When the Drums Go Silent
Exposing "Pro-Choice" Sophistry in the Wake of Dobbs

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When the *Roe-v-Wade* decision descended onto the American landscape in January, 1973, Frederica Mathewes-Green, was a self-described "anti-war, mother-earth, feminist, hippie college student" whose car sported a bumper sticker that read, "Don't Labor Under Misconception; Legalize Abortion." [i] Three years later, she had done an about-face and has since become one of the pro-life movement's most eloquent defenders. In 2016 she looked forward with hope and trepidation to the day in which we now live:

> One day, the tide is going to turn. With that Supreme Court decision 43 years ago, one of the sides in the abortion debate won the day. But sooner or later, that day will end. No generation can rule from the grave. The time is coming when a younger generation will sit in judgment of ours. And they are not obligated to be kind.

While Mathewes-Green rightly predicted that this day would come, she may have underestimated the zeal with which those who defend abortion would continue to fight. If *Dobbs* has shown us anything, it is that any culture comfortable with brutalizing its own children is also a culture that gets desperate when its rites are challenged.

And, yes, I did mean to say "rites."

Consider the Canaanites. For hundreds of years, they engaged in religious practices that defied the commands of the One True God. Their ceremonies were legendary. Jewish commentaries on the Old Testament, the *Midrash*, describe a ritual in which children were handed over to the pagan priests of the Canaanite god, Molech:

> … an idol with the face of a calf and open hands like someone who wants to take something from another. They would light this idol on fire until his hands were scorching. There were seven chambers before him and according to the quality of the sacrifice that is how close one could come to him … He who brought his child, the priests would say that he is offering the greatest sacrifice. He would enter the innermost chamber and go kiss the Molech … the priests would then take the child and place

> it near the Molech. *They would then bang with drums to drown out the cries*. [ii]

The *Midrash* cited here claims that children were burned alive in this fashion. Some historians disagree that this is the case. But whatever is true about the actual fate of the children in question, it is hard to imagine a more appalling practice than this. And the Canaanites knew it. They beat the drums to mask the inconceivable suffering they were imposing on their own offspring.

Modern Drums

The abortion industry – a modern and outwardly more sanitized system of child sacrifice – has for several decades marched to the beat of different drummers. Masked by euphemisms like, "safe, legal, and rare," "reproductive freedom," or "my body, my choice," its rituals have remained cloaked behind anesthesia, stainless steel forceps, or scalding chemicals that achieve the same result. The tiny corpses that the industry produces are invisible to a culture that readily condones injustice it never has to see.

But the contemporary version of those drums has gone silent in the wake of *Dobbs*. With the legally thin veil of *Roe* now shredded, we are getting a glimpse behind the curtain to see what choices abortion advocates *really* defend. And the scene is reminiscent of a Canaanite worship service.

Literally.

In the Name of Religious Freedom

In November, 1993, the U. S. Congress passed the *Religious Freedom Restoration Act* (RFRA) to "prohibit any agency, department, or official of the United States or any State (the government) from substantially burdening a person's exercise of religion."

The kind of cultural climate that led to the need for such a law, given the plain language of the First Amendment, is telling. But even Molech might blush at seeing how 21st Century abortion zealots have turned that law on its head.

Recently, *The Satanic Temple* (TST) has sued in federal courts in Indiana and Idaho to designate abortion as a treasured religious ritual that deserves protection under the RFRA. On its website, TST explains that:

> The Satanic abortion ritual provides spiritual comfort and affirms bodily autonomy, self-worth, and freedom from coercive forces with the affirmation of TST's Seven Tenets. The ritual … sanctifies the abortion process by instilling confidence and protecting bodily rights when undergoing the safe and scientific procedure … as a federally recognized religion, *The Satanic Temple* utilizes RFRA and the Hobby Lobby

> precedent to protect its members from unnecessary abortion regulations that inhibit their religious practices and force them to violate their deeply held beliefs.

Their website even provides a "handy" step-by-step guide for how to perform the ceremony.

It is not difficult to see that sacrificing a human being does not qualify as a protected religious ritual. But the sophistry required to try to make that case exposes the abortion industry for what it really is.

In the same way TST leaped to claim a religious exemption, the ACLU and Planned Parenthood filed lawsuits aimed at protecting "family planning." Led by the clarion calls of Planned Parenthood of America President and CEO, Alexis McGill Johnson, they launched legal battles in Indiana and other states to stop the "nightmare" that *Dobbs* had unleashed. Johnson warned that the march toward "racial injustice" and a "public health crisis" would soon rear its ugly head in the devastating absence of *Roe's* protection for the right to abortion.

Beyond the red herrings and straw men in these arguments, what these voices expose is a desperation that betrays the extremism of their cause. And the extremism isn't just ideological. It's existential. The terrorists of *Jane's Revenge* have proved that with their nationwide crusade to intimidate pregnancy care centers.

Spinning False Narratives

Dobbs obliterated *Roe's* arbitrary and unscientific definition of "fetal viability," and with it, the federal protection *Roe* provided for abortion "rights." As individual states have begun to draft post-*Dobbs* abortion bills, we see that the Big Three Exceptions (rape, incest, and saving the life of the mother) were never anything more than a distraction meant to paint pro-life advocates as extremists. States that are drafting more restrictive abortion bills in response to *Dobbs* have included those exceptions.

But suddenly, they aren't good enough. It turns out that respecting "bodily autonomy" actually means allowing abortion for any reason, right up to the point of birth – and after. That has always been the logical conclusion of the bodily autonomy argument, of course. Now, it's just easier to see.

Abortion advocates have also resorted to using fear tactics to drive a false narrative about post-*Dobbs* abortion restrictions. Not content to stop at falsely claiming the post-*Dobbs* world allows no room for exceptions like these, the defenders of abortion have taken it one step further.

No one in the pro-life movement has ever questioned the fact that the procedure required to remove an embryo perilously mis-implanted in an ectopic pregnancy is

perfectly acceptable to save the life of the mother. Likewise, no one has ever argued that such a procedure constitutes an abortion. But in July 2022, the pro-life organization, *Live Action* documented the fact that "pro-abortion media [was doing] its best to conflate abortion and ectopic pregnancy" in order to claim that the *Dobbs* decision threatened the lives of women in those kinds of situations. *Planned Parenthood* went so far as to scrub its website's clarification of the distinction in order to reinforce the false narrative.

Desperate times call for desperate measures when the drums go silent.

Into The Pit

These reactions to *Dobbs* are eye-opening. They validate everything pro-life advocates have ever claimed about the righteousness of their cause. The long national nightmare of *Roe* is over. But it has taught us lessons. As Mary Eberstadt points out:

> … what the forces behind *Roe* would never acknowledge, and the forces behind *Dobbs* do, is the ultimate lesson of that experience. There is a floor. There is a level beneath which men and women cannot sink in the name of autonomy without crashing into a pit. [iii]

Dobbs has given us a glimpse into that pit. We see it in the actions of Jane's Revenge, The Satanic Temple, and Planned Parenthood. Their frantic attempts to protect their rites by dehumanizing the unborn betray the depth of their zealotry. But Mary Eberstadt's conclusion should resonate with us all:

> So, bring on the post-*Dobbs* future. Let voters in every state weigh a framed sonogram photo against the handmaid costume … Let the Zoomers and Millennials and other Americans shortchanged by family and community collapse come to know the truth: Life is good. New life is grand. Let the babies of tomorrow do what babies do, what Americans scarred by *Roe* missed out on: humanize the people around them. And may the continuing, manifestly loving work of the pro-life movement come to soften the hearts of opponents and rekindle something that so many after 1973 thought all but extinguished by law: Mercy.

Keep the drumbeat silent and let mercy resonate in the void.

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[i] "When Abortion Suddenly Stopped Making Sense," *National Review Online*, January 22, 2016, available at: https://www.nationalreview.com/2016/01/abortion-roe-v-wade-unborn-children-women-feminism-march-life/

[ii] *Midrash* Tanchuma (Buber) addition to Va'etchanan, Section 2. "The Tragic History of Molech Child Sacrifice," chabad.org, available at: https://bit.ly/3Vl9iYd

[iii] "What the Nurses Knew, *National Review*, August 1, 2022, p. 20.