

Abolition of Reason

Pro-Life Apologists Deconstruct “Immediatist” Ideology
as Presented in Cunningham-Hunter Debate



Hays | Klusendorf | New | Stanek | Van Maren | Wilcox

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By

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On April 25, 2015, Gregg Cunningham, founder and CEO of the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, engaged T. Russell Hunter, co-founder of Abolish Human Abortion, in a debate entitled “Pro-Life Incrementalism vs. Abolitionist Immediatism.” This publication is a compilation of post-debate commentaries by five pro-life apologists.

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Biographies

Steve Hays

Steve holds a double major in history and classics as well as a Masters of Arts in Religion from Reformed Theological Seminary. He writes at Triablogue.

Scott Klusendorf

Scott is the founder and president of Life Training Institute, which was established in 2004 to challenge and equip pro-life advocates to persuasively defend their views in the public square. Scott is the author of *The Case for Life: Equipping Christians to Engage the Culture*, released in March 2009 by Crossway Books. He co-authored *Stand for Life: A Student's Guide for Making the Case and Saving Lives*, which was released in December 2012 by Hendrickson Publishers. Scott has also published articles on pro-life apologetics in *The Christian Research Journal*, *Clear Thinking* and *Focus on the Family Citizen*. Scott is a graduate of UCLA with honors and holds a Master's Degree in Christian Apologetics from Biola University.

Michael J. New, Ph.D.

Michael is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Michigan -- Dearborn and an associate scholar at the Charlotte Lozier Institute in Washington, DC. Dr. New received a master's degree in statistics and a doctorate in political science from Stanford University in 2002. Dr. New's writing and research interests include the impact of pro-life laws, abortion trends, and public attitudes toward abortion.

Jill Stanek

Jill was a registered nurse in the Labor & Delivery Department at Christ Hospital in Oak Lawn, IL. She discovered not only were abortions being committed there, but babies were being aborted alive to die without medical care. When hospital leaders said that they would not stop, Jill went public and has become a national figure in the effort to protect both born and pre-born infants.

Jonathon Van Maren

Jonathon is a writer and pro-life speaker who has given presentations across North America on abortion and pro-life strategy. Jonathon graduated from Simon Fraser University in 2010 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History. He is the communications director for the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform.

Clinton Wilcox

Clinton is a staff apologist for Life Training Institute. He specializes in training pro-life people to make the pro-life case more effectively and persuasively. He is also a certified speaker and mentor for Justice for All.

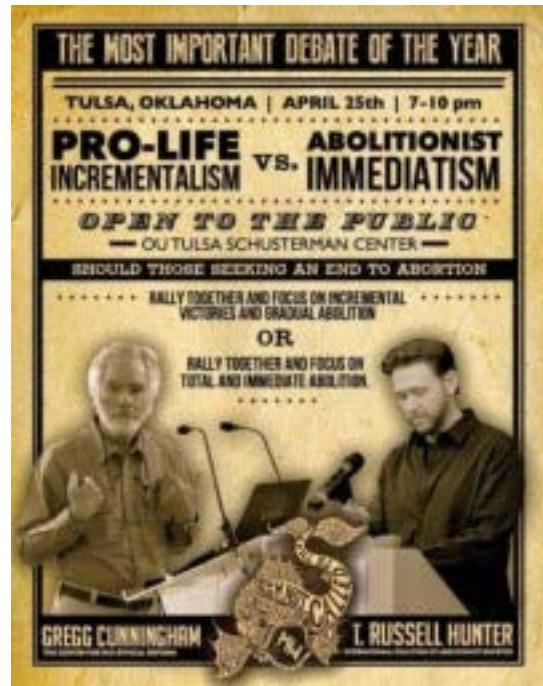
Prologue

Jill Stanek

He asked for it, he got it.

Several months ago Abolish Human Abortion's T. Russell Hunter issued an [open challenge](#) to anyone from the pro-life community to debate him on the topic of "immediatism," which he supports, versus "incrementalism," which the so-called "establishment" generally supports. His description of the debate frame:

I would argue for the abolitionist position - that all people who are opposed to abortion ought to unify around abolishing all forms of intentional prenatal destruction regardless of the age of the human being in question - and my opponent could argue for the pro life establishment's position that we should focus our time and energy on regulating abortion while it remains legal and seek incremental gains against it.



Gregg Cunningham of the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform eventually accepted Hunter's challenge, and the debate was held this past Friday, April 25.

(Cunningham also rejected Hunter's premise that incrementalism is an "either/or" thing, a concept it is actually immediatists who espouse. I find it inexplicable that they not only ignore opportunities but block attempts to save children from abortion now, thinking it is only principled to work to stop all abortions at one time in the future. But as Cunningham stated more than once, "We don't do one or the other, we do both.")

You can view video of the debate [here](#). It totals almost three hours, but I think the last hour of Q&A could be skipped without missing much. Otherwise, it's an interesting thing to watch.



A bunch of us around the country and Canada viewed it “together,” so to speak, via live stream, and the consensus was Cunningham won the debate hands down. How hands down? Nixon’s stunning debate defeat to Kennedy comes to mind. Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform’s Jonathon Van Maren [called it](#) an “out-and-out mauling.”

Hunter came ill-prepared to support his actual premise, that pro-life incrementalism hasn’t and doesn’t work, and Cunningham quickly disproved Hunter’s claim that immediatism is buttressed by historical figures like William Wilberforce, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King, Jr. None of the aforementioned were immediatists in practice. They were incrementalists.

Which is where Hunter’s thesis fell apart. He quoted their writings, which expressed an absolutist view against slavery and segregation, but ignored their work, which demonstrated an incremental approach.

By example, someone looking back at my writings some day will readily conclude I abhor all abortions, oppose the rape/incest exception, and think abortion clinics come from the pits of hell.

Yet in practice I support a 20-week abortion ban, some legislation with rape/incest exceptions, and abortion clinic regulations. These are means to get to the end: stopping all abortions. Again, incrementalists work to stop all abortions while at the same time working to save the babies we can along the way.

The reason I'm taking the time to dissect this debate here, and in another post or two or three, is because I believe AHA and Hunter's immediatist view is not only wrong, it's dangerous and deadly, resulting in the senseless deaths of children.

So if you consider this mere internecine bickering, I don't. In my opinion, lives hang in the balance.

This was exemplified clearly in the debate, which I'll get to in my next post.

But we weren't the only ones who thought Hunter fared poorly. He thought so, too. Some of his initial [Facebook comments](#):

- Wish I did better in last night's debate and kept the focus on immediatism instead of letting it run all over the place and of course, there were a lot of things I wanted to say or shoulda woulda could have said....
- Definitely my first [debate]....
- I was getting pretty rilled [sic] up at times and actually holding a lot back.
- I was dead tired and dealing with all sorts of strange spiritual warfare issues and family difficulties so I was not anywhere as sharp as I needed to be.
- Because it is quite difficult to explain the difference between immediatism and incrementalism while someone is constantly calling you a pharisee, accusing you of hating babies and repeatedly telling you that they regulate abortion better than you do, I have decided to finish this powerpoint presentation and put it up in its entirety for people to evaluate and assess.
- I'm a better drawer than debater....
- I didn't get to half of [my arguments] and was too [sic] rushed and distracted to nail Gregg where I should have.

- Then Gregg got up, said that he and his organization were awesome and uncompromising and that I was a meanie head on Facebook.... Greg then said that I was stupid and that he was awesome.... He held up that paper again and said that I completely disregarded the lives of all children ever saved from abortion and that I was a monster (but that he loved me and respected my work etc etc).

As an aside, even a cursory viewing of the debate will show Gregg was strong but behaved like a gentleman. Apparently, for all the verbal bombs he throws online, Hunter can't handle hand-to-hand combat.

But as someone wrote to NYC Mayor de Blasio, [who recently complained](#) people are mean to him at baseball games, "Toughen up, buttercup."

At any rate, by last night Hunter had recovered his mojo, writing, "I'm starting to realize that the debate went far better than I realized," this, he said, because he'd heard people like me were 'totally freaking out and making promises to write articles.'



I'm totally freaking out, all right, for the babies Hunter and his followers fight to leave in the hands of abortionists.

Chapter 1: Background, Structure, Overall Analysis

Scott Klusendorf

April 25 Debate—"Pro-Life Incrementalism versus Abolitionist Immediatism"

Gregg Cunningham argued for the former; T. Russell Hunter argued for the latter. The debate took place in Tulsa, in front of Hunter's supporters. [View the debate here.](#)

Background and Structure

T. Russell Hunter and Abolish Human Abortion (AHA) attack pro-lifers for allegedly "regulating" abortion rather than calling for its immediate abolition. They insist pro-life incremental strategies are not only mistaken, they are based on evil compromise and because of that evil compromise, we are losing the abortion fight. On the web and in social media, AHA is primarily known for its attacks on pro-lifers, often with a strong dose of spiritual superiority. For example, Hunter affectionately refers to my own position on incremental legislation as "crafty" and "sinfully motivated," comprised of "delusive nonsense" that leads weak minds astray with "false doctrine" (Facebook post March 20).

Elsewhere, AHA attacks the pro-life group Justice for All for allegedly ignoring sin and [later](#) calls pro-life apologist Josh Brahm's worldview "demonic." Almost without exception, every attempt to challenge these claims is met with the assertion that pro-lifers are attacking a strawman and, due to unrepentant sin, don't really understand what AHA stands for. When Jill Stanek wrote her [review](#) of the debate, an AHA supporter named Toby immediately attributed to her the worst possible motives and all-but damned her to Hell. "Instead of dealing with incrementalism or immediatism on Biblical terms, she chooses to make an idol out of the abortion fight. Her career is more important to her than her soul. When the light of scripture is shown on her wicked endeavors she, in the reaction of covering up sin, attempts to shoot the messenger and further compound her sin. If her position was a good

and true one, she wouldn't have to resort to strawman arguments and ad hominem...I pray she repents."

That's not the language of someone eager to engage his critics with thoughtful responses. It's the rhetoric of a spiritual weirdo with a severe prophet complex. What he can't secure with a syllogism, he'll pick up with a spiritual power play. Indeed, one high-up AHA rep requested that I publicly repent for not posting his link announcing the pending debate. That my Facebook page is mine to post or not post as I please apparently never crossed his mind. The arrogance of such a request is mind-blowing.

Rewind to late last Fall. T. Russell Hunter issued a very public challenge calling for any pro-life leader to debate him on incrementalism. Gregg Cunningham, a former member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and Executive Director of the Center for Bioethical Reform, accepted. The formal debate structure was as follows: 20-minute opening statements, 15-minute rebuttals, 15-minute cross-examination, 5-minute closing statements. An informal audience Q&A followed the formal debate.

Short Take

Gregg Cunningham won the formal exchange handily and he did so early by pointing out a fundamental flaw in Hunter's argument—namely, the mistaken claim that pro-lifers have the power to end abortion immediately but won't. Again and again, he exposed Hunter's fallacious either/or reasoning by demonstrating that pro-lifers don't have to choose between incremental legislation that saves some children right now or total abolition that saves all at a later time. Rather, they can advance both strategies simultaneously and save many lives in the process.

Cunningham also demonstrated a superior grasp of social reform history, noting that while Wilberforce, Lincoln, and Martin-Luther King were in *principle* moral absolutists, in practice they *functioned* as strategic and tactical incrementalists—as do pro-lifers today. During cross-examination, Hunter [stumbled badly](#) when asked if those babies saved through incremental legislation should have been left to die. When he refused to give a clear answer—despite being repeatedly pressed to do so—the debate was effectively over. In short, Hunter could not preach his way to victory, even when invoking his understanding of

Scripture. His claim that incrementalism is not found in the Bible was decisively refuted when Gregg cited three examples from Scripture where God dealt incrementally with His people.

Cunningham clearly did his homework for this one. Read on for a fuller analysis. Meanwhile, Jonathan Van Maren reviewed the debate [here](#) and Jill Stanek [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#).

Summary of the Debate

1) Opening Statements

T. Russell Hunter framed the debate between incrementalism and immediatism in spiritual terms. The debate is not new, but old. It's rooted in the enmity between the woman and the snake--namely, a clash between "God has said" and "Did God really say?"

Hunter defined "immediatism" not as "overnightism," but as a principle of immediate action as opposed to gradualism. He claimed that immediatism is seen theologically in the gospel--namely, the command to "work while the day lasts"--and in the abolition movements in America and in Britain.

American abolitionists, the first street preachers in America, were immediatists "who believed the slaves ought be instantly set free" and brought under the protection of law. They believed that laws permitting slavery were an affront to God's holy commandments and thus were null and void. Such laws should be instantly abrogated, not regulated with incremental schemes that prolong the evil. In short, incrementalism is a substitute for immediate abolition. Slavery demanded immediate abolition because slavery was a national sin for which the nation(s) must repent instantly.

Hunter further insisted that William Wilberforce was not an incrementalist and "it's ridiculous to say he was." Rather, Wilberforce repented of incrementalism. Regulation of evil was not an option for him. Nor was it for Martin Luther King or the biblical writers. "The roots of immediatism are on the lips of every single prophet of God." Pro-life incrementalists, by regulating abortion instead of calling for its immediate abolition, are to

blame for its continuation. The culture is deeply immoral and merely addressing abortion won't get the job done. We need an immediate call to repent and believe the gospel.

Gregg Cunningham followed with his opening, insisting that Hunter's argument was fundamentally flawed because it assumes that pro-lifers have the power to immediately end abortion but simply won't. Nothing could be further from the truth. Pro-life advocates do not have the power to say which children live and which ones die. The federal courts have already said that no unborn children have a right to life.

In that legal environment, the principled pro-lifer is an immediatist morally and an incrementalist strategically. That is, while pro-lifers remain committed to the principle that every unborn human should be legally protected, they work to save as many lives as possible given current political realities. In short, Hunter is misstating facts: Pro-lifers aren't satisfied with the status quo. They're appalled by it. But unlike Hunter, they realize you can't just "wave a magic wand" and make abortion go away. So, while they don't willingly choose to be incrementalists, they function that way legislatively in order to save as many lives as they can.

Citing the work of Dr. Michael New (University of Michigan-- see [here](#) and [here](#), reg. required), Cunningham argued that incremental laws are indeed saving lives everywhere they are passed. He challenged Hunter's claim that legislators who sponsor incremental laws are compromising with evil. Citing his own efforts as a Pennsylvania State Rep who authored and sponsored several such bills always with a view toward getting the strongest protections he could, Cunningham replied, "It's painful to hear T. Russell Hunter belittle men and women who put their seats on the line to save as many children as possible."

Gregg then challenged Hunter's historical claims. William Wilberforce was in principle a moral absolutist, but in practice a strategic and tactical incrementalist—as are pro-lifers today. While firmly committed to the principle of complete abolition, Wilberforce went after what he could get. For example, he supported legislation to refit slave ships so the suffering could be reduced. He introduced limitations on slave traffic in shipping ports. He did all this while working tirelessly for complete abolition. He took these incremental steps to get the votes to eventually ban the slave trade altogether. Here in the states, Abraham Lincoln worked incrementally to abolish slavery. He withheld his Emancipation

Proclamation until 1863, and even then, it only declared slaves free in the South not the North! Were both these men guilty of compromise? Cunningham concluded, “We will give an account to God for babies we could have saved but didn’t.” And we don’t have to choose between preaching the Gospel and exposing abortion. “We can do both” with a combination of spiritual arguments and human rights arguments.

2) Rebuttal Speeches

In his rebuttal speech, T. Russell Hunter claimed that Wilberforce never authored incremental bills. He insisted that abortion-opponents can’t compromise by offering such bills. We must repent. Instead of putting a compromised principle in front of unsaved people, “Secular people need to be told to repent of sin.”

As for Cunningham’s claim that pro-life incrementalists are constrained by political realities imposed on them by the federal courts, Hunter replied that we have the power to stop abortion immediately “because we serve a risen King and have the Holy Spirit as a helper.” Using the image of a tree to represent abortion, he insisted that pro-life incrementalists are content to cut-off branches rather than taking an ax to the root of the tree.

For example, they ban partial-birth abortion, only to have other methods creep up. Focusing on late-term abortion doesn’t get at the root; it sends a message to the public that other abortions are okay. In short, pro-life incrementalists deny the power of God when they refuse to call for the immediate abolition of abortion.

Cunningham began his rebuttal by summarizing Hunter’s position as follows: “Until we can outlaw killing that unborn baby, we can’t work to save any.” He insisted that Russell is “so prophetic” that he lacks love for those children who are saved by incremental legislation. Unlike immediatists, “I won’t let savable babies die.” Gregg went on to say that, again, Hunter gets Wilberforce wrong. Wilberforce, like pro-lifers today, did not compromise on principle, only tactics and strategy.

When you don’t have the votes, you get what you can while you continue working for complete victory. That’s sound moral thinking! Not once did Wilberforce compromise

principle. Nor do pro-lifers today. Indeed, the history of social reform has both immediatism and incrementalism. Russell only acknowledges the former.

Cunningham once again appealed to history, noting the incremental examples of John Adams and Martin Luther King. During the debate for Independence, Adams knew he didn't have the votes to abolish slavery. Thus, he allowed southern states to retain slavery in order to pull them into the Union where the principles in the founding documents would eventually abolish the practice.

If those southern states weren't pulled into the Union, they'd remain separate slave-holding nations. Thus, in principle Adams was an immediatist but in practice an incrementalist. He used the latter to get the former. Likewise, Martin Luther King, recognizing he didn't have the votes for immediate civil rights, worked to achieve what he could in each political cycle.

Gregg then confronted Hunter on his hostility toward professional pro-life activists who raise funds for their projects. "Russell Hunter uses our abortion photos—which happened because we had professional activists who fundraise. Russell just lets me do his fundraising for him."

3) Cross Examination

During the cross-x, each speaker had fifteen minutes to ask questions of the other. Gregg went first. Noting that T. Russell Hunter was critical of pro-lifers who work with secularists to save babies, Cunningham asked the following: "If your two-year old daughter stumbles into a swimming pool, are you going to quiz the paramedics about their theology before working with them to save your kid?" Hunter replied the question was a silly strawman of a complex issue, but Cunningham persisted.

When Hunter eventually said that he would work with the paramedics, Gregg replied (paraphrase), "So you will work with [secularists] to save your own kid, but you won't work with them to save other kids?" Then, holding up Dr. New's research on the effectiveness of incremental bills for saving lives, Cunningham asked, "What about these babies? Should we allow them to die instead of passing incremental legislation that would save them?" Hunter

initially said “no,” but when Cunningham pressed him for clarification, he called the question a “charade” because if all incrementalists would become immediatists, we could put the ax to the root and end abortion. Gregg continued, “For the record, Russ didn’t answer the question. Should these babies have been allowed to die instead of passing the incremental legislation that saved them?”

When Hunter again declined to answer and called incremental victories “shallow,” Cunningham again held up Dr. New’s study and asked, “Are you saying this guy made this stuff up when he said these laws save lives?” Cunningham also asked if Lincoln was wrong to be both an immediatist in principle and an incrementalist in practice. Hunter replied that Lincoln did not credit incrementalists with the abolition of slavery.

During his cross-x, Hunter asked Gregg if he wanted to “constantly strawman” the immediatist position or simply avoid it. “Do you really not understand [immediatism]?” To which Cunningham—pointing to a screenshot of unborn humans—replied, “I’m going to make this as simple as possible. I’m determined to save that baby, and that baby, and that baby, whether a few seconds old or not, and that is immediate action. It’s a false dilemma to say we can’t both talk about abortion as sin and talk about it as a human rights violation.” Hunter’s second question was about Christian involvement: “Do you believe the Bride of Christ is sitting in the pews instead of fighting abortion because it is putting its faith in incremental legislation?”

Cunningham agreed it is a problem, but not the one Hunter imagines. The big problem is we can’t win without the church, and we won’t win the church without more full-time paid activists who can train seminarians, etc., yet Hunter attacks those working full-time. But how can we win when secular institutions crank out full-time professionals to support abortion and we have part-time volunteers? Hunter then asked if Gregg knew that Wilberforce called slavery wicked and criticized gradualism?

Gregg replied that Hunter was conflating two different things—Wilberforce’s principles and Wilberforce’s practice. That is, Wilberforce hated gradualism in principle and wanted to abolish slavery immediately, but in practice knew he didn’t have the votes. Thus, he worked incrementally to take what he could get. He wasn’t either/or—incrementalist or immediatist. Rather, he pursued both strategies simultaneously. Again, Wilberforce did not

compromise on principle, only on strategy and tactics. Hunter next asked if the atheist at a pro-life display is more likely to become anti-abortion by converting to Christ or by hearing human rights arguments.

Once again, Gregg pointed out that Hunter was engaging in either/or thinking when it is both/and. We present both sets of arguments—gospel arguments and human rights arguments—because we don’t know who the atheists are. We should pray for revival and work to save every baby we can. It’s not either/or. Finally, Hunter asked if Gregg agreed the partial-birth legislation was a waste of time. Gregg replied PBA legislation had a big impact on changing public opinion on late-term abortion and that never in the history of social reform is everything accomplished all at once, as Hunter wrongly thinks. Instead, individual victories matter because they save lives.

4) Closing Statements

Hunter spoke first and quoted Isaiah 30, making the claim that incrementalists don’t challenge the status quo, but say, “What can I do within the law?” He insisted that incrementalists are under a false delusion thinking incrementalism is the way forward. They are “placing their hope in Egypt.” If Christians would repent of incrementalism and become immediatists, we could lay the ax to the root of the abortion tree and end the practice. Incrementalism is not found in the Bible.

Cunningham replied by appealing for both incremental and immediate action. That’s how social reform campaigns always work. Gregg then gave three examples of incrementalism in the Bible. First, Paul (1 Cor. 3) works incrementally to convey hard truths to weak brothers in the faith. He gives them milk instead of solid food. He revealed God’s law to them incrementally so they could digest it. Second, Jesus (Mark 10:4) says that God instructed Moses to relax the law on marriage because the people were not ready for tough divorce codes just then.

Gradually, however, Christ toughens those laws. Jesus said this! Third, when Peter asked about paying the temple tax, Jesus compromised and paid lest he offend weaker Jews. Jesus was skillfully picking his fights! Studies show we can save babies incrementally, and we don’t have to do that to the exclusion of saving them as immediately as we can.

Cunningham concluded by saying he was deeply troubled by Hunter's insensitivity to the babies saved by incremental legislation.

5) Audience Q&A

The Q&A is not part of the formal debate, so I won't say much about it other than to point out one weak spot for Gregg during that time. I've noticed that almost always, the winner of the formal debate gets aggressive questions from his opponent's frustrated devotees. This was certainly true in this exchange, where the audience was almost exclusively made up of those supporting Hunter's position, which didn't seem to trouble Cunningham. In the first question directed at Gregg, an AHA devotee asked if CBR had a written policy, a waiver, instructing people not to preach the gospel at GAP displays.

Gregg said he didn't have any waiver documents with him and even if he did, the language in them is constantly evolving. He further said CBR wants people to be discerning, but does not foreclose on volunteers sharing the gospel when opportunities arise. That's true. But it didn't directly answer the question about the waiver. But, again, even if Gregg had such a waiver, it would not destroy his case that we can both preach the gospel and make human rights arguments. At best, it would only show that in the case of that waiver (assuming it foreclosed on sharing gospel content), he was inconsistently applying his own position. It wouldn't prove the both/and principle wrong, especially when other pro-life groups like LTI, Created Equal, and others effectively integrate both sets of arguments.

Analysis

Outside that one question, Cunningham commanded the field the entire night. Again and again, he corrected Hunter's cherry picking of history. He repeatedly demonstrated that Hunter was falsely creating an either/or framework when it was truly both/and—meaning we should work incrementally to save as many lives as we can while simultaneously working to end abortion outright. Cunningham also demonstrated that for a guy who constantly accuses his critics of straw-man arguments, Hunter was guilty of misrepresenting the incrementalist view. That is, pro-life incrementalists are not satisfied with the status quo—they would stop abortion immediately if they could. Nor are they “regulationists who decide which babies live and which die. They have no such power. To the contrary, the

Supreme Court has already said that no unborn humans have a right to life. Thus, while incrementalists work to change that, they try and save as many lives as they can right now.

The most troubling moment for Hunter was the cross-x when Gregg repeatedly asked him, “Should these babies saved by incremental legislation have been allowed to die?” Hunter was grilled on that point and never fully answered the question, as [the clip of the exchange](#) demonstrates. Here is the transcript:

GC: I’d like to return to the question with which I began, which Russ hasn’t answered. Should we allow these babies to die rather than enact incremental legislation?

TRH: No.

GC: I’m sorry?

TRH: Like, should we allow - should we allow babies to die?

GC: Should we allow these - because...

TRH: The charade is - the charade is not even what we’re talking about - the incrementalism/immediatism debate. Focusing the ax at the tree, getting all the people who follow incrementalism to become immediatists and help put that ax to the branch - to the root...

GC: Would you answer this question?

TRH & GC: [unintelligible]

Moderator: That was the last question. Russ, go ahead and answer that, and then we’re gonna end this.

GC: Just for the record, Russ didn’t answer the question: Should we have allowed these babies to die, which this university professor says would have died had that

legislation not been enacted. Should we have allowed them to die rather than enact the incremental legislation?

Moderator: Okay, Russ, answer that question, then we'll change.

TRH: Um, well, I firmly believe that abortion is evil, and it is one of these things that the powers and principalities of darkness and high places are very in to. It's the crown jewel of darkness, and I actually believe that if they can keep abortion going by deceiving people into becoming gradualists, they will do it. And if to deceive them they have to give them empty, illusory victories, and law professors may claim that babies were saved, they'll do it. But I - if someone goes to an abortion mill and shoots a doctor, a baby might be saved that day, but that's not going towards abolishing abortion. It's not establishing justice that day [unintelligible] a baby that day.

GC: May I ask for clarification for your answer? You're saying this guy's making this up?

TRH: Uh, no, I have to read it. But I'm just saying that convincing people to be gradualists by saying, "Hey look, we saved some," while they're still being - I'm pretty sure that you can convince people to be gradualists for the next 40 years...

GC: Hey Russell, let's do both. Let's do both. Let's do both.

Hunter never once said how his policy of immediatism plays out in the real world. How, exactly, does it work to insist on the immediate abolition of abortion? Got the votes for that? Here is where Hunter's argument is truly self-sealing. He states that if only all incrementalists would become immediatists, we could take the ax to the root and win. So there you have it. When you can't explain how your strategy actually works in the real world, you just fault your opponents for your failure to execute. This reminds me of faith healers who blame the victim for "not having enough faith" when he doesn't immediately recover from a systemic illness.

Commenting on the debate, Dr. Marc Newman, professor of rhetoric at Regent University and well-known debate coach, writes:

Many people's hearts are still hard, so I am going to 'by all means save some.' There will, one day, be an accounting and God will not judge us incrementally but absolutely. But until that day comes, we do what we can, share the truth in its entirety, and accomplish as much as our present circumstances allow. I do not have the internal luxury of feeling good about the purity of my legislative agenda while thousands of human beings that I could have saved perish, while not saving any of the others either.

Abortion rights advocates love the absolutists because they can portray them as extremists. They fear the incrementalist because they know that once people begin to consider that SOME human lives before birth are worthy of protection, they will have to craft some kind of justification for why that protections should not be extended to others prior to birth. And that, my friends, would be a much tougher sell than the scorched earth story our opponents are telling now.

Regarding Hunter's claim that you must go right to the Gospel when talking to unregenerate people about abortion, this, too, is rooted in fantasy. Dr. Newman writes, "By making a case for the gospel, Hunter neglects the fact that the gate is narrow and few are those who find it. That means that Christianity will always be in the minority. In a democracy, you need to be able to make an argument that appeals even to those who don't share your spiritual underpinnings."

Cunningham demonstrated a superior grasp of social reform history. Puzzling to me was Hunter's claim that Lincoln never acknowledged incrementalism as a solution to slavery. Really? No less than Frederick Douglass had a different take, as Princeton Professor Robert George [points out](#):

Of course, politics is the art of the possible. And, as Frederick Douglass reminded us in his tribute to Lincoln, public opinion and other constraints sometimes limit what can be done at the moment to advance any just cause." Applied to abortion, George continues: "The pro-life movement has in recent years settled on an incrementalist

strategy for protecting nascent human life. So long as incrementalism is not a euphemism for surrender or neglect, it can be entirely honorable.

Planting premises in the law whose logic demands, in the end, full respect for all members of the human family can be a valuable thing to do, even where those premises seem modest. Fully just law would protect all innocent human life. Yet sometimes this is not, or not yet, possible in the concrete political circumstances of the moment.

Hunter's reply was that pro-life incrementalists don't trust the power of the risen Lord and thus don't embrace immediatism. But wait. If Hunter truly believes the power of the risen Lord enables us to end abortion immediately, why wait for us? Doesn't that same power enable small groups as well as large ones? If so, stop blaming the pro-life movement for not joining your immediatist crusade. After all, the gospel proclamation began with just twelve men, accompanied by signs and wonders, proclaiming the power of the risen Jesus in the very city where he was crucified in the face of hostility far worse than Hunter faces today.

And they did it incrementally. As Dr. Newman points out, the salvation of many people took place gradually.

Look at Acts 17, with Paul on Mars Hill. He preaches a sermon during which he, quite interestingly, doesn't cite a single scripture, but does invoke the local religion, philosophers, and poets. At the end, some scoff, some convert, and others say that they want to hear more on this subject. Similarly, God in his foreknowledge and omnipotence, could convert all of the elect in the womb, but he does not. C.S. Lewis came to Christ incrementally: from an atheist, to a mythologist, to a theist, to a Christian — and this road has been traveled by many others. God saves people in much the same way that incrementalists save children.

God makes it clear that it is His desire that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4), and that He takes no delight in the destruction of the wicked (Ez. 33:11). Nevertheless, we all come, one at a time. This one gets saved, then that one. Imagine if the apostles waited until they crafted a strategy that resulted in the salvation of everyone before they actually began evangelizing? The Church would have been strangled in its

cradle. No. The Apostle Paul says that he works separately among the cultures in all ways that don't require him to compromise the core of the faith, becomes all things to all men, that by all means, he might save some — not all, some (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Paul even declares that he will live as one under the law, even though he is not under the law, if by doing so he can save some. If Paul was an incrementalist, count me in.

In short, if Paul and the other apostles didn't immediately end the social ills of their day by applying the power of the risen Christ, what makes Hunter think he can do so today?

Hunter also had no response to Dr. Michael New's research that incremental laws save lives. He appeared not to have read the studies. How can this be, given he insists these legislative victories are hallow and contribute to the deaths of children? That's quite a claim for a guy who is not even familiar with the relevant literature. And if focusing on late-term abortion is bad because it implies that early abortion is not, why does Hunter use Gregg's late-term abortion pics in his own signs and postings?

Another example of Hunter's either/or fallacy was his illustration of the atheist. Hunter asked Cunningham, "Do you think the atheist viewing a pro-life display is more likely to oppose abortion after converting to Christ or before?" Setting aside for the moment that unbelievers can recognize the moral wrong of abortion just like they can the moral wrongs of slavery and discrimination, note it can work the other way as well: The pro-life case draws agnostics towards a Christian worldview.

For example, professor Hadley Arkes, once a secular Jew (agnostic), eventually embraced Christian theism precisely because the soundness of the pro-life argument forced him to reconsider his ultimate philosophical foundations. Speaking of his own journey toward theism Arkes writes:

It came through my involvement over many years in the pro-life movement. I've been moving in this direction for a long while, perhaps more than 20 years. The process is often the reverse of what is told in the media. The media suggest that we're pro-life because we're religious, when in fact, many of us are won over by the

force of the moral argument and the evidence of embryology. Then we're drawn to the Church that defends that argument.

This fits with my own experience. When non-Christians encounter a Christian theist who graciously and persuasively makes a case for life, they sometimes take a deeper look. They reason that if Christianity has something intelligent to say on a key moral issue of our day, perhaps its other claims deserve a second look.

A skilled apologist knows how to make the best of the opportunity. For example, once a non-believer agrees that moral truths exist, it's natural to gently ask, "Have you committed moral crimes? If so, should you be punished for them?" Now we are at the threshold of the gospel. In short, it's not a one-way street. Sometimes the gospel opens eyes on abortion. Sometimes abortion pics awaken our need for the gospel. Both bring God glory because truth is proclaimed.

Ultimately, Hunter's ax to the root analogy is God-limiting. He wrongly takes one of the ways that God restrains evil in the world—changing hearts through the gospel—and asserts that it is the only way that God restrains evil, thus ignoring the role of cultural engagement that results in good civil government. Truth is, God gave both the church and the government a role to play. Civil law may not change hearts, but it restrains heartless men who are hardened to the gospel. As [Wayne Grudem](#) points out,

One significant way that God restrains evil in the world is through changing people's hearts when they trust in Christ as their Savior (see 2 Cor. 5:17). But we should not turn this one way into the only way that God restrains evil in this age. God also uses civil government to restrain evil, and there is much evil that can only be restrained by the power of civil government, for there will always be many who do not trust in Christ as their Savior and many who do not fully obey him.

Exactly. As Gregg pointed out again and again, pro-life Christians don't have to choose between preaching the gospel and reforming culture. They can do both.

Later in the exchange, Hunter quoted verses from the major prophets without any attempt to provide exegetical support for applying them to pro-life advocates today. Cunningham,

however, did provide exegetical support when he refuted Hunter's claim that incrementalism isn't found in the Bible. Gregg provided three specific examples of God working incrementally with people who weren't ready for tough truths. Again, for a guy who believes he knows the Gospel and Scripture better than compromising incrementalists, Hunter demonstrated a surprising lack of biblical knowledge. Gregg really schooled him on that point.

At the end of the day, Hunter picked a fight with a pit bull and got chewed up in his own yard. This was a public-relations disaster for AHA and served to solidify its brand as being more about attacking pro-lifers than stopping abortion. If Hunter wants to fix that, he better stop grinding his ax against pro-lifers—immediately.

Chapter 2: Let babies die today, we can save the rest later

Jill Stanek

The most disturbing aspect of the “immediatist” anti-abortion movement is that which is hardest to get its followers to acknowledge.

That is, by opposing incremental legislation they are condemning babies to die, some in excruciating ways, who would otherwise be saved.



For instance, Abolish Human Abortion [opposes legislation](#) that would save babies slated for abortion who are 20 weeks and older because, AHA says, it excludes younger babies.

Never mind there's no chance of such an all-encompassing dream law making it past Round 1 in the courts.

In other words, even though we can't save all babies NOW, we will oppose a law that could save 20-week-old babies NOW, because the latter would be morally wrong?

This is just one example of their upside down and deadly thinking.



So, as the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform's Gregg Cunningham pointed out in the debate against AHA's T. Russell Hunter on April 25 ([1:08:03](#) on the time stamp, also in [this video clip](#)):

The inescapable conclusion of T. Russell Hunter's argument is that until we can save that baby [pointing to a 6-day-old embryo, see screen shot above right] - until we can outlaw the abortion of that baby - we should be utterly indifferent to the slaughter of that baby, and that baby [pointing to an 8-wk-old aborted baby, then a 10-wk-old aborted baby], and older babies....

"Utterly indifferent" is exactly right. We witnessed this indifference during the debate, wherein Hunter acknowledged incremental legislation "might be able to help somebody" and "may save some babies," BUT is nevertheless wrong, he claimed, because "you leave this wicked tree (of abortion) growing."

So saving some babies is wrong because the wrong we saved them from still exists?

Hunter further contradicted his position by first acknowledging, "Every child who is aborted? Image bearer, neighbor." EVERY CHILD. Every child aborted is Hunter's neighbor, but not really....

There is absolutely no historical foundation for Hunter's absolutist philosophy. As Cunningham stated in so many words during the debate and followed up in an email:

In the entire history of social reform, no activists have ever outlawed a major injustice "immediately." Reform has only ever been achieved step-by-step. AHA activists are willing to allow savable babies to perish in reliance on an absurd strategy that amounts to saving no babies until we have the votes to outlaw birth control pills....

Getting immediatists to focus on the very babies they are condemning to death by their all-or-nothing strategy is understandably difficult. They'd prefer these babies remain in the abstract, inexplicably dismissing them while simultaneously claiming moral superiority on the abortion issue.

Cunningham tried three times during the debate to get Hunter to focus on the babies he is casting aside on his quest. The most telling exchange can be seen beginning at [1:33:30](#) on the full debate video, where Hunter repeatedly dodged the question but ultimately referred to legislation that saves babies as “empty, illusory victories,” i.e., babies saved by incremental legislation are “empty, illusory victories,” then went completely into left field by likening such laws to killing abortionists, and finally mocked incrementalists who celebrate saved lives.

In my opinion, these were the most condemning moments in the debate.

Here is a transcript of that exchange:

GC: I’d like to return to the question with which I began, which Russ hasn’t answered. Should we allow these babies to die rather than enact incremental legislation?

TR: No.

GC: I’m sorry?

TR: Like, should we allow - should we allow babies to die?

GC: Should we allow these - because...

TR: The charade is - the charade is not even what we’re talking about - the incrementalism/immediatism debate. Focusing the ax at the tree, getting all the people who follow incrementalism to become immediatists and help put that ax to the branch - to the root...

GC: Would you answer this question?

TR: [unintelligible]

Moderator: That was the last question. Russ, go ahead and answer that, and then we're gonna end this.

GC: Just for the record, Russ didn't answer the question: Should we have allowed these babies to die, which this university professor says would have died had that legislation not been enacted. Should we have allowed them to die rather than enact the incremental legislation?

Moderator: Ok, Russ, answer that question, then we'll change.

TR: Um, well, I firmly believe that abortion is evil, and it is one of these things that the powers and principalities of darkness and high places are very in to. It's the crown jewel of darkness, and I actually believe that if they can keep abortion going by deceiving people into becoming gradualists, they will do it. And if to deceive them they have to give them empty, illusory victories, and law professors may claim that babies were saved, they'll do it. But I - if someone goes to an abortion mill and shoots a doctor, a baby might be saved that day, but that's not going towards abolishing abortion. It's not establishing justice that day [unintelligible] a baby that day.

GC: May I ask for clarification for your answer? You're saying this guy's making this up?

TR: Uh, no, I have to read it. But I'm just saying that convincing people to be gradualists by saying, "Hey look, we saved some," while they're still being - I'm pretty sure that you can convince people to be gradualists for the next 40 years...

GC: Hey Russell, let's do both. Let's do both. Let's do both.

Chapter 3: AHA's Human Shields

Steve Hays

Pro-lifers are analogous to just combatants who are confronted with a human shields.

Now, there's definitely evil to be seen in that situation. It is not, however, those who attack military installations nestled in civilian population centers that commit evil; rather, the enemy did evil by maliciously narrowing the options to two terrible alternatives: either surrender to the enemy by refusing to defend yourself against jihadist attacks or else defend yourself at the cost of killing noncombatants.

It's not as if Americans were trying to kill Japanese civilians. Rather, the Japanese authorities went out of their way to make that unavoidable. Same thing with Hamas in relation to Israel.

Likewise, it is evil when the power elite imposes a choice between saving some babies and saving all babies. However, pro-lifers aren't guilty of evil. Rather, it is evil to confront them with those alternatives - just as it is evil to taunt soldiers with human shields. But within those parameters, it would be evil to save no babies if you could save some. Pacifists and abolitionists suffer from a failure to appreciate that omission can be a source of moral compromise no less than commission. Inaction doesn't avoid the "problem of dirty hands."

In that situation, pro-lifers are basically operating from the double effect principle (or some refinement thereof). That's not a "wicked compromise." It is wicked to be put in that situation. But given that situation, it is not wicked to save those you can.

Indeed, we can mount an a fortiori argument: If, in a human shield situation, it is morally licit to sacrifice some innocent lives to save other innocent lives (when you can't save them all), even though the requires the just combatant to directly kill some innocents, then it is morally licit to sacrifice some innocent lives to save other innocent lives when the pro-lifer

isn't killing anyone, but preventing some from being killed. If the greater is permissible, then lesser is permissible (a maiore ad minus).

AHA's studied duplicity

Code violations are like getting Al Capone on tax evasion. It's an indirect way of achieving a goal. Sometimes the direct approach is preferable because it's politically feasible. You have to be ingenious.

If that saves the lives of babies, why does AHA oppose it? Because they think it "sends the wrong message"?

So what's the priority? Should more babies die so that we can send the right message?

If it's a choice between reducing abortion and making a statement, which takes precedence? And what's the value of "the message" if it comes at the cost of innocent lives?

At least to judge by some of their representatives, AHA seems to have an all-or-nothing policy. Oppose laws that save if such laws (allegedly) send the wrong message. Better to let more babies die unless and until we can pass laws that send the right message.

The result is a prohibitive policy in theory, but a permissive policy in practice. We are so uncompromising in theory that we will support a very permissive policy in practice - by opposing restrictive legislation - unless and until, at some indeterminate date in the future, we can achieve a total ban on abortion. All-or-nothing: therefore nothing.

With respect to AHA, nothing is easier than to take an "uncompromising" stand when it has no chance of happening. In that respect, AHA is like Republicans who are rhetorically pro-life, rhetorically uncompromising. There's no price to pay. No real-world consequences. It's just self-congratulatory talk.

Pro-life legislators aren't *creating* discrimination, but *curtailing* discrimination. Absent legal restrictions on abortion, the law discriminates against an entire class of humans by making all unborn babies liable to murder.

The proper job of a lawmaker is to pass good laws and block bad laws. It is not the job of a lawmaker to spend his career doing nothing of consequence. He doesn't need to be a lawmaker to do nothing of consequence. The duty of a lawmaker is to make a difference. Make things better. Not just have a nice office on Capitol Hill. Have a Congressional staff for the sake of having staffers. Make speeches for the sake of speechifying.

Notice the studied duplicity of AHA rhetoric. On the one hand they set the bar very high. On the other hand, they slide under the bar. The measure of progress isn't consciousness-raising, but the abolition of abortion. By their own oft-repeated sloganeering, that's the only "fruit" that counts. The total abolition of abortion. AHA confuses leaves with fruit. Thus far, AHA is a leafy, but fruitless tree. Lots of leaves, no fruit.

Claiming to "seed" the culture is hooey unless and until the seed blossoms into the total abolition of abortion. That's how AHA defines success - in contrast to the half-measures of the pro-life movement. I'm simply holding AHA to their own metric.

AHA plays this bait-n-switch, where they stake out a "uncompromising" rhetorical stand, but then substitute movement "growth" or "seeding" the culture for concrete results. Don't be taken in by their shell-game.

Chapter 4: When Perfection Kills

Scott Klusendorf

Ahmad is a parliamentarian in a rogue Middle East nation where women 17 and under are the property of their fathers. Each year, thousands of young girls are sold into sex-slavery by age 7. Typically, a girl's father signs a lucrative 10-year contract with an adult male who in turn possessed the girl as his slave until she turned 18. At that time, he returns the girl to her family and pays for a special surgical procedure that restores the appearance of physical virginity, allowing her father to re-sell her to another man in marriage.

Ahmad is deeply grieved by this barbaric state of affairs and is committed to protecting all girls from sex-slavery, but he does not have the votes to do it. Nevertheless, he fights on. Last year, he convinced a slim majority of MPs to ban 10-year slave contracts. While sex-slavery remained legal, it was tougher to sell young girls and the practice dipped 10 percent.

This year, Ahmad has just enough votes to do more. He knows the new Prime Minister will support a bill protecting nationals from sex-slavery, thus saving 97 percent of girls from the barbaric practice. Given the current reality is that no girls—nationals or non-nationals—are protected, Ahmad is delighted at the government's compromise. But there is no time to lose. On Saturday, 20,000 young girls were up for auction. If the bill passed before then, 19,400 of them would walk away forever free.

Only they didn't. On the eve of the vote, two fellow MPs who shared Ahmad's anti-slavery convictions pulled their support for the bill on grounds that it allows exceptions and did not immediately end all sex-slavery for both nationals and non-nationals. They said they could not, in good faith, decide which girls are enslaved and which are not. Unlike Ahmad, they were not going to compromise their principles by regulating slavery.

Ahmad patiently explained that he was not deciding which girls could be enslaved and which could not. Previous regimes did that when they declared that no girls—nationals or non-nationals—had protections from slave trade. He was simply limiting the evil insofar as possible given current political realities. He asked his critics point blank whether freedom for the non-nationals was closer with 97 percent of the practice forbidden or when it was allowed 100 percent. He reminded them that the current legal environment did not require anyone to exercise a right to own girls as slaves—so, by voting for the proposed bill, they would not be making the current situation worse. They would be making it better. As for compromising, the government was the one doing that by moving from the total permissibility of sex-slavery to almost no sex-slavery. Thus, if together they remained committed to protecting all children—something they might very well achieve if they keep at it—why not save the 97 percent right now, before the auction?

Saturday morning, 20,000 young girls had new homes...and new masters.

If you think that appalling scenario can't happen here, guess again.

Last month, I witnessed a [jaw-dropping exchange](#) between former Pennsylvania State Representative Gregg Cunningham and T. Russell Hunter of Abolish Human Abortion (AHA). Hunter and AHA attack pro-lifers for allegedly “regulating” abortion rather than calling for its immediate abolition. They insist that pro-life advocates who support incremental legislation that limits the evil of abortion, but doesn't ban it outright, are not only mistaken; they are immoral. And it's their fault abortion continues.

Against that backdrop, Cunningham—who authored incremental bills in the Pennsylvania Statehouse—accepted Hunter's challenge to debate in Tulsa. Cunningham won the debate handily by pointing out a fundamental flaw in Hunter's argument—namely, the mistaken claim that pro-lifers have the power to end abortion immediately but won't. Indeed, pro-life legislators who advance incremental bills are not deciding which children live and which die; the Supreme Court did that when it declared that no unborn humans have a right to life. In short, pro-lifers don't have to choose between incremental legislation that saves some children right now and total abolition that saves all at a later time. Rather, they can advance both strategies simultaneously and save many lives in the process. Historically, that's what social reformers do.

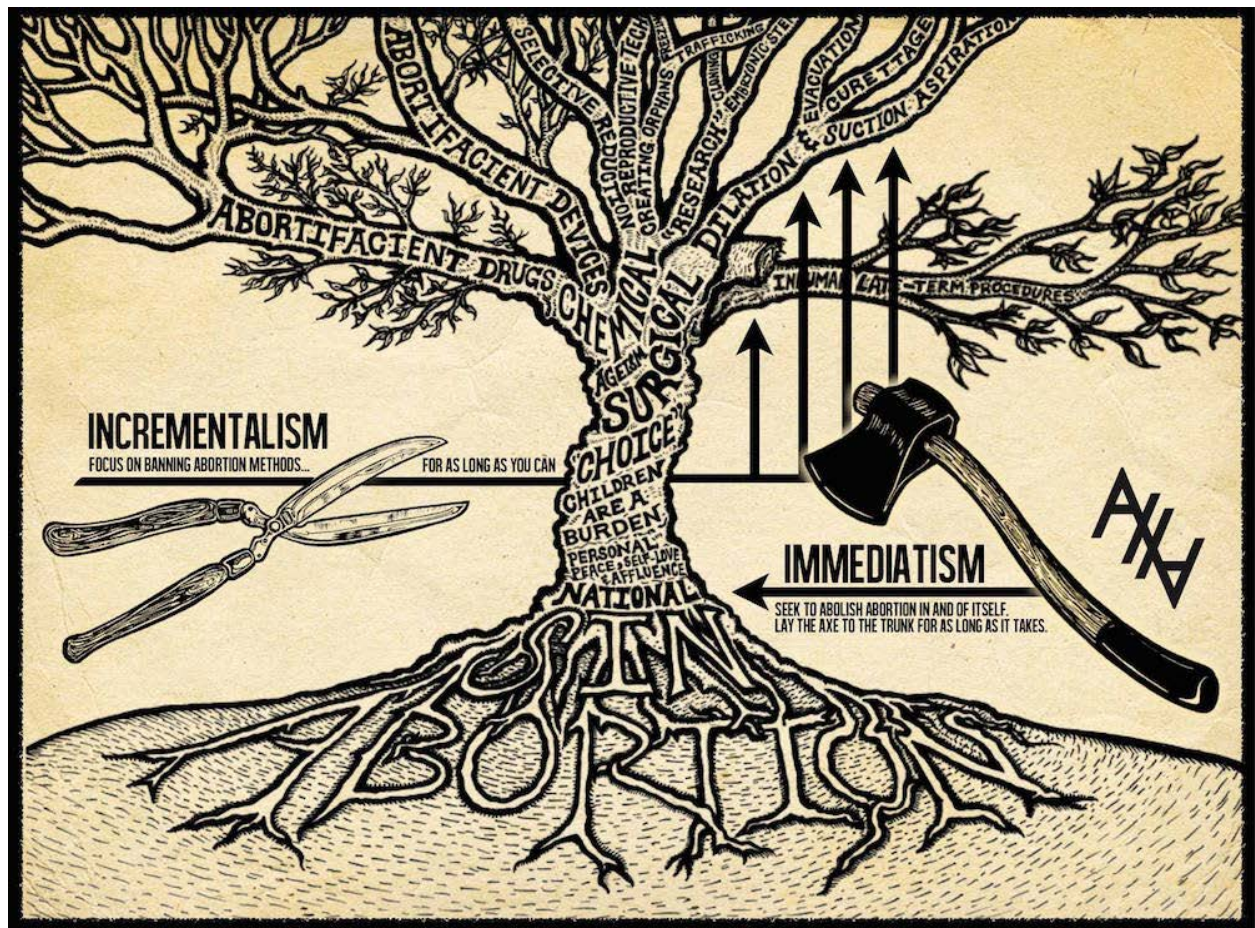
During cross-examination, Hunter stumbled badly when asked if those babies saved through incremental legislation should have been left to die. This was the defining moment of the debate. Holding up research from Dr. Michael New of the University of Michigan, Cunningham argued that incremental laws are indeed saving lives everywhere they are passed. He then pressed Hunter to answer the question: “What about these babies? Should we allow them to die instead of passing incremental legislation that would save them?” When Hunter refused to give a direct answer—despite being repeatedly asked to do so—the debate was effectively over.

Last week, the U.S. House passed a fetal pain bill that restricts abortions after 20 weeks. The bill is not perfect. Predictably, Abolish Human Abortion and other absolutists joined Planned Parenthood condemning the bill. But the history of social reform is not on their side. No less an abolitionist than Frederick Douglass reminded us in his tribute to Lincoln that cultural and political realities sometimes limit our efforts to advance a just cause to its rightful end. But all is not lost. Incremental steps—whether Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation or 20-week abortion bans—educate the public and put important premises into law needed to eventually protect all human beings.

Cunningham closed the debate with these chilling words: “We will give an account to God for babies we could have saved but didn’t.” Until that day, Hunter and those like him can pat themselves on the back for opposing imperfect legislation. But their moral smugness is cold comfort to dead children.

Chapter 5: There's only one way to cut down a tree?

Jill Stanek



While arguing in defense of abortion immediatism during his [debate](#) against Center for Bio-Ethical Reform's Gregg Cunningham, Abolish Human Abortion's T. Russell Hunter used a tree analogy.

Hunter claimed cutting off “branches” of abortion through incremental laws is more than a waste of time, it's counterproductive, because new branches take their place. The only

way to end abortion, said Hunter, is to ignore the branches and focus on chopping down the tree.

Hunter's tree-cutting analogy is erroneous for several reasons, foremost because removing branches first is exactly how it's done. I happen to know this because we had to have three big trees cut down in our yard last year (thanks, ash borers), and I [happened to take video](#). Little did I know how handy it would come in.

At risk of taking Hunter's tree analogy too far, I daresay all trees in populated areas, such as where abortion exists, are cut down branches first.

In fact, as Cunningham pointed out, "In the entire history of social reform, no activists have ever outlawed a major injustice 'immediately.'" It has always been branches first.

Well, now that I've started down this path, I'll add it seems indicative to me of Hunter's antiquated, undeveloped logic that he would use shears and an ax in his illustration to cut off branches and take down a tree. In both cases only a saw will do, unless one wants to take forever, or one is too small to handle a saw, or one hasn't properly assessed the tree.

Ok, one other point, Hunter is apparently unaware that suckers can grow from trunks (see photo right), so it's not as if cutting a tree down is necessarily the end of things.

That's the last of my immediatism tree analogies. On with Hunter's.



In [this video excerpt](#) from the debate, Hunter makes several gaffes in relation to incrementalism.

I know Hunter is a smart guy. I know he knows he grossly misrepresents the pro-life movement, such as at 7:47 in the above video:

And you say [to pro-life leaders], “Well, why don’t you say abortion is murder and sin and seek its abolition?” Well, because they can’t. Because it’s legal. And the courts have said. So now instead of that wily snake saying that we gotta keep legal abortion safe, legal, and rare, we’ve got pro-lifers saying, “As long as abortion is legal, it should be safe, early, and painless.”

Hunter knows it is ludicrous to claim pro-lifers keep secret the fact that “abortion is murder and sin” and don’t “seek its abolition.” He knows perfectly well we do both. It is slander of the worst kind for Hunter to claim the end game for pro-lifers is that abortion be “safe, early, and painless.” He knows perfectly well why we pursue incremental efforts.

(All this while Hunter pursues his own self-approved brand of incrementalism - [geographical incrementalism](#).)



Chapter 6: Social justice history vs. T. R. Hunter

Jill Stanek

In a comment to my tree post, an antagonized Hunter called my writings about the debate a “freaked out obsession,” to which I responded:

My “freaked out obsession” is what I knew you knew but what you admitted [3x in the debate](#): that incrementalist pro-life advances save children’s lives. Yet you blow those children off. This is utterly unfathomable, loathsome, and ghastly to me. My “freaked out obsession” is for those children. They’re abstract collateral nothings to you. They’re not abstract to me.

Obsession^{n.}
An image, thought, or influence which
continually fills or
troubles the mind;
a *compulsive interest*
or preoccupation,
seemingly beyond one’s will to control.

The debate exposed Hunter’s admitted betrayal of preborn children being slaughtered by abortion *today*. This while Hunter has the chutzpah to claim moral superiority over those trying to save them and *then* inexplicably press to block their efforts.



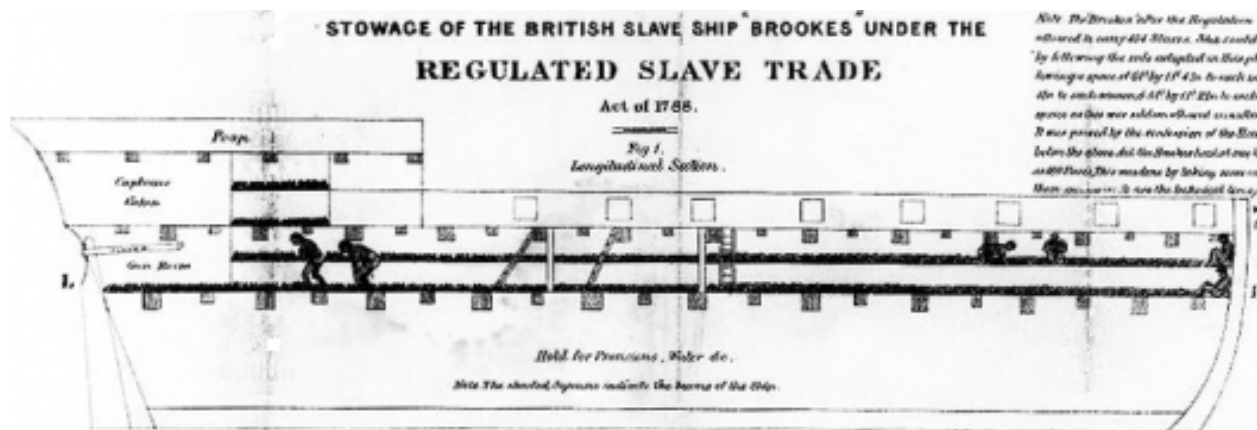
Sound crazy? There’s more. Also exposed during the debate were the half-baked theories and accusations by which Russell makes his contradictory claims. It is these I’m dissecting in these posts for those with ears to hear.

Hunter’s most glaring error, and the collapsing foundation of his immediatist house of cards, was his revisionist

history of social justice movements, absurdly claiming such leaders as William Wilberforce, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King, Jr., were immediatists.

Hunter's flaw was in quoting their *writings*, which indeed expressed an absolutist moral view against slavery and segregation, but ignoring their *work*, which demonstrated an incremental approach.

I've pulled excerpts on the topic of social justice history from the debate into a video, below. In it Cunningham corrects Hunter on his fraudulent portrayal of social justice history.



Most telling is from 10:02 on, during Q&A, when Hunter first agrees with Cunningham that Wilberforce was not behaving immorally when supporting incrementalist legislation to redesign slave ships, an obvious attempt to slow down the slave trade.

So, Cunningham queries, why is it immoral for incrementalists to apply the same logic, such as with abortion clinic regulations? In [this video clip](#), watch Hunter squirm and go on to contradict himself by saying Wilberforce was wrong to engage in incrementalism.

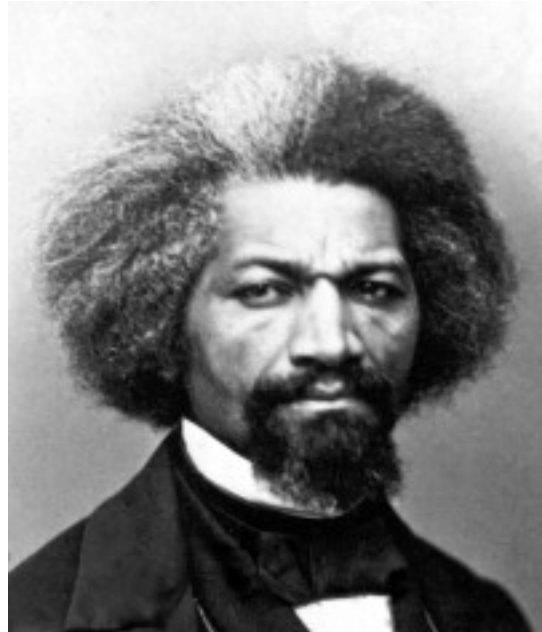
There are innumerable examples throughout history of good people saving the lives of victims of oppression how they could, when they could - from Christians who rescued babies from infanticide during the days of the Roman Empire; to the Underground Railroad; to officers on the Titanic choosing women and children first to board the short supply of

lifeboats; to daring efforts by such heroes as Schindler, Sendler and ten Boom to save Jews from the Nazis.

Noted Scott Klusendorf of Life Training Institute in his [debate analysis](#):

Puzzling to me was Hunter's claim that Lincoln never acknowledged incrementalism as a solution to slavery. Really? No less than Frederick Douglass had a different take, as Princeton Professor Robert George points out:

"Of course, politics is the art of the possible. And, as Frederick Douglass reminded us in his tribute to Lincoln, public opinion and other constraints sometimes limit what can be done at the moment to advance any just cause."



Applied to abortion, George continues:

"The pro-life movement has in recent years settled on an incrementalist strategy for protecting nascent human life. So long as incrementalism is not a euphemism for surrender or neglect, it can be entirely honorable. Planting premises in the law whose logic demands, in the end, full respect for all members of the human family can be a valuable thing to do, even where those premises seem modest. Fully just law would protect all innocent human life. Yet sometimes this is not, or not yet, possible in the concrete



political circumstances of the moment.”

Hunter’s reply was that pro-life incrementalists don’t trust the power of the risen Lord and thus don’t embrace immediatism. But wait. If Hunter truly believes the power of the risen Lord enables us to end abortion immediately, why wait for us?

Good question, which I’ll focus on in my next obsessed chapter, “Straw men and the Bible.”

The biggest question is why is Hunter dogmatically standing on such a disproven and deadly falsification of social justice history?

I think Jonathon Van Maren of the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform captured it in his comment on the debate:

In my analysis, Hunter is simply someone who started reading some abolitionist literature, and then began announcing that he’d rediscovered something about them and that he’d identified uniform trends across the board and throughout history before doing nearly enough reading or research.

As his historical case has steadily come apart under the weight of historical details he either ignored or just didn’t read, he increasingly cloaks his position in religious language in order to stave off criticism. It’s why his response to historical critique general takes the form of religious accusation or a pivot back to the immediatist argument.

Hunter must know by now - or perhaps he really is that simplistic - that his ideology is his own, not some revival of universal abolitionist views. But he’s gone too far down the road to start being nuanced or well researched now - and he’s convinced a lot of people that he’s some sort of prophet.

Keep the channel on. The train wreck is inevitable.

Chapter 7: Straw men & the Bible

Jill Stanek

Abolish Human Abortion followers love to use the term “straw man” to dismiss pro-life arguments that point out their inconsistencies.

(For example, during their recent “Immediatist vs Incrementalist” debate, AHA’s T. Russell Hunter called it a “very, very silly straw man” when Center for Bio-Ethical Reform’s Gregg Cunningham challenged Hunter for saying he would let a secularist save the life of his 2-year-old but not let a secularist help him save the lives of children marked for abortion [beginning at [1:20:20](#) on the video].)



So today let’s talk about straw men.

Repeatedly throughout the debate, Hunter blamed incrementalists for the fact that abortion has remained legal in the U.S. for 43 years, and this because we don’t have enough faith in God. Excerpted from his closing argument ([1:53:39-1:59:47](#)), italicized/underlined emphases mine for points to make afterward:

The Word of God is clear on at least this point. When there are grave injustices and evils going on in your midst, you ought to, because you love your neighbor, do justice and show mercy.

My big beef - my big problem- with the incrementalism is that people, instead of trusting in the Word of God and coming together as the bride of Christ and bringing the Gospel into conflict with the evil of the age, and doing what we are commanded

to do, instead of being like Jonah to Nineveh, we go and we say, “What do the laws say? What can I get within the current federal ruling?”...

The debate between immediatism and incrementalism, when it's couched in the, “which should we rally around, which should we come together,” if all Christians had to say, I’m going to go all my funding all my energy, my time, my talent, my church, which project should the people of God do? You may call it binary. Should we all pick up the ax and lay it to the trunk of the tree over and over and over, no matter how long it takes.... Should we do that - should that be what we unify around - or should we continue to say that’s good, I like that, but I’m gonna work on cutting down these branches....

My contention is that the people of God are under a false delusion that incrementalism is what they ought to be paying attention to. They ought to be unifying....

I don’t find incrementalism in the Bible. I don’t find incrementalism in the historical record of fighting social justice, except for that it is as a tutor to tell us don’t play around with it....

It’s just a question of like, do you believe in that God?...

If we can get people to believe in Him and trust in Him we can abolish abortion. But if we can’t get people to believe in Him and trust in Him we will not abolish abortion.

The emphasized sections highlight three flaws - straw men, if you will - in Hunter’s logic.

False premise

First, Hunter sets up a false premise, claiming we must choose between immediatism and incrementalism.



But Hunter is the only one “couching” it as an either/or. As Cunningham repeatedly rebutted, Hunter’s assumption is flawed and binary. Incrementalists pursue both strategies. We can walk and chew gum. Hunter apparently can’t.

Let babies stuck in the branches die

Second, Hunter glosses over the babies he is callously willing to sacrifice while focusing on chopping down the abortion tree with his ax, “no matter how long it takes.” [Russell repeatedly refuses to stop and own](#) the span of time between when immediatists began axing and when the tree falls. How exactly do we “show mercy” to our neighbors caught in the branches of abortion while ignoring them to hack at the tree “over and over and over, no matter how long it takes“?

Blame incrementalists when immediatism fails

Third, Hunter says we only need faith to stop abortion, but apparently the faith of he and his band isn’t strong enough. If they fail, it’s our fault. International Coalition of Abolitionist Societies reiterated their convenient escape hatch/scapegoat in a recent Facebook post:



In other words, there's a Goliath II blocking AHA from getting to Goliath I.

Scott Klusendorf of Life Training Institute responded to that logic fail in his analysis of the debate:

Hunter never once said how his policy of immediatism plays out in the real world. How, exactly, does it work to insist on the immediate abolition of abortion? Got the votes for that? Here is where Hunter's argument is truly self-sealing. He states that if only all incrementalists would become immediatists, we could take the ax to the root and win.

So there you have it. When you can't explain how your strategy actually works in the real world, you just fault your opponents for your failure to execute. This reminds me of faith healers who blame the victim for "not having enough faith" when he doesn't immediately recover from a systemic illness....

... Hunter's reply was that pro-life incrementalists don't trust the power of the risen Lord and thus don't embrace immediatism. But wait. If Hunter truly believes the power of the risen Lord enables us to end abortion immediately, why wait for us? Doesn't that same power enable small groups as well as large ones?

If so, stop blaming the pro-life movement for not joining your immediatist crusade. After all, the gospel proclamation began with just twelve men, accompanied by signs and wonders, proclaiming the power of the risen Jesus in the very city where he was crucified in the face of hostility far worse than Hunter faces today.

Hunter also stated, "I don't find incrementalism in the Bible." If so, it's only because he doesn't want to. Cunningham gave but three examples ([2:00:12-2:02:16](#)), as summarized by Klusendorf:

First, Paul (1 Cor. 3) works incrementally to convey hard truths to weak brothers in the faith. He gives them milk instead of solid food. He revealed God's law to them incrementally so they could digest it. Second, Jesus (Mark 10:4) says that God instructed Moses to relax the law on marriage because the people were not ready for

tough divorce codes just then. Gradually, however, Christ toughens those laws. Jesus said this! Third, when Peter asked about paying the temple tax, Jesus compromised and paid lest he offend weaker Jews. Jesus was skillfully picking his fights!

Klusendorf added:

Commenting on the debate, Dr. Marc Newman, professor of rhetoric at Regent University and well-known debate coach, writes:

Look at Acts 17, with Paul on Mars Hill. He preaches a sermon during which he, quite interestingly, doesn't cite a single scripture, but does invoke the local religion, philosophers, and poets. At the end, some scoff, some convert, and others say that they want to hear more on this subject.

Similarly, God in his foreknowledge and omnipotence, could convert all of the elect in the womb, but he does not. C.S. Lewis came to Christ incrementally: from an atheist, to a mythologist, to a theist, to a Christian - and this road has been traveled by many others.

God saves people in much the same way that incrementalists save children. God makes it clear that it is His desire that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4), and that He takes no delight in the destruction of the wicked (Ez. 33:11). Nevertheless, we all come, one at a time. This one gets saved, then that one.

Imagine if the apostles waited until they crafted a strategy that resulted in the salvation of everyone before they actually began evangelizing? The Church would have been strangled in its cradle. No. The Apostle Paul says that he works separately among the cultures in all ways that don't require him to compromise the core of the faith, becomes all things to all men, that by all means, he might save some - not all, some (1 Cor. 9:19-23). Paul even declares that he will live as one under the law, even though he is not under the law, if by doing so he can save some. If Paul was an incrementalist, count me in.

In short, if Paul and the other apostles didn't immediately end the social ills of their day by applying the power of the risen Christ, what makes Hunter think he can do so today?

Actually, as he stated during the debate and elsewhere, Hunter doesn't believe "immediatism" means "immediate," the topic of my next chapter.

Chapter 8: Sacrificing children to the idol of abolitionism

Jill Stanek

On May 5, 2015, Abolish Human Abortion leader Don Cooper wrote on [Facebook](#):

I am an abolitionist. I am calling for the immediate abolition of human abortion. And anyone who opposes the immediate abolition of abortion I consider an enemy of God, an enemy of my neighbor, and enemy of me.

That's a noble thought but certainly not earth-shattering. There's no pro-lifer in the world who "opposes the immediate abolition of abortion."

Yet, do not be confused. When those calling themselves "immediatists" call for the "immediate" abolition of abortion, they don't really mean immediate. When pro-lifers challenge them to stop talking and just do it already, they [mock](#) us for advancing the Straw Man of Overnightism (right).



AHA co-founder T. Russell Hunter hedged his bets during the April 25 ["Immediatist vs Incrementalist" debate](#) against Center for Bio-Ethical Reform's Gregg Cunningham, [stating](#) the [tree of abortion](#) must be hacked with an ax "over and over and over, no matter how long it takes" - a signal for patience.

Except there is one tiny people group for whom patience in this instance is not a virtue - it's deadly.



In a comment to my [Part II post](#), Hunter wrote to “think of the abortion tree as more like Redwood,” the world’s biggest tree.

In a comment to my [Prologue post](#), Hunter reiterated, “As I said in the debate, Immediatism has to do with what we are calling for and focusing on, it does not have to do with what we do on a daily basis or how long it takes for us to achieve abolition.”

In yet another comment Hunter wrote, “Immediatism often produces incremental results....” What in the world?

And so we return to my [“freaked out obsession,”](#) those preborn children caught in that unknown span of time between now and “no matter how long it takes” to abolish abortion.

During the debate Hunter persistently tried to evade Cunningham’s questions about those particular babies, since Hunter and AHA oppose incremental legislation that is proven to save them, even though Hunter [admitted three times](#) (I actually found a fourth, at [1:26:11](#) in the video) he knows such legislation works.

In another comment to my Prologue post Hunter admitted it again, writing: “Sorry Jill, I never say that the numbers saved ‘don’t matter,’ I only say that you guys are being deceived (and deceiving others) into believing that reducing the numbers leads to abolition...”

So, “reducing the numbers” (“numbers” being Hunter’s inhuman term for children) of those slaughtered by abortion doesn’t necessarily equate to abolishing abortion, in Hunter’s opinion, even though for those kids abortion was obviously abolished.

Hunter's opinion is grossly uninformed, I might add, since Hunter admitted during the debate (at [1:35:26](#)) he hadn't read the [foremost statistical study](#) listing specific "numbers" saved by incremental legislation. So how does he know?

It appears the only AHA-sanctioned way to pull children from the branches of abortion during the time between wanting the "immediate abolition of human abortion" and actually abolishing it is protesting at abortion clinics, as Hunter wrote in another comment:

Abolitionists are going into the fields to save as many as we can and change as many minds as we can while we call for the total and immediate abolition of human abortion. We go out to the killing fields to rescue children because we are not just sitting at home and supporting the incremental schemes of politicians and lobbyists who write laws specifying which of the children in the field must be protected now and which in the field must be protected later.



Nice to "call for the total and immediate abolition of human abortion," but what's the plan? How many of the [738](#) remaining abortion clinics in the U.S. (from a [high of 2,176](#), no thanks to AHA) does AHA cover on a daily basis? One? Two? Five?

It would be great if there were fewer to cover, right? No. AHA fights regulations to close those clinics, even though Hunter admitted in the debate (at [1:27:56](#)) he didn't think William Wilberforce was immoral to regulate slave ships for the same reason.

AHA also fights legislation that would keep pregnant mothers from going to abortion mills in the first place, such as informed consent, parental notification, waiting periods, and abortion bans.

It's crazy. But what's crazier is this: Hunter launched his fight against pro-life incrementalism with no immediate and functional plan of his own in place to replace the plan he was seeking to destroy. Hunter posted [this](#) on his Facebook page yesterday, infuriating me even more.



T. Russell Hunter

13 hrs · 🌐

Read this one closely and think it through.

necessarily and unavoidably from our position."⁴³ Accordingly, hostility did not shake the abolitionists' conviction of the righteousness of their course; public acceptance could not be their criterion. (Those abolitionists who carried this line to its conclusion would suggest, rather, that public acceptance would be a sign that their duty was to move on to an unpopular position.) In fact, the more they were attacked, especially by defenders of slavery, the more certain they were that they were attacking slavery at its weakest points.⁴⁴

It also follows, from the abolitionist's conception of his role in society, that the goal for which he agitated was not likely to be immediately realizable. Its realization must follow conversion of an enormous number of people, and the struggle must take place in the face of the hostility that inevitably met the agitator for an unpopular cause. Hence he would be denounced not only as a contemner of the general will but also as

a visionary. The abolitionists knew as well as their later scholarly critics that immediate and unconditional emancipation could not occur for a long time. But unlike those critics they were sure it would never come unless it were agitated for during the long period in which it was impracticable. The

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So Hunter knew when he launched AHA in 2011 immediatism would take "a long time," and there would be "a long period in which it was impracticable." But he had no safety net prepared for the children from whom he would go on to rashly attempt to remove protections. He had no immediate and workable plan in place to save the children he was pulling the rug out from under.

To this day, four years later, AHA has no cohesive, wide-ranging plan to save these kids.

Did Hunter “think it through”? Clearly not.

All one can conclude is Hunter would prefer that these children die rather than be saved in a way in which he disapproves.

And mock those standing in a gap he is too small to stand in, [in this video](#).

It’s all just so funny, isn’t it?

Steve at the [Triablogue blog](#) nailed it yesterday:

It’s risky for AHA to level the charge of “methodological moral relativism,” for that’s apt to boomerang. AHA mortgages the lives of babies here and now in the hopes of saving every baby’s life in the future - except for all the babies they sacrifice in the interim in the furtherance of their long-range goal. What’s that if not ruthlessly “pragmatic” and methodologically “relativistic”?

Chapter 9: Christians & the legislative process

Clinton Wilcox

Late in the debate (timestamps [1:05:10](#) to 1:07:04), Hunter made the following claim: **Christians** are not practicing activism at abortion clinics because they don't trust in the power of **God**, they trust in incremental legislation.

During cross-examination (timestamps [1:41:32](#) to 1:44:56), Hunter made the same accusation, adding pastors and churches, and asked if Cunningham agreed. Cunningham rebutted that while he agreed churches aren't doing enough to combat abortion, it is not the fault of incremental legislation. Incremental legislation is a good thing.



Rather, Cunningham observed:

- Pastors are not being trained properly in pro-life apologetics, and they are not speaking about abortion to their parishioners.
- Pastors can be afraid of losing members, so they don't want to engage in any sort of "offensive" speech from the pulpit.
- Christians, by and large, are not leaving the pews to engage in pro-life activism.

Not to be outdone, Hunter wrote the following as a comment on Jill's post:

As for specific bills and laws, we do believe that cultural change is necessary to their passage and are focused on doing what we can to “get the votes,” as our anti-abolitionist pro-life opponents always tell us “are not there.” But do look for specific practical actionable bills of abolition to start appearing in 2016.

In other words, legislation is actually fine, as long as it’s AHA’s brand of legislation. And somehow Hunter’s brand will not lull Christians into complacency?

The bigger problem, though, as has been pointed out before, is all bills are necessarily incremental, as would be any bill AHA proposes. If, for instance, you pass a personhood amendment in Texas, all you have to do is go to New Mexico, [“...and then you can kill the baby.”](#)

Hunter had an answer for that in another comment on Jill’s blog:

Do I need to explain the difference? Do you see that the statewide abolition bill that bans abortion because it is the murder of human beings is different than a state Not banning abortion and not bringing humans under the protection of law but hexing a certain procedure in which they could be killed?

Of course people would drive to another state to get an abortion but that is because in their state abortion had been abolished as murder.

However, AHA opposes incremental legislation to close abortion clinics [because](#) “Shutting down clinics doesn’t halt abortion; it just makes people who choose to sacrifice their children drive further.”

Overt contradictions aside, Hunter is nevertheless playing semantics. If we must oppose all bills that could end with “...and then you can kill the baby,” we must, of necessity, oppose any personhood amendment that doesn’t abolish abortion in the United States as a whole. But then you run into further problems, because then you could just cross the border to Canada, “...and then you can kill the baby.”

Hunter's brand of "immediatism" should be rejected because one cannot consistently live



as an immediatist as Hunter understands it. All bills we can logically support are incremental in nature; personhood bills are simply the only kind Hunter is happy with.

During the debate Hunter knocked Christian involvement in legislative endeavors as distracting from *real* work to stop abortion.

So, should Christians be involved in the political process?

Absolutely, if we believe in effecting change for the better. In fact, as brilliant theologian Wayne Grudem [pointed out](#), there have been many times in Jewish history when they gave counsel to ungodly rulers, such as when Daniel counseled King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4, and when Joseph advised Pharaoh in Genesis. Please read the linked article for a more in-depth discussion of Christians being involved in the political process.

It's true many Christians can use the political process as an excuse not to engage in activism, but this isn't a problem with the legislative process. This is a problem with education in our churches, and apathy among church-goers.

We should continue to support incremental legislation because that's the only way we'll affect change in our current political atmosphere.

Pro-life people want the immediate end to abortion. Incremental legislation is our strategic method for getting there. Planned Parenthood knows this. Pro-choice writers like Katha Pollitt know this (it plays a major theme in her recent book *Pro: Reclaiming Abortion Rights*). The only people who don't seem to get that are the self-proclaimed "abolitionists."

Chapter 10: So fundraising is wrong?

Clinton Wilcox

On one hand, a favorite punching bag of T. Russell Hunter is pro-life fundraising.

On the other, Hunter's group Abolish Human Abortion is [incorporated, has a for-profit arm through which it sells t-shirts and other wares](#), and [rents office space](#) (see screen shots right).

It was these contradictory positions Hunter had to balance in his April 25 debate against Center for Bio-Ethical Reform's Gregg Cunningham.

Hunter contended ([1:06:10](#) on the video) that one reason Christians aren't actively involved in anti-abortion activism is because they donate money to pro-life organizations to do the work for them. (See also [1:14:24-1:16:26](#).)

Nevertheless, from timestamp [1:39:55-1:41:31](#), Hunter alleged he wasn't opposed to fundraising per se. But not only did this contradict Hunter's earlier statement, it contradicted a multitude of *Facebook* posts in which he and AHA have castigated pro-life

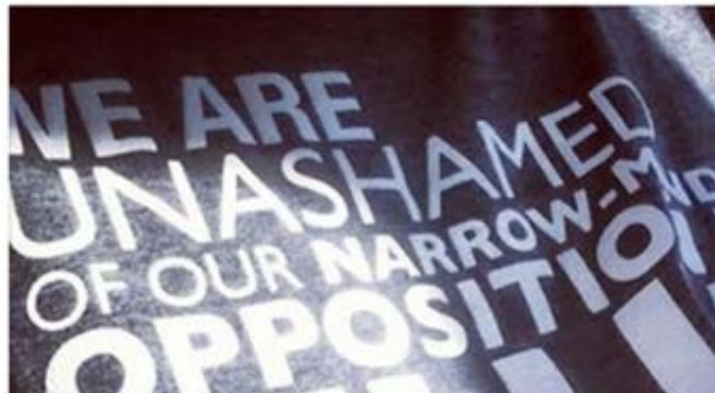


Abolish Human Abortion

April 29 at 4:26pm · 🌐

24 hour shirt sale ends soon. Don't miss it!

www.ahagear.com



organizations for fundraising. All this while two of AHA's leaders, Don Cooper and Todd Bullis, [actively engage in fundraising](#) under the AHA banner.



Abolish Human Abortion added 3 new photos.
May 7 at 7:24pm Edited

[snip]

2. Abolitionists will never send out an email asking for donations to fill our coffers. For instance, we would never send anyone an email saying, "Dear Incrementalist, our funds are down, we need to raise \$56,119 by the end of the day."

Don Cooper, Executive Director ABOLISH HUMAN ABORTION

May 28, 2013

SUBJECT: World Life and Abolish Human Abortion Unite

Hello World Life Supporters,

This month World Life celebrates its one-year birthday. Thank you for your generous support this past year. It has been vital to our efforts and has enabled us to press on in this important ministry, which is more critical today than ever before.

Providentially, this month we also announce our most significant action yet. Allow me to explain.

When Todd Bullis, Jennifer (my wife), and I started World Life, we started a ministry whose priority and mission was to break down the false dichotomy that evangelism and fighting abortion are mutually exclusive. We wanted World Life to be a ministry that not only proved this dichotomy to

[snip]

That has brought us to what I think is the most significant step of the World Life/AHA ministry. I am very excited to announce that we have formally come together under one ministry that we have named Abolish Human Abortion. World Life's name will remain valid during this time of transition, but the new name that we will go by from now on is Abolish Human Abortion.

[snip]

Don Cooper

Executive Director, Abolish Human Abortion

P.S. Checks and online donations to World Life are still valid and continue to support the ministry. World Life monthly donors do not need to do any changes at this time. Please continue your support as we need it!

As it is with their own incremental bills, it seems AHAers agree with fundraising as long as it fits their own agenda and not that of the larger pro-life movement.

The problem is some people can't feasibly stand against abortion because they work, have families that demand their attention, and maintain other responsibilities. They simply don't have the time to be out there "in the trenches," as Hunter would say.

So, giving funds to pro-life advocates who have devoted their life's work to the cause is their way of helping.

Donations help pro-life advocates like myself, the organization I work for ([Life Training Institute](#)), Jill Stanek, Gregg Cunningham/Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, and all the other pro-life advocates keep doing what we do. As Scott Klusendorf reminds us, there are many more people working full-time to kill babies than there are working full-time to save them. And as Cunningham mentioned in his debate, a part-time movement of volunteers is not going to end abortion.

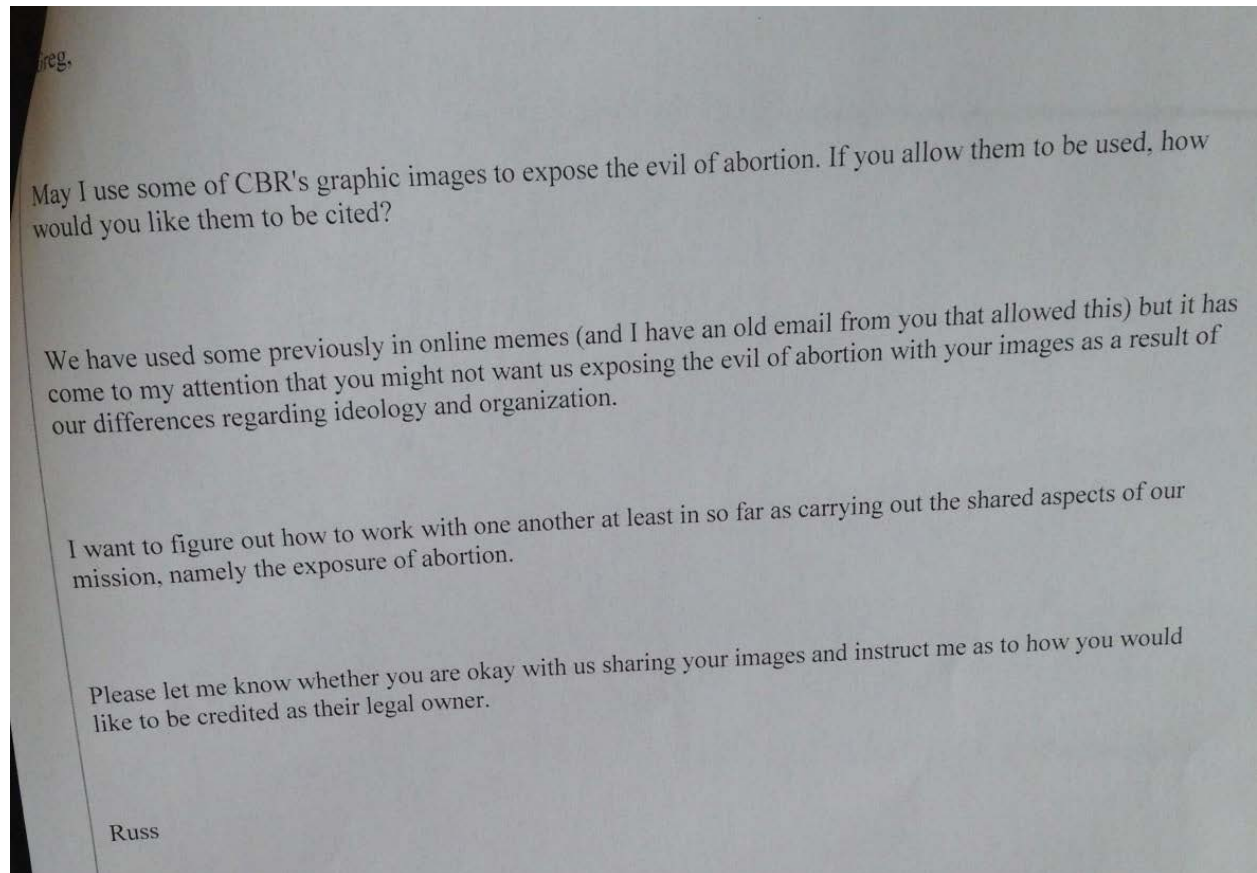
We also don't receive billions of dollars in taxpayer funding, as organizations like Planned Parenthood do.

Pro-life organizations subsist on generous donations so we can sustain pregnancy care centers, make a difference in the political realm, maintain full-time presence at abortion clinics, educate pro-lifers on how to effectively share their views so as to convert our culture, and conduct a multitude of other pro-life work.

Hunter, while decrying the fact that pro-life organizations fundraise, hypocritically uses the fruits of those organizations' labor.

For example, AHA uses images of abortion victims that Cunningham's group has spent millions of dollars to acquire over the years. CBR was the first pro-life organization to compile an archive of broadcast quality video and still photographs.

At [1:15:45](#) in the video, Cunningham astutely observed that while Hunter may not fundraise, he allows CBR to do the fundraising for him, because Hunter benefits from CBR's work. And Hunter knows it, as shown in this email from Hunter to Cunningham.



An example of AHA's ineffective strategy was the debate itself. Despite having months to prepare, AHA produced [a substandard video](#) using substandard cameras and audio equipment. Had AHA fundraised - with the foresight to effectively reach the public - the group could have afforded professional equipment to make a high quality recording so arguments by both participants could easily be understood for posterity. (Fortunately, Cunningham has done just that and [also recorded the debate with much greater clarity.](#))

As previously mentioned, Don Cooper (pictured below left), who holds himself out as AHA's Executive Director, also fundraises. Cooper's organization, named Abolitionists Northwest, made [\\$101,159 in 2013](#) - \$96,645 of which came from "[c]ontributions, gifts, grants, and similar."



I don't fault Cooper for this. As St. Paul reminds us in [1 Timothy 5:18](#), "For Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'" Activists are an essential component to ending abortion in the United States, and fundraising is an essential component to enabling us to work full-time to stop abortion. Pro-life people, like everyone else, have bills to pay and families to support. If we had to work full-time in another arena, we wouldn't be able to devote ourselves single-mindedly to work to end abortion.

My point is that AHA is hypocritical on the issue of fundraising.

In the debate, Hunter not only failed to present any sort of plan for ending abortion under his immediatist regime, he failed to present any sort of plan as to how we can end the fight for the rights of the unborn without fundraising and all just working part-time to speak out against it, a proposition which, as I stated, is disingenuous on Hunter's part to begin with. This is simply an untenable view, and one Hunter fraudulently claims AHA adheres to.

Chapter 11: Four observations from the debate

Jonathon Van Maren

On Saturday night, I had the pleasure of watching Gregg Cunningham of the Center for Bio-Ethical Reform face off with T. Russell Hunter of Abolish Human Abortion on a question that is as old as the pro-life movement: [Pro-Life Incrementalism versus Immediate Abolitionism](#).

The exchange was fiery and extraordinarily lopsided. Since Hunter had months to prepare, I was genuinely surprised at the out-and-out mauling that he received. I knew Gregg Cunningham was a talented debater. Although I was well aware of Abolish Human Abortion's selective historical cherry picking and theologically immature underpinnings, I thought Hunter would put up a better fight.

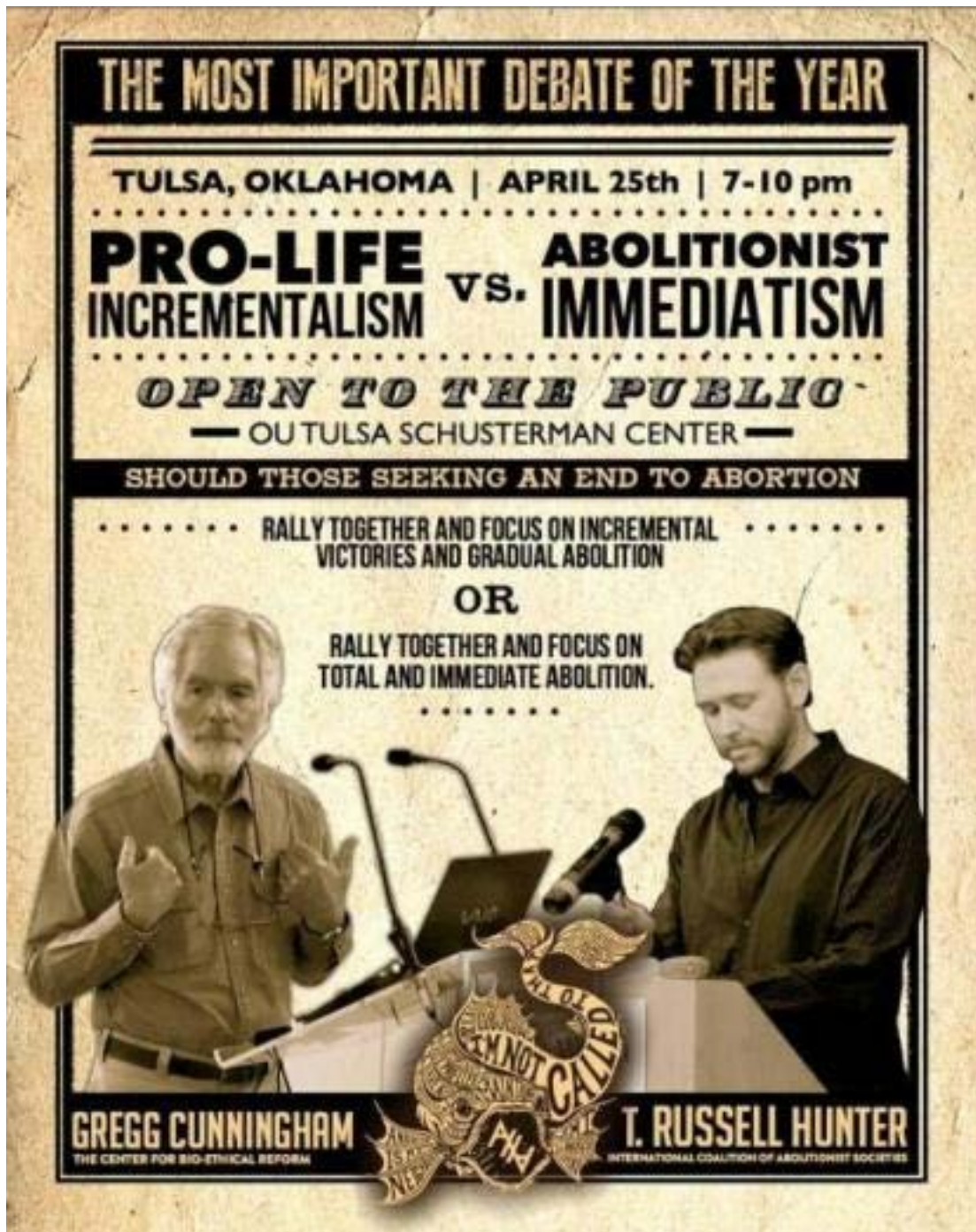
I didn't plan on writing a debate summary at first, but the sheer vitriol being directed at Gregg Cunningham on social media as well as the misrepresentation of his remarks made me change my mind.

A few observations:

1. As I noted in articles previously [here](#) and [here](#), Hunter is an extremely deficient historian who fundamentally misunderstands a number of things. First of all, he quotes the absolutist denunciations of many abolitionists and then pretends that their rhetoric and their oratory were a reflection of their strategy.

This, of course, is nonsense. One's profoundly and sincerely held views are not the same as the strategies one takes to have those views implemented on a social level, especially in a post-Christian society as we have today. In this sense, the pro-life movement reflects the abolitionists (especially the British abolitionists) almost exactly—openly and unequivocally

condemning, in countless books, speeches, presentations, and columns, the heinous crime of abortion, while taking every step available to restrict and abolish that practice.



An honest analysis of history shows us that there are no social reform movements that have ever managed to do away with an injustice in one fell swoop. Hunter’s so-called “strategy,”

to play it fast and loose with the word, has no basis in historical fact and is, for the most part, based on his misunderstanding and in many places misrepresentation of the historical record. For example, during the debate he noted that Lincoln (a politician that those in AHA would not have been able to vote for, based on their pronouncements of the last election cycle) credited the Garrisonian abolitionists with contributing to the end of slavery. Certainly. But the rest of Lincoln's statement is quite indicative—it was the abolitionists, *and the army*.

Any historian with a modicum of honesty would not be claiming that it was the abolitionists who abolished slavery when in reality, years of political maneuvering culminated in a bloody Civil War that cost the lives of more than 600,000 people—this war, incidentally, provided the context for Lincoln to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln's clever incremental strategies following that, detailed so well in the fantastic book *Team of Rivals*, made use of this tragedy to ensure that the scourge of slavery was entirely abolished. Lincoln had a deep theological understanding of what was going on, as well—a cursory reading of his brilliant Second Inaugural Address illustrates that beautifully.

2. Hunter is under the misconception that the ideology of abolitionism as it pertains to the pro-life movement is new—in short, his ideas. As Lincoln once noted, “History serves to remind us that our new ideas are not new, and are not ours.” The debate over immediatism versus incrementalism is as old as the pro-life movement. Additionally, when Hunter claims that the pro-life movement is made up of swarms of unfaithful Christians, I wonder if he realizes that many of them are veterans of the Rescues? I wonder if he is even aware of that time when pro-lifers responded to the statement, “If abortion is murder, act like it,” and put their careers, their possessions, and their livelihoods on the line to place themselves physically between the babies and the killers?

More than 70,000 arrests resulted before the FACE Act passed and pro-lifers were forced to “count the cost.” I’ve had the privilege of spending many long evenings with veteran pro-lifers as they told of the jobs they lost, the imprisonment they bore, and the hardships they faced because they were willing to stand for children created in the image of God. For Hunter to say that the pro-life movement has simply produced forty years of unfaithfulness, apostasy, and failure is both indicative of his almost palpable arrogance (watch the debate

and hear him explain that if people read books like he did, they'd be on his side) and again, the fact that his claims to being a historian are farcical.

To Hunter, it seems the complexity of our movement's history is an enemy to be ignored, but full of facts to be cherry-picked and forced into the immature, binary worldview that he has imparted to large numbers of frustrated activists eager to think his intellectually feeble repackaging of age-old strategies is the magic bullet that will release them from the hard, day-to-day slog that is the culture war. It brings to mind a writer who noted, "An immature man wants to die for a noble cause. A mature man realizes he must live humbly for one."

3. The reaction of the "abolitionists" to the debate is all anyone needs to illustrate their inability to actually reasonably assess the arguments on the table. Hunter took to Facebook immediately to first half-apologize for his performance, but then quickly become snarky and sarcastic again as his supporters assured him that he was, of course, the visionary they all knew him to be. Hunter was soon posting things like this: "Because it is quite difficult to explain the difference between immediatism and incrementalism while someone is constantly calling you a pharisee, accusing you of hating babies and repeatedly telling you that they regulate abortion better than you do, I have decided to finish this powerpoint presentation and put it up in its entirety for people to evaluate and assess."

Unbelievable, considering Hunter had a twenty-minute uninterrupted opening statement in which to make his case, in which he failed miserably and managed to lay out no coherent or succinct view of immediatism as he sees it. The most mind-boggling post surely goes to the "International Coalition of Abolitionist Societies," who actually posted a fake apology for Gregg Cunningham being "a jerk" and for his so-called "ad hominem attacks." I don't think I've ever seen such a stunning display of immaturity and sour grapes, with the exception of the out-and-out character assassination that the "abolitionists" across social media, in a series of adolescent temper tantrums, have launched against Cunningham, all the while accusing any and all respondents of "slander."

I haven't seen any "abolitionists" come out to defend Gregg yet, but then again, they only ever reproach (and humiliate) people in public if those people have attempted to leave their clique (and then, they might actually release private-phone recordings among

supposed friends onto the Internet.) Hunter and his followers have one of the few examples I've ever seen of both a martyr complex and a superiority complex simultaneously—they relentlessly attack and malign pro-lifers on social media, and then complain of persecution when anyone responds, promptly citing it as evidence that they, like the original abolitionists, are clearly also the maligned prophets.

4. Finally, the binary worldview of AHA that Cunningham highlighted again and again was also visible in the way Hunter delineated “secular arguments” from religious ones. I wrote [a whole column on the error of this binary approach to the abortion debate](#) some time ago, but here's the most relevant passage:

There is another point to be made here, one made by pro-life apologist Scott Klusendorf: “I would categorically reject the premise that there is God's truth, then, man's truth. Truth is truth, and if reasonable arguments can be made for the pro-life view, those are God's reasons.” Thus, to try to draw a differentiation between using explicitly Christian arguments versus, say, an appeal to the pre-born child's humanity and the inhumanity of abortion, is simply a false dichotomy.

Hunter, of course, is already calling for a second debate, probably hoping to somewhat redeem himself. But with the full theological illiteracy, historical inaccuracy, and philosophical bankruptcy of AHA's cherry-picked ideology on display for everyone to see, I think that activists of good will can get back to the hard, day-to-day work of changing the culture without responding to this minor irritant. The attacks on the pro-life movement, we can assume, will continue on relentlessly. But one day, perhaps, they will take a lesson from the pro-life movement and decide to focus their full energy on fighting abortion.

Chapter 12: Pro-life review of an AHA debate review: Pollyannaish

Steve Hays

I will comment on this "review" of the debate by AHA's Don Cooper:

<http://blog.abolishhumanabortion.com/2015/05/former-pro-life-leader-reviews.html>

He [Gregg Cunningham] didn't address the problem that we are not to do a little evil that good may come. Or at least he begged the question that legislation that dehumanizes groups of people, those exceptions such as victims conceived in rape, is not evil. You cannot just assume it isn't evil you have to show that it isn't.

For some odd reason, it doesn't even occur to Don that both sides, both debaters, have a burden of proof to discharge. What makes Don imagine the onus lies exclusively on the pro-lifer?

He himself is begging the question by presuming that this amounts to "doing a little evil that good may come." But it's incumbent on him to show how that's the case.

Because there are some positive results from something does not necessarily make it right.

Same problem. He just leaves that dangling in mid-air. It's true that positive results don't necessarily make an action right. Conversely, it's equally true that positive results don't necessarily make an action wrong.

So he can't just leave it hanging there. He needs to offer some criteria for when that's right and when that's wrong.

Take military ethics. Unless you're a pacifist, you believe that some actions which are ordinarily wrong become morally permissible or even obligatory in extreme situations.

But at the same time I supported legislation and candidates that said otherwise. They were the lesser of evils as I saw it. But the problem with this you don't really find this in the bible. In fact you see the opposite.

Many people are confused about the word "evil" in "the lesser of two evils." But that doesn't mean choosing between a lesser wrong and a greater wrong. Rather, that's choosing between bad and worse.

If I can't saving everyone in a nursing home that's on fire, I have a choice between bad (letting some die) and worse (letting all die). It's not immoral for me to rescue those I can. It's not a lesser "evil" in that sense.

And as the old saying goes, our actions speak much louder than our words.

Not to mention how the *inactions* of AHA speak much louder than their hifalutin rhetoric.

I would say that the incrementalist strategy is a strategy that is without faith. It assumes that God will not act, it ignores the biblical norm we see, and it allows for the person to take on actions that send a message to the world that is inconsistent with God's word. I think that is faithless.

Honestly, that's just so dumb. It's like Christian parents who refuse to take a gravely ill child to the doctor because God can heal their child.

It's like a Christian farmer who says, "I won't plant any crops this spring because God can make food miraculously materialize on my dinner table!"

Imagine if every pro-life leader in this country said, "No more compromise!" Imagine if everyone who calls themselves "pro-life" said, "I will not support anything or anyone that does not call ALL abortion sin and call for its immediate and total abolition!" Imagine if we just said to all those who opposed immediate and total abolition, "You can throw us in the furnace if you want to but I will not bow down to your idol for I know that God can save us and even if He didn't we will worship only God."

"Imagine" is the operative word. Imagine if everyone was nice to each other. Imagine if all Muslim militants became pacifists tomorrow. Imagine if all military dictators suddenly renounced violence. Imagine if all Latin American drug cartels became Christian charities. Imagine if all "abortion providers" changed their minds overnight.

It's so hopelessly Pollyannaish.

Chapter 13: Academic Research Shows Incrementalism Saves Lives

Dr. Michael New

After the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalized abortion in all 50 states, many pro-life groups at both the state and national level have pursued a strategy of enacting incremental pro-life laws to limit or stop abortion in certain cases. There are a number of strong reasons to pursue a strategy of incrementalism. Incremental laws can inform people about the extreme nature of abortion policy in the United States and shift public opinion in a more pro-life direction. A well-designed incremental law that gets challenged in court might eventually lead to the repeal of *Roe v. Wade*. However, the best argument in favor of supporting incremental pro-life laws is that they have a very strong track record of stopping abortions and saving innocent human lives.

I have been researching the effects of incremental pro-life laws for over 10 years. Four of my studies have been published by the Heritage Foundation and another has been published by the Family Research Council. Two of my studies have been published by *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* which is considered to be the top state politics journal in the country. In his April 25th debate Greg Cunningham referenced one of my *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* studies. Much to my surprise, T. Russell Hunter seemed unfamiliar with my research or any of the other research which demonstrates the effectiveness of incremental pro-life laws. This was surprising. Hunter is an outspoken and aggressive advocate of immediatism and the effectiveness of pro-life laws is an argument frequently made by incrementalists.

In this essay, I want to provide an overview of the academic research on the impact of incremental pro-life laws. There is an impressive body of academic and policy research which demonstrates that the incidence of abortion is affected by its legal status broadly and the presence of incremental pro-life laws specifically. Since the *Roe v. Wade* decision, pro-lifers have pursued a variety of legislative strategies to protect the unborn. However, in

this essay I want to provide an overview of the academic literature on the three most common types of incremental pro-life laws 1) public funding restrictions 2) parental involvement laws, and 3) informed consent laws.

Public Funding Restrictions

As legal access to abortion was expanded in the late 1960s and early 1970s, questions were raised about the extent to which state Medicaid programs should subsidize abortions for low-income women. In 1976 Congress passed a budgetary act known as the Hyde Amendment which restricted federal Medicaid funds for abortions. Groups supporting legal abortion sued, and in 1980, the Supreme Court ruled in *Harris v. McRae* that the federal Hyde Amendment was constitutional.

Since that time, the federal funding of abortions has been largely limited to situations in which either the abortion was performed to save the life of the woman or the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest. However, states have always been free to use their own tax dollars to fund abortions through Medicaid. Currently 17 states fund abortions through their state Medicaid programs. As such, there is a significant body of public health and public policy research that has analyzed the impact of publicly funding abortions for low-income women.

In 2009 the Guttmacher Institute published a literature review that looked at this issue (Henshaw et al. 2009). Keep in mind that up until 2007, Guttmacher was the official research arm of Planned Parenthood, America's largest abortion provider. Guttmacher advocates for legal abortion and increased government funding for various contraceptive programs. Additionally, Guttmacher tries to downplay the effectiveness of pro-life laws in their research and commentary. Nevertheless, of the 18 studies they considered in their literature review, 15 found statistically significant evidence that abortion rates fell after Medicaid funding was reduced.

This finding held for studies using time-series data from nearly every state to analyze overall abortion rates (Blank, George, and London 1996; Haas-Wilson 1993; 1997; Hansen 1980; Levine, Trainor, and Zimmerman 1996; Matthews, Ribar, and Wilhelm 1997; Medoff 2007; Meier et al. 1996; Meier and McFarlane 1994). It also held for studies using

time-series data from nearly every state to specifically analyze teen abortion rates (Haas-Wilson 1996; Lundberg and Plotnick 1990; Medoff 1999; 2007). This held as well for studies that analyzed abortion rates in smaller groups of states (Korenbrod, Brindis, and Priddy 1990; Trussell et al. 1980) and for two studies that specifically analyzed the impact of public funding restrictions on pregnancy outcomes in North Carolina (Cook et al. 1999; Morgan and Parnell 2002).

The studies that analyzed data from North Carolina were especially interesting. From 1980 to 1995, North Carolina publicly funded abortion for low-income women—not through Medicaid but through a state abortion fund that periodically ran out of money. Whenever funds ran out, the researchers found there were statistically significant decreases in the abortion rate, and months later, statistically significant increases in the birthrate (Cook et al. 1999; Morgan and Parnell 2002). These findings were statistically stronger when the pregnancy outcomes for African American women were considered. Overall, Cook et al. concluded that 37 percent of the women who would have otherwise had an abortion carried their child to term when funding was not available. Overall, the authors of the Guttmacher literature review acknowledge that the best research indicates that Medicaid funding restrictions reduce the incidence of abortion. In the discussion that follows the literature review, they state that

the best studies . . . used detailed data from individual states and compared the ratio of abortions to births both before and after the Medicaid restrictions took effect. These found that 18-37 percent of pregnancies that would have ended in Medicaid funded abortions were carried to term when funding was no longer available. (Henshaw et al. 2009, 27).

They state that the Cook and Parnell study that analyzed data from North Carolina had the “best design.” They conclude by stating that “Considering the case studies collectively, a reasonable estimate is that lack of funding influences about a quarter of Medicaid-eligible women to continue unwanted pregnancies” (Henshaw et al. 2009, 27).

Parental Involvement Laws

Since the *Roe v. Wade* decision, a number of states have enacted parental involvement laws. These laws require that minor girls either notify or receive permission from their

parents before obtaining an abortion. In 1974 Utah became the first state to enact a parental involvement law and Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Rhode Island all enacted parental involvement laws in the early 1980s. A number of U.S. Supreme Court decisions have upheld the constitutionality of parental involvement laws. These include *H.L. v. Matheson*, *Hodgson v. Minnesota*, and *Casey v. Planned Parenthood*. As of this writing, approximately 38 states have parental involvement laws in effect.

A 2009 Guttmacher Institute literature review identified 16 peer-reviewed studies that analyzed the impact of parental involvement laws on minor abortion rates (Dennis et al. 2009). I was able to identify three additional peer-reviewed studies for a total of 19 studies. Each of these 19 studies finds that parental involvement laws result in a statistically significant decline in the in-state abortion rate for minors.

This is true of studies that analyze time-series data on minor abortion rates from nearly all states (Haas-Wilson 1993; 1996; Levine 2003; Medoff 2007; New 2007; 2009; 2011; Ohsfeldt and Gohman 1994; Tomal 1999). It is also true of studies that focus on the impact of individual state-level parental involvement laws. There have been separate studies analyzing the laws in eight states, including Indiana (Ellertson 1997), Massachusetts (Cartoof and Klerman 1986; Donovan 1983), Minnesota (Donovan 1983; Ellertson 1997; Rogers et al. 1991), Mississippi (Henshaw 1995; Joyce and Kaestner 2001), Missouri (Ellertson 1997; Pierson 1995), South Carolina (Joyce and Kaestner 1996; 2001), Tennessee (Joyce and Kaestner 1996), and Texas (Colman, Joyce, and Kaestner 2008; Joyce, Kaestner, and Colman 2006).

The findings are very similar. After the passage of a parental involvement law, the research indicates that there is a statistically significant reduction in the in-state minor abortion rate anywhere from 13 percent (Henshaw 1995) to 42 percent (Cartoof and Klerman 1986). Most studies found a decline in the in-state minors' abortion rate ranging from 15 percent to 20 percent (Colman, Joyce, and Kaestner 2008; Ellertson 1997; Haas-Wilson 1996; Joyce, Kaestner, and Colman 2006; Levine 2003; New 2011; Ohsfeldt and Gohman 1994; Tomal 1999).

There is an ongoing debate about the extent to which these in-state minor abortion declines are offset by out-of-state increases. After all, if a state passes a parental

involvement law, a minor girl can circumvent the law by obtaining an abortion in a nearby state which does not have a parental involvement law in effect. However, according to the two best studies on parental involvement laws that track and compare both in-state and out-of-state minor abortions, each show that the in-state abortion decline significantly exceeds the out-of-state increase.

The first is “Parental Consent for Abortion: Impact of the Massachusetts Law.” This study appeared in the *American Journal of Public Health* in 1986 and analyzed the Massachusetts parental involvement law that took effect in 1981 (Cartoof and Klerman 1986). The second is “Changes in Abortions and Births and the Texas Parental Notification Law.” This study appeared in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 2006 and analyzed the Texas parental involvement law that took effect in 2000 (Joyce, Kaestner, and Colman 2006). Both studies were unique because they were able to analyze monthly data on in-state minor abortions, out-of-state minor abortions, and births to minors.

These studies found that after the enactment of both the Massachusetts law and the Texas law, the in-state abortion decline clearly exceeded the out-of-state abortion increase. Furthermore, both studies found evidence of short-term increases in the minor birthrate - indicating that some minor girls who would have otherwise obtained abortions carried their pregnancy to term after the parental involvement law was enacted. The Texas study found statistically significant increases in the birthrate of minors who were above 17 and a half years old when they conceived (Joyce, Kaestner, and Colman 2006). Another Texas study that analyzed similar data found that the birthrate for 17-year-olds increased by 2 percent after the parental involvement law took effect (Colman, Joyce, and Kaestner 2008). The Massachusetts study suggests that in the year after the parental involvement law took effect, anywhere from 50 to 100 minors gave birth—instead of having abortions—as a result of the law (Cartoof and Klerman 1986).

Additional evidence pointing to the effectiveness of parental involvement laws comes from research indicating that the presence of a parental involvement law improves health outcomes for teen girls. A 2003 study in the *Journal of Health Economics* (Levine 2003) found that parental involvement laws reduce the pregnancy rate of 15- to 17-year-olds by 4 percent to 9 percent. A 2008 study in the *Journal of Law Economics & Organization* shows that parental involvement laws reduce the gonorrhea rate anywhere from 12 percent to 20

percent for females under 20 (Klick and Stratmann 2008). Finally, the journal *Economic Inquiry* published a study which shows that the enactment of parental involvement laws is associated with an 11 to 21percent reduction in the number of 15- to 17-year-old females who commit suicide (Sabia and Rees 2013).

Informed Consent Laws

Informed consent laws are laws requiring that abortion-minded women receive certain types of information prior to the abortion procedure. This can include information about fetal development, information about public and private sources of support for single women, and information about potential health risks involved with an abortion. The first informed consent laws were passed during the 1970s. In the 1992 *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* decision, the Supreme Court upheld Pennsylvania's informed consent law. The Pennsylvania law was among the first that required women view color photos of fetal development prior to the abortion. Approximately 35 states have an informed consent law in effect and 27 states have enacted *Casey*-style informed consent laws similar to Pennsylvania's.

There is somewhat less research about the effects of informed consent laws than there is about the effects of parental involvement laws or Medicaid funding restrictions. This is for two reasons. First, there is a great deal of variation in terms of how informed consent laws are designed. Some require that the abortion minded women have to view an ultrasound of her unborn child. Some require women make multiple trips to the abortion facility. However, other informed consent laws simply require that the abortion facility do little more than provide the pregnant women with information about the gestational age of her unborn child. Second, there is also no commonly accepted dataset of the enactment dates of the various state level informed consent laws.

Nevertheless, a 2009 Guttmacher Institute literature review (Joyce et al. 2009) identified three studies that specifically analyzed the impact of Mississippi's informed consent law that took effect in 1993 (Althaus and Henshaw 1994; Joyce, Henshaw, and Skatrud 1997; Joyce and Kaestner 2000). This law was unique because it was the first that required women seeking an abortion to make two separate trips to the abortion clinic. Each of the three studies found that this informed consent law resulted in a statistically significant

abortion rate reduction (Althaus and Henshaw 1994; Joyce, Henshaw, and Skatrud 1997; Joyce and Kaestner 2000).

Other studies that have analyzed the effects of informed consent laws possess methodological shortcomings. They include studies that have analyzed data for only a very limited number of years (Medoff 2007, 2009), one study whose data set ended in 1992—before many of the stronger *Casey*-style informed consent laws took effect (Meier et al. 1996), and one study that only analyzed only a limited subset of informed consent laws (Bitler and Zavodny 2001).

However, my 2014 *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* study overcomes many of these shortcomings. It analyzes abortion data from nearly all 50 states from between 1985 to 2005. It holds constant a range of demographic and economic variables. It separately considers state level abortion data from two sources, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Guttmacher Institute. It found that *Casey*-style informed consent laws, which require that abortion-minded women view color photos of fetal development, reduce abortion rates anywhere from 2 percent to 7 percent. It found that laws that require that women make two separate visits to the abortion facility reduce abortion rates anywhere from 7 percent to 12 percent. These findings were robust and consistent across datasets.

Other Research

There exists other research which finds that the incidence of abortion is affected by its legal status. For instance, a study analyzing changes in abortion policy in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism found abortion restrictions reduced abortion rates by around 25 percent (Levine and Staiger 2004). A recent National Bureau of Economic Research study found that in 1971 and 1972, state abortion rates were significantly affected by both the legal status of abortion in their own state and their distance to New York which in 1970 became one of the first states to legalize abortion (Joyce, Tan, and Zhang 2012). Finally, a recent study analyzed a Texas law which required that all abortions taking place at or after 16 weeks of gestation be performed in either a hospital or an ambulatory surgical center. It found that this law reduced the number of abortions performed in Texas at or after 16 weeks of gestation by 88 percent. While there was an increase in the number of Texas

residents seeking late-term abortions in other states, the out-of-state increase failed to offset the in-state decline (Colman and Joyce 2011).

Conclusion

There are many reasons why pro-lifers should continue to pursue a strategy of incrementalism. The mid-1990s debates over banning partial birth abortion put vivid pictures of aborted babies on television and in magazines. This clearly shifted public opinion in a pro-life direction. Between 1995 and 2011 the percentage of Americans identifying as “pro-life” according to Gallup increased from 35 percent to 50 percent. Additionally, history shows that a number of other social justice movements achieved their ultimate goal through incremental steps. One of the first successes of the civil rights movement was the desegregation of public law schools. Civil rights attorneys thought that this would help train a new generation of civil rights lawyers. Additionally, during the late 1700s and early 1800s William Wilberforce succeeded in limiting the slave trade in Great Britain before banning it altogether.

However, one of the most important reasons why pro-lifers should continue to support incremental pro-life laws is that these laws are effective. Academic research has been published in an impressive range of political science journals, economics journals, and public health journals. These studies have analyzed different types of incremental pro-life laws. They have analyzed data from different states and different time periods. There is a very strong consensus among scholars that incremental pro-life laws have stopped abortions and saved literally thousands of innocent human lives. Overall, for the past 40 years, pro-lifers in the United States have worked tirelessly to protect the unborn. Progress has not come as quickly as we had hoped. However, the declining abortion numbers are clear evidence that progress is in fact, being made. And I have every confidence that if we stay the course, victory will someday be ours.

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Epilogue

Jill Stanek

In the scheme of things, the [“Immediatist vs Incrementalist” debate](#) between AHA’s T. Russell Hunter and Center for Bio-Ethical Reform’s Gregg Cunningham on April 25, 2015, was iconic. AHA’s immediatist philosophy was laid bare as contradictory, confused, and even nefarious.

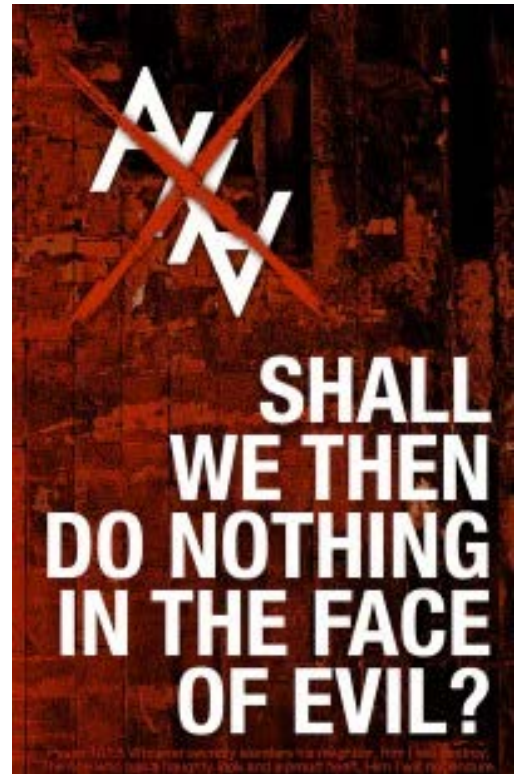
Most extraordinary was that Hunter came so ill prepared, after beating his chest for months for prudentialists to “choose a man, and let him come down to fight me,” in the [words of Goliath](#).

Witnessing social movement historian and master debater Cunningham methodically take down each of AHA’s talking points, only to receive such flummoxed responses by Hunter, was a sight to behold. Cunningham was quick to challenge Hunter’s “conflated” and “binary” arguments, and with no keyboard to hide behind, Hunter’s half-baked theories, groundless accusations, and inaccurate portrayal of history were laid bare.

Hunter asked me this question in a comment on my post, [“Immediatist vs Incrementalist” debate analysis, Part II: There’s only one way to cut down a tree?:](#)

Jill Stanek,

Do you agree with your readers that “AHA” is some kind of a pro-choice plot? A group sent by pro-aborts to bring the PLM down?



Russ

This was in response to commenters like **Kate**, who wrote:

I'm convinced that Abolish Human Abortion are pro choicers disguised as prolife with the mission to bring the prolife movement down. It is one thing to disagree, it is another to go after your own, as they constantly seem to do.

I don't know why Hunter cares what I think, since *he* actually accuses *me* of being part of the "pro-choice plot" for supporting incremental legislation and thus advocating, so he says, abortions that are "safe, early, and painless."

As you can see, the conversation can (and often does) get stupid. Another for instance, when AHA responded that [my hatchet-job on Hunter's tree analogy](#) was misplaced, because silly me thought he was actually making a *tree* analogy...



...which was to say the tree analogy only works if it supports AHA theory.

But I will answer Hunter's question. Actually, I'll let others who have already said it better than I could. The first thought comes from a pro-life proponent who would prefer no attribution:

T. Russell Hunter and AHA are not dissenting voices in an intellectually honest discussion. They are intentionally poisoning the well and confusing the faithful. Heck, not only does Hunter break down under cross-examination, he can't even clarify his own position - thus, the endless stream of [sandwich-eating videos](#).

When you can't clarify your own position, something other than your position is the real agenda. That "something else" in this case is a personal hatred of pro-lifers who are recognized (and paid) for working hard and actually getting things done.

What has AHA done other than attack pro-lifers? Reach a few students here and there with a quick sermon? Demonstrate abortion to a handful of folks via a picture provided by CBR? In short, we are dealing with malcontents who rival **Planned Parenthood** in their efforts to confuse and distort reality.

[Watch this clip from *Band of Brothers*](#). I've seen it a number of times and weep each time. This is what we fight. Everyone in our sphere would save as many of these people as we could. T. Russell Hunter and his cronies will not work with **Catholics** and secularists to free these people. He would not save them incrementally.



So what's the lesson? Simply this" We are not dealing with rational dissenters who contribute something to our understanding and thus make us better. To the contrary, we are engaging a moral sickness combined with unthinkable arrogance. I'd rather be known for opening the camp gate.

Steve Hays of *Triablogue* also answered Hunter's question in [two succinct](#) blog posts on May 17.

Why does AHA discriminate against babies?

Abolitionists accuse proliferers of "discrimination" because they lobby for laws that protect some babies rather than all babies. But the allegation is ironic:

i) To begin with, the charge of discrimination is nonsensical. For instance, it's discriminatory to choose one group over another group if you're in a position to choose both groups.

If, however, proliferers are striving to save all, and only those babies who can be saved right now, that's not discriminatory. They lack the wherewithal, at present, to save more babies. If they could, they would.

ii) In fact, it's actually the abolitionists who are guilty of discrimination. They discriminate against the babies who are savable by opposing incremental legislation. They discriminate against those babies by refusing to take feasible measures necessary to save them.

So not only is the abolitionist accusation false, but it boomerangs. On the one hand, proliferers don't discriminate against babies. On the other hand, abolitionists do discriminate against babies.

Abolitionists discriminate against babies in the present in the hopes of saving all babies in the future.

Why does AHA support abortion?

Abolish Human Abortion: Abolitionists will also continue interposing themselves between the innocent unborn and the rhetoric of wolves that jovially and enthusiastically support the unjust laws that cement ageism into our culture of death's psyche.

Translation: abolitionists interpose themselves between innocent babies and the proliferers who could save them. AHA barricades the abortion clinic from restrictive laws. AHA barricades the abortion clinic to prevent restrictive laws from saving babies.

Instead of protecting babies from the abortionist, AHA is protecting the abortionist from laws that limit his access to babies. They don't allow the prolifer to come between the abortionist and the baby. They give him free rein.

By opposing incremental legislation, AHA protects the legal status quo. They stand guard at the abortion clinic to keep restrictive laws at bay.

In closing, a thought by Maggie Gallagher of [National Review Online](#) last week, upon the passage of the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, which AHA opposed:

I remember being at the table in New York City in the 1980s, discussing abortion strategies with people who said they could never support any law except a constitutional amendment protecting all human life. Otherwise, they told me, their hands would be dirty.

I remember thinking: Your hands may be clean, but the babies are still dying.