

Correspondence

AMERASIANS

This is to express our appreciation for the article by Edward A. Olsen concerning "The Human Rights of Amerasians" (*Worldview*, May). We welcome his astute and caring observations and share his lament. It is somehow ironic that no sooner did our great nation finish its celebration of the International Year of the Child than it published its Human Rights Report. Ironic, because it lists every other human rights violation but our own—the Amerasians—a topic known to the Report's editor, Pat Derian.

It is also ironic that following the IYC the Amerasians are still denied a name, a family, citizenship, food, shelter, and education—basic rights—a resolution for which was agreed to in 1959 in the U.N. General Assembly and to which our nation was signatory.

John A. Shade, Jr.

Executive Director
Pearl S. Buck Foundation
Perkasie, Pa.

PERSONHOOD

To the Editors: Robin Lovin's review of *Aborting America* by Bernard N. Nathanson and *A Private Choice* by John T. Noonan, Jr. (Books, *Worldview*, June), like those books themselves, overlooked a vast body of fact and opinion on the subject that cannot be wished away.

Unwanted pregnancy and abortion are worldwide, age-old problems little affected by man-made—i.e., male-made—laws. The real questions are whether abortion will be legal and safe or illegal and unsafe, and how we can improve education and contraception to reduce the demand for abortion.

At bottom the legal controversy grows out of a religio-philosophical disagreement over when a fetus becomes a person. The Supreme Court was correct in holding in 1973 that, in the absence of consensus and since the legal term "person" does not apply to fetuses in

American law, constitutionally guaranteed privacy rights allow a woman, in consultation with her physician, to decide to terminate a problem pregnancy.

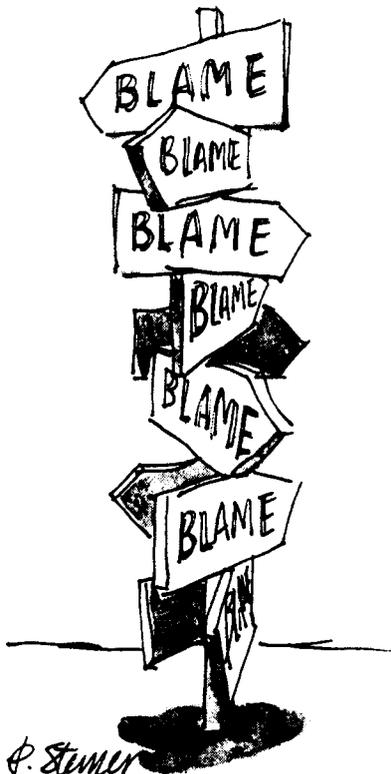
Further, it seems that those opposed to choice, generally on theological grounds, take a very materialistic view of what a person is. They seem to believe that a person is merely a physical or biological entity. They leave nurture, loving or otherwise, and culture out of their narrow picture.

Finally, it is not specious to argue that government would engage in an unconstitutional act "respecting an establishment of religion" if it enacted into law the theological notion that personhood begins at conception.

Women must be allowed freedom of choice, but we can certainly all work to reduce the number of problem pregnancies.

Edd Doerr

Silver Spring, Md.



ROBIN W. LOVIN RESPONDS

The key issue remains, I think, whether a society can abandon the decision how to treat nascent human life to *any* single, private source. My point in criticism of Dr. Nathanson is that science cannot make that decision, but I would be equally reluctant to see it handed over to religion. To deal with the conflict of values and perspective in society by handing the decision back to the prospective mothers without any constraints at all is not a defense of the right to choose but an abdication of social responsibility. Of course a society that limits individual choice in this way ought to bear more responsibility for its children—all of its children—than ours currently does.

CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

To the Editors: I fear that Ms. M. Archer's "Cry for Help" [for the Lebanese Christians] in Excursus 4 of your May issue is more a cry for a religious war than a cry for justice. The help she seeks is military help, but the wrongs she would make right by such means don't disappear with the smoke of bombs.

I suppose it is somewhat beside the point to ask where Ms. Archer's sensitivities were when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were pushed from their homes and made refugees. Those injustices occurred years ago. And I doubt that any army (or radio station telling Palestinians that "it will be worth it all when we see Jesus") will convince Palestinians that loss of their homeland is a matter to forget.

Quite possibly the only just solution is the establishment of a Palestinian state. And those who are prone to cry with Ms. Archer might do better by working to convince the United States Government to work toward that end. After all, it has been the steady opposition of Israel and the U.S. that prevents such a solution. As the PLO has demonstrated to the world, there comes a time when wringing hands and wailing must stop and some direct action of political consequence must take place.

D. L. Johnson

Chairman, Department of Humanities
Indiana State University
Terre Haute, Ind.