "good old boy[s]" appointed because of having found favour with the party in power at the time. Lipe accused the Court of meddling in Provincial areas of jurisdiction (i.e. allocation of expenditures in health care), of ignoring lower court rulings which had pointed to the acceptance of the humanity of the unborn, and of usurping law-making power from Canada's elected legislative bodies.

Having fired this broadside at the Supreme Court, Lipe proceeded to turn his editorial gun barrel around and unleash another volley, this time at his fellow Baptists. Pointing to the fact that both the Canadian Baptist Federation and the United Baptist Convention had passed resolutions opposing abortion, Lipe decried the silence of individual Baptists (and Christians in general) as a contributing factor in the acceptance of abortion. To counteract the Supreme Court's ruling, first Lipe urged that letters be written to the members of the government and of the Court itself, expressing opposition to the ruling. As a second step, Lipe called for support to be given to local Crisis Pregnancy Centers in Halifax and Moncton. As a third step, Lipe requested that another article, entitled "Tonya's Story" in that particular issue of the *Atlantic Baptist* be read in addition to his own editorial. This article detailed the experience of a Baptist couple from New Brunswick who had adopted a severely handicapped infant, depicting both the struggles and the blessings which the child had brought to their family. Lipe saw fit to allocate no less than five pages of the *Atlantic Baptist* to this particular human interest story.³³ Concluding his own editorial,

Lipe issued a warning that "If you allow murder to remain an impersonal thing, you may escape the cries of agony and blood for a few years. But you will not escape the consequences of our national sin for long."³⁴

The *Atlantic Baptist* was not alone in opposing the Court's decision. At its meeting on February 2, 1988, the Social Action Commission also expressed its concern over the decision. After discussing the situation, the Commission opted to encourage all members, congregations, and individuals to write federal and provincial politicians expressing their opinions on the issue. A press release would also be drafted by Rev. Craig Carter and sent through Convention office to federal and provincial politicians, to the *Atlantic Baptist*, the *Canadian Baptist*, regional newspapers, and other media outlets stating the position taken by the UBCAP and calling upon government to "exercise their responsibility to protect the life of the unborn."³⁵

Meanwhile, Michael Lipe resumed his editorial thrust in the April 1988 *Atlantic Baptist*. He praised the efforts of some federal and provincial politicians who had made attempts to limit funding for abortion and to block Dr. Henry Morgentaler's machinations to establish additional abortion facilities. Lipe printed excerpts from *Hansard* recording the pro-life views of certain members of parliament but observed that members from Atlantic Canada had not been among those who had spoken out. Lipe concluded that "[p]erhaps it is time the voters started taking notes."³⁶

Despite the setback for the pro-life cause which the Supreme Court decision engendered, there were some bright spots during

1988. One such success which was reported in the *Atlantic Baptist*, was the acceptance by the legislature of Prince Edward Island of a motion favoring protection for the life of the unborn. Instrumental in the passing of this resolution was a Progressive Conservative MLA from Summerside, Prowse Chappell, who seconded the motion. Chappell, also a Baptist, felt compelled by his respect for life which convinced him that protection for the unborn was necessary. The motion, despite having originated in the Conservative opposition, passed with only a slight modification made by the Liberal government and thus the pro-life stance in Prince Edward Island benefitted from a rare solidarity transcending party lines.³⁷ The action of Prowse Chappell provides an example of individual action carried out by an Atlantic Baptist concerned with the abortion issue.

Turning to the Convention scene once again, Atlantic Baptists as a body responded to the abortion issue by reaffirming their opposition to this practice. At the 1989 Assembly the following resolution was passed:

WHEREAS we recognize the Supremacy and the Holiness of Almighty God as the Creator and Sustainer of all life;
WHEREAS we believe that people everywhere, and citizens of our Nation (Canada) in particular, have good reason to thank and praise Almighty God for His bountiful goodness;
WHEREAS we believe that the future of our Nation and the survival of society is being threatened by forces and influences opposed to God and the teachings of His Holy Word, the Bible;
WHEREAS we believe that we have a solemn responsibility before God and man to honour our Creator, to obey His Holy Word, and to protect and defend the values and principles under which this Nation has prospered;
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates voting at the 143rd Assembly of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, reaffirm our belief in the sanctity of human life, our

desire to respect and protect life from conception, and to implore government leaders and legislators to establish laws which will protect life, and to restrain those who would destroy life through abortion except in a possible situation where the mother's life may be in danger;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we reach out with caring compassion to women (and their families) in our communities who may be facing difficult or crisis pregnancy situations, giving prayerful and practical support as individuals and as congregations.³⁸

The impetus for this resolution came from the Saint John-Kings Association Social Action Commission. The theme of the 1989 Convention Assembly was "Reaching Out to the Family" and this gathering provided a forum for the expression of the Convention's long standing concern for social issues, particularly those relating to the family. Opposition to abortion found its place amidst a wide variety of social concerns. It was noted that:

There are a number of moral and social issues which should be viewed as serious threats to the traditional values of the home and family within today's society. These include such issues as: Child Abuse, Poverty, Unemployment, Divorce, Family Violence, Substandard Housing, Racial Discrimination, Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Abortion, Pornography, the Homosexual Rights movement and Television Violence.³⁹

The resolutions presented to Assembly focused on two issues in particular, described as "the most disturbing issues affecting homes and the well being of society" these being abortion and the use of alcohol. The focus on alcohol and abortion wedded a long-standing social concern to a relatively new one, both linked by an underlying desire to defend Christian values in relation to society and especially to the family. The Introduction to the Resolution on Alcohol cited statistics from the Alcoholism & Drug Dependency

Commission of New Brunswick and the National Council on Alcoholism, Focus on Family & Chemical Dependency which provided strong evidence for a link between alcohol consumption and criminal acts within society including: murder, robbery, assault, and rape; and in linking alcohol use with family-related problems including: battering of women, incest, child abuse, and Family Court cases.⁴⁰

The Social Action Commission recognized the insufficiency of resolutions if these were not followed up with concrete actions. The SAC's Report for 1989-90 made this point very clear:

To take a stand on issues of morality demands a practical response. To that end we have continued funding of the Crisis Pregnancy Center ministries in Saint John, Moncton, and Halifax. As well, we began funding the Birthright organization in Halifax. We commend these organizations to you for your involvement, prayer, and financial support."⁴¹

The SAC was also cognizant of the inseparability of social issues, like abortion, from spiritual issues. The Report's concluding remarks recognized that:

Ultimately, we are realizing that the battles we are fighting are spiritual battles, battles which are not fought with weapons of human cunning. So we ask, and ask sincerely, that you would pray for us as a Commission, and those who are in the front lines of Social Action ministry: the chaplains, the C.P.C. and Birthright Counsellors, the interested people in the pews who love and care for the hurting, the countless others that spread abroad God's love to our hurting and confused world.⁴²

The last official pronouncement by UBCAP on the abortion issue to date occurred at the 1991 Convention Assembly. The abortion issue had recently come to the forefront as a result of the

establishment of an abortion clinic in Halifax operated by Dr. Henry Morgentaler and of Morgentaler's expressed plans to establish a similar facility in New Brunswick. The Saint John-Kings Association was again behind a resolution which sought to express opposition to Morgentaler's plans. The following resolution was passed by the 1991 Assembly:

WHEREAS we, the Assembly of the United Baptist Convention, voted in 1989 to accept a resolution on the issue of abortion which clearly stated that we should ". . . restrain those who would destroy life through abortion . . ."; and

WHEREAS a freestanding abortion clinic has been established in Nova Scotia and plans for a clinic in New Brunswick have been announced; and

WHEREAS God's Word is clear: abortion is killing and killing is against God's law. We, as followers of Christ and as His ambassadors in this world, are responsible to point out and oppose that which is against God's law. It is God who is Lord of life, not the state, or the individual or parent;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates voting at the 145th Assembly of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, express our concern and opposition to the presence and establishment of free-standing abortion clinics in our region; **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we urge individuals and church congregations to active public involvement concerning this issue in order to:

(a) remind society that the destruction of human life through abortions is an act of killing, and

(b) to notify government leaders and elected officials of our opposition to the use of public funding to provide or support abortion services.⁴³

The forceful wording of the original motion included the use of the word "murder" in place of the word "killing." An amendment was moved by Rev. Marshall Thompson and seconded by Rev. Bill Newell which made the change in terminology. The motion in amended form, passed after much debate.⁴⁴ The resolution

opposing the establishment of abortion clinics took its place alongside another closely related issue concerning human rights, namely euthanasia. The year 1991 marked the first time Convention Assembly chose to speak with a united voice on what would become one of the major social concerns of the new decade, challenging even the abortion issue for the greater share of public attention. It seems evident that during the 1980s and 1990s, a degree of homogeneity had arisen among Atlantic Baptists to such an extent that UBCAP became willing and able to address social issues clearly from a conservative point of view.

¹Sabina McLuhan, "The Supreme Court Judgment on Abortion: Who Said What," in *The Issue is Life*, ed. Denyse O'Leary (Burlington, Ontario: Welch), 102.

²"National Alert," advertisement by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in the *Atlantic Baptist*, 2 January 1985, 3.

³Brian C. Stiller, "A Cry for Justice," *Atlantic Baptist*, 2 February 1985, 1. (reprinted from *Faith Today*, n.d.)

⁴Craig A. Carter, "Abortion: Why and How Baptists Should Get Involved," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 December 1985, 26.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, 27.

⁷*Ibid.*, 28.

⁸"Baptist [*sic*] and the Abortion Issue," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 December 1985, 28.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹"Action Taken By Convention Council," *Atlantic Baptist*, 1 December 1985, 28.

¹²Craig A. Carter, interview by author, 24 May 1994, Moncton, New Brunswick.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵"Abortion Alternatives Workshops Held," *Atlantic Baptist*, May 1986, 17.

¹⁶Craig A. Carter, interview by author, 24 May 1994, Moncton, New Brunswick.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Social Action Commission minutes, 23 April 1985, appended brief entitled, "Baptists and Abortion," presented by Craig A. Carter on behalf of Prince Edward Island Baptist Association, photocopied.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.*

²³Social Action Commission minutes, 26-28 September 1985, appended brief entitled, "A Report to the Council of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces," by The Special Committee Appointed to Prepare a Pamphlet on Abortion for Our Convention, Craig A. Carter, Chairman, 1985, 1.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 1-2.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 2.

²⁶Stephen Dempster, interview with author, Moncton, New Brunswick, 24 May 1994.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Michael Lipe, "National Symposium Examines the Sanctity of Human Life," *Atlantic Baptist*, December 1987, 26-27.

³¹The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Declaration on Human Life," *Atlantic Baptist*, December 1987, 28.

³²Michael Lipe, "Murder is not really so bad after all," *Atlantic Baptist*, March 1988, 4.

³³Valerie French, "Tonya's Story," *Atlantic Baptist*, March 1988, 12-16.

³⁴Michael Lipe, "Murder is not really so bad after all," 4.

³⁵Social Action Commission Minutes, 2 February 1988, photocopied.

³⁶Michael Lipe, "Speaking Out for the Unborn," *Atlantic Baptist*, April 1988, 4-5.

³⁷Doreen Beagan, "Prowse Chappell Works to Protect Life," *Atlantic Baptist*, July 1988, 47.

³⁸*Social Witness Resource Binder* (Saint John, New Brunswick: Social Action Commission of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1993), Section 3-22.

³⁹"Pro Life/Pro Family Resolutions from 1989," Saint John, New Brunswick: United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1989, typewritten.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Hazel Parent and Malcolm Purdy, "Report of the Social Action Commission," in *Year Book of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1990*, (Saint John, New Brunswick: United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1990), 271.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 272.

⁴³*Social Witness Resource Binder* (Saint John, New Brunswick: Social Action Commission of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1993) Section 3-26.

⁴⁴"Minutes of the One Hundred and Forty-Fifth Annual Assembly of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces," in *Year Book of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1992*. Saint John, New Brunswick: United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces, 1992, 46-47.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHAPERS OF A PRO-LIFE PERSPECTIVE

The initial leadership given to the abortion issue by Earle McKnight and M. R. Cherry was continued on by a younger generation of scholars who furthered the development of a Christian perspective on the issue which had both solid theological and practical components. Among the leaders at the forefront in developing this stance were Craig Carter and his fellow Atlantic Baptist University faculty member, Stephen Dempster.¹ Both Carter and Dempster actively promoted the pro-life cause, having developed similar theological standpoints for addressing the issue. It is therefore appropriate to consider, in some depth, their contributions to the theological component of the debate.

In 1991 the Canadian Baptist Federation's Taskforce on Human Life published *Life and Death Choices: Canadian Baptist Perspectives on the Moral Dilemmas of Human Life Issues*. This book focused upon the moral and ethical dilemmas surrounding a number of very relevant life and death issues. Topics discussed included abortion, fetal transplantation and experimentation, technological fertility enhancement, and genetic engineering. Craig Carter was a major contributor to this work, authoring three of the volume's six chapters.

As a basis for developing his position on these related issues, Carter first sought to establish a Christian perspective on the origin, nature, and value of human life. This perspective on human life and its value being rooted in the image of God drew heavily upon the

work of Karl Barth whom Carter described as "the most important theological influence on my thinking"2 In addition to Barth, Carter pointed to John Howard Yoder as another major influence in the development of his pro-life views.3 Carter rejected the idea that a sound Christian view of human life and a response to its complex related issues could be built upon biblical "proof texts."4 Instead, he sought to discover "an overall perspective on human life which is distinctly Christian, that is, which arises out of the Gospel--the good news about Jesus Christ."5 It was important to Carter that such a perspective not simply remain solely confined to the realm of theological speculation, but that it be a realistic and practical ethic capable of guiding Christians as they faced and responded to the realities of life. According to Carter:

This Christian perspective on human life is something which every Christian doctor, nurse, researcher, patient, ethicist, taxpayer, elected official, administrator and pastor should carry with him or her throughout the process of evaluating, participating in, or supporting these various new technologies. We can not [sic] and must not try to isolate any aspect of our lives from our Christian faith. We must think Christianly about the dilemmas raised by new medical technologies.6

Carter saw the challenge facing Christians living in a post-Christian society as essentially a struggle to resist the temptation either to accommodate to secular society, or retreat from it into isolation. "Accommodationists" in their tendency to abandon or alter "any and all Christian beliefs which conflict with modern cultural presuppositions," risk becoming "nothing more than a faint echo of the liberal elements of secular society."7 Isolationists, on the other hand, in refusing the attempt to bridge the ideological chasm

separating them from secular society, virtually insure that their fate "is always to remain irrelevant to the secular culture around them."⁸ It seemed to Carter that Canadian Baptists were proving guilty of both errors, lapsing into isolationism when it came to speaking out on issues while falling into accommodationism in terms of lifestyle.⁹

In order to rectify this situation, Carter recognized the necessity of developing a Christian perspective with which to engage secular society on critical issues of human life such as abortion and euthanasia. Beginning his study with the book of Genesis, Carter focused on God as originator of the created order of which man is the pinnacle. Genesis 1:27 describes man's creation in the image of God. and from this, Carter developed three aspects of this image: the image as gift from God, the image as demonstrated in loving human relationships, the image as incorporating man's responsibility as steward of creation. This high view of the nature and dignity of humanity runs counter to the naturalistic evolutionary assumptions of modern secularism which rejects any suggestion that humanity originated in a divine act of creation. According to the secular view, human life ought to be shaped and molded according to the dictates of what its proponents deem best for human development. Furthermore, secularistic views tend to base their standards for determining personhood on arbitrary criteria such as "average health, average intelligence, or average ability to communicate." Carter drew the obvious conclusion for those who do not meet these standards:

members of the species who do not measure up to the standard are less than full persons and those at the extremes, (the very young, the very elderly, the very sick, the very handicapped), may not be considered persons at all. Thus some members of the human species are only potential persons, and full personhood is something they must earn, attain, or achieve. Some members of the species will never attain personhood and may therefore be killed if they are unwanted.¹⁰

The relevance of this observation to the abortion issue is quite evident - if the fetus is deemed a "non-person" then it has no innate value and no right to legal protection.

The Christian view of human worth which Carter developed was not based upon a subjective determination of what constitutes personhood, but was based, first of all, upon the belief that all human beings bear the image of God as a gift and not as the product of man's achievement. "To be human," Carter argued, "is to be in the image of God. We cannot give or take away this status from each other. All we can do is choose whether or not to respect the image of God in our fellow human beings or not [sic]."¹¹

Carter's view of personhood was also based upon a second element - loving relationships between human beings. From the beginning, God created man and woman to live in relationships which mirror, at least faintly, the relationship of the Persons of the Trinity with each other. This biblical emphasis on community runs counter to the individualistic bent of western society. Although this relational aspect of the image of God has been partially ruined through sin, renewal and redemption have been made possible through Jesus Christ.¹²

Stewardship, the third component of Carter's perception of image of God, finds its basis upon the command of God in Genesis

1:28 which endowed mankind with responsibility for the rule and care of the creation. This mandate for dominion was not an excuse to use and abuse creation, but a trust for which humanity will be held accountable by God. Carter held that humnity's creation in the image of God bears directly upon the matter of genetic engineering, serving as a clear demarcation between the Christian response to such issues and the secular one. As he noted,

The Christian will joyfully make use of techniques such as gene therapy to cure diseases such as cystic fibrosis while resisting the pressure, for example, to try to alter the race genetically in order to make humanity less aggressive. There is a line between healing and controlling.¹³

Carter proceeded to link the value of human life with the biblical prohibition against murder. He saw "the evil in murder . . . in the fact that it is not just an attack on a fellow creature, but also an attack on the image of the Creator in that creature."¹⁴ The Old Testament injunctions against murder are further deepened and broadened in the New Testament, particularly in the teachings of Christ and of Paul, where love for one's neighbour precludes not just harmful acts, but also negative attitudes of the heart such as hatred, prejudice and jealousy. Murder then, is an attack not only against a human being, but also against God himself, who in Christ, identifies with the weak, oppressed, sick, and suffering.¹⁵

The importance which God has placed upon the achievement of human redemption from sin is further evidence Carter posited as affirmation for the value of human life. The grounds for this view are to be discovered in the Christian doctrines of the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection of the body. The incarnation

demonstrates God's love for mankind to the extent that he was willing to send his only Son Jesus Christ into the world as a human being with the purpose of bringing his redemptive purposes to pass. The cross is the culmination of this redemptive work for it is here that the suffering love of God for all human beings is made manifest. To Carter, the work of God in Christ amply attested that "Human life is precious and even sacred because every living human being is the object of God's suffering love."¹⁶ Yet additional evidence for the value of human life which Carter offered, was the revelation that human existence continues beyond physical death. The Bible speaks of a future resurrection of the body in which the redeemed human being enters a new mode of existence in the spiritual realm. Carter enunciated the pertinent conclusion of this doctrine's bearing upon the issue of human life in following way:

the human creature is more than an animal who is born and lives a few years only to perish forever. The doctrine of the resurrection teaches us that we are created by God for himself, not just for time, but for eternity. Our earthly lives are but a portion of our total existence. Human beings are more valuable than any secularist could ever think or imagine.¹⁷

Carter's elucidation of a Christian perspective on human life forms the basis of his approach to the abortion issue which he describes in the following chapter, "Abortion: A Christian Response." Among Atlantic Baptists who have participated in the debate, Carter and Dempster have contributed the most to date in developing a coherent response to the abortion issue. In this chapter, Carter addressed the abortion issue both theologically and practically, offering a strategy for a Christian response. To Carter, the abortion

problem issued a clear call to assist one's neighbours in need, these being the unborn child and the mother. This he made quite clear in the following observation:

Approximately 80,000-100,000 abortions per year are being performed in Canada. This means that 80,000 -100,000 unborn children being killed per year. Who is my neighbour? It also means that 80,000 - 100,000 women per year feel helpless enough, desperate enough and pressured enough to have their unborn children killed. Most women who have abortions do not want to do so. They usually feel that they have no choice. Very few women in the abortion clinic waiting rooms spout pro-choice slogans. For them, "choice" is just a meaningless and empty slogan. Who indeed, is my neighbour?¹⁸

Carter refused to reduce the abortion controversy to a simplistic contest which pitted the woman's reproductive freedom against the unborn child's right to life. Both the wellbeing of the mother and of the child she carries remained uppermost in his thought. In this sense, Carter stood in the long-standing Atlantic Baptist concern for females and especially for mothers and children which formed an integral part of the social gospel. What Carter added to this traditional perspective is clear Christian rationale from which the sanctity of human life could be made defensible.

Carter cited Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan as a prime example of the Christian obligation to respond to those in need. Applying this to the abortion issue, it was essential that Christians respond to their "neighbours," the pregnant mothers and their unborn children. Carter applied himself to the task of defining how this could be undertaken, firstly considering how cultural and related factors tended to lead women to seek abortions, and

secondly, attempting to develop a practical Christian response to the situation.

Carter construed the widespread acceptance of abortion as a symptom of society's general tolerance for violence. Violence was seen as having become an acceptable element in entertainment, including sports, television and movies. It had also for too long, according to Carter, been accepted when directed at women and children. Additionally, he interpreted the frequency of warfare and the brutalization of the environment as evidence that violence was being utilized as a "remedy" for various social and economic problems. Abortion's place in the violence-tolerating society was graphically described by Carter in the following way:

Abortion is one form of violence which we try to pretend is anything but what it is. In every abortion a living, human fetus is either burned to death by a saline solution, pulled limb from limb by pliers or has its body pulled apart by a suction machine. Sometimes, in a late term abortion, the fetus is born alive and left to die on a counter. Abortion is an unnatural invasion of a woman's body which interrupts natural bodily processes and has serious physical and psychological consequences. Disguising such violence as medicine would seem to be a particularly perverse form of calling good evil and evil good.¹⁹

Having asked rhetorically why efforts to liberalize abortion had met with such rapid success, Carter argued that it was not because society had become more concerned for justice or for the concerns of women, but because liberalized abortion served both a means of furthering male dominance over women, and accorded well with western society's acceptance of violence as a "solution" to its problems which in this case was the problem of unwanted pregnancy. "Abortion," Carter asserted, "is often portrayed as the

solution to the pregnant woman's problem, whereas in reality, it is often the solution to everyone else's problem."²⁰ He faulted the self-centered attitudes of parents, male partners, governments, and employers for contributing to the promotion of abortion. Carter criticised: parents for tending to see abortion as the solution for their embarrassment and inconvenience at having pregnant teenage daughters; male partners for having no interest in taking responsibility for their offspring; and governments for seeing abortion as the solution to social and economic problems accompanying the provision of support for single mothers. Carter also chided government for "not doing enough to encourage women to have enough hope to have their children instead of aborting them. If society had its priorities straight," he continued, "a much greater investment in child-raising would be made and child poverty would not be tolerated. Children should be seen as the hope for the future instead of being viewed as economic realities."²¹

Employers, particularly large corporations, did not escape Carter's critical scrutiny. He saw their guilt in promoting abortion as an easy way to keep women in the work force as opposed to helping them find a balance between career and parental obligations. This was a far cry from what Carter perceived as the proper approach to meeting women's needs:

Liberalized abortion laws do not represent the empowering of women. They are a means by which women are manipulated by those in positions of power: parents, male partners, governments and big business. The true empowering of women would involve their being able to fulfill all their legitimate aspirations instead of having to choose between their children and their career or between their boyfriend and their child and so on. Abortion is

not the solution to the problem of the oppression of women. It merely denies, avoids and perpetuates the problem under the dubious and misleading slogan of choice.²²

Thus we have Carter's interpretation of modern, western society's widespread acceptance of the practice of abortion on demand as a violent and easy "solution" for dealing with this perceived problem. He was also very firm in his belief that abortion rights did not provide an effective vehicle towards female emancipation, as its proponents have asserted, but was in reality another expression of the subjugation and exploitation of women by society.

Continuing his examination of the abortion controversy, Carter next contemplated how Christians ought to respond. Having at the outset observed that the issue was far deeper than the mere sloganeering of political activists in both pro-life and pro-choice camps, he felt that any efforts at lobbying for political change needed to be supplemented by a wide variety of other related activities across a broad spectrum. It was here that Carter expanded upon the ideas for combating abortion which he had presented to UBCAP's Convention Council back in 1985. Among these activities, Carter proposed that efforts be undertaken to: provide information and alternatives to women in crisis pregnancies; teach a Christian view of sex and marriage to the youth of the churches; provide counselling to women suffering psychological effects of abortion; provide support for Christian health professionals who for reasons of conscience did not wish to participate in abortions; encourage governments to deal with child poverty and with fathers who refused to provide child support; work at alleviating pressure

against women to have abortions and to end discrimination against women opting not to abort.²³

Carter felt strongly that the abortion issue cried out for a Christian response because of its inherent violence and oppression of the weak by the powerful. He saw in Proverbs 24 an unavoidable scriptural summons to the Christian duty of fighting injustice, evil and oppression. The passage commands the people of God to:

Deliver those who are being taken away to death,
And those who are staggering to slaughter, O hold them back.
If you say, "See, we did not know this,"
Does He not consider it who weighs the heart?
And does He not know it who keeps your soul?
And will He not render to man according to his work?
(Proverbs 24:11-12)

Carter is firm in his view that abortion is evil and a sin against God, describing this act as "bloody violence and an attack upon the image of God in humanity,"²⁴ and Christians, if they be true to their inescapable calling to seek justice, were obliged to speak out against it. Carter was likewise convinced that strong denunciations of this nature must be followed up with positive actions and loving overtures towards those women who had abortions. He emphasized the importance of giving these women the opportunity to experience forgiveness through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁵

In order to accomplish this in a practical way, Carter proposed a five point strategy which he developed from the principles of action he put forth as the spokesman for the Prince Edward Island Association at meetings of the UBCAP's Convention Council in 1985. Carter's first point was that efforts must be made to eliminate all

Christian participation in the abortion industry. In order for this to be realized, he proposed that Christians press for the adoption of a legal "conscience clause" which would give health professionals such as nurses the right to refuse to participate in abortion procedures. Along a similar vein was his proposal to set up a legal defense fund to assist those facing judicial action for their refusal to participate. Additionally, Carter pointed to the need for pastors to become more effective in educating physicians in their congregations concerning the scriptural prohibitions against the taking of innocent human life.²⁶

In addition to these efforts at eliminating Christian complicity in abortion, Carter also looked at ways of preventing problem pregnancies. To this end, he highlighted the need for a more effective way to involve the church in presenting the Christian perspective on sexuality to the young people in its midst. Carter deemed this essential in order to counteract the misleading and dangerous views being promoted in secular society, where he claimed,

Much secular sex education is centered on the need to use contraceptives whenever you decide to become sexually active. Biblical sex education will focus on the decision to become sexually active and will encourage young people to choose to wait for marriage.²⁷

Anticipating the response of those who dismiss the promotion of abstinence, Carter had this to say:

Of course this approach is derided as "unrealistic" by secularists, but it is no more unrealistic than to expect romantic, immature teens to make adult decisions and plans regarding contraception. The whole emphasis on "safe sex" is unrealistic and ineffective.²⁸

The next component of Carter's Christian response to abortion offered a viable, realistic alternative to abortion. The foundation of this approach was centered upon the promotion of the Crisis Pregnancy Centers. Carter believed that this is where Christians "need to roll up our sleeves and get involved in the hard work of offering viable alternatives to abortion for those inside and outside the church who are experiencing crisis pregnancies."²⁹ Carter believed that the potential impact these centers could make was sufficient to warrant their promotion by Christians. In his own words:

As Christians, we need to get behind the crisis pregnancy ministry. Canadian Baptists could start such ministries in every population center in Canada if they chose to make this ministry a priority. What better way to build respect for our anti-abortion stand and witness to both the justice and the love of God at the same time?³⁰

The Crisis Pregnancy ministry was not only seen as a vehicle which could help prevent abortions, but which could also provide a way of reaching women who had already had abortions and who were in need of ministry to their emotional, psychological needs, and spiritual needs. Carter saw the evangelistic potential here, noting that these women represented "a vast unreached group of people who need the good news of Jesus Christ."³¹

The final area Carter discussed is the realm of political action. Admitting that "the reversal of liberal abortion laws will take a very long time," Carter proposed a strategy for working towards that end. He argued for the need "to address a broad spectrum of issues which relate to our concern for women and children," adding

the opinion that successful church growth and evangelism in the coming century would only be successful in proportion to how well Christians related these things to the issues and needs of contemporary society. Furthermore, he advised against Christians inadvertently portraying themselves fanatics or just a "single issue group" whose focus was out of line with that of the Bible. The Christian focus needed to be "on issues which involve the interests of the poor, the oppressed, and the voiceless, rather than . . . on issues which affect us [only]."³² The sum of the matter according to Carter, was that there must be a willingness on the part of Christians in Canada to live what they profess to believe: "We must avoid making grand pronouncements on what others should do unless we ourselves are involved in doing what we say should be done."³³

It is evident that Carter has made a significant contribution to the abortion issue in having linked a biblically conservative perspective on the value of human life with a practical and compassionate response to those involved.³⁴ Carter's balancing of care for both mother and child puts him well within the bounds of the traditional approach Atlantic Baptists have taken during the twentieth century which has wedded conservative values with social concern.³⁵

Stephen Dempster, a professor of Religious Studies at Atlantic Baptist University has been an active participant in the fight against abortion on demand, as has been documented in the previous chapter. Dempster, like Craig Carter, actively examined the abortion issue in the light of biblical theology.³⁶ As part of his efforts

towards enlisting support for the Moncton Crisis Pregnancy Center, Dempster developed a presentation paper on the theology of the value human life and its relation to abortion, a copy of which he supplied to the author of this thesis. Dempster's unpublished document forms the basis for the following consideration of his perspective.

The presentation proceeded in systematic fashion, to explore the abortion issue under a number of topics. Included was a brief accounting of statistics concerning abortions performed in Canada; a description of various methods of abortion; an outline of the process of growth and development of the unborn child; and of particular note, the main body describing the biblical principles undergirding a Christian response to abortion.³⁷ It is this latter portion which merited closer scrutiny for the purpose of this thesis.

Dempster began his inquiry into the issue in a section entitled *Abortion and the Bible* by considering the origin of the human race. The revelation that mankind bears image of God makes humanity "absolutely unique, set apart from the rest of creation." Mankind is the pinnacle of God's earthly creations and it is only in the creation of man that God demonstrates intimate involvement. Thus, because man bears the image of his Creator, human life is of infinite worth: "Just as God is infinitely valuable, so is his creature man." Referring to Cain's murder of his brother Abel, Dempster observed sin's destructive undermining of the value of human life. Not only is Cain's sin an attack against God's creature man, but it is also an attack against the Creator. Cain's descendents exhibit "a growing concern for the things of life while [at the same time reflecting] a

radical cheapening of human life itself," which is clearly embodied in the boast of Lamech.³⁸

Dempster found, in the roots of the Israelite nation, evidence for God's care and concern for the powerless and oppressed. He focused on the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel in which Israel is compared to a newborn baby abandoned at birth and left to die, unwanted and unvalued by its parents, but wanted and valued by God. As Dempster affirmed,

What is unwanted and despised in the eyes of a selfish world is wanted in the eyes of the creator who loves his creation. This is a constant theme in the O[ld] T[estament]: God's special concern for the poor and needy, the helpless and powerless: Why? Because they have nothing of value except their humanity, and what could be more valuable?³⁹

Dempster also cited Psalm 139 in support of the value of individual. Here "the psalmist is persecuted and he sees that he is frequently defenceless in life when confronted with the power and hatred of others."⁴⁰ The psalmist's confidence in God resulted from his conviction of the omnipresence of the Almighty. Nowhere is there separation from the presence of God, including inside the womb where created existence begins.⁴¹

The Old Testament message of the value of human life carries over into the New Testament, according to Dempster. He listed a number of verses supportive of this view including: Matthew 22:34-40, Matthew 7:12, Mark 12:28-34, Luke 10:25-37, Romans 13:8-10, 1 Timothy 1:5, each of these emphasizing the importance of love for neighbour as the indispensable co-requisite of love for God. The problem which the contemporary abortion issue poses is

part of the malaise of the twentieth century in which people have come to be viewed as means to an end and not as the end itself. Dempster used the example of Christ's teaching in the parable of the Good Samaritan as a lesson to challenge the assumption that: "there are some members of the human family that are legitimately outside the scope of neighbourly love, because for some reason or other they are or never can be worthy of the epithet 'neighbour.'⁴² This was the attitude of Jew and Samaritan towards each other, but in the parable, the Samaritan recognizes that the beaten, helpless Jew is in fact, his neighbour. Dempster articulated two important points of this parable:

We do not begin drawing lines within the human family and decide who is worthy of our love and who is not. The parable demonstrates one thing if anything: the ones we would normally wish to exclude, Jesus would include, particularly the powerless and dependent.

And secondly the one neighbour in most need is the one who is radically dependant on our aid, and for whom social and cultural barriers may prove great impediments to helping.⁴³

In Dempster's understanding then, a person's very humanity precluded his being expendable, thus the humanity of the unborn fetus means it truly qualifies as a "neighbour," with innate value and the moral right of protection against being arbitrarily deprived of its life. Dempster was adamant in stating that the value of a human life and the decision of whether or not it should be permitted to continue or be terminated should never be left to the changing whims of pragmatism. According to Dempster:

The current practice of abortion is a complete denial of the biblical estimate of human worth and value. It makes human worth dependent on whether the individual is wanted by

another human being. That tiny powerless human life is not infinitely valuable but has a value less than the cost of economic or social inconvenience. That powerless, little life can be eliminated as a means to a personal end, usually economic or social. Human beings are means and not ends.⁴⁴

Dempster made a clear linkage between abortion and other pressing issues facing society, including the lack of value accorded the elderly and the mentally handicapped: "In our society in general, people -- usually the dependent and powerless -- are treated as means and not ends."⁴⁵ This problem also included females, according to Dempster because they tend to be perceived by irresponsible males not as ends, in themselves, and loved as neighbours, but as objects or means for the attainment of personal sexual gratification.

Dempster's presentation paper concluded with a strong call to action on the part of Christians:

The Christian has to make a stand, an unequivocal stand for life: Jesus' words to the Pharisees: What is it better to do, to save life or to kill? The advice of King Lemuel's mother to him: Speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves, for the rights of the powerless. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.⁴⁶

It is evident from the views of Carter and Dempster, that both held very similar convictions concerning the nature and value of human life. Both saw abortion as an attack against the image of God in humanity and as very detrimental to the well-being of the pregnant woman. There was also agreement between both that abortion is a fundamental issue of justice in which the weak and voiceless are being oppressed by the powerful. This goes to the very heart of the Christian's obligation to resist evil and is a

struggle in which Christians have no option but to be involved. Both Carter and Dempster have provided a model of what might be termed a "scholar-activist" and as such, have made a major contribution in how the abortion issue has been handled by Atlantic Baptists.

¹Craig Carter, a native of the Maritimes, has an educational background which includes the following degrees: B.A. (Honours), Mount Allison University; M.Div., Acadia University; Ph.D., University of St. Michael's College (Toronto School of Theology). His present teaching areas include Philosophy and Religious Studies. Stephen Dempster, a native of Ontario, holds the following degrees: B.A. (Honours), University of Western Ontario; M.A.R., Th. M., Westminster Seminary; M.A., Ph.D., University of Toronto. His present teaching area is Religious Studies.

²Craig A. Carter, interview by author, 24 May 1994, Moncton, New Brunswick.

³Craig A. Carter, telephone conversation with author, 1 May 2000. Carter pointed out that Yoder, who studied under Barth, developed his mentor's social ethics into a consistent pro-life ethic which is opposed not only to abortion, but to war, capital punishment, and has strong affinity for the poor and oppressed.

⁴This is not to say that Carter in any way shied away from using biblical texts as the basis for his perspective. On the contrary, the Scriptures are foundational for his views. Rather than using a proof-text approach, Carter made use of a wide selection of texts from both Old and New Testaments to provide a broad foundation upon which he constructs a perspective on the nature and value of human life which is reflective of the composite of the Scriptures.

⁵Craig A. Carter, "Human Life in Christian Perspective," in *Life and Death Choices: Canadian Baptist Perspectives on the Moral Dilemmas of Human Life Issues*, ed. Robert A. Duncan (Mississauga, Ontario: Canadian Baptist Federation, 1991), 24.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Craig A. Carter, "Human Life in Christian Perspective," 24.

⁸Ibid., 25.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., 27.

¹¹Ibid., 29.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 30.

¹⁴Ibid., 31.

¹⁵Ibid., 32.

¹⁶Ibid., 33.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Craig A. Carter, "Abortion: A Christian Response," in *Life and Death Choices: Canadian Baptist Perspectives on the Moral Dilemmas of Human Life Issues*, ed. Robert A. Duncan (Mississauga, Ontario: Canadian Baptist Federation, 1991), 36.

¹⁹Ibid., 38.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 39.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., 40.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., 40-41.

²⁶Ibid., 41.

²⁷Ibid., 42.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 43.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., 44.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Quite frequently, Canadian evangelicals are accused of merely adopting the the views and concerns of their American counterparts rather than developing their own. This is not the case in the abortion issue, insofar as Carter and Dempster have approached it. By way of comparison, let us briefly consider the approach of four prominent American evangelical ethicists.

The approach taken by John Jefferson Davis in *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today* 2d. ed. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1993) was to consider the abortion issue in its historical and legal contexts and

then to explore its medical and psychological components. Davis then followed this with an exploration of the biblical, theological, and ethical considerations, having given attention to the biblical basis for the value of human life, using the Scriptures to buttress his arguments in defence of the unborn. He viewed the abortion issue as a struggle between the secular and Christian perspectives on the value of human life.

John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, in *Ethics For a Brave New World* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1993), considered the fundamental issue in the abortion controversy to be that of personhood, i.e. what is the nature of personhood and when does the developing fetus become a human person? The other major focus of their work was upon the conflict of rights issues - the rights of the woman versus the rights of the child she carries in her womb, and about special problems relating to abortion. The only significant consideration of Scripture was in a discussion centered around Exodus 21:22-25 which describes a situation in which a pregnant woman is accidentally injured and gives birth prematurely.

In *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1989), Norman L. Geisler considered the central question in the abortion issue as revolving around the human status of the unborn. He discussed what he saw as the three main approaches used to categorize the unborn, namely: fully human, potentially human, or subhuman. Geisler defended the fully human stance, utilizing Scripture as a significant component in critiquing the other two views.

Although it is clear that Davis, Geisler, and the Feinbergs all have a strong grasp of the abortion issue and its various components and are adept at putting forth strong arguments in defence of the unborn, yet they tend to lack the overall more well-rounded and articulate approach which has been constructed by Carter and Dempster. Carter and Dempster have made effective use of a more broad, overall scope of Scripture to construct a biblical view of the nature and value of human life. Whereas the authors cited above tended towards a more defensive approach on the abortion issue, mainly concentrating on the refutation of pro-choice arguments, Carter and Dempster have focused upon the construction an overall pro-life ethic which is capable of moving past a merely defensive posture and into an active engagement of the issue in a positive way, demonstrating both strong pro-life

conviction and compassionate care for those who are most deeply involved. This positive, practical element has not been developed anywhere near as thoroughly by their American counterparts.

³⁵This is not to imply that theological liberalism did not make inroads among Atlantic Baptists. It did, particularly in the first half of the century, as has been noted elsewhere in this thesis. Unease over the perceived liberalism of Acadia University's faculty of theology led to concern in some quarters, however it did not lead to the outright conflict and division that occurred in other denominations.

³⁶Also like Carter, Dempster made extensive reference to the Scriptures in developing his views on the value of human life and his opposition to abortion on demand.

³⁷Stephen Dempster, A presentation on abortion, 1-4, photocopied.

³⁸In Genesis 4:23-24: Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times." (New International Version).

³⁹Stephen Dempster, A presentation on abortion, section entitled, "Abortion and the Bible," 5, photocopied.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., 6.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., 7

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Surveying the twenty-five year period from 1968 to 1993, it is apparent that Atlantic Baptists have come a great distance in understanding and responding to the abortion debate. From the first serious attempt to come to grips with abortion - initiated by Rev. Earle T. McKnight and the Board of Social Service - to the development of a biblically sound, Christian response to the controversy, the abortion issue was thoroughly investigated, studied, and discussed.

One of the important products of this debate was manifested in the strong pro-life leadership which developed within the UBCAP. The quality of this leadership is remarkable, both in terms of its intellectual acumen and in its decisiveness in translating theological principles into practical actions. Instead of merely "borrowing" resolutions passed by other Baptist bodies, the UBCAP, particularly through the efforts of Cherry, Carter, and Dempster, cultivated its own distinctly "Atlantic Baptist" theology and response which in this issue, comes to be the voice for the Convention as a body.

It is also likewise worthy to note the dearth of strong leadership, indeed of virtually *any* leadership at all on the pro-choice side of the issue. The only openly pro-choice individual discovered in this project was Dr. Norman Guiou, and it must be borne in mind that Guiou was speaking to the issue from outside the Atlantic United Baptist Convention. To describe Earle McKnight as "pro-choice" would be to oversimplify his view. Certainly

McKnight leaned somewhat towards a liberal view of abortion, acknowledging that the decision to abort should be that of the mother, yet at the same time he recognized what he saw as the developing value of the fetus. McKnight also hoped that the decision to either abort or to carry the fetus would be made only after carefully weighing all of the relevant factors. Although McKnight's efforts at providing an acceptable position paper for the UBCAP were unsuccessful, he did help set in motion a serious discussion of the issue which eventually culminated in a more conservative consensus within the Convention and which was based upon a well-developed biblical and theological foundation.

One of the noteworthy observations in the period leading up to the resolution of 1983 concerns the difference between how abortion was viewed by the *Atlantic Baptist* magazine on one hand, and the Board of Social Service/Social Action Commission on the other. From 1971 onward, the editorial policy of the *Atlantic Baptist* remained staunchly opposed to abortion. The Board/Commission seemed more ambiguous in its outlook, and at least in the earlier years of the 1970s, it appeared to have a rather liberal view of abortion if the 1973 Study Paper on Abortion is any indication. Another difference between the two was in the type of language used to describe abortion. The Board/Commission was quite adamant in its view that abortion was not murder since it believed that the fetus was not a full human being. Abortion tended to be depicted by such phrases as "terminating the pregnancy." The *Atlantic Baptist* in contrast, did not shy away from the use of strong language, depicting abortion as killing a human being and equating

it with murder. The *Atlantic Baptist* appealed to the findings of medical science in the area of fetal growth and development to undergird its view of the fetus' humanity; the Board/Commission tended to avoid such information.

Of the assertion that there were differences in opinion between the *Atlantic Baptist* and the Board of Social Service/Social Action Commission in the earlier years of the abortion debate, there can be little doubt. Despite this obvious difference of opinion however, there is no indication that there was any overt sense of hostility between the Board/Commission and the *Atlantic Baptist*. In the material examined for this project, no derogatory remarks are to be found on either side. The differences between the two did not endure for very long as it turned out, for by the early 1980s, a marked shift had taken place on the part of the Social Action Commission, moving it to a perspective in harmony with that of the *Atlantic Baptist*.

It does not seem likely that the more liberal-leaning approach taken by the Board of Social Service in their 1973 Study Paper on Abortion really had any prospect of being adopted and retained as a definitive position paper for an *Atlantic Baptist* stance on the abortion issue. A number of factors mitigated very strongly against this possibility. Firstly, the Convention's traditional and resurgent conservative theological orientation which looked askance at radical feminism and its accompanying rallying issues, of which abortion on demand was at the forefront. Secondly, the increase in scientific knowledge about pre-natal development tended to strongly undermine arguments that the fetus was an extension of the

mother's body, or just a mass of tissue. Long-held ideas about when the fetus became a human being, such as at the point of quickening became no longer tenable as scientific knowledge probed deeper and deeper into life in the womb. The developmental continuum of life from conception through to birth gave no clear point at which to say that before it the fetus was "not human" and afterwards "was human." Thirdly, the social gospel's concern for children and their families seemed to continue to impact upon the Atlantic Baptist thought and action vis-a-vis the abortion issue. The expression of this in the abortion issue was in the concurrent strong support for the right-to-life of the fetus and support for the expectant mother. The movement which would develop during the 1980s to support the establishment of Crisis Pregnancy Centres was an important expression of this ongoing social concern.

Throughout the time period considered, the *Atlantic Baptist* maintained a consistent and vocal witness for the pro-life perspective. Apart from the article by Dr. Norman Guiou and Dr. M. O. Vincent's "second thoughts" discourse, both of which appeared in 1968, no editorials or articles have appeared in the subsequent time period covered by this thesis which in any way demonstrate anything but implacable opposition to abortion on demand.

It is apparent that that the abortion issue came into greater prominence particularly after 1977. The abortion issue appears not to have occupied much attention among Atlantic Baptists (with the exception of the Board of Social Service/Social Action Commission) between 1971 and 1977, if the absence of articles on abortion in the *Atlantic Baptist* is considered as evidence.

With the succession of editors at the *Atlantic Baptist* during the 1970s and 1980s, the magazine became more outspoken on abortion. Although there was only one editorial on abortion written by Fred Gordon within the time studied in this paper, his stance was unequivocally opposed to abortion on demand. With George Simpson's appointment to the position of editor, it is evident that, after a brief lull, the abortion issue was given greater prominence, with the editorial view again being staunchly pro-life. When Michael Lipe became editor in 1985, the pro-life position of the *Atlantic Baptist* continued unabated. Concurrent with the increased attention given the abortion issue by Simpson and Lipe, the UBCAP as a whole also exhibited a greater willingness to grapple with the issue at the highest level, as exhibited by its passing of two resolutions in opposition to abortion during the 1980s and one more in the early 1990s.

The *Atlantic Baptist* has played an important role in keeping the abortion issue before its constituency both by responding to the events of the abortion controversy in Canadian society and by urging Baptists to involve themselves in this issue. The *Atlantic Baptist* has been able to present different aspects of the abortion issue to its constituency and has not avoided criticizing Atlantic Baptists at times when they appeared slow to respond to the issue. The *Atlantic Baptist* has also stressed the need for effective actions to accompany the resolutions passed by Convention.

Since the resolutions of the 1980s, and the failed attempts by the Mulroney government to pass new federal legislation governing abortion, the abortion issue has largely receded from the forefront

of issues which have occupied the attention of Atlantic Baptists. Another factor has been the rise of concern over euthanasia, assisted suicide and other related issues concerning the value and protection of human life. The abortion issue is also noted for its absence from the pages of the *Atlantic Baptist* since the departure of editor Michael Lipe in 1995. In addition, the scaled-down format of the *Atlantic Baptist* resulting from cost-cutting measures had the effect of lessening the amount of space available for in-depth explorations of issues such as abortion.

The 1990s have continued to witness Atlantic Baptists opposing abortion on demand, but doing so more quietly, largely by working at the local church level in support of Crisis Pregnancy Centers and local pro-life advocacy groups, and by also continuing to make people aware of the issue from the pulpit. The 1991 resolution opposing the existence of free-standing abortion clinics was the last public pronouncement made by Convention Assembly during the 1990s.

In the political realm, Atlantic Baptists as a body have not been as successful in their efforts to combat abortion on demand. The pronouncements made by Convention Assembly have not had as great an impact as had been hoped. It is fair to say that in general, Atlantic Baptists, like evangelical Christians in general in Canada, have not given as high a priority to political action in comparison to their counterparts south of the border. It does not appear, despite the urgings of many of their leaders, that Atlantic Baptists have perceived a need to determine their voting choices on the basis of a party's or individual candidate's stance on key issues

such as abortion. It is this author's opinion that if a survey was made of the voting habits of evangelical Christians in Canada, including Atlantic Baptists, it would show very little divergence from the general patterns of society as a whole. As a result, it would seem unlikely to the author that Atlantic Baptists will have a great effect on the abortion issue in the political realm.

However, on a more positive note, Atlantic Baptists do have a long history of deep concern for social and moral issues. Abortion, being one such issue with serious social and moral implications, is likely to remain an important matter for many within this constituency, since it has been perceived as striking at the very heart of the biblical understanding of the nature and value of human life. How Atlantic Baptists will continue to respond to the abortion issue during the new century will be for time to reveal.

The abortion issue is noteworthy for Atlantic Baptists in the sense that it points to the beginning of their awareness of the demise of the "Constantinian era" in which church and state tended to march together. The perception of abortion as being an unavoidable issue of life and death helped awaken Atlantic Baptists, at least to some extent, to a new awareness that in order to follow their convictions on this matter, they had to move in a direction that runs counter to that of state and society. The perception that government was a sympathetic ally of the pro-choice movement's aims and objectives served to make it, for many in the pro-life camp, a legitimate target for criticism. There developed a growing unwillingness to trust the state with making moral decisions of this magnitude. The level of criticism directed against the government

coming from key leaders in the Atlantic Baptist constituency became more severe with the passage of time as frustration grew over the lawmakers' unwillingness and inability to enact legal protection for the unborn. Michael Lipe's editorial views expressed in the *Atlantic Baptist* during the time when the abortion issue was being mostly hotly debated, tended to reveal this very clearly. Likewise, Craig Carter did not hesitate to deliver pointed criticism at governments for their role in contributing to the abortion problem.

Other issues which came to the forefront during the 1990s began to compete with abortion for the attention of Atlantic Baptists. No sooner had they come to a consensus on abortion when the related life and death issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide imposed upon society. Agitation for homosexual rights continued to exercise an increasingly prominent hold on public attention as the decade progressed, as Canadian society seemed to abandon the Christian beliefs and values that once held sway, and to embrace the tenets of post-modernism.

As these other issues surfaced and as it became increasingly unlikely that a pro-life victory would be achieved quickly through the legislative process, some Atlantic Baptists began to focus more upon the "hands on" ministries of the Crisis Pregnancy Centers. An area which suggests itself for future study would be to determine the effectiveness of this form of ministry and how active Atlantic Baptists have been in supporting it.

For Atlantic Baptists and for Christians in general, it seems inevitable that the death of Constantianism will continue to force them to grapple seriously with their response to the more critical

issues which affect post-modern Western society. The choices will remain clear: accommodate to society's views and norms; isolate themselves from society; or seek to actively engage society from a biblically-based, positive, practical, and caring standpoint. Within the Atlantic Baptist community, the work of Carter, Dempster, and other key leaders in responding to the abortion issue has made a vital contribution in providing a pattern for the option of a positive engagement of society from a Christian point of view.

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APPENDIX

A Chronology of Important Governmental and Judicial Events Relating to Abortion in Canada, 1969-1989¹

27 June 1969 - Bill C-150 (the existing abortion law) received Royal Assent after its adoption by the House of Commons on 14 May 1969 and by the Senate on 12 June 1969.

29 September 1975 - The government appointed a sociologist, a doctor and a jurist "to conduct a study to determine whether the procedure provided in the Criminal Code for obtaining therapeutic abortions was operating equitably across Canada." Under these terms of reference, the Badgley Committee, named after its Chairman, was asked only "to make findings on the operation of this law rather than recommendations on the underlying policy."

9 February 1977 - The Badgley Committee tabled its report which concluded that the abortion law was not being applied equitably across Canada. However, the Committee added that it was not so much the law that had led to the inequities as the attitude of Canadians toward this delicate subject.

2 December 1981 - The final draft of the constitutional Resolution for a Joint Address to Her Majesty on the Constitution of Canada was passed in the House of Commons. Several members voted against the Resolution on the ground that the Charter failed expressly to guarantee the right to life of the fetus.

17 April 1982 - The Constitution Act, 1982 received by Royal Assent.

8 November 1984 - A Toronto jury acquitted Dr. Henry Morgentaler and co-accused on charges of conspiracy to procure a miscarriage.

1 October 1985 - The Ontario Court of Appeal set aside the jury acquittal of Dr. Morgentaler and co-accused on the Toronto charges and ordered a new trial.

30 April 1987 - In the case of Borowski v. Attorney General of Canada, the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal ruled that the fetus is not covered under sections 7 and 15 of the Charter.

28 January 1988 - The Supreme Court of Canada in a 5 to 2 majority judgment ruled in the Morgentaler case that section 251 of the Criminal Code contravened the rights of pregnant women under the Charter and was therefore of no force or effect.

28 July 1988 - After a two-day debate, the House of Commons voted down six proposals on abortion, including the government motion.

3-4 October 1988 - The case of Borowski v. Attorney General of Canada was argued in the Supreme Court of Canada. Judgment was reserved.

9 March 1989 - The Supreme Court of Canada rendered its judgment in Borowski v. Attorney General of Canada, finding unanimously that there is no longer an issue on which to rule as the previous abortion law had been found unconstitutional in Morgentaler.

4 July 1989 - Ontario Supreme Court Judge John O'Driscoll granted an injunction preventing Barbara Dodd from having an abortion.

6 July 1989 - A Winnipeg court refused a man a similar injunction against his pregnant girlfriend.

7 July 1989 - Jean-Guy Tremblay was granted a temporary injunction prohibiting Chantal Daigle from proceeding with an abortion.

11 July 1989 - Mr. Justice Gibson Gray of the Ontario Supreme Court overturned the injunction against Ms. Dodd on the grounds that she was not properly notified.

17 July 1989 - Mr. Justice Jacques Viens of the Quebec Superior Court granted a permanent injunction preventing Ms. Daigle from obtaining an abortion, deciding that the fetus is protected under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.

20 July 1989 - Five judges of the Quebec Court of Appeal heard Ms. Daigle's appeal.

26 July 1989 - In a 3-2 decision the Quebec Court of Appeal upheld the injunction against Ms. Daigle, relying heavily on Quebec's Civil Code.

1 August 1989 - Five judges of the Supreme Court of Canada, in an unusual summer sitting, granted Ms. Daigle leave to appeal.

8 August 1989 - The full bench of the Supreme Court heard the Daigle appeal. Although informed by Ms. Daigle's lawyer that his client had already had an abortion, the court continued to hear the arguments. They delivered a unanimous decision that the injunction was set aside, with reasons to follow.

¹Monique Hebert, *Abortion: Legal Aspects* (Ottawa: Library of Parliament Research Branch, 1980; revised 1989), 21-23.